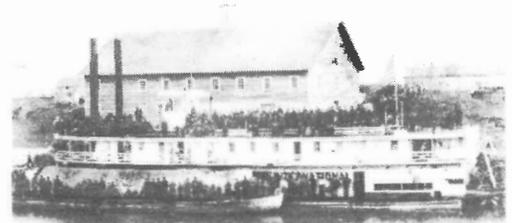


# Preservings

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



No. 7, December 1995

## Feature Story:

# Emigration

by D. Plett, Editor

North American societies are composed of people whose ancestors were immigrants at one time or another. This provides the focus for this issue of *Preservings*.

Aboriginal people crossed an Asiatic bridge populating the country side with Nomadic tribes 6-8,000 years ago while the first Caucasian immigrants crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the 16th century settling the Eastern seaboard.

At about the same time, the forerunners of our Hanover Steinbach pioneers were fleeing their aboriginal lands in Northern Europe in the midst of persecution and settling further east along the banks of the Vistula River in Prussia.

By the close of the American Revolution when the United Empire loyalists were settling southern Ontario, these sturdy free-holding farmers and craftsmen were moving again—this time to southern Russia.

In 1874 7000 of the Russian Mennonites decided to immigrate to Manitoba, of whom approximately 2500 (500 Kleine Gemeinde and 2000 Bergthaler) choose to settle in what was known as the East Reserve, now R.M. of Hanover.

Within a few years half of the Bergthaler relocated to the Altona area of the so-called West Reserve. Around the turn of the century other East Reserve residents moved on to new settlements in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and Swalwell, Alberta.

A major movement took place in the aftermath of the Anglicization program of the  
*continued next page*



## Good-byes in the rain June 23, 1948

*"Good-bye in the rain." 450 Chortitzer Emigrants to Paraguay at the Niverville train station; the other Chortitzer group left via Winnipeg. This photo has been featured prominently in several historical works, but without any identification. Dick F. Wiebe has made a concerted effort to identify the participants and provides the following information: l. to r. unidentified, the minister reading from the Bible is Rev. Peter F. Wiebe, Niverville, (son of Jakob D. Wiebe, see Preservings, No. 6), unidentified, man holding umbrella - John S. Kehler, man with rubber boots is Aron Schulz, brother-in-law to Rev. Wiebe, Johann D. Peters of New Bothwell and Peter Unger. Identification courtesy of Dick F. Wiebe, R. R. 1, Ste. Anne, October 13, 1995, and Victor Hiebert, Steinbach, Manitoba, December 1, 1995. Anyone with additional information about the people in this picture are asked to contact Mr. Dick Wiebe and/or the editor.*

*Photo courtesy of Lydia Penner, Hanover 100 Years (Steinbach, 1982), page 20.*

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# Elisabeth Rempel Reimer - Immigrant Woman

by Dr. Royden K. Loewen,  
Dept. of History, U. of M.

On 13 September 1874, 59 year-old Elisabeth Rempel Reimer arrived at the confluence of the Red and Rat Rivers in Manitoba with her 66 year-old husband Abram. She and her husband would make their way to the village of Blumenort that had been founded in August, 15 miles to the east. Here in Blumenort, the Reimers registered a homestead, SW 21-7-6E, (in September 1877) and established a small farm.

Within a short time, however, the couple seem to have followed the tradition of settling on the farmstead of one of their children. The 1879 diary of Elisabeth's husband, Abram Reimer, indicates that the couple was semi-retired, Abram spending his days visiting and chopping wood for neighbours, Elisabeth working to ensure the health of her children and grandchildren and sewing for neighbours. By 1883 the couple owned only 30 cultivated acres of land, one cow and small quantity of furniture; just a year later they were cultivating only 20 acres and possessed nei-

ther cow nor their own furniture. By 1889 the Reimers were no longer listed on the municipal tax roll. Both lived to relatively elderly ages, Abram dying at 84 in 1892, Elisabeth at 79 a year later.

The story of Elisabeth Reimer, is more than that of a quiescent Mennonite woman following her husband to a new land, and living out a peaceful, pastoral twilight of her life in a quaint East Reserve village. It is the story of a migrating woman, similar in some ways to the lives of millions of other European women who came to North America in the nineteenth century: these were lives determined by the limitations and opportunities rooted in a unique intersection of gender, ethnicity and agrarian lifeworld.

Like migrating women of other traditions - whether Jewish, Finnish, Ukrainian - Elisabeth lived out a complex life in a web of family, kinship, and village ties, and pursued a life that was made difficult by a never-ending cycle of birth, illness and death and by a migration to a new land. But she was also a Mennonite and would hold an especially pronounced sense of community, commitment to farm life, vision of historical lineage, and belief that migration itself was a religious act.

Like the worlds of other migrating Mennonite women in the 1870s, Elisabeth's life was rooted in the farm household and extended family. Family and kinship was the primary arena of her social relations; the Blumenort village and Kleine Gemeinde congregation represented a secondary arena; the outside world of market and government was usually outside her purview as a woman and an elderly person. It is significant that although she and Abram arrived in Manitoba with the third contingent of 1874 Kleine Gemeinde settlers, included in her travelling group were the families of three daughters and two sons and a total of 21 grandchildren, ages 15 years to 3 months.

Elisabeth and Abram were probably met at the river bank by their two sons - Peter and Abram - who had arrived six weeks earlier; the elderly Reimers also probably by-passed the Jacob Shantz immigration sheds and made their way straight to Blumenort where they would have been met by the wives of Peter and Abram Jr., each named Maria, and another 9 grandchildren.

Three of Elisabeth's married children were to make Blumenort their permanent homes, four would settle in Steinbach, four miles south (one remained in Russia). Within this tightly knit group of 40 members of her direct family, Elisabeth transplanted a familiar pattern of life.

That life had evolved in Russia. It began in the Molotschna colony where she was born as a twin to Peter and Katerina (Berchen) Rempel in 1814 and where, in 1835 at age 21, she married Abram Reimer, the son of Kleine Gemeinde bishop, Klaas Reimer. Genealogy records indicate that Elisabeth bore 8 children,

having her last child when she was only 38.

She was fortunate, each of her children grew to adulthood. But life was difficult. Her parents had been financially secure land-owning farmers and according to the bylaws of the Mennonite inheritance order she would have been entitled to an inheritance in 1837; but given those rules, too, and the size of families, that inheritance would have represented just 1/14th of the farm asset. Moreover, her husband, Abram, was not a successful farmer.

As a family history notes he "apparently...prospered neither spiritually nor materially the way his father had." It appears that Elisabeth had married the village intellectual. As a grandson, Bishop David P. Reimer noted in the 1950s, "on the whole [Abram Reimer] is said to have [had] a real interest in many areas in which others were uninformed. As is the case with many so-called men of knowledge, he too did not always end up on a green twig." Kleine Gemeinde deacon records indicate that the Reimer family relied on the church's poor fund to make ends meet, and frequently borrowed money from the deacon's fund: in 1847 it was to purchase a cow, in 1856 to construct a house, in 1861 to cover debts incurred elsewhere.

The Reimers' economic difficulties meant that Elisabeth was called to participate in the public world to a greater extent than other Mennonite women. It was not unusual that she would have worked the farmyard, milking cows, tending the chickens and gardens to feed the family. Nor was it unusual as a mother of one of the poorer homes to see her children leave home to work as teenaged "lifecycle" servants for neighbouring families. Klaas Jr., the future Steinbach merchant, left home at age 12 to learn the trade of blacksmithing, while son Peter left home at 14, recalling later how he returned home only for visits by skating down the frozen river and running over the steppe to the sound of howling wolves.

But poverty also meant that the Reimer household was more dependent on mother producing non-agricultural products than other homes. Daughter Margaretha, born in 1852 recalled years later how "mother, a seamstress was often called away from home on business. In the cause of her profession she did such work as tailoring men's suits, making men's caps with patent leather peaks and even, making hoop skirts for the nobility. Thus, her frequent absences caused [Margaretha, the young girl] much loneliness."

Conditions improved somewhat after the mid 1860s when Elisabeth and Abram joined Kleine Gemeinde migrations, first to Marcusland and then to Borosenko. In Marcusland they found a place for themselves on the farmyard of their son Klaas, and in Borosenko at their son Johann's place in the village of Steinbach.

And here, too, they witnessed each of their married children prosper: Abram's diary is

## Emigration

*continued from previous page*

When the church private school system was abolished in direct contravention of the 1873 "Letter of Privileges" which had induced them to come to Canada, a group of Chortitzer Mennonites went to Paraguay where they established the Menno Colony in 1927.

At very much the same time, the Soviet Revolution, Machno insurgents and famine devastated the Mennonite settlements in Russia so that some 23,000 immigrated to Canada. The first group of these so-called "Russländer" arrived in Giroux on August 20, 1923.

A second series of major immigrations occurred in 1948 when another group of Chortitzer moved to Paraguay. At the same time, some 65 conservative Kleine Gemeinde families, besieged by American fundamentalists in their own ranks, moved to Mexico, from where a smaller group moved on to Belize in 1958.

World War Two directly affected those Mennonites left in Russia as the battle front twice engulfed what was left of their once flowering settlements. The lucky ones were able to flee back to Germany while others perished in Stalin's Gulag. Many of these refugees came to Hanover Steinbach in 1948 as so-called "D.P.s" or Displaced Persons.

Our community has frequently experienced immigration: the farewells to relatives never to be seen again, the challenges of establishing new settlements, etc. The stories in the feature section provide insight into the drama and pathos of our history.

filled with a myriad of references to the expanding commercial agricultural, blacksmithing and milling activities of the Reimer children. Johann, for example, who was seen most often, made the two-day trip to Nikopol, the riverport on the Dnieper, with wheat for export approximately once a month and returned with goods or cash amounting to 28 to 34 rubles. But similar references are made to sons Peter and Abram marketing grain, and to the blacksmithing and milling enterprise of son Klaas and son-in-law Abram Friesen.

Most importantly for Elisabeth, Borosenko was the site in which she was able to work the close network of her extended family, offering assistance during the many times of illness and child birth. These close ties were made possible by having most of her children living within 15 miles of their own residence. Five married children - sons Klaas, Johann, Peter and daughters Elisabeth and Maria and their families - lived right in Steinbach.

Seven miles south along the shallow, winding Buluk River, past the Russian town of Scholochown, lay the large Mennonite village of Blumenhof where Elisabeth's son Abram and his family farmed. Clear across the Borosenko Volost, 15 miles east northeast of Steinbach, past the seat of the Volost council in Nikolaithal, lay Rosenfeld where her youngest daughter, Margaretha, lived with her husband Abram Penner.

Within this setting Elisabeth exercised her role as the matriarch of an extended Mennonite family. Few Sundays passed but that the Steinbach children gathered at a sibling's place in the village with the parents for the afternoon "Faspa" and often, too, daughter Margaretha or son Abram came from their respective villages with their families. Through the week the boys in Steinbach helped one another shoe horses or assist in construction projects, and borrowed tools or arranged caravans to Nikopol.

Husband Abram spent much time visiting or assisting his children in the village, or if a ride happened to be available his children too in Blumenhof and Rosenfeld. Elisabeth, herself, walked the dusty streets and travelled outlying roads as much as her husband. But she was younger and more vivacious and her contacts were as much medical as social.

Abram's diary for the Borosenko years is a unique document describing not only activities of the male world, but that of the female world, and especially that of his wife, Elisabeth. The diary indicates that her life followed closely the activities of his daughters and daughters-in-law. In 1870, for example, five infants were born to Elisabeth's extended family, revealing that the round of child bearing and illness was a very difficult stage in the woman's life and that these were the events that bonded women of different generations.

It was Elisabeth Sr. who attended all child-births. Sometimes attending to childbirth was a mere formality. On June 16 son Peter's wife, 20 year-old Elisabeth Friesen, went into labour with her first child and Elisabeth Sr. quickly came over and during the night a

granddaughter was born; a day and half later the mother was up and about. In August when son Johann's wife, Anna, had her first child, she experienced such a fast birth that Elisabeth Sr. arrived too late to see the child, a son, born.

But only three days later Elisabeth was rushed to Rosenfeld where her 18 year-old daughter, Margaretha, gave birth to her first child, a daughter, after three hours of hard labour; Margaretha was less fortunate than her sisters-in-law and spent many days in bed, exhausted, "very sick" and afflicted with mastitis.

Only two days after Elisabeth had travelled to Rosenfeld, she was summoned back home, to Steinbach where her son Klaas's 34 year-old wife, Katherina Willms Reimer, gave birth to her seventh child, a son; this too was a difficult delivery as the mother "was very weak and sick." The most difficult time in the Reimer family that year came when 20 year-old daughter, Katherina, gave birth to her second son on October 23. Although she was "peaceful and enduring" for two days, her condition worsened and over the course of the next month she was near death on two occasions.

The year of migration, 1874, would threaten to dislodge this closely-knit life. But Elisabeth would focus her energies and authority on ensuring that the migration was a transplantation and not an uprooting. The preparation for moving itself was a trying time as auction sales were organized and strong bonds of friendship broken.

These were times sometimes of emotional crisis: on June 9, 1873 it is noted that daughter-in-law Elisabeth Friesen Reimer's "condition deteriorated ... [and] at 10:30 her breathing decreased rapidly until 11 o'clock when she died"; on 6 November it was noted that "at Toewes [daughter Elisabeth Jr.] is somewhat distressed about the travelling and very anxious about selling their house" and on 8 March 1874 daughter-in-law Katherina, who suffered from a mental disorder, is said to have returned home where "she cried and insulted very much."

Then, too, there was the need for additional income. It is possible that the Reimers operated a small consignment store: on 10 February 1874, for example, they took "four pounds of raisins, six pounds of coffee, three pounds of sugar, one pound of prunes, carrots, half a pound of wax" from Peter Friesen of Nikopol for "14 days." Elisabeth took on other assignments that spring. In a single day in January 1874 "Abram Reimers came to visit for lunch and 'Faspa' and brought work here, one large fur coat and [ordered] other clothes to be made. Also Peter Wiebe brought three old fur coats to be made into two new fur coats for two of his sons."

These were times that the men folk would travel to Katerinoslav, the capital, or to Molotschna colony, to organize the migration. On such occasions women gathered for moral support: on 25 February 1874 Abram and Margaretha Penner came to visit from

Rosenfeld, but after a while Abram returned home to catch a ride to Katerinoslav and his pregnant wife, Margaretha, stayed on with parents; the next day, on the 26th, daughter Katherina Friesen spent the night at Reimers. All the while there were more births of grandchildren, one in March, another in May. Each time Elisabeth was called to assist: as Abram recorded it for the birth in March, it was "at about 10 o'clock [that] my wife was driven to Toewses and at 11 at night a son...was born."

But on March 30, just as grandson and his mother were making progress, the new mother "walking about the room and sitting by the oven", Elisabeth herself fell "very weak and sickly." Although she regained enough health to ride to church service with her son Klaas on his "two-wheeler" the next day, she suffered a relapse. On April 10th her husband noted that Elisabeth Sr. had "been very ill since Easter, so much so that she could not be up for the entire day, and this week still she has had so much throat pain that we have often been very saddened." The voyage to North America during the summer of 1874 was even more trying; while husbands scouted for land and debated the merits of locating in Manitoba or in Kansas, women were preoccupied with health: at least three of Elisabeth's daughters were ill on the voyage, a brother-in-law remained in Russia on account of his ill health, one grandchild died en route, another died in Manitoba, just a month before Elisabeth herself arrived. Still, as in Russia, Elisabeth became a focal point for her daughters and their families. Her only difficulty was keeping her ever-curious husband by her side: Abram is said to have become so enthralled with the sites at Quebec City that he became separated from the larger group and missed the train to Toronto.

In Blumenort and Steinbach, Elisabeth saw to it that a renewed kinship-based female network was quickly woven into place. Sometimes she witnessed her daughters visiting one another: an entry in Abram's 1879 diary notes that on "Sunday, June 22, Bishop Toews preached and in the afternoon Mrs. Peter Reimer walked to Blumenhof and Mrs. Abram Penner went with her." More often Elisabeth would do the visiting. A typical entry in Abram's diary is the one from May 1879 in which he records that "when I came home I discovered my wife had gone to Abram Penners, so I went there as well."

Sometimes when Abram would leave the village for one destination, so too would Elisabeth, but heading in a separate direction: thus on 28 March 1889, as the elderly Abram travelled to Gruenfeld for the day, Elisabeth visited her daughter-in-law in the neighbouring village of Blumenhof. On still other occasions the daughters came to Blumenort: on 27 February 1889, a Wednesday, when married daughters Katherina and Elisabeth Jr. of Steinbach came to visit their sister, 42 year-old, Margaretha in Blumenort, Elisabeth Sr. and Abram walked over at once to

*continued on page 7*

# Loeppkys of Straszburg and Schanzenberg

by Dr. Jacob L. Peters,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

The Johann Loeppky clan has been traced back to the early Mennonite pioneers in Russia. Henry Schapansky (1993) found census and tax lists that show Johann Loeppky (b.1772) lived on Insel Chortitza in 1795 and in Schoenhorst in 1802. He links this family to Johann Loeppky, Sr. (b. 1745) who came to Russia from the Elbing region in Prussia in 1788-89. These records also show that while living in Schoenhorst they had four children, Katherina, Johann, Maria and Anna.

Johann (1804-1862) married Eva Glockmann in 1824. This family is listed later in the "Bergthal Gemeinde Buch A" (page A52) with ten children, five boys and five girls. Three died in early childhood. They lived in the village of Schoenfeld, part of the Bergthal Colony. It is this family that stands as the family of origin for the Straszburg

Loeppkys.

This article identifies the descendants by name, family, date of arrival, age, and home-stead community. It is likely that the whole clan came to the East Reserve but later many moved to the West Reserve. This information is based primarily on the documents published by HSHS in the *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch* and *Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories, 1874-1910*.

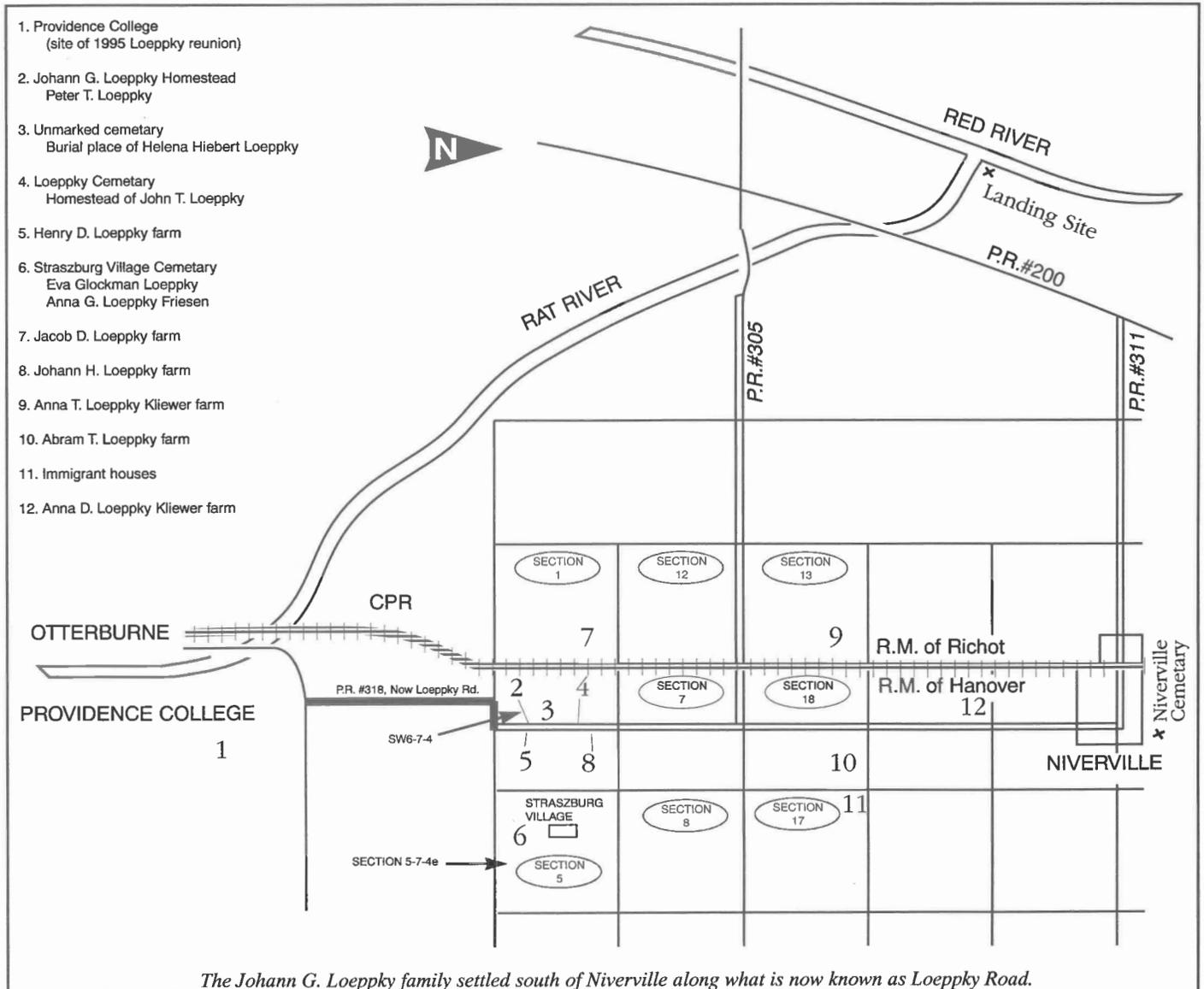
Eight descendants arrived in 1874. Katarina G., Loeppky Wall's teenage children, **Katarina** (17), **Gerhard** (15), and **Eva** (12) arrived with their father Gerhard Wall and stepmother Agatha Heppner in Quebec aboard the S.S. Nova Scotian on July 27, 1874 with 283 Mennonites. After a start on the East Reserve this family moved to the Neu-Bergthal area on the West Reserve. On the same day, but another ship, three young married couples, Helena (19) and Franz Kehler, Aganetha and **Abram H. Loeppky** (26), and

**Helena** (21) and Abraham Groening came on the S.S. Peruvian No. 47 with 521 Mennonites.

Helena Loeppky Kehler, oldest daughter of the Johann G. and Susanna Toews Loeppky, Abraham H. Loeppky and Helena Loeppky Groening, oldest son and oldest daughter of Jacob G. and Katharina Hiebert Loeppky arrived in Manitoba on August 3rd (Julian Calendar). For these three couples the trip started on June 16th and on the very next day the diary entry reads "...Two children died this night, a daughter of Abram Loeppkys and Abram Groening's son." (Schroeder 1986:75).

Records show that the Kehlbers settled in the Blumengard, the Loeppkys in Schanzenberg and Groenings in Schoenfeld. The Groenings later moved to the Lowe Farm area (Dyck 1993:30) and the Loeppkys to the Blumenhof area near Gretna (Neufeld p.30).

Later that same summer Aron and **Anna G. Loeppky Friesen** (24), with one child,





*Johann G. Loeppky homestead, SW 6-7-4E. Courtesy of Otto Loeppky.*

**Katharina** (4), arrived in Manitoba. They settled in Straszburg. The second year of the Berghthaler exodus added significant numbers to the Loeppky clan. The S.S. Moravian No. 25 docked in Quebec on July 1, 1875 with 667 Mennonites. Among that number were **Johann H.** (24) and Margaretha Loeppky, son of Jacob G, and Katharina Loeppky, and **Isaac L. Krahn** (8), son of the late Dorothea G. Loeppky and Gergen Krahn (both parents passed away prior to the migration). He came with his half sister, Agatha Krahn Janzen and her husband Franz, and stepmother, Agatha Dyck Krause Krahn. No record has been found of the arrival of his older brother, **Gergard L. Krahn** (11). Johann and Margaretha later moved to the Neu-Hoffnung in the West Reserve. Isaac Kahn lived with Franz and Agatha Janzen in Rudnerweide on the West Reserve by 1881.

The S.S. Quebec No. 34 docked in Quebec on July 20, 1875 with 463 Mennonites under the leadership of Isaac Mueller, C. Epp and J. Loeppky. Counted in that number were the **Johann G.** (45) and Susanna Toews Loeppky family with nine children (1-17), the **Heinrich G.** (27) and Anna Toews Loeppky family with three children (2-6), and the **Abraham G.** (30) and Anna Dyck Loeppky family with three children (3-7). They were accompanied by their elderly mother and grandmother, **Eva Glockman Loeppky Wall** (70), widow of Johann Loeppky and Gerhard Wall. All three families settled in Straszburg.

The Loeppky-Leppy Reunion at Otterburne, Manitoba in 1995 involved the descendants of Johann G. and Susanna Toews Loeppky.

The last members of the Loeppky clan arrived in Quebec on July 30, 1876 aboard the S.S. Sardinian No. 39. With the arrival of the



*Johann G. Loeppky and Susanna Toews Loeppky.  
Courtesy of Otto Loeppky, Steinbach, Manitoba.*

**Jacob G.** (51) and Catarina Hiebert Loeppky family and their five children (4-18) in Schanzenburg the clan move to Manitoba is complete. The Manitoba Johann Loeppky clan now numbered mother Eva, four sons and their wives, one daughter and her husband and twenty-nine grandchildren. Two daughters, Dorothea, Mrs. Gerhard Krahn, and Katarina, Mrs. Gerhard Wall, died prior the Berghthaler exodus.

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**About the author:** Jacob L. Peters is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba. He is a descendant of Johann T. Loeppky referred to in the article.

# When Hanover Opened Its Heart

by Dr. Roy Vogt,  
University of Manitoba

More than seventy years ago, on August 20, 1923 to be precise, the people of Hanover municipality warmly welcomed 95 strangers into their midst. These strangers had left southern Russia more than a month earlier, on July 3. They had boarded a cattle train with over 600 other Mennonite friends and relatives, determined to leave the communist system of Russia for a new homeland in Canada.

After long stretches of travel by train, a wait of several weeks in England, and a difficult ocean voyage, they arrived weary and apprehensive at the CPR station in Winnipeg on August 20. Here they were greeted by

members of several Mennonite congregations, including the Kleine Gemeinde, Chortitzer, Evangelical Mennonite Brethren and Holdeman.

Many of the new immigrants travelled further west. Ninety-five travelled with their hosts by train from Winnipeg to Giroux, where dozens of families had gathered to meet them and to offer them places to stay and work. After their long journey the new arrivals were overjoyed at this heartwarming reception.

The meeting at Giroux brought together two kinds of Mennonites: the descendants of those who had left Russia earlier, in 1874, and those who had stayed in Russia until the revolution of 1917 made their life unbearable.

Both were Mennonites, but they came from different branches of the Mennonite Church and had very different experiences for almost half a century. That is why the new arrivals were pleasantly surprised - almost overwhelmed - at the warm reception they got, and that is also why in the coming years they had to learn to live together.

The Hanover welcoming committee was well prepared. A home had been found for everyone. My father, Peter Vogt, then 22 and single, was taken with his mother and sister Maria to the home of C.P. Reimers, three miles north of Steinbach. His older brother Abram, with wife Elizabeth, was received by Mr. and Mrs. Heinrich Klippenstein of Chortitz.



**The Andreas Vogt Family in Russia, circa 1918.**

*Andreas Vogt (1854-1914) was a teacher who lived in Schoenwiese, in the Chortitz Colony or Old-Colony. Although an Anwohner, he was a well-respected member of his community and served as a minister of the "Frisian" Kronsgarten Gemeinde. His widow Aganetha Block Vogt came to Canada in 1923 together with her children and grandchildren.*

*Front row: Arnold Dyck (the famous writer); Katherina (Vogt) Dyck; Aganetha (Vogt) Kampen; Mother Aganetha Vogt; Maria Vogt; Maria (Wiens) Vogt, holding daughter Frieda; and Andrew Vogt, with daughter Mary in front.*

*Back row: David Vogt; Anna Vogt; Jakob Kampen; Peter Vogt; Johann Vogt; Helena Vogt and Abram Vogt.*

*Photo courtesy of Roy Vogt, editor, A Vogt Family History: The Descendants of Andreas Vogt (1854-1914) and Aganetha (Block) Vogt (1857-1930), (Steinbach, 1994), page 32.*



*Russländer families were taken in to live in homes like this one belonging to H. G. Klippenstein, two miles north of Chortitz. Later Abram Rempels lived on this farm. Photo courtesy of Margaret Kroeker, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

His sister Helen, with husband Peter Penner and two children, one of whom had been born enroute in Russia in one of the cattle trains, went to the Peter Thiessen farm near Steinbach and from there to Grunthal. Another sister, Katherine, with her husband Arnold Dyck, the well-known writer, and their two children, were welcomed in the Peter T. Funk home in Grunthal. Another brother, John, with wife Helen, moved in with the P.K. Toews family in Grunthal.

Other host families included J.S. Rempels, C.W. Toews, K.F. Penner, H.W. Reimer, P.P. Penner, K.P. Penner, P.B. Peters, G.P. Schroeder, P.F. Unger, F.K. Goossen, K.F. Penner, P.T. Barkman, Cornelius P. Kroeker, John E. Funk, J.D. Goossen, and Mrs. Jacob W. Reimer. By evening all 95 arrivals had found homes.

Adjustments had to be made almost immediately, some of them quite amusing. Most of the arrivals were famished, but when asked by their new hosts whether they were hungry some of them politely said "no, not really," expecting to be asked a second time, as was the custom in Russia. Their hosts, used to straightforward responses, assumed that their new guests really were not hungry and saw them off to bed without a meal.

It didn't take long for the newcomers to learn to say how they really felt the first time.

Work was available on the farms for a few weeks, but long-term employment was extremely difficult to find. Families moved around from village to village in search of work, most of them eventually settling in Steinbach or nearby. Most attended the local churches, but found some of the religious customs strange.

The newcomers were generally perceived as being more "liberal" and "worldly" than the people among whom they settled. Although they greatly appreciated the warm hospitality and lasting friendship of the people who had

welcomed them, they tried as soon as possible to create their own congregations.

Many were members of the Mennonite Brethren Church and were welcomed in their own church fellowship. The others, the "Kirchliche", to whom my father and his family belonged, were fewer in number and didn't congregate separately for a number of years.

With time the newcomers were able to make a contribution to the communities that had welcomed them. Some did it in business - John, Abram, and Peter Vogt in groceries, Maria Vogt in nursing (helping to found Steinbach's first hospital), sister Anna Vogt in a new Kindergarten, and brother-in-law Arnold Dyck in printing. (It was he who persuaded his old friend, Gerhard Derksen, also a new immigrant from Russia, to move to Steinbach from Herbert, Saskatchewan to build up the printing business. From this small beginning Gerhard Derksen's son Eugene built up a sizeable printing establishment).

As mentioned, lasting friendships were formed between some of the new immigrants and their hosts. Abram Vogt spoke frequently of his respect for the H. G. Klippensteins of Chortitz and visited them often. Through their businesses in Steinbach the newcomers became thoroughly immersed in their new communities. One business relationship went much further: Peter Vogt found work as a clerk at "K. Reimer & Sons" store, and in 1925 married Susanna Reimer, the daughter of Mrs. Jakob W. Reimer, the owner. This was apparently the first marriage between a "Kanadier" Mennonite and a "Russlaender", but surely not the last.

When the 95 immigrants arrived at Giroux on August 20, 1923, they were afraid but hopeful. The open hearts of their Hanover hosts quickly stilled their fears and justified their hope. We, the descendants of those strangers from Russia, will never forget.

## Immigrant Woman

*continued from page 3*

Margaretha's and stayed for the afternoon and "Faspa" and saw their daughters off when they returned to Steinbach at 5:30.

Even in her old age, Elisabeth provided for the needs of her immediate household. Her's was the duty to milk their one cow the during 1880s and she was the medical caregiver, tending to her daughters in child birth, passing on the skill to at least one daughter-in-law and practising herbal medicine, from time to time "making a pot of ointment." Even in her 70s she took on work as seamstress. In September 1888, for example, she produced a fur coat for Heinrich Reimer in "four and half days" and in March 1889 a "grey coat" for Abram Penner. During this time, too, she produced about a shirt per month and sometimes, as in March 1889, contracted to do a quantity of sewing for a non-relative, "the young Cornelius Pletts," from a neighbouring village.

Elisabeth's contribution and authority extended beyond her immediate household and the close-knit relationships between mother and daughters. Oral tradition suggests that Elisabeth was not a timid woman. On an occasion, when Abram was absent, cutting firewood in the forests to the east, Elisabeth was confronted at her door by three poor, drunken men seeking refuge from a cold winter night. Instead of turning the men away, Elisabeth allowed the men inside, provided them with food and then ordered them to lie down on the floor by the fire and not to rise until morning. To ensure that order was kept, Elisabeth planted herself in her rocker, and watched the sleeping men all night. In the morning, the men, well-rested and fed left without incident.

More importantly, Elisabeth's domain of influence affected the decisions of some of the most powerful Mennonite men in Manitoba. She would be most often remembered for stopping her son, Klaas R. Reimer and son-in-law Abram S. Friesen, Steinbach's two foremost entrepreneurs, from joining the Kleine Gemeinde movement to relocate to Nebraska in the summer of 1876.

The story recalls that when it appeared that grasshoppers would destroy the crops for the second successive year, the Reimer clan gathered for a Sunday afternoon visit to plan a strategy of defense. After the two influential brothers had indicated their plans to leave Manitoba their mother spoke up: "This we do not want to do," she is said to have declared, "for the dear Lord has heard my prayer; He has protected us on our journey here. And we do not want to leave. Instead we want to remain faithful...in our calling and not become discouraged. I have faith in God that He will bless us and that we will have our bread."

The narrator concludes that her children were "obedient" and remained in Manitoba. According to a later account: "this faithful

*continued on page 9*

# From Steinfeld to Stoney Fields

by Helene Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba

My maternal grandparents, Peter David Klassen (1900-1981) and Helena Bergen Klassen (1903-1989), emigrated from the Baratov-Schlachtin Colony in South Russia to Canada in the winter of 1928 to 1929.

Peter was born in the village of Steinfeld to David Klassen (1860-1910) and Elizabeth Goertzen Klassen (1862-1949), who were farmers on their Vollwirtschaft of 50 dessiatine (equal to 135 acres). On it was a large and beautiful orchard filled with pear and other fruit trees. His father died when Peter was 10 years old. After completing his elementary education in the village school, Peter studied for one year at the Zentralschule in Nikolaipol and for two more years at the Osterhof Zentralschule.

It seems that during the Civil War years a Selbstschutz or self-defense unit was formed in the region. He often related of how, with other young Mennonite men organized to protect the village from the marauding bands of armed lawless bandits, he'd find himself running with his fellow protectors across the fields at night, gun in one hand and rolling a cigarette with the other.

Helena, daughter of Abram Bergen (1869-1956) and Katherina Friesen Bergen (1876-1946) was born in the village of Repatino, a 'Judenplan' village near Steinfeld. In the mid-1800s the tsarist government considered Mennonite farmers so successful that they encouraged them to become part of the Judenplan. This project saw the Mennonites living in villages with Jewish settlers, as model farmers so that the latter could pick up on the Mennonites' agricultural expertise as evidenced by their farming techniques.

The Bergens were one of eight Mennonite families in the village and rented 40 dessiatine from a rich land owner. Here Helena's father and her uncle Isaak built an oil mill where oil was pressed out of sunflower seeds. Later, Abram Bergen and Johann Klassen, who had married Abram's sister Helena, also built a grain mill which prospered and grew into a large business. They had a comfortable life. In 1915 Abram and Katherina built a beautiful big house.

In 1918 the Bergens' orchard and beautiful house were burnt down and destroyed by the 'Red Bandits'. The Russian workers at the grain mill would not allow the bandits to burn down the mill. The family fled with only a change of clothes, 20 km north to Steinfeld to the home of Katharina's parents, John and Katharina Friesen, who died that same year.

Both Peter and Helena were baptized on May 24, 1922, and accepted into the membership of the Mennonite Church that served both Steinfeld and Gruenfeld. On June 16, 1923, they were married. The house in which Peter was born became their home, as well as for brother John Klassen and his wife Aganetha (Krahn) and their children. Peter was

employed as the village secretary in Steinfeld.

Of the 10 Klassen siblings that survived infancy and WWI, one brother and one sister emigrated to Canada in the 20s: Abram and Maria Klassen in 1923 became one of the first "Russlaenda" to settle in Gnadenthal south of Winkler; Maria (Klassen) and Wilhelm Sawatzky emigrated in 1925 and settled on a farm in the Grunthal area. Their mother, Elizabeth Klassen, emigrated with the family of her only daughter. Other brothers also tried to emigrate: Jacob, David, Henry and Franz all applied in Moscow but were denied their exit visas. John and his family were not able to enter Canada because a health inspector misdiagnosed the condition of one of the children, and so their destination in 1929 became Brazil instead.

Because of increasing difficulties in obtaining permission from the Soviet authorities to emigrate, the departure of Peter and Helena from Steinfeld necessitated secrecy. Without the comfort of bidding most of their family members goodbye, they set out in the early hours of December 9, 1928, for the railway station at Devladovo, 10 km east of Steinfeld, and proceeded to Moscow via Dnepropetrovsk and Charkov.

From December 12 to 29 they remained in Moscow where their first business at hand was to obtain their exit visas and passports. Peter's first two attempts were unsuccessful.

However, he ensured the success of his third effort: acting as if he were drunk, he had the authorities quickly realize the benefit of ridding their country of such a 'nuisance'!

Peter and Helena and their children—Katharina, Helen, and Peter, ages 5, 4, and 1—left on "the last train out of Moscow", as my grandparents always emphasized. All their possessions were contained in just two suitcases. The train was so packed with people, a Moscow stranger suggested leaving the children behind. On the 6th of January, they sailed from the port of Tiga, made numerous stops along the northern coasts of Germany, Holland, Belgium, and arrived at Southampton, England, on the 12th. The journey across the Atlantic from Cherbourg, France, to St. John, N.B., was a 9 day rough voyage on the steamship Melita.

Because one of the children had contracted measles during the voyage, mother and children were quarantined for several weeks. On February 15 they boarded the CPR trail, travelled through snow-covered forests and onto the endless prairie for days, and arrived in Winnipeg on the 18th. Next day they were met at the Plum Coulee train station by brother Abram who, with his horse-drawn sleigh, brought the family to his home.

Peter worked first on his brother's farm and then for a farmer in the Plum Coulee area. They moved to Grunthal and lived for a short

## Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization

Roathern, Sask.

Form M-107

Familienverzeichnis.

Kassen-, Kredit- oder Halbkreditpassagier *977 Credit C. 7.97*

Vor-, Vaters- und Familienname.	Wann geboren.	Wo geboren.	Letzter Wohnort in Russland.		
<i>Klassen Peter Dav.</i>	<i>5/10 - 1900</i>	<i>Steinfeld</i>	<i>Steinfeld</i>		
<i>" Helena</i>	<i>5/10 - 1903</i>		<i>Abgereist von Deculadawo</i>		
<i>" Katharina</i>	<i>1/10 - 1921</i>		<i>Russland am Dec. 9. 1928.</i>		
<i>" Helena</i>	<i>2/8 - 1925</i>		<i>In Rezekne, Latvia, angekommen</i>		
<i>" Peter</i>	<i>15/9 - 1927</i>		<i>am ..... abgefahren</i>		
			<i>In Riga angekommen am</i>		
			<i>Dec. 31. 1928 abgefahren</i>		
			<i>am Jan 6. 1929</i>		
			<i>Dampfer Melita - Antar.</i>		
			<i>In ..... England</i>		
			<i>angekommen am</i>		
			<i>abgefahren am</i>		
			<i>In St. John, Canada</i>		
			<i>gelandet am Jan. 11. 1929</i>		
			<i>Erster Aufenthalt in Canada</i>		
			<i>Plum Coulee, Man.</i>		
Verzeichnis der zurueckgebliebenen Familienglieder.			Adresse.	Prov.	Datum.
Vor-, Vaters- und Familienname.	Wann geboren.	Wo geboren.	<i>% A Klassen</i>		

Immigration Pass.



1928 Passport Picture. Peter D. and Helena Klassen and their three oldest children: Katharina, Helen and Peter. Photo courtesy of Helene Friesen.

time with the Sawatzky family, until they purchased a 160 acre farm for \$1,200.00 three miles southeast of Grunthal in May of 1932. Financing was begun with the Intercontinental Co. in 1930 and after it went bankrupt, with The National Trust Co. out of Winnipeg. This farm did not have the six feet of topsoil that Steinfeld had. Instead, it consisted of sand held down by poplar trees, rocks and boulders. Here they built up the farm into a dairy and raised sheep as well.

Both the Reiseschuld, the debt to the CPR for their fare to Canada, and the mortgage were paid off by the growing family working together, hoeing sugar beets in the 40s and other kinds of work for wages. To make ends meet in the 30s, Peter raised and sold water-melons, peddling them door to door in Steinbach for 5 cents apiece. This also earned the family a nickname.

In the early 30s, Peter and Helena sought membership in the Grunthal Elim Mennonite Church. Their request was denied. At present there are at least three versions of why they were not accepted into membership; all three are such that today it is difficult to grasp the reasoning of the men who spoke up to reject them.

The Klassens had left behind them a home and family and lifestyle that had once been comfortable and satisfying. The Soviet regime implementing Stalin's ideals ended that world forever.

Most of their family they never saw again. All four of Helena's brothers and two brothers-in-law were taken at night by Soviet agents, jailed, and exiled to slave labour camps—three of them on the night of June 10-11, 1938, for some imagined crime or the crime of once having been moderately well-off. After WWII, her parents were among the thousands of Mennonites shipped east by train to Siberia, where they starved to death in their old age.

With very little money, a travel debt, and three children they arrived in Canada just in time for the Great Depression. They were without the traditional dependence on the Gemeinde as a meaningful source of community, faith and culture. Because all contact between them and their remaining relatives in their former home ceased during the Stalinist

purges, for years they had no contact with loved ones left behind. A younger daughter remembers her mother ironing letters from the USSR in the 40s: the heat made the words written in milk legible.

Their children walked to the Bergthaler

admonition coming from our grandmother has not failed to leave rich blessings in its wake for out of this one time...has emerged our present beautiful and prosperous community. We the present generations are the benefactors of all this."

Elisabeth Rempel Reimer represents a missing element in much of Mennonite migration history. The migration itself was more than an exercise of establishing a Privilegium of religious freedom and of choosing the choicest lands; it was the migration of extended families, including infants, the infirm and the elderly. The human bonds that made this intergenerational transplantation possible were those of both men and women. But Elisabeth Reimer also represents the tradition of female-authority exemplified by so many other Mennonite women migrants of the 1870s. She would shape the very nature of the migrant community by directing an entire extended family to chose one place as their residence over another. As other migrating Mennonite women, Elisabeth Reimer was one of the "Quiet in the Land", but that did not mean she was "Hidden in the Household."

#### NOTES:

1. Abram F. Reimer, (Borosenko, Ekaterinoslav, Russia and Blumenort, MB) "Tagebuch, 1870-1874, 1879-1889," boxes 10 & 14, Evangelical Mennonite Conference Archives.

2. See: Sydney Stahl Weinberg, "The Treatment of Women in Immigration History: A Call for Change," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11 (1992), pp. 25-46; Francis Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity: 1891-1991* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Ruth A. Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939* (Toronto: UTP, 1992).

3. For a fuller exploration of how being

Church, set up in the Spencer School in the 30s. Of their seven out of eight children who married, only the eldest daughter married a "Russlaenda", six married descendants of Mennonites who had immigrated in the 1870s.

Like most newcomers to Canada, the Klassens encountered numerous obstacles and difficulties in adjusting to a new life. They chose to centre on their close and caring friends and neighbours, and especially on their family that grew around them; eight children and 27 grandchildren, one son, one daughter, and one grandson died before they did.

Their strength and endurance, their intelligence and industriousness, their expressed care and quiet compassion, their warmth and generosity—all are a legacy their descendants have good reason to be proud of. My grandparents shall remain my guideposts.

**About the author:** Helene Sarah Friesen is presently completing her Master's Degree in history at the University of Manitoba.

## Immigrant Woman

*continued from page 7*

Mennonite made the lives of women unique see my article, "The Children, the Cows, and My Dear Man," and Nebraska, 1874-1900," *Canadian Women: A Reader*, eds., Wendy Mitchinson, et.al. (Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, Davonovitch, 1996).

4. For family histories and genealogical information see: John C. Reimer, ed, *Familienregister der Nachkommen von Klaas und Helena Reimer mit Biographien der ersten drei Generationen* (Winnipeg, MB, 1958).

5. See: Delbert F. Plett, "Bernhard Rempel Genealogy," unpublished paper, February 4, 1994, 22 pages.

6. Reimer, *Familienregister*, p. 19.

7. Kleine Gemeinde, Financial Account, 1847-1929, Evangelical Mennonite Conference Archives (Hereafter EMCA).

8. Klaas R. Reimer, "Memoirs, 1857-1890," trans. P.U. Dueck, EMCA, Box 10, courtesy P.J. Reimer, Steinbach, MB; Reimer, *Familienregister*, p. 217.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 287 and 288.

10. A. Reimer, "Tagebuch," 1870.

11. In a letter to Manitoba in December 1876 Sara Siemens Janzen enquired about her friend Elisabeth Reimer Penner. "Is she healthier than she was in Russia?" asked Janzen, "I often walked to her place [in Rosenfeld, Borosenko' but now I no longer hear anything [of her]." See: Sara Janzen to "Liebe Kinder" Johann Janzens, December 23, 1876, John K. Loewen Papers, C.J. Loewen, Giroux MB.

12. No doubt, her place at the side of her daughter-in-law Maria Plett was important on the voyage, for as a family history notes, Maria "was sickly and her six week old baby...died on board the boat and was buried in the ocean."

13. Reimer, "Tagebuch," June 22, 1879; April 3, 1879.

14. K.J.B. Reimer, ed., *Das 60 jaehrige Jubilaem der mennoniteschen Einwanderung in Manitoba, Canada* (Steinbach, MB, 1935), p. 26.

15. Reimer, *Familienregister*, p. 19.

# Emigration to Paraguay 1921-27

by Irene Enns Kroeker

*"With high respects and acknowledgements of your favours and peace for which we, who are leaving Canada to settle in Paraguay, have enjoyed nearly half a century, we feel genuinely obligated to give thanks to you, the government of this country and of Great Britain, for your goodness as expressed in granting us free homesteads and ample financial support in difficult times. In the name of all who have left the country and all who as yet will leave, we, who were the first of our people to settle in these prairie provinces, extend to you our sincere heartfelt thanks. . . . Our prayers shall ascend to the throne to God for you, including those who did not hesitate to violate the holy promise of 1873 in respect to the school question. . . . May the government have the insight to be more tolerant towards the schools of the Christian churches, and thus be a blessing for the entire world in promoting and sustaining Christianity." (July 7, 1931; correspondence in the Chortitzer Waisenamt, Steinbach Office).*

Talk within the Chortitzer villages about moving to Paraguay began with the concern about having their own schools disbanded. The new public schools dictated by the Manitoba Government placed a fear among the Mennonite people, namely, that the government would place restrictions into their school system that they were not prepared to accept: new English textbooks, less or no religious instruction, new teachers and a different teaching approach.

Scarcely 50 years earlier, the Mennonites had moved to Canada so that they would have the freedom to run their own schools. Now, the government had taken away this freedom.

To leave a country and establish a new community has never been easy for Mennonites. Great thought, agonizing discussions, and prayers were a part of their decision. As one group left for Mexico (mostly Old Colony and some Sommerfelder) in 1922 in order to escape the takeover of the schools, another group, the Chortitzer, started to make plans to go to Paraguay. Control of the schools was an important issue, not one to be taken lightly. Mennonite people were willing to leave their homes because of it.

The immigration to Paraguay in 1926 was a decision made by the Chortitzer Mennonite people as a whole. The leaders of the Church, listening to the concerns of the people acted as discussion leaders, counsellors and organizers during this time of decision. Some Mennonites however, felt that they could work with the government to come up with a solution and were willing to stay in Canada. Others decided they would begin anew.

It is not difficult to speculate what type of discussions were held around the Sunday afternoon "faspa" tables. Those that wanted to leave had only to ask their grandparents who had immigrated during the late 1870s what that meant, emotionally and physically. No doubt there were stories of adventure and excitement mixed with stories of death and horror.

Although they were upset over the school question, the people did not immediately pack up and take off. Much planning went into the decision. Most important however, the church was to fully support the movement by helping with the organization and the vast amount of

funds needed for such an undertaking.

The first correspondence that refers to the decision to leave that is in my possession is dated July, 1921. Further correspondence states that the first delegates arrived in Puerto Casada in 1921. The Fuersorge Komitee that was in place at this time and involved in these plans from the beginning was Martin C Friesen, Niverville, and Abraham A. Braun, Grunthal.

The plans were to take five years before the first group would leave. Finally, the time came to take surveys of how many were actually in favour. From the beginning, the Church leaders were involved. The Fuersorge Komitee was to take a survey of those that sincerely wished to leave. By June, 1926, an official Fuersorge Komitee was established, with signing rights, consisting of representatives from each of the Mennonite groups involved. These members were given the power to negotiate on behalf of their group. Appointed were:

1) Aelt. Martin C. Friesen, Niverville and Rev. Abraham A. Braun, Grunthal, representing the Chortitzer Congregation of the East Reserve;

2) Heinrich Unrau, Gretna, and Abraham J. Friesen, Altona representing the

Sommerfelder Congregation of the West Reserve; and

3) Peter Peters and Peter I. Dyck of Rosthern, Saskatchewan representing the Bergthaler Congregation of Saskatchewan.

Later, on November 23, 1926, an amendment to the original agreement added the names of Heinrich G. Klippenstein, Chortitz and Jacob Enns, Steinbach.

Throughout the five years of planning, the committee was to be very busy. Contracts were negotiated. The Intercontinental Company Ltd., headed by a lawyer in New York named Samuel McRoberts, sold the land of those who wanted to leave Canada, and helped with the purchase of the land they were to buy in Paraguay.

The original contract, dated June 23, 1926 contains 24 pages of terms and conditions requested by the Mennonites. Two amendments follow, adding further terms. Everything was to be sold. Land agreements show that personal property (including livestock, horses, sheep, poultry, machinery, tools, miscellaneous items and much more) was included in the purchase price.

Besides selling their land a banking system had to be set up. \$25,000 went with the immigrants through the Waisenamt. In addition, emigrants needed to ensure all business here was left in good order. A "Beschluss" (resolution) entered into the Waisenamt records on October 21, 1926 reads as follows:

1) Those that move have to repay all loans, and those that do not move and have co-signers that wish to move, should release those co-signers.

2) The congregation to give the permission for the ministerial to take care of any left over business in this area.

3) Those that are unable to meet the conditions of #1 should let the ministerial know, and together they will come up with a solution.



1927. Part of the emigration from Chortitz, Manitoba, to Paraguay. Emigrants in St. Pierre on the way to the Carey Train Station. Courtesy of D. F. Wiebe, Ste. Anne, Manitoba.

4) Add to the Waisen Rules: Upon the event of death then within six weeks give an account to the estate to the Waisenamt according to Rule #37 and 38.

5) The principal will bear interest at three per cent until withdrawal or disbursement of funds.

Notices were sent around in various communities. One document, dated November 1, 1926 signed by David A. Falk, Grunthal, reads:

“The public is herewith sent a list of names and addresses of those people that intend to move to Paraguay. The reason for this list is that each borrower should meet with his borrower or vice versa, and agree orally or in written form, how they intend to repay the money, that which is coming to him. Agreements can be made and should be made. If no agreement can be made then a request should be made in 30 days.”

Finally, all 1743 people from Manitoba and Saskatchewan were ready to leave. Ministers, Aeltesten, and leaders had been elected; money, baggage, passports and paperwork had been cleared with both governments. It was time to say goodbye.

Many people supported, encouraged, gave time, effort and money to help their neighbours and family members move to yet another country and to establish yet another colony. I am encouraged, as I delve into these documents and unravel the Canadian aspect of the immigration of the 1920s, by the willingness of my fellow Mennonites to “freely give of themselves, in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit”.

Would that we, too, continue this tradition of giving freely to help realize each other's dreams.

\* All information taken from documents held in the Chortitzer Mennonite Church Waisenamt Archives as well as the Jacob Enns collection (unpublished).



1927. Mennonite emigrants embarking on the train at Carey (St. Pierre), Manitoba. Courtesy of Justina (David C.) Friesen, Steinbach, Manitoba.



1927, Carey Train Station. Photo courtesy of D. F. Wiebe, Ste. Anne, Manitoba.

### Chart of Immigration Groups Leaving for Paraguay

Immigration Group	Departure Date	Place of Origin			No. of Families	Single People	Total
		East Reserve	West Reserve	Other			
One	Nov. 23, 1926	196	113		32		
Two	Dec. 1 and 20		Rosthern	215			
Three	Jan. 26, 1927	80		31	15		
Four	April 13, 1927	330	5		50	8	
Five	August 23, 1927	114	222		16	1	
Six		99	1		18	1	
Seven		337					1743

Chart compiled by Irene Enns Kroeker.

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# Bishop Martin C. Friesen 1889-1968

By Katherine Friesen Wiebe,  
R.R. 1, Ste. Anne, Manitoba,  
niece of Martin C. Friesen.

Martin Cornelius Friesen was born on October 6, 1889, the fifth of twelve brothers and sisters, the son of the well-known Waisenvorsteher Cornelius T. Friesen. He was born on the parental farm about five miles east of Niverville in the small Mennonite village of Osterwick.

As a young boy Martin C. Friesen attended the village school which was one of the German private schools run by the Chortitzer Gemeinde. Later he expanded his own knowledge with intensive self-study. He especially immersed himself in the study of theology.

Martin's job as a growing boy was to help on the family farm, for his father had a rather large farm of land and cattle. With many chores that needed to be done, the boys were certainly needed at the time.

He was baptised by Elder Peter Toews and became a member of the Chortitzer Mennonite Gemeinde (Church) on June 1, 1909.

On July 18, 1911, Martin was united in marriage to his step-sister Elisabeth Wiebe, daughter of Heinrich D. Wiebe of Chortitz and granddaughter of the former Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900). According to his father's journal, they lived on his yard for a while. Soon they moved on to their own place in the village of Osterwick, SW 25-7-4E. Later they moved to their own homestead a little north of the village which was not within walking distance, for they always drove with horse and buggy or sleigh after their move.

They raised nine children—five girls and four boys of which one son and one daughter died in infancy.

On July 15, 1924 Martin C. Friesen was elected as a minister of the Chortitzer Gemeinde. Several other ministers and deacons were elected at the same meeting. On October 8, 1925, an election for Bishop or Aeltester was held in the worship house in the village of Chortitz. All the ministers and deacons were candidates to replace Aeltester Johann Dueck. Grandpa Cornelius T. Friesen has recorded in his diary that the votes were cast as follows: Rev. Heinrich Doerksen 9, Rev. Johann Schroeder 3, Rev. Johann Sawatzky 32, Rev. Abe E. Giesbrecht 16, Rev. Abram A. Braun 38 and Martin C. Friesen 147.

Grandpa Cornelius T. Friesen writes in his diary on December 8, 1925, that the worship house in Chortitz was filled to overflowing when Elder Heinrich J. Friesen and Rev. Peter W. Dueck came from Altona, West Reserve, to ordain Rev. Martin C. Friesen as Bishop of the Chortitzer Gemeinde. Martin served the denomination in this capacity until they emigrated to South America in 1927.

[Editor's note: In 1916 the Manitoba Government broke the guarantee which had



*Martin C. Friesen and family taken at a farewell family gathering on August 23, 1927, the last day in Canada. l. to r.: Liez or Elisabeth, daughter of Martin C. Friesen; the two young girls in front are Katherina and Maria, daughters of M.C.F.; lady at the rear second from left is unknown; Anna C. Friesen, Mrs. Heinrich Schulz, sister to Martin; Mrs. Heinrich F. Toews, nee Katherina C. Friesen, sister to Martin; Mrs. Martin C. Friesen, nee Elisabeth Wiebe; Martin C. Friesen, holding daughter Gertrude; the face of Peter C. Friesen, brother to Martin, can be seen between the two; Heinrich F. Toews, brother-in-law to Martin, at the far right; the four people at the right hand side of picture are unidentified. Photo and identification of individuals, courtesy of Katherine Friesen Wiebe.*

been given to the Mennonites in 1873 and took control of education and abolished the church private schools. The result was that Aeltester Friesen and a large group of followers eventually decided to emigrate to South America.]

When reading Grandpa's diary, the first Brotherhood meeting with regards to the emigration to Mexico and Paraguay took place May 21, 1922. From then on many meetings were held in all congregations of the Chortitzer Gemeinde.

On December 3, 1924, a Brotherhood meeting was held at Chortitz with respect to a proposal to emigrate to Paraguay. The main speaker was Elder Aaron Zacharias from Rosthern, Saskatchewan. The next meeting was held December 4 in Grunthal, and on December 8 in Gnadefeld, but nothing definite was decided.

On February 22, 1926, Bishop Martin C. Friesen, Rev. Johann Schroeder and Rev. Abe E. Giesbrecht went to Rosthern, Saskatchewan, to discuss the move to South America. They were having these meetings to see how many were willing to leave and to emigrate to Paraguay. They had taken the train going there, so going back they took the train again to Herbert and stayed there with relatives for a few days and then got back to Niverville by train in a few hours. Trains were popular in those days, especially in winter.

On March 9, 1926, Bishop Martin C. Friesen together with other ministers and deacons went to Winnipeg to work out the land deal they had in South America.

The next date skips over to March 16,

1927, when Martin C. Friesen went to Winnipeg, also March 17, and again March 30, in regards to the emigration. Meetings were again held in different areas to see if all were listed who wanted to move to South America and had been convinced that all was in good order.

It seems that excitement was running high by this time for by now time was running out. Lots of gatherings are mentioned and on April 7, 1927 Grandpa writes that he lent his team of horses and democrat buggy to his son Martin C. Friesen, Ab E. Braun and David A. Falk to make another trip to Winnipeg to look after some more papers and signatures.

On April 10 a farewell service was held by Martin C. Friesen in the private school in the village of Osterwick. The roads at that time were in a deplorable condition but in spite of that some 130 to 140 people attended.

Another farewell was held on April 12, 1927, in Niverville. Grandpa Cornelius T. Friesen writes in his diary that it took them two hours to get there. They had two pairs of horses pulling one big wagon with light freight and had to stop to clean out the wheels as it was very muddy and the wheels would not turn any more.

Although the first four groups had left for Paraguay already, Bishop Martin C. Friesen and his group (which was the fifth and the last of this trek) left August 23, 1927 from the train station at Carey, Manitoba in good spirits.

Cornelius T. Friesen describes this last trip with his son Martin, children and grandchildren, and relatives as follows: "We were a

nine car motorcade accompanying them to the Carey station. When we got there a crowd of people were already busy bustling about with children, baggage and 'auf wiedersehns' ". Many farewell tears were shed that day with all the good-byes until the train slowly started to move down the track and sped on to St. Paul, Minnesota which was their first stop on August 24.

They got to Chicago August 26 in the morning and in New York harbour August 27 in the morning. The day was spent loading and boarding and by evening they left for Puerto Casado, Paraguay, September 23, 1927.

Even though Martin C. Friesen had worked hard in leading the emigration to Paraguay, the workload was not getting easier. There also were duties to perform for the month they were on the ship. There were worship services to organize and all the other pastoral duties incumbent upon the Bishop. In the September 4, 1992 issue of the *Mennonitische Post*, Peter M. Hiebert, Paraguay, writes that Elder Martin C. Friesen preached on a text from Jeremiah 51 while enroute to South America.

While in Puerto Casado (where they had to stay much longer than they had intended) diseases broke out and a lot of people got sick and died. This also meant there were many funerals to officiate. Life and death went on always leaving duties to fulfil for a servant of God.

In the 41 years that Bishop Martin C. Friesen lived in Paraguay, he and his brother Peter C. Friesen (who was my Dad) always had an open line of correspondence which they continued until Martin's passing. Dad always tried to help his brother Martin when it came to certain issues. The letters came steadily. Meanwhile Dad had my sister and myself corresponding with Martin's children, Martin, Katherine and Gertrude, which we still do with much enjoyment.

Elder Martin C. Friesen was relieved from all life's worries, struggles and strife when he passed away in his sleep April 7, 1968, in Paraguay. At his graveside they sang the song "Eilet hin denn die zeit unserer leben ver geht".

by Katherine Friesen  
Wiebe

## Coming in the June Issue, 1996

*In 1916 the Manitoba Government abolished and outlawed the Christian school system which had been operating in Hanover since 1874 and fined and jailed parents who continued to send their children to their village schools. Find out why in our feature story on Education.*

# Martin C. Friesen in Paraguay

By son Martin W. Friesen,  
Menno Colony, Paraguay

Upon arrival in Paraguay the settlers established the Menno Colony and a new Chortitzer Mennonite Gemeinde in the Chaco of Paraguay. This settlement soon became known as the "Menno Colony".

The Government of Paraguay guaranteed them extensive freedoms in the areas of farming, church and school developments. Churches and schools were again established according to the old ways. Aeltester Friesen soon recognized that these institutions were suffering severely as they were too restricted by tradition. He worked hard for renewal which however progressed very slowly but which did not come to a standstill either.

A small group encouraged him in this endeavour. It was no small matter; rather a serious undertaking. But Aeltester Friesen was the right man for the right job at the right place and time. He challenged church and school to move beyond the practices and traditions of their ancestors and directed them towards spiritual renewal.

Originally the large majority of his parishioners were against this. Although an attempt was made at splitting the Gemeinde this was not successful and slowly but surely the impact of the new efforts widened and worked for the blessings of peace and unity.

In 1965 Aeltester Friesen resigned from his office but continued to serve as a minister. His successor as Aeltester was Jakob T. Dueck of Blumengart.

Martin C. Friesen died on April 7, 1968. He was sick for a month but was not bedridden. Shortly before his death, he had expressed the wish to receive holy communion once more together with the entire Gemeinde.

April 7th fell on a Sunday. A communion service was held in the forenoon where many were assembled. At the close of the service he



*Martin C. Friesen, photo taken on March 21, 1968. This photo is taken in the exact location where Martin C. Friesen together with his family arrived in Paraguay on April 28, 1928. (It was a Saturday.) He lived on this same place for 40 years. Photo by Katherine Wiebe, Ste. Anne, Manitoba.*



*Martin C. Friesen and Rev. Abram Wiebe plowing with oxen. Photo courtesy of Justina Friesen, Mrs. David C. Friesen.*

stood up and told the congregation that he had the expectation that the Lord would call him home very shortly. He also spoke some very earnest words of farewell.

After the communion service was finished, Martin C. Friesen went to the hospital in Loma Plata where his wife Elisabeth lay in her sickbed. The personnel at the hospital gave him a bed close to his wife, so he could have a rest. After he had laid down he fell asleep, for eternity.

by son Martin W. Friesen

**Editor's Note:** The Menno Colony which Martin C. Friesen was responsible for founding is now a blooming settlement of 7,000 people, a model of economic prosperity for Paraguay and all of South America. It has also

been the mother colony to numerous other thriving settlements in Bolivia and elsewhere.

Martin C. Friesen was the grandfather to Martin F. Fehr, owner of Fehr Sheet Metal Ltd, Steinbach, and the uncle of Peter H. Friesen, founder of Eastman Feeds of Steinbach, Manitoba.

**References:**

Peter M. Hiebert, letter to the Mennonitische Post, September 4, 1992.

Martin W. Friesen, *Neue Heimat in der Chaco Wildnis* (Altona, Manitoba 1986), 502 pages.

Martin W. Friesen, *Kanadische mennoniten bezwingen eine wildnis: 50 Jahre Kolonie Menno - erste Mennonitische Ansiedlung in Suedamerika* (Asuncion, Paraguay, 1977), 173 pages.



*Caption written on reverse of picture by Martin C. Friesen reads: To David Friesens. You write in your letter that we should come to visit you. We are so willing and also comply at once. [In the picture] The largest [building] is our dwelling house, the other the summer kitchen, and the chicken barn in the background. Also you can see a number of orange trees and rows of beans. Taken in January. Photo courtesy of Justina Friesen.*



*Chaco watermelon feast, c. 1930. Sister-in-law Helena, sister-in-law Elisabeth, Mrs. Joh. Neufeld, and my wife, Maria. Photo by Jacob P. Wiebe, son of Dietrich D. Wiebe. See Preservings, No.6, pp. 12-14. Colony Menno Paraguay. Photo courtesy of D. F. Wiebe, Ste. Anne.*

# The Coming of the Russländer

by Helen R. Unger,  
Abbotsford, B.C.

In 1923 many Russländer Mennonites fled the Soviet Union. John Steingart my uncle described their experiences in coming to Canada and on to Chortitz. Before they could emigrate from Russia they had to wait in Moscow for two weeks. After the two weeks they would leave on their first lap to England which took them three days, and another six days on an oceanliner to Quebec. From there they boarded the train, which took them another two days till they reached Winnipeg.

From the time they left Russia on the 27th of April in 1926, they arrived at their destination in Manitoba at the end of May. They had been only allowed to take 500 rubles along, which was the equivalent of \$250.00 in Canadian money.

When we first got acquainted with our new immigrants we noticed that their main spoken language was High German but could also speak the Low German. The younger ladies felt fortunate to be able to work in Winnipeg and learned to speak English at work. Anna Thiessen had organized a home for the young ladies and called it the Mary Martha Home. Often the parents would arrange with their daughters to meet in the famous Eatons waiting room and have coffee together, on their days off.

There are still a few older women left that rather prefer to speak in the High German language as they can't speak English too well yet. The men apparently learned to speak English at their jobs etc.

In those days there were few jobs available for these immigrants to get back on their feet again, after leaving their life savings behind. They had also promised the Canadian government that they would work on farms in the first year of their arrival.

I was only above five to six years old during the time the first immigrants came in 1924. I remember when my aunt and uncle the Henry Penners came to our house to bid their last farewell before leaving for South America. I also remember my grandfather's nephew, Dietrich Wiebe's son Peter got a job painting my parents' house just before moving to South America. As my older brother age 7 chatted and watched him paint, Peter being about the age of 15, said to him, "You are too young to talk to me". After they had lived in South America for four years, we heard the shocking new that Peter had drowned in the river. It is believed that an alligator devoured him.

I can also remember a little about when the Mennonite immigrants had arrived in our village. Some of these families had gathered in the former Dietrich D. Wiebe's house. My parents and myself were there too. The ladies were all so

happy chuckling and laughing, but I did not understand what it was all about as I was too young yet. My parents were getting very involved with getting to know all the new neighbours.

Our little village of Chortitz was quite lively and going strong. We had a full fledged orchestra going during the nineteen thirties etc. The musicians were as follows: Katie Wiebe Bergmann, Yash Wiebe, Justina Wiebe Bergmann, Susie Hiebert, Marieche Wiebe Rempel, Bernhard Rempel, Anna Rempel Heinrichs, Nick Wiebe, Hans Wiebe, Frank Rempel, Nettie Rempel Hiebert and Dave G. Hiebert.

This group of musicians were often being invited far and wide, to perform at weddings and other occasions as well as serving at home. Only David and Nettie G. Hiebert are still living from this group. P. S.- "Mind you, Chortitz was far from being a dead one horse town" in those years.

My uncle Cornelius Rempel soon found a fair maiden named Marieche, daughter of the Anton Wiebes, that had also newly arrived. Mr. Rempel owned a threshing machine and did all the threshing for the farmers in the Chortitz area. One of our new neighbours were the Rev. & Mrs. Wilhelm Peters, their two sons Herbert and Henry and their daughter Lena and her husband Abram Neustaedter with their two little sons. Abram Neustadter later moved on to Steinbach where he took over delivering the mail to Chortitz, Kleefeld and Hochstadt for two years. At that time this was done with a horse drawn sleigh in winter and with a Model T. in summer. Then he got a job as a printer at Derksen Printers and worked there until he retired.

When the Rev. Wilhelm Peters and family had moved to Chortitz [in 1934] their son Henry started work for Henry F. Wiebe's General Store, delivering the groceries to the store from the truck that was waiting for them to unload on the highway in wintertime.

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Steingart moved onto the farm which the Dietrich D. Wiebes had vacated and moved to South America. They only lived there for two years and then moved to B. C.

Next Abram Dirks and family moved onto that farm. Their children were Abe, the oldest, then Mary, next Erna, and then Nick. While living in Chortitz their girls, Laura and Vera were born. Some years later they moved to Sardis, B. C. Mr. Dirks had passed away at the age of sixty-five, while Mrs. Dirks lived to the age of ninety-one. Also Abe and Mary the oldest two have died some years ago, and Nick just passed away last December 1995.

David with his wife Eva Grave are still living in the Randolph district and is quite a busy farmer. Eva has retired from being a school teacher for a number of years now. Dave moved here from Russia along with the family also in the early twenties. They are always busy with entertaining people, like family, friends, and loved ones. Some of his past close friends were my brothers. Whenever my father would give my six brothers a hair cut, he would include David too, in our homestyle barbershop.

One and a half miles north of Chortitz lived the widow Mrs. Toews and her family including



*About the author: Helen R. Unger, nee Wiebe, is retired and lives in Abbotsford, B. C. She is the great-granddaughter of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900).*

her brother, Uncle Yash, filling in the vacancy of their father who had died in Russia. Her children were Jake, Liese, Lena, Marieche, Peter and Agnes (Mrs. Frank Unger) who lived in Ontario and have both passed away. Mrs. Toews and son Jake and Marieche have all passed away too. The rest of the family had moved onto the Wilhelm Reimer farm one mile south of Chortitz.

Mr. & Mrs. John Steingart also lived in our village. He was a truck driver for his brother-in-law Henry Wiebe's General Store. They had a small young family at that time, and later on moved to Niverville, where they still are living. He was a railway foreman after working on the railway for many years, and after that he took over office work for the railway company.

Another immigrant family were the Frank Ungers with their two sons Frank and Cornie and daughter Agatha, now Mrs. Poetker. The Ungers and sons Frank have passed away. Cornie lived in Chilliwack.

The Abram Wiens family lived on a farm two miles from the Chortitz school. Their children were Agnes, Henry, Annie, Johnny and Earnest. We used to walk to school together. The Wiens family moved to Yarrow, B. C. in 1942 where he took over managing the M. C. C. store. Later they retired in Abbotsford.

Mr. Wiens and their oldest sons Ernest have all passed away and Mrs. Wiens passed away one year ago at the age of 97. Agnes the oldest got married to John Thiessen and Annie (Mrs. Peter Jansen) live in Abbotsford. Agnes and Annie both were nurses but now are retired.

Annie says what she remembered most about Chortitz were the red Hieberts and the white Hieberts. They were both John Hieberts and their wives were sisters, and they lived across

the road from each other. One had a house and barn built together which was painted red and the other Hieberts had a white house. Annie says they sometimes have gone back to Chortitz to see the old Randolph schoolhouse and later the new school. Their brother Johnny is a teacher and lives in Ashcroft, B. C.

Mr. & Mrs. Cornelius Rempel settled on the farm where the Jacob D. Wiebes used to live before moving to Niverville. Mr. & Mrs. Rempel both have passed away, but their four sons Cornie, Toni, Werner and John are all living in the Randolph area. Cornie the oldest is carrying on with farming and making great headways.

Rev. & Mrs. David Fast moved on the farm where the Abram Dirks had lived. Their children were Arthur, Heidi, Irene, Victor, Peter, Erna, Helen and Betty. Arthur and Victor both became pastors. Arthur and Heidi have both since passed away. Mrs. Fast is living in Winnipeg and still in her own house at 91 years of age.

Half a mile south of Chortitz on the original Peter Funks farm the Gerhard Baergs made their home. Their children were John, Gerhard, a Mrs. Martens and Mrs. Esau. Gerhard later moved with his parents to Steinbach to retire. His father soon passed away. Later on his mother had to go into the Steinbach Nursing Home where she passed away.

Gerhard Baerg who was our Sunday school teacher for some years didn't own a car because of his partial blindness. He always walked up to two miles to visit his class pupils in their homes. We kids all know he would never come empty-handed. He always had some goodies along for us, or even paska his mother had baked. Mr. Gerhard Baerg eventually as a diabetic became totally blind so he had to go into the Steinbach Nursing Home. One day before lying down for his afternoon nap, he says to his roommate, "Today I'm going home". After his friend woke from his nap, he noticed Mr. Berg had really gone to his heavenly Home to be with his Lord forever.

The John Krauses and family, Mary, Lena, Katie, John and Henry, lived on the former Peter's farm who had also moved to South America in 1924. Some of their children now live in Ontario and Katie lives in New Westminster, B. C. Mrs. Krauses' parents, the Henry Neufelds and her blind sister Lena, lived in their upstairs suite. In those days there were no pensions for the elderly and the blind, so my parents helped them giving them meat and farm products. Mrs. Krause who had been sick and hospitalized for about for two years in the Sanatorium hospital died, and about after two weeks later her mother also died. Mr. Krause later remarried and moved to Steinbach with his family. Later on his second wife died and he remarried for the third time and moved to Clearbrook. They lived very happily together to the end.

Another new family who settled on the farm one mile south of the Randolph school were Mr. and Mrs. William Reimer and their two children Helen and Henry. In years later Helen got married to Herman Loewen after the whole Reimer family had moved to Yarrow, B. C. where the Reimers took ownership of a fruit farm.

# Lawyer advises Chortitzer 1948

by D. Plett, Q.C.

Bernard Dubiński, who was of Polish descent, came to Winnipeg from Austria-Hungary in 1913. He attended Law School and graduated in 1917. He immediately became known as the only lawyer in Winnipeg fluent in Ukrainian, Russian, German, English and Polish.

Dubiński became known to the Mennonites when he acted for Conscientious Objectors during World War One. Over the years he had many friends and clients in Steinbach and Chortitz, including John D. Goossen, an insurance broker and Notary Public who acted as a conveyancer and estate

lawyer. When Goossen had problem files he could not handle he would refer them to his friend Dubiński.

In 1948 the Chortitzer Mennonites from the East Reserve as well as others, some 3000 in total, retained Dubiński to act for them regarding their emigration to Paraguay. He assisted all the emigrants in obtaining their passports and negotiated for the lease of a steamship, etc.

By this time Dubiński was fluent in Spanish and had become Paraguay's Honourary Counsel for Canada. This made him the perfect person to accompany his clients on their journey to Paraguay, acting as a negotiator, facilitator, and mediator.

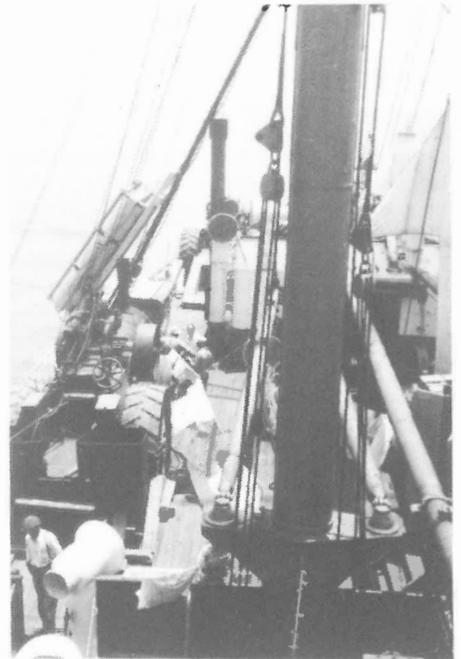
The Chortitzer group travelled by train from Niverville to Quebec City. Bernard Dubiński arrived in Quebec City on June 23, 1948. In Quebec all their goods including two huge steam tractors were loaded onto the S.S. Volendam and steamed for Buenos Aires. Here they transferred to a smaller ship, the S. S. Berna, a side paddle river steamer, and continued up the La Plata River.

The Mennonites docked and landed in Asunción and prepared themselves to settle on their land in southeastern Paraguay where they established two colonies, Sommerfeld and Bergthal.

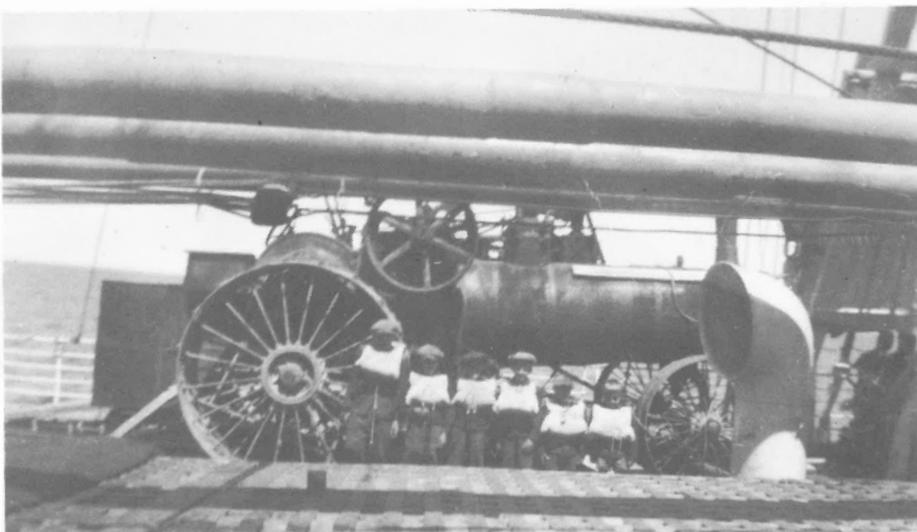
Bernard Dubiński was also a photograph-



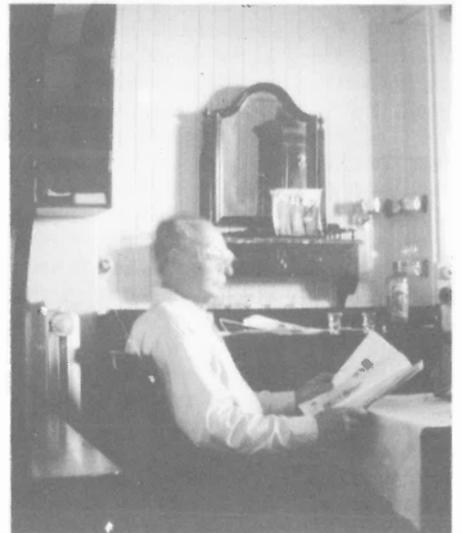
*H.H. Hildebrand casts one more look upon Quebec City, perhaps never to see it again. [Editor's note: According to the research of Irene Enns Kroeker, Heinrich Hildebrand was the Waisenvorsteher of the Chortitzer Gemeinde and a new "Vorsteher" was elected to replace him when he emigrated to Paraguay.]*



*The Chortitzers loaded two large steam tractors on the S. S. Volemdam at Wolfe's Cove, Quebec City.*



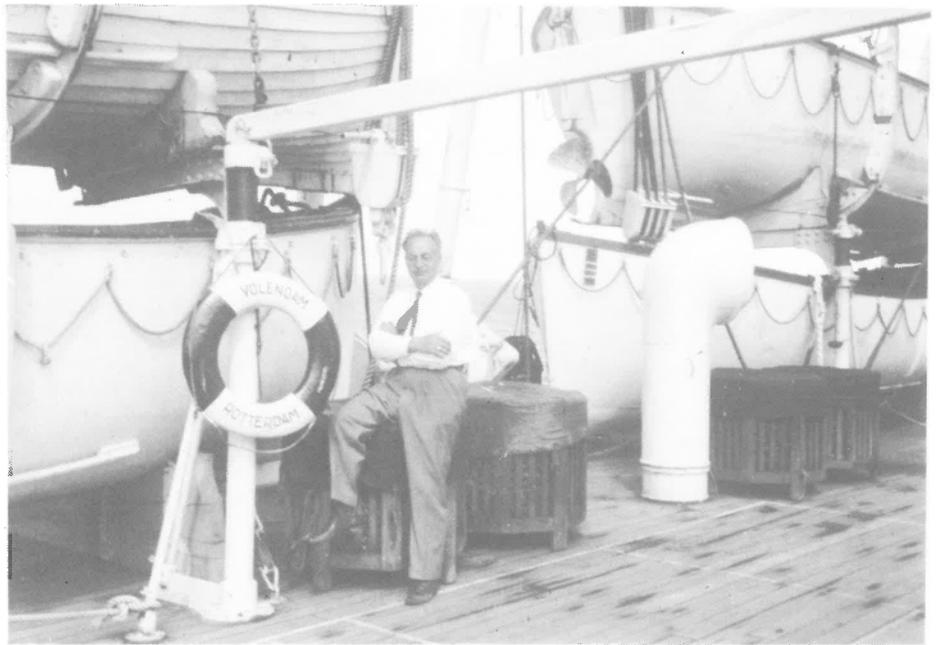
*Boat drill. July 6, 1948. Isaac W. Hildebrand's children gather for boat drill under one of the steam tractors on board ship.*



*Bernard Dubiński in his sitting room adjoining his cabin. July 8, 1948.*

er and his photo album of this famous journey provides an interesting view of the emigration. He died in 1981 at the age of 90.

I acknowledge with thanks The Honourable Judge Ian Dubiensi of Winnipeg (son of Bernard) for providing the information for this article and his father's photo album of the trip. Please note that the photo captions are as labelled in Mr. Dubiensi's "Photo album".



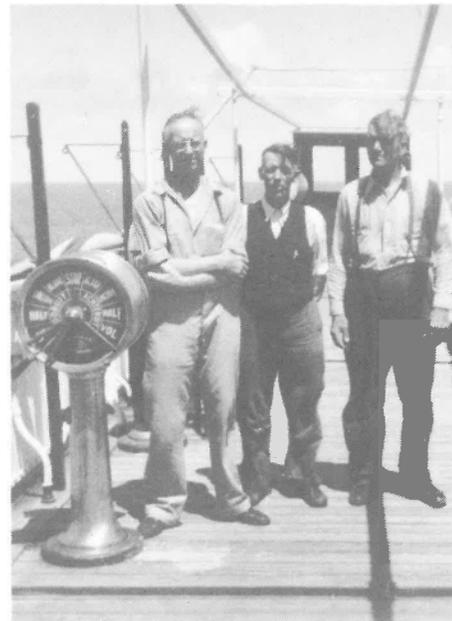
*Bernard Dubiensi posing in front of the life boats.*



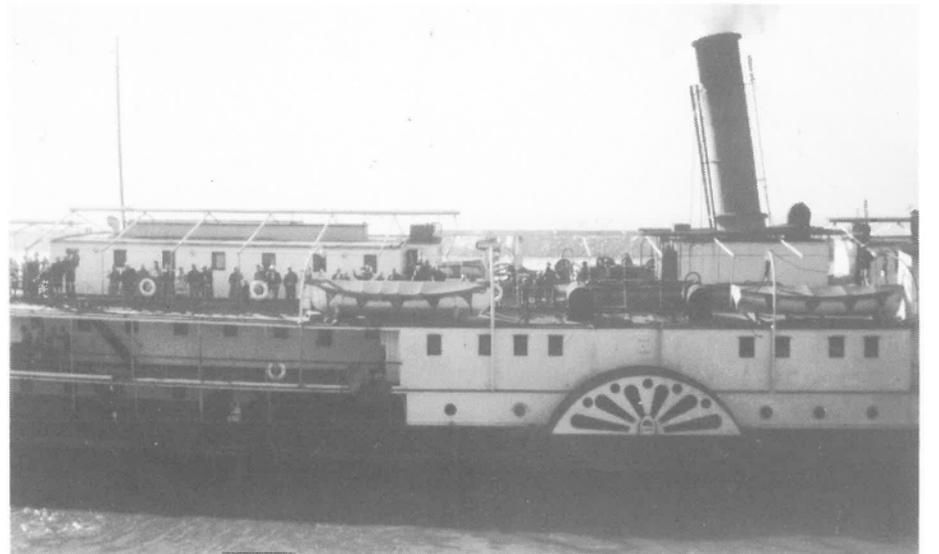
*H. H. Hildebrand taking leave from Captain Kleyn.*



*Group of young Mennonites on daily inspection tour of the ship under the guidance of a junior officer.*



*l. to r.: Peter F. Heppner, D. K. Hildebrand and F. F. Enns, on the Captain's Bridge.*



*Up the Paraguayan River to Asuncion City on the S. S. Berna.*

# News and Announcements

## Board of Directors Nominees:

The Directors met for their fall board meeting on October 26, 1995. The following were nominated to join the Board: Lois Loeppky, Randy Kehler and Cornie Martens.



**Lois Loeppky** is a librarian at the Steinbach Bible College. She has a long standing interest in history and was actively involved in the Loeppky gathering last summer. Lois is the daughter of Velda Richert Doerksen of Goessel, Kansas, who translated and compiled the Alexanderwohl Gemeinde Buch.



**Cornie Martens** is a retired school teacher and a past member of our board. He is active as a minister of the Chortitzer Church. He is hoping that his retirement will allow him more time to write.

**Randy Kehler** is a merchandising contractor who hails from Blumengart. He is very

interested in the pioneer period of the East Reserve (1874-1910) and has recently completed a Kehler family book. One of his articles is published in this issue of the Newsletter.

The Board made the following recommendations for the Executive for the forthcoming year: Orlando Hiebert - President, Doris Penner - Vice-President, Irene Kroeker - Secretary, and Delbert Plett - Treasurer. The above nominations and such other nominations as may be made from the floor will be decided at the business meeting of our Society to be held at 7:00 Friday January 26, 1996.

The HSHS is always looking for more people who are interested in the history and culture of our community and who might wish to get involved in preserving the same. If you are interested in becoming involved with any of our activities please contact any member of our Board.

## Volume Four.

The board also decided that it would be best if Research Director John Dyck would devote as much of his time as he has available to do the editing work on Volume Four of the East Reserve Historical Series. The Village Research project will continue but under the guidance of volunteers from the Board members yet to be designated.

## Annual Meeting Friday January 26, 1996

At its meeting of October 26, 1995, the Board of Directors of the HSHS set the date for our Annual Meeting for Friday January 26, 1996 at the Steinbach Bible College, Steinbach, Manitoba (see advertisement elsewhere in this newsletter). The business meeting is to start at 7:00 p.m. and the program at 7:30. The program will consist of three papers on the theme of emigration using biography as a focus: Dr. Royden K. Loewen will present a biography of pioneer matriarch Elisabeth Rempel Reimer (1814-1893); Dr. Roy Vogt's paper on the Vogt family who immigrated to Steinbach, will be presented by John E. Neufeld; Irene Enns-Kroeker, president of the HSHS, will do a paper on the Choritzer emigration to Paraguay of 1921 - 1927, using the journals of her grandfather Jacob Enns of Blumengart.

The entertainment portion of the evening will start at 9:00 and will feature readings by Armin Wiebe, author of the novel *The Salvation of Jasch Siemens*, a classic and premier work of southern Manitoba literature and culture. Everyone is invited to attend. Admission \$2.00.

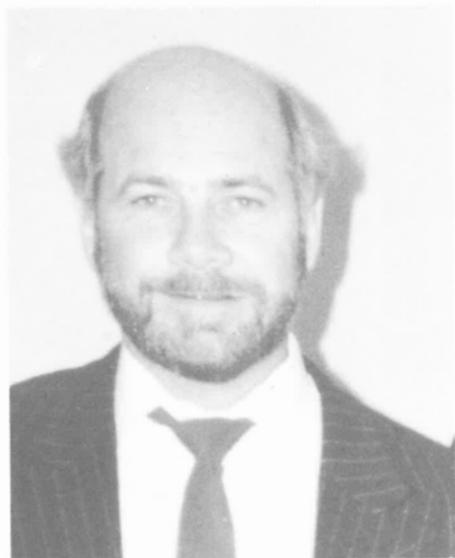
## Newsletter:

The Board also approved "Education" as the topic for the feature section of the June 1996 issue of *Preservings*. We already have at least one article in hand. If you have a biogra-

phy of a pioneer teacher or information related to school life, either of the private church school system established in 1874 or the public schools established during the 1920s, please contact the editor.

The readers are reminded that the topic for the December 1996 issue is Steinbach. We are still looking for more material.

## Member Profile:



We are pleased to introduce **Eldon Unger** of Sardis, British Columbia, who joined the HSHS early in 1995. Eldon is a son of John Unger of Blumenort, Manitoba who started his career in furniture sales by working at "Plett & Co.", and later for L. A. Barkman in Steinbach. The family moved to B. C. in the early '60s where they operated a furniture store.

Eldon went into the land development business and presently has a number of active subdivisions under way in the Abbotsford area. He is the son of Helen R. Wiebe Unger, who wrote a biography of her grandfather Jakob D. Wiebe which was published in the June 1995 issue.

Eldon is interested in his roots in Manitoba and back to Russia and Prussia. He joined our society as a way of keeping up with developments in that field.

## Letters to the Editor:

From time to time we receive correspondence from our readers and members. The following is an extract from a letter received from Professor Harry Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Ave., Manitoba, R3B 2E9.

September 29, 1995

"I read your fine article on Gerhard Wiebe in *Preservings* (June 1995) with great satisfaction. The article is interesting, informative and most worthwhile. It is ironic and sad that the recognition that this sincere man and leader should have received in his life-time is so late

in coming. But then this is perhaps as it should be, given the fact that Wiebe did not seek praise from men and would have been highly embarrassed had he been honoured by his contemporaries. . . .

Sincerely yours  
Harry Loewen

Editor's note. Although Dr. Harry Loewen's family was not part of the 1870s emigration, he has strong East Reserve ties since he has a number of Kleine Gemeinde ancestors. In fact, he is related to our Board Member, Dr. Royden Loewen.

### Olga Shmakina Visits

On November 26, 1995, 30 invited guests attended a private reception held at the Mennonite Village Museum in honour of Olga Shmakina, a tour guide with Intourist in Zaporizhyya, Ukraine. Olga was also given a private tour of the Main Gallery Exhibit by Museum director Frank Froese.

Olga was born in Zaporizhyya, the daughter of Alexei Vassilyev. Her parents were actually living in the far east at the time where her father was a bomber pilot. Her mother Ada Katlyav was Jewish and her family had come to Zaporizhyya from the western Ukraine during the 1930s.

Olga attended university in Zaporizhyya finishing Teacher's Training College in 1972. She taught for two years in a Bulgarian village just north of the Sea of Azov.

In 1976 she started working for Intourist, now known as Ukrainatours. She guided many tours to western Europe as well as to places like India, Turkey and the Mediterranean, as well as in Russia.

By 1976 Mennonites were starting to come to Zaporizhyya in search of their roots and Olga quickly became an expert on their culture and, particularly, their villages and architecture.

Hundreds of Mennonites have come to appreciate Olga for her knowledge about the Mennonites who once lived in the region. Her genuine interest in people and her willingness to go the extra mile to help people find their ancestral villages has endeared Olga to many.

We are indebted to John Schroeder and Assiniboine Travel for bringing Olga to Winnipeg thus giving many of her old friends a chance to see her again. On Sunday November 26, 1995, my wife Doreen and myself took Olga to attend the Holdeman worship service at Whitemouth, Manitoba, where she visited friends Harold and Bertha Giesbrecht and Jonas Toews who had met her on their tour to the Ukraine in April 1995.

On Monday November 27, 1995, Orlando Hiebert and myself took Olga to visit Ben Maendel and Jonathan and Pauline Maendel at the Baker Hutterite Colony near McGregor. Olga was delighted to see a commune in operation, an idea which has not always worked very well in the Soviet system.

Olga flew to Toronto on December 4, 1995, to visit friends for a few days before returning to her home in Zaporizhyya.



Irene Kroeker, HSHS President; D. Plett; Olga Shmakina; and P.K. Reimer visit at the Sunday night reception at the Museum. Photo by Frank Froese.



Visiting at the Sunday night reception. Photo courtesy of Frank Froese.



November 27, 1995, Pauline Maendel, Olga Shmakina, Rev. Ben Maendel and teacher Jonathan Maendel inspect the 60,000 square foot state-of-the-art factory just completed by the Hutterian Brethren at the Baker Colony. Photo by Orlando Hiebert, Tourond.

# Loeppky Reunion

by Lydia Falk

Approximately 500-600 people attended the "Dit Sied - Yant Sied Lepki, Leppky, Loeppky Reunion" July 14-16, 1995. For the first time in 120 years, the descendants of Johann and Susanna Lepki gathered for a reunion.

The Lepkis arrived at the junction of the Rat and Red Rivers in 1875 with nine children. Their oldest daughter Helena had come to Canada with her husband Franz Kehler one year earlier. Their youngest son Heinrich was born in Canada but passed away at the age of 1 1/2 years.

The Lepkis and their ten children were among the Mennonite settlers in the village of Strassberg. Land was assigned to all the immigrants that had arrived. It was at this time that Johann moved his family out of the village and homesteaded on SW 6-7-4E which is presently farmed by Johann's great-great-grandson, Jim Loeppky.

Gradually their children established homesteads along the former 318 Road as well. Two adventurous sons Jakob and Dietrich moved to Yant Sied river and established

farms near Emerson. One sister Eva married and moved to Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Another sister married and moved to Altona, Manitoba.

Two and a half years ago Bernie Loeppky from Winkler and Susie Leppky of Niverville started talking about a reunion. A committee was formed consisting of approximately 24 members. They spent 1 1/2 years organizing the event which was held at Providence College, Otterburne. This was an ideal location because the Lepki homestead located was only 2 1/2 miles north.

The committee prepared and distributed newsletters and invitations. They also lined the walls of the college gym with genealogy charts and planned programs and meals.

Registrations for the reunion started before supper on Friday July 12th. Friday evening was left open for visiting and studying genealogy. Some spent the night at the college in the dorm or in campers. Others stayed with relatives or went home. The evening closed with evening vespers led by David Loeppky from Stuartburn.

Genealogy was the highlight of Saturday's agenda. Many came to find where they fit into

the family. The morning session consisted of welcomes and introductions to the genealogy.

Since so many Loeppky families originally settled along the former 318 and so many are still living there, a number of relatives headed off by Professor Jake Peters, worked hard at renaming the road "Loeppky Road". This was announced and made official during the Saturday morning session.

During the afternoon and evening programs all clans were given an opportunity to share about their families. Albert Leppky from Lincoln, Nebraska, and John Hiebert Friesen from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, had devotions in the afternoon and evening respectively.

We discovered how many of those present were still farming, how many were teachers, nurses, businessmen, etc.

Cornie P. Loeppky together with his brother Otto had arranged for a self-guiding tour of the Mennonite Landing Site at the junction of the rivers, the family cemeteries and Loeppky homestead. Eighty cars took this tour Saturday at 3 P.M. Others continued touring Sunday afternoon.

Winnipeg Parks and Rec. were present to entertain the children. This freed the parents to study genealogy, visit and to attend sessions.

Some 300 people attended the Saturday evening B.B.Q. outside the College grounds. It featured chicken done by Heritage Poultry and buffalo burgers prepared by Jim and Barb Leppky and family.

The Sunday morning worship service was led by Bernie Loeppky (also chairperson of the reunion planning committee). Allan Kliever from Steinbach had the message and a choir from within our group preformed under the capable direction of Lori Kliever accompanied by her husband Lorn. They were in charge of all the music for the weekend.

After lunch, on Sunday, some time was spent taking pictures of each clan present.

The eye catching display of antique dresses, clocks, and old pictures of our ancestors was organized by Jake Peters of Winnipeg with help from Pete and Rose Funk, Susie Leppky, Debbie Penner and Betty Koop. Souvenir plates and videos were available for purchase.

Clan members came from far and wide. Some found long lost relatives. Laughter and hugging was going on everywhere. All in all the weekend appeared to be a great success. by Lydia Loeppky Falk, Niverville

The members of the "Loeppky Reunion Committee" were Bernie (Chairman) and Helen Loeppky, Alvin and Clara (Treasurer) Kehler, Elmer (Secretary) and Amanda Heinrichs, Gordon and Esther Pappel, John L. and Helen Klassen, Rose Funk, Susan Leppky, Debbie Pearson, Henry (deceased) and Mary Loeppky, Eva Loeppky, Dick and Elvira Martens, Jake Peters and Alvin and Lydia Falk.



Registration table. Jason Falk (edge of picture), Mrs. Helen Loeppky, Lorraine Barkman, Elmer Heinrichs, Clara Kehler. Photo by Lydia Falk.



Part of Loeppky group in gymnasium. Photo by Elmer Heinrichs.



*Jake L. Peters announcing the naming of Loepky Road during Saturday morning sessions. Photo by Elmer Heinrichs.*



*Seniors visiting. Jakob G. Leppky, Niverville; Annetta Loepky, Altona; Mrs. Katherine Wiebe, Winkler. Photo by Elmer Heinrichs.*



*Singing during the Sunday morning worship service. Bernie Loepky, Chairman; Allan Kliewer, guest speaker, Lori Kliewer, conductor; and Loren Kliewer, pianist. Photo by Elmer Heinrichs.*

**Mennonite Books**, with store and office at 844-K McLeod Avenue, Winnipeg, has added several services for the convenience of its customers.

Recently a used book section was added. You can now buy and sell used Mennonite books. In order to do this, contact the office to make arrangements if you have used books to sell. Stop by if you want to check our selection.

Other customers have asked about church and/or family histories. We will take these on consignment and sell to interested customers. Call us about this new service.

Also, we realize the need to connect individuals with specific titles requested. Therefore, the staff at Mennonite books now maintains a card file for customers asking for out-of-print titles or almost-impossible-to-find titles.

The staff at Mennonite Books wants to provide the best service possible. Call 204-668-7475 or fax 204-661-8530 for further information. You may also write to: **Mennonite Books**, 844-K McLeod Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2G 2T7.

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# Bruderheim Moravians Celebrate

by Dick F. Wiebe,  
R.R.1, Ste. Annes, Manitoba

The Bruderheim Moravian Church's 100th anniversary and Christian Education Building dedication was celebrated at Bruderheim Alberta May the 5th, 6th and 7th 1995.

My wife and I and Bill and Trudy Harms from Altona, MB (Trudy is a second cousin of mine and a great-granddaughter of the late Bishop David Stoesz) arrived at Bruderheim midmorning on Saturday May the 6th and were received very fondly, especially by the people whom my wife and I had already met last summer when we were there (Note 1). It was just amazing how word spread around that the Mennonites from Manitoba had arrived.

We received the official invitation from Rev. Steve Gohdes in February and in it he requested that a representative from the Mennonites in Manitoba bring a short presentation. The Chortitzer Mennonite Conference executive appointed me to be that representative.

After exchanging greetings, introductions etc. we toured the now finished new 900 sq. feet education building which is very well planned with the most modern but practical

heating, ventilating etc. equipment.

At noon the Bert Freys', where we had lunch last summer, insisted that we come to their house for lunch again. At 3:00 p.m. we all went back to the church for a family carnival and a family picnic at 5:00 p.m.. After the picnic and some more reminiscing and visiting, my wife, I and the Harms', went to Edmonton to check out Motel rooms which we had already previously booked. We were severely reprimanded for this because the Moravians had it all planned that the Manitobans would be staying with them. So my wife and I promised to stay the next night with them.

Arriving at the Moravian Church Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. for the 10:30 a.m. worship and the 100th anniversary service we found the church was full already and people were streaming into the new education building's fellowship hall where they had set up a huge live T.V. screen. By the time the service started the fellowship hall was filled also. It was estimated there had been 700 people attending the service. Their pastor, Rev. Steve Gohdes had a very touching sermon on thanksgiving for the spiritual as well as physical needs that the Lord had provided for during the past one-hundred years and also on the

Christians' responsibility to spread the gospel and help the needy.

After the service nearly everyone stayed for the potluck lunch that was served by the local Catholic Ladies Aid. Delicious food and lots of it! I must mention that the Moravians, at least in that area, have a very good relationship with the other churches and are very well liked. The fact that business people from other denominations donated Redi-mix concrete, electrical supplies etc. attest to it.

The education building dedication service started at 2:00 p.m. with the congregation singing the song "Majesty", prayer of thanks by Rev. Gohdes and greetings from various people involved in the building project, the Mayor of Bruderheim, and representing the Province of Alberta M.L.A. Ed Stelmach, Manitoba Mennonite representative D.F. Wiebe (Note 2) and church dignitaries from the surrounding area.

After some more reports and singing the main message "Lift High The Cross" was delivered by the Rt. Rev. Percy Henkelman of the Lutheran Church. Both Rev. Gohdes and Rev. Henkelman mentioned the aid that the Moravians had received from the Mennonites in Manitoba in the 1890s.

After the service, lunch was served once more, followed by lots of reminiscing and visiting. It was so interesting and heart warming to hear that those people still cherish the help that their ancestors received from ours (Note 3).

One dear old lady made a special effort to come and shake our hand and just had to tell us that she still has a doll that had been part of the aid from the Mennonites in Manitoba.

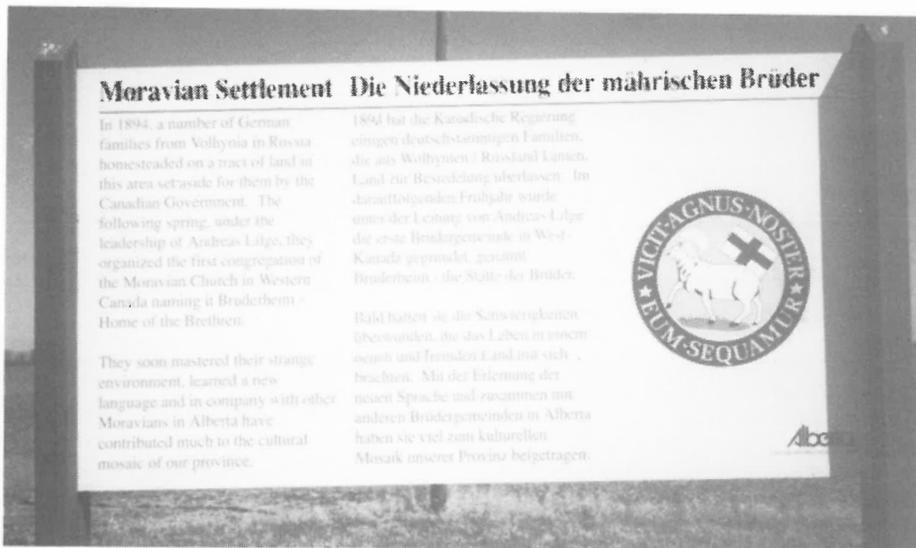
Another old lady that lives in B.C. now told us that her grandfather and Rev. Lilge had been to Manitoba looking for aid from the Mennonites and while staying at Bishop Stoesz's for the night, Bishop Stoesz had insisted that her grandfather sleep in his bed. "You see," she said, "they not only gave them the aid but also let them sleep in the best bed they had." If it had not been for the Mennonites our people would have starved to death," she said with tears in her eyes. All this reminds me of I Timothy Chapter 5 verse 17: "Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

I find it perturbing that so many people today don't want to be associated with the Mennonite name. The Catholics, the Lutherans, and Moravians at Bruderheim have a greater respect for the Mennonite faith than a lot of us ourselves have.

After the festivities had ended, keeping our promise of the previous day, we stayed at Bert and Doreen Frey's place for the night. Bill and Trudy Harms left for Spruce Grove Alta. where they stayed with their relatives for the night. After a hearty breakfast Monday morning, the Frey's took us on a tour of the countryside around Bruderheim. They showed us



Bruderheim Church.



Roadside sign on the Highway near Bruderheim, Alberta.



The 9,000 square foot Education Building of the Bruderheim Moravian Church



L. to r.: D. F. and Katherine Wiebe, Ste. Annes, Manitoba; Ben and Lydia Radke, Bert and Doreen Frey; Mrs. and Vern Bartz. The latter three couples are all very actively involved in the Bruderheim church, especially in their on-going building program.

their various parcels of farmland with the oil wells on it, also heavy bush land on which they do rotative logging.

Bert and Doreen are retired and live in Bruderheim keeping busy in church and other activities. After promises to keep in touch and fond farewells we were on our way to Calgary to see our cousins. Tuesday we met up with the Harms' again and continued homeward bound with the fondest memories of the Bruderheim Moravians who we got to know and love.

By D.F. Wiebe

Editor's Note: All photos in this article are courtesy of Dick F. Wiebe, Ste. Annes, Manitoba.

**Endnotes**

#1 See Moravian Brethren: *Preservings*

newsletter #5 Jan. 1995 issue  
 #2 See Greeting from Manitoba.  
 #3 See Chortitzer assistance; *Preservings* newsletter #3 Jan. 1994 issue.

The following is the letter of greetings from the Manitoba Mennonites to the Bruderheim Moravian Church on occasion of their 100th anniversary May 7, 1995, presented by D.F. Wiebe

Greetings from Southern and friendly Manitoba, and also Congratulation! It is indeed a momentous milestone that you have reached, and we are rejoicing with you.

It is a pleasure and an honour to be present at this anniversary and dedication celebration, and I would like to open my remarks with two verses out of II Chronicles Chapter 7 verses 15 and 16. Now, this is what the Lord said to

Samuel in the night after Samuel had dedicated his temple to the Lord, "Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this house. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name shall be there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetual-ly."

And it is our wish and prayer that the Lord's eyes will be open and his ears attend to the prayers that are made in this place, not only today, but also in the years to follow.

We Manitoba Mennonites can very much identify with you people as, 21 years ago, we Mennonites celebrate our 100th anniversary of emigrating from southern Russia to Southern Manitoba.

I presume that most of you know why we Mennonites from Manitoba are in attendance here, so I won't go into detail, except to mention that, approximately two years ago, I came into possession of some old letters written by the late Pastor Andreas Lilge of the Bruderheim Moravian Church to Bishop David Stoesz of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church in Manitoba. Now the reason why my interest was aroused, when I got these letters, was the fact that Bishop David Stoesz was my great-grandfather.

The first letter that I have was written by Pastor Lilge to Bishop Stoesz is dated May 9th 1895, and that also happens to be exactly 100 years ago, next Tuesday, so we could really say we are celebrating a dual anniversary.

We see and we feel that the Lord has blessed you abundantly in the past one-hundred years and it is our hope and prayer that He will continue to do so in the future.

It is so encouraging to hear and to see that you people have kept your faith in the Lord, especially in these times when the world is trying so hard to distract us from the straight and narrow path.

I am sure that Pastor Lilge and Bishop Stoesz would both be pleased to know that, after having lost contact for almost a hundred years, the bond of Christian friendship and love has been re-established.

We, Manitobans, want to thank each and everyone of you for the warm reception you have extended us. A hearty thank-you to the Freys', the Bartzs' and Radkes' for their warm hospitality.

And a special thankyou to Pastor and Mrs. Ghodes for the letter of invitation and kind reception. It's been a real pleasure being here and, if anybody from this congregation ever comes to Manitoba please allow for some time to pay us a visit.

I have a book here that I wish to donate to your church library. It is a diary kept by Bishop Stoesz, it dates from 1872 to 1896 and is quite interesting.

And last but not least, I have a letter of greeting here from Bishop Bill Hildebrandt of the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference for Pastor Ghodes and I will let him read it to you. Thank you and God Bless all of you.

Yours truly Dick F. Wiebe

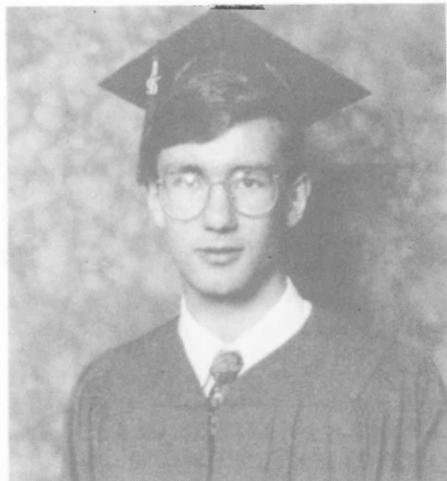
## Henry E. Plett Memorial Award

The Genealogy and Family History Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society awarded the "Henry E. Plett Memorial Award" to Lydell Brandt and Audrey Ginter of the Steinbach Christian High School at the June 25, 1995, school graduation service. The award is given annually to two Manitoba high school students for research and documentation of a Mennonite Family History.

Lydell was awarded the first prize of \$100.00 for his essay "The Friesen Family." The second prize of \$50.00 was awarded to Audrey Ginter for her essay entitled "My Friesen Roots."

The Genealogy and Family History Committee of the MMHS welcomes contributions from any Manitoba high school student. Please deliver completed Mennonite Family History projects to Alf Redekopp at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 800 Schaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, or the Centre for M. B. Studies, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg.

(This article is reprinted from the MMHS Newsletter, Number 18, December 1995.)



Lydell Brandt



Audrey Ginter

# Writing Protocols

by John Dyck, HSHS Research Director

From time to time our writers have requested directions on standard ways of writing or referring to various terms. The following are some of the words and descriptions which have come up in the past. Hopefully this list of protocols will assist our writers and save time in the editing process later.

**Land Descriptions:** For northwest quarter of section 36, township 5, range 5 east of the principal meridian write - NW36-5-5E

**German names** - Some German names are spelled with two "n"s unless spelled with one "n" only in the original document; e.g. Johann, Susanna.

**Ships names** - leave a space after each period S. S. Hibernian

**Family Lists:** When listing more than one or two children with ages, say Jacob, age 13, Peter 2, Katharina 1. It is not necessary to repeat the word "age" each time.

**Dates** are written in full when they appear in the main text e.g. August 12, 1888, however, a date appearing in brackets can be abbreviated e.g. (12 Aug 1888)

**A married couple** is best named like this "Peter and Anna (Friesen) Banman" rather than Peter Banman and Anna Friesen or Peter and Anna Banman, nee Friesen.

**New paragraphs** should be tabbed.

**Quotes** longer than a few lines can be Double Indented, with a blank line above and below the quotation. However, when it is a short quotation and/or it is preceded by a short line, then a blank line is not required. Indented quotes do not require quotation marks. If the quote is very long, a Single Indent is sufficient instead of a Double Indent, in order to save space.

Quotations should be exactly as the original, including spelling errors. If changes are made they should be identified.

**Book titles** should always be in italics.

**German or other foreign words** should be italicized rather than using quotation marks.

**Village names:** Alt-Bergfeld, Neu-Bergfeld and Neuhoffnung

**Old Photos and Journals:** Always be on the lookout for old photos, village maps and journals. If they are not related to your particular article or paper, they are likely going to be of interest to other writers or for the society collection. If you cannot obtain the original photographs, try to get photocopies - clearly identifying the people or places appearing in the picture and, if possible, the date it was taken. Also note where the original can be seen.

There are several ways of entering daily journals on computer. The Hanging Indent for each new day is practical for some journals. Other journals lend themselves better to writing continuously and then separating each month with a blank line.

**Scripture references** should be in brackets, abbreviations are acceptable, and the stan-

dard format is as follows: (1 Peter 6:5-8) and (1 Thess. 2:7-9)

**Endnotes** - please follow the format used in Volume Three.

Chapters in books and unpublished manuscripts are always in quotation marks.

Example 1: William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989), 222.

Example 2: Al Reimer, "The Print Culture of the Russian Mennonites 1870-1930," in John Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989), p. 222. [The 222 indicates the page number of the reference.]

**Punctuation** appearing at the end of quotations are generally placed within the quotation marks. Example: He said, "This is the way do it."

**Newsletter Submissions** - The HSHS newsletter, *Preservings*, is presently being produced on Word Perfect 5.1 If at all possible please submit your articles and papers in both hardcopy (a printed paper copy) and on computer disk in the Word Perfect 5.1 format. This saves us a vast amount of time and expense in retyping the article and in editing. The same comments apply to submissions and articles which are to be included in the forthcoming Volume 4 of the East Reserve Historical Series.

**Submitting photos** - When submitting photos for publication with your articles please make sure that they are carefully labelled, naming people in the picture, describing the activity, date and place, and other details. Try to obtain the name of the photographer and the people that have owned the picture. The name of the present owner of the photo should also be listed and properly credited in the photo captions for the article.

### Attention Readers:

If you live outside the Hanover - Steinbach area and have not paid your 1995 or 1996 membership fee, this may well be the last issue you will receive.

To avoid being taken off our mailing list, send your membership fee of \$10.00 to HSHS, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba. R0A 2A0

# Mennonite Landing Site

by Orlando Hiebert, Tourond, Manitoba

There was a light coating of snow on the ground as I walked down the path to the river. The snow also lay on those trees that were no longer alive and upright which reminded me of the brushing and clean-up work which still remained to be done. The stone memorial, the big timber frame gate and fence and the concrete picnic tables were still in place (despite a spring flood) as they were at the end of that week July 24-30, 1994 when a week of frantic activity resulted in the site finally being ready for the dedication service.

Despite it being one of the hottest days of the summer, the large crowd of approximately 400 exceeded our expectations. We were privileged to have former Governor-General Edward Schreyer speak to us and assist us in the unveiling of the memorial. Since then on most week-ends one or two cars can be seen in the parking lot at any one time. Fortunately the high water this spring did not do any damage to the site but it did cover the picnic tables, a third of the monument and was lapping at the base of the gate and fence.

This year it came down to the more mundane things like, does the grass need cutting or is there garbage lying around. I put up a stand to inclose a guest book and since August 2 there have been 552 visitors who registered. Sundays are the most popular days for visitors but there are also a surprising number who come during the week.

The first week in October had the highest number with 85 registered visitors. Where do they come from? The majority came from Manitoba but 14 came from B.C., Sask. 12, Ontario 8, Alberta 7, Paraguay 7, Germany 7, others came from Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Wisconsin, Yukon, Japan, and Montenegro (the southern-most of the Yugoslav Republics).

It is gratifying to see that people are coming from far and near and to read their comments and encouragements. On behalf of the present committee consisting of President C. Wilbert Loewen, Secretary Royden K. Loewen, and members; Herm Martens, Lawrence Klippenstein, and myself, Orlando Hiebert, I would like to thank all those who donated financial, material and labour to make this project a success. We have been able to retire our debt of approximately \$10,000 and now even have a small surplus in the bank.

May the site serve as a reminder to us and those who come after, of the vision, courage and resulting hardships of our early pioneers.



*Steinbach Bible College students visit the Mennonite Landing Site. L. to r.: Bobbie-Jo Reimer, Tanya Barkman, Michelle Plett and Pam Penner. Photo by Henry N. Fast, Steinbach, Manitoba.*



*Steinbach Bible College students at the Mennonite Landing Site. They are posing in front of the confluence of the Rat and Red Rivers where the first Mennonite settlers from Russia arrived on July 31, 1874. Photo courtesy of Henry N. Fast, Steinbach, Manitoba.*

# Church Buildings in Ukraine

**The Church as represented by its buildings in present-day Ukraine, by Orlando Hiebert, Tourond, Manitoba.**

My first experience with the church in Ukraine was at Pryluki a city of 80,000 people which is about 130 km east north east of Kiev. It was mid March and the weather is dreary alternating between sunshine, and light snow flurries much like the weather here at the end of the first week in April.

I asked Lena my translator if she might take me to attend a church service at the Orthodox church on Sunday. When Sunday arrived we walked over to the church which was about a 15 minute walk. The church, which was built in 1709, was of stone and mortar construction, white in colour with 5 green coloured domes. The five domes seemed to indicate that this church was above average in size.

Inside, one is immediately struck by the beauty of the statue, the paintings of Jesus and the Apostles on the walls and up in the domes, and the carvings on the panels of the screen wall which separates the sanctuary from the front vault which seems to correspond to the Jewish temple's "Holy of Holies".

Half the interior had already been restored (walls painted and the paintings cleaned and retouched). The congregation, consisting mostly of older women, filled the church standing (there are no chairs or benches to sit on) under scaffolds and where ever there was room.

The priest would sing or chant the liturgy and the mixed choir, which stood in a balcony opposite the screen wall would sing responsively, starting on the same pitch as the priest's last note. The harmony and the clarity of the choir accentuated by the superb acoustics (aided by empty clay pots entombed in the walls) and above all the deep emotions of the Slavic soul, which seem to come through in their songs, at times threatened to overwhelm me. The two hour service did not seem long because I felt I was witnessing something that had not changed for over 500 years.

My second experience with the church in Ukraine was at Buchach. This is a small city of 14,000 people in the western Ukraine south of Ternopil, a region to which some of the Ukrainians of the Sarto area trace their roots. Being closer to Poland, the Roman Catholic church has a greater presence in religious life. Ivan, my host, took me to see a large Roman Catholic church. As we entered the dim interior I could hear some construction activity and presently could make out the shape of three or four workmen on scaffolds replacing wooden mouldings, doors, and washing walls of years of grime and smoke damage.

The Bolsheviks and Anarchists during the revolution had used axes to wantonly destroy the beautiful woodwork in the church. The large percentage of 50,100,200 Kupon bills

(37,000 to the US\$) I had seen in the offering basket at the service in Pryluki told me that the restoration of the pre-revolution church building was going to be a long and difficult project. Most people find it difficult to earn enough money just to live, never mind having extra money to give to charities.

The Orthodox church at Puchioov Lavra was unique. I could see the majestic gold onion domes atop the white walls of this church and monastery gleaming in the sun from a distance of about four miles.

The church's size was exceeded only by its beauty. It is hard to find words to describe the gold-trimmed archways, marble floors and beautiful frescoes and paintings. The parishioners also stood through the whole service

which lasted over two hours. My host lead me right to the front of the church so that I stood at the doorway to the "Holy of Holies". From where I stood I could see the large alter with it's many candles and watch a young lad signal instructions to the alter boys as they attended to the needs of the priest.

Because of this church's size and importance there were at about a dozen priests and or monks who performed various duties during the service. The whole of the church and surrounding monastery seemed not to have sustained any damage nor to have been neglected. When I questioned my host as to why this was he told me that because of this church's importance and beauty even the godless Bolsheviks did not have the heart to



March 1994. Pryluki Church, 130 km east of Kiev. Photo by Orlando Hiebert.



Pryluki Church. Typical Icons in a Orthodox Church. Photo by Orlando Hiebert.

destroy it.

There are also new churches being built in Ukraine. These, with some exceptions are much more modest structures than those built before the turn of the century. During an impromptu banquet in my honour in the mayors' office in the village of Kryva I was asked if I was a believer and how the church in Canada was faring. They went on to tell me that they had started to build a new church but that they were in need of \$12,000 US to be able to finish it.

This year one of the places I visited was near the town of Proharowka (Russia). This was the site of the biggest tank battle of the second world war's eastern front. Sixteen hundred Soviet tanks faced sixteen hundred German tanks. I was told that windows were shattered in a large radius just from the concussion of the many guns being fired. The Germans' eastward advance was halted at this battle and to commemorate this victory a large memorial and a new Orthodox church were being readied for a dedication June 10 at which Boris Yeltsin would be present. This church was not as grand as some 19th century churches but with state support it was none-the-less beautiful.

This brings me to two churches that have more significance to us as Mennonites. During my tour of the village in the area of Halbstadt in the Molotschna Colony, Olga pointed out the Mennonite churches at Petershagen and Schoensee.

The church at Petershagen had that alone, forlorn and forgotten look. The arches on the side walls indicate where the windows were, but the windows are gone and the openings appear to have been mortared shut. No doubt this building was put to a use in other ways than worship by the Soviets.

The sight of the church at Schoensee came as a shock. Having seen a picture of this grand building on page 89 in the book "Heritage Remembered" I was unprepared for what I saw. The roof was gone, the fence with it's stone posts was missing, there was rubble all around, a private farmer was using the yard to park his machinery. The steel rafters at least indicated that someone thought this building was worth restoring and had started the project, but the problem as in so many things in Ukraine is the lack of money.

The churches at Pryluky, Buchach, Kryva, Proharowka although also having suffered at the hands of the Soviets still have their constituency and who still hold fast to their religion, heritage and culture. The people with their religion, heritage and culture that first built the church buildings of Petershagen and Schoensee among others have either left or been deported from this land. Barring a miracle, these buildings will fade into history and will exist only in our photo albums and our Mennonite history books.



*The Petershagen Church in the village of Petershagen, Molotschna. This is the village where Klaas Reimer (1770-1837), founder of the Kleine Gemeinde, settled on Wirtschaft No. 4 in 1805. Photo by Orlando Hiebert.*



*Schoensee Church in the Molotschna. Photo by Orlando Hiebert.*

## Update on Vollwerk Cemetery

by Linda Buhler

The Peters Memorial Committee has finally seen its ambitious plans become reality. After many delays, the monument honouring Oberschulz Jakob Peters has finally been erected at the Vollwerk Cemetery where Peters was laid to rest in 1884. This monument, complete with a brass plaque recognizing Peters' leadership and contribution to the East Reserve communities, was made possible through a grant received from the Heritage Grants Advisory Council and through the Committee's diligent fundraising efforts.

Earlier this summer, the Hanover Municipality provided an approach on the east side of the cemetery making it more accessible to the public. On July 20, 1995, Patricia Badertscher and David McLeod from the Historic Resources Branch spent the day at Vollwerk measuring out the perimeter of the

cemetery and marking the location of all unmarked graves. As they were marking the grids according to their earlier work done through electro-magnetic readings, they discovered a cement pad under several inches of sod marking the grave of Peter D. Peters who died at the age of eleven months in March 1903.

Three foot evergreens have recently been planted along the north and south edges of the site. In addition, the Committee plans to erect an identification marker which would include a list of all marked and unmarked graves.

The large extended Peters family has truly rallied together in the true community spirit that the Oberschulz himself would have approved of, as multi generations of Peters have worked together in the Committee and through their generous financial support to make this site one worth visiting.

# HANOVER STEINBACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

DATE: Friday, January 26, 1996

PLACE: Steinbach Bible College, Highway 12 North, Steinbach, Manitoba

## AGENDA

7.00 BUSINESS MEETING - financial report and election of directors.

ADMISSION \$2.00

7:30 HISTORICAL SESSION - topic - IMMIGRATION

The public is invited to come and listen to the following presentatians:



Dr. Royden Loewen

Professor of History, U. of M., on Elisabeth Rempel Reimer (1814-1893), pioneer matriarch whose sons were 1874 Steinbach pioneers.

Dr. Roy Vogt

Professor of Economics, U. of M., on the Vogt Family which fled Russia and came to Steinbach in 1923. The paper will be presented by John E. Neufeld.



Irene Kroeker

Teacher and HSHS President, on the Paraguay emigration of 1921-27.

Break 8:30

9:00 ENTERTAINMENT SESSION

- The HSHS Presents Armin Wiebe:

The public is invited to come and hear Armin Wiebe, renowned author read from his first novel, *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens*. Come and hear how Yasch, a lad who grew up on the wrong side of the "double dike", found "himself" within his community and happiness with Oata.



## Articles

# 1877 Letter - Jakob L. Dueck

Translated and edited  
by Henry N. Fast, Steinbach, Manitoba

My great-grandparents Jacob L. Duecks immigrated in the year 1875 and settled in the East Reserve village of Gruenfeld. Jacob kept a copy of his letters, a number of which are still extant. A copy of the following letter is in the possession of Mary and Minna Reimer of Steinbach and was loaned to me for this translation. **Henry Fast, Steinbach.**

Dec. 12, 1877

To Isaac Regehr and relatives in Gnadenthal  
Dear Friends:

We received your letter dated Sept. 1 on Oct. 22 in which we received the news that F. Janzen had passed away. It is grace if he died in the Lord and grace when in this difficult time you can be encouraged that the Lord has accepted him and as a loving father will care for you.

As exemplified by your husband, you can be sure of the Lord's help in the future. You have received a rich harvest as well as a good price for the grain. I can imagine that this should strengthen the desire to emigrate. If only the exchange rate would change, for now you do not always receive half of what it used to be. However, if peace should come and Russia is victorious the exchange rate would soon change.

From a dispatch we heard that the emissary of the Sultan had offered to make peace. One hopes that the savagery of war would cease before it spreads and clouds the possibility of peace. Now if each one would personally pray, "Come Spirit of Peace, teach us to live in peace. Take from us all hate and envy etc." (from the Herald, 1875, January, J.F.)

Now I want to give you an extensive report of our condition since the letter of P. Reg. of Feb. 14, 1877. Last winter, that is, from the end of January to the beginning of March, we had Spring weather. We had our first frost at the beginning of September. We still have mild weather with sunshine during the day with above freezing temperatures and some frost at night, though there have been some stormy days. Now at times the snow has disappeared and we have reasonably good wagon roads. Only in Spring when we have much rain as we did this year do parts of the road become quite bottomless.

This year excess rain has hindered the crop so that we only got 12 to 30 bushels of wheat per acre. The potatoes too suffered so that the price is now up to one dollar. The wheat price is 65 to 80 cents/bus, eggs 35 c/doz., butter 30 c/lb. Some of us have up to 100 hens to supplement our income.

The wolf here is smaller than there and when it has its young it often desires a hen

which wanders too far into the garden or too far from the buildings. In the evening they tend to howl, yet they are not dangerous. It seems as if the animals here are less dangerous than there.

Our women and children are without danger when they go into the garden or woods to pick strawberries, raspberries, cherries, plums, nuts, gooseberries and other fruits for which we have no name. We actually do not get to see many animals even though there are bears, wolves, badgers, foxes and rabbits. We even heard that the Old Colony people in Pembina had shot a lynx. Snakes too are not dangerous here. Even the children have played with them.

During the harvest on August 21, the prince of all Canada came in the name of the Queen of England to visit us. When he came with his wife and daughter, we constructed a shelter of evergreen boughs and flowers in the middle of the colony where we met him, together with our families. We were asked to bring the best produce of the land and so the women displayed their garden produce on their side of the circle and we displayed grain.

The prince rode bareheaded into the gathering area. After a short rest we presented to him a welcoming address stating our conditions here. He competently replied sentence by sentence and promised us complete religious freedom. He also mentioned that he was aware that we were a God-fearing people and as such we were doubly welcome. If you are interested in hearing more, I wrote to Waldheim in September as it was written in the Herald.

I also want to inform you that Isaac Harms from Nebraska visited us two times this Fall. He got himself a wife, namely old Mrs. Klaas Friesen of Rosenort.

Also the escaped Ab. T. [hiessen], originally raised in Schoenau was here, but only for a few days. He quickly saw that his information about Manitoba was wrong and few people responded to him, even though he promised them free passage to Nebraska when he returned. But when he saw how satisfied we were with our condition here he soon turned his back on us. Since his intention was to run down Manitoba he may send printed pamphlets to Russia and you may believe more than what is true.

Your B. Reg. requests that we write and tell him what is best. This is no more possible here than it is for you to know what is best in Russia. You will not know of a better place than yours and we say, "here it is good". However, time will tell, and if you come, decide as soon as possible to set up a mill, either alone or with others. We need more mills.

Brother-in-law Ab. Friesen, Steinbach, has an operating windmill and the trial run indi-

cates that at best five bushels can be milled in four minutes. He started with a saw mill with which he sawed the lumber to build the mill and later expects to do half the sawing for others. Besides this one there are three windmills and one steam mill in our Reserve. They still have no mill at Scratching River. They think it may be possible to erect a water driven mill there.

This year we had good weather for seeding and threshing. We needed only one and a half days to do our threshing and to store our grain since our machine cleans as it threshes and can produce 51 bushels of clean oats in 50 minutes. The machine cost us 600 dollars and is driven by five pair of cattle. We charge four cents a bushel when we thresh for other people, plus we supply one man for the machine. It would have been better to buy a steam engine so that the cattle could rest.

The same could be said of mowers. One should immediately have bought a self binder so that fewer men are needed. Jon. R. has one on which 2 men stand and bind (in the shade). But where the grain is dense he cannot cut a full swath, otherwise the two men cannot keep up. The self binders are always improving and are more economical since fewer men are needed and there is no straw in the yard (Wirtschaft). Two men can then be assigned other work.

Here it is best to plow immediately after the harvest. One man with a pair of oxen can plow while two men can bring in the grain with horses. If this is done then we have enough time to thresh, even though we threshed for others till Martin (holiday). Though we are able to thresh all winter the progress is too slow because of the short days. Our Jon. worked on the threshing machine in Nov. among the Metis and received 75 cents a day.

Presently it is Dec. 23, and we have had a number of rainy days. It does not seem like winter. This is the exception as it seldom rains here in winter. Now I have to contradict myself since I said before that the roads are very soft only in Spring, but now it is so muddy that travel is a problem and today I went to church by horse back.

Last winter I wrote to P. Reg. that the snow that fell in Dec. stayed till Spring, yet in Feb. it nearly disappeared. Please don't think evil of me because of this error. Partly this came about because we expected the winter to be severe. The first two winters were not as mild, also the testimonials from other places say, "The winters are severe here".

Now in conclusion, all of us send a heartfelt greeting to your loving sister, Mrs. Janzen. Jac. Regehr sends greetings to Grs. and Margaretha. We remain your friends.

Jacob Duecks.

# Johann S. Rempel

By Helen R. Unger, Abbotsford, B.C.

It was in 1874 that Johann S. Rempel at the age of twenty, came along with his parents, whose name also was Johann Rempel, from Russia. When they arrived they landed in Toronto, Ontario. Seeing the lakes were frozen up, they stayed there over winter, along with all the other newly arrived Mennonite immigrants for some months, till the ice would start breaking up at Lake Superior.

During those months Mr. Rempel learned to speak some English from the Amish Mennonite people that were living there. When the time came that the ice was starting to break up, two shiploads of immigrants started on their way to Manitoba, their promised land. With great difficulty they only got as far as twelve miles from the shore, and the ice wouldn't budge anymore.

They were stuck there and waited for two weeks hoping that someone would come. They had completely run out of food. So the senior John Rempel started walking the twelve miles for help. What help they got is not known but they finished the rest of their journey to Manitoba by ferry.

The Rempels chose to settle down in Grunthal, Manitoba. They started up in small business with harvesting potatoes. They peeled the potatoes for eating and saved the peel for planting. Every bushel of potato peel yielded eight bushels of potatoes. Soon the junior Johann S. Rempel decided to move about twelve miles north to the small village of Chortitz. With no roads, and no bridges that must have been something, walking through the bushes in a strange country.

There he met Katharina Peters of Reichenbach born in 1852. They got married and had four children. Katharina was the daughter of Cornelius Peters of Reichenbach, a brother to Jakob Peters, the Oberschulz. Thus Johann S. Rempel was a brother-in-law to deacon Johann D. Wiebe (1853-1909), son of the Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe also of Chortitz. Katharina Peters Rempel passed away and about a year later he married his first wife's sister Margaretha Peters. In their union they had twelve children.

In time Johann S. Rempel became a very

prominent man. Because he had learned to speak a little English, Mr. Hespeler appointed him as Secretary. Mr. Rempel had bought himself a piece of land for farming and made great progress. Soon he had built up his farm with a house and barn together, a building to store all his machinery, a granary and a big blacksmith shop from which he served the villagers and farmers.

Rempel was a genius inventor. He invented the grindstone, and made the grass mower with new ideas to improve it and many other things he invented. A while later he built a small bank of his yard to serve the people.

Johann S. Rempel had a big tractor which we called the "Bullkjeatel" and a threshing machine. Every year he threshed four hundred acres for four of the farmers as well as his own. Even the fourteen year old boys were helping with threshing.

Mr. Rempel's sons were growing up, and Cornelius became a builder and built a new big house for his parents which is still there and also a chicken barn etc. In our day it does surprise us that Mr. Rempel and most likely many others in those days were debt free.

Johann Rempel was one of the very first in the village of Chortitz to buy a new Model T Ford. At that time we called it a "Glass Car" because they were one of the first ones to come out with big glass windows. Most of us villagers watched and cheered when it pulled into their yard.

Mr. & Mrs. Rempel's son David had a severe crippling disease and had to have extra special care and was completely disabled. His father had him well provided for his future life. After his parents were gone, his sister Helen with loving care took care of him till he passed away at 44 years.

The Rempels were very sincere in their Christian faith and duties to God. He was one of the lead singers or Vorsänger in the Chortitzer Church. They have always been a very musical family, travelling far and wide in a group along with other musicians.

Johann S. Rempel very much preached against smoking. In one incident he told someone with an unlit cigarette in his hand, to throw it out the door as far as he could throw it. Then the dog quickly ran for it to pick it up.



Mr. & Mrs. Johann S. Rempel. Courtesy of Helen R. Unger.

When he sniffed it, he left in lying on the ground and ran back, "You see?" Rempel said, "not even a dog will go for it."

The Rempels had a five bedroom home and they always had open house for overnight guests, especially preachers and pastors that came to have special meetings or Bible studies for a week or so, or a teacher would find room and board at the Rempel's home.

In their retirement years they often sat on their veranda watching the traffic go by. Johann S. Rempel passed away suddenly on May 28th, 1929.

Mrs. Margaret Rempel passed away on September 22nd, 1934.

I would like to thank my cousin Mr. John F. Rempel of Niverville, Manitoba, who was kind enough to give me a lot of very valuable information. Thanks John. [Editor's Note: John F. Rempel passed away August 13, 1995]



The Johann S. Rempel farmyard at Chortitz, Manitoba. I believe this was taken at an auction sale on their farm. Notice all the old cars? Courtesy of Helen R. Unger.

# Johann S. Rempel - Addendum

by Rev. Cornie Rempel,  
Randolph, Manitoba

In his earlier years, Grandpa Johann S. Rempel was a smoker. It seems this was quite acceptable at the time. He came to the conviction that he should quit, but realized that he would have to contend with others offering him "a smoke". His solution was to have tobacco with him at all times so that whenever someone offered him "a smoke" he would say, "I have tobacco with me".

Johann S. Rempel had a view on education favouring the public school system. This did not sit well with many of his neighbours and, so, for many years he was referred to as "Aenglischa Rempel".

"Children should be seen and not heard" was the thinking in those days and this was also the case in the Rempel home. The young ones would be with mother while father was in his study. If things got to be somewhat noisy, father Rempel would knock on the wall. This was considered to be a serious reprimand. Perhaps a touch of such respect would be in place today.

Grandpa sang a lot. There was one song he sang often:

Schuld und Strafe sind erlassen  
Gott erbarmt sich ueber mich  
Dies Wort darf ich Suender fassen  
Und mein Glaube freuet sich.

The lyrics indicate that he had peace with God. This was also the time period when my father Cornelius P. Rempel was baptized and



*Johann S. Rempel family circa 1898. Back row, l. to r.: Johann, Maria, Margaretha, Katharina. Front: Mrs. Margaretha Rempel, Helena, Elisabeth, Johann S. Rempel, Cornelius and Peter. Photo and identification, courtesy of Rev. Cornie Rempel, Randolph.*

joined the Chortitzer Gemeinde. He has told us of the deep sense of peace that came over him when he memorized the catechism in preparation for membership.

These are some thoughts of a grandson who never saw his Grandpa.

Cornie Rempel,  
Randolph



*Johann S. Rempel family circa 1928. Standing, l. to r.: Anna Rempel, later Mrs. Heinrichs; Helena Rempel, later Mrs. Kroeker; Katherina Rempel, Mrs. Peter Penner; Aganetha, Mrs. David G. Hiebert; Elizabeth, Mrs. Gerhard F. Wiebe; Maria, Mrs. Heinrich F. Klippenstein; Rev. Heinrich Klippenstein; Margaretha, Mrs. Jakob Funk, and daughter Mary on her arm; Peter Rempel; Jakob Funk; Maria, Mrs. Joh. P. Rempel; Joh. P. Rempel; Jakob P. Rempel; Franz Rempel; Cornelius P. Rempel; Bernard P. Rempel; Gerhard F. Wiebe. Front: Margaretha (Peters) Rempel and*

# Greenland Young Men

by Ted Wiebe, Benito, Manitoba

A group of the young men in Greenland, Manitoba, posed for a picture in about 1905.

It is possible that Abram N. Eidse (1888-1971), son of Heinrich E. Eidse of Rosenort, was the photographer. Abram would have been old enough to have taken the picture. In 1914 he married Katharina M. Penner, a sister to Jakob, John, Aron and Martin, featured in the photograph.

This priceless photograph was found in the personal belongings of Dan de Veer on Enderby, B.C. Dan was the oldest son of John de Veer No. 9. The identification of the people in the picture is courtesy of the late Mrs. Peter R. Wiebe, nee Agnes Toews.

The seventeen young men in the photograph were all first generation born in Canada. Their parents were all born in Russia and belonged to the Kleine Gemeinde when they came to Canada. They grew up after the first

struggles of pioneering had been overcome. They must have looked forward with optimism after the War of 1914-18 was over.

Then the Thirty's hit them but they faced that, too. They passed away before they could really take advantage of liberal pensions and Medicare. They all worked with horses, maybe even oxen. Some of them will have travelled by jet. None of them became wealthy but they all earned their own bread.



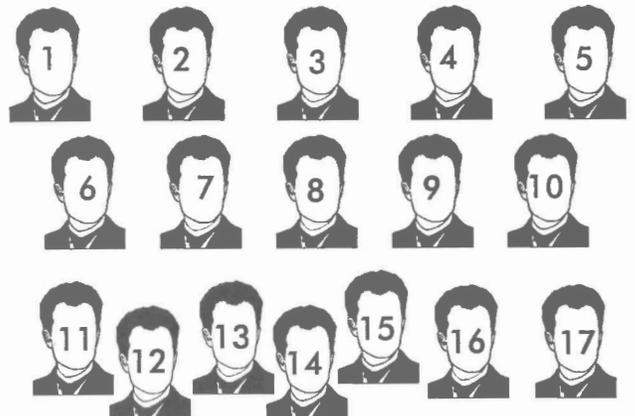
No. 1: **Martin** or **Klaas K. Friesen** of Blumenort. They were twins and were hard to tell apart. They were with the young people of Greenland. [Klaas K. Friesen was the grandfather of Patrick Friesen, well-known Winnipeg poet. The Friesens were related to the Toews' of Greenland.]

No. 2: **Peter G. Toews**, born 1882. He was the son of Johann H. Toews and Elisabeth Geerkie of Gruenfeld. [His mother came from a German Catholic family.]

His parents were the first to move to Greenland in 1890. Their farm was two miles west of the Greenland church where Marlin Warkentin lives today. They had eight children and most of them moved to the West coast.

Their son Andrew Toews was a school teacher for many years in Greenland. He taught the Montezuma school in the later years.

Peter G. Toews moved to Steinbach. They have two daughters in Steinbach; Amanda, Mrs. Peter F. Barkman, and Elma, Mrs. Waldon



Barkman. Peter G. Toews passed away January 3, 1972, and is buried in Steinbach.

No. 3: **Martin M. Penner**, born in Blumenort, Manitoba, 1882, was the son of Holdeman minister Martin R. Penner and Aganetha Toews. In 1891 they moved to Greenland, settling one mile west and half a mile south of the present Greenland church.

They had ten children. Martin M. Penner farmed for a while in Greenland and then started a sash and door company in Steinbach with his younger brother John, called "Steinbach Lumber Yards".

Later when the power plant of "Steinbach Flower Mills" became too small, Martin M. Penner built a power plant which put Steinbach in the category of Cities with 100 A.C. power. Some time later his sons built a sawmill complex called "Colenso Lumber" of Vermilion Bay, Ontario. Martin M. Penner passed away in 1963 and is buried in Steinbach.

No. 4: **John T. Penner** was the fourth child of Isaac and Margaretha (Toews) Penner in Blumenort, Manitoba. He moved to Greenland, Manitoba in 1894 with his parents. In 1911 he moved with his parents to Needles, B.C. Later they moved to Linden, Alberta where John married Elizabeth Reimer on December 25, 1921. They had three children. They farmed on the southern slope of the Knee Hill. He passed away December 13, 1958 and is buried in the Linden cemetery.

No. 5: **Abram Penner**, son of Cornelius and Agenetha (Dueck) Penner, was born September 25, 1885 at Gruenfeld (Kleefeld) Manitoba. He died in Portland, Oregon on February 16, 1952. He had one adopted daughter, Ruth.

No. 6: **David Penner** was the third child of Cornelius and Aganetha (Dueck) Penner. He was born at Gruenfeld in 1879 and drowned in a boating accident at Portland, Oregon on April 22, 1913. Abram and David were older half brothers of Rev. John I. Penner of Kleefeld. This information is in the John I. Penner family book 1893-1973.

No. 7: **Abram M. Penner**, brother to Martin M. Penner, was born 1885 in Blumenort. He married Agnes Giesbrecht on August 18, 1905. They had twelve children. They lived at Stern (later Linden), Alberta, then moved to Prairie Rose (Landmark), Manitoba where they built up a farm and later added a lumber yard.

He died on May 28, 1953 and is buried in the Greenland cemetery.

No. 8: **Abram G. Toews**, the seventh child of John and Elizabeth (Geerkie) Toews, was born 1885 in Gruenfeld, Manitoba. At age 5 he moved with his parents to Greenland. On November 9, 1918, he married Helen Wiens. They lived at Ste. Anne near the Seine River on a farm. They had two children. He passed away January 11, 1969 and is buried in Greenland.

No. 9: **John de Veer** born 1884 in Blumenort, was the second child of Isaac and Anna (Toews Wiebe) de Veer born. In 1894 he moved with his parents to Greenland. On March 24, 1907 John de Veer married Elizabeth Wiebe. They had eight children. In 1911 they moved to Needles, B.C. and in 1917 they moved to Linden where they bought a farm and also had a blacksmith shop. In 1926 Mrs. John de Veer passed away. In 1957 he married Anna Wohlgemuth. John de Veer passed away January 24, 1960 and is buried in the Greenland cemetery.

No. 10: **Peter T. Toews**, the second child of Peter (Grote) B. and Anna (Toews) Toews, was born in Blumenort in 1887. The family moved to Greenland in 1894. Peter married Eva Hiebert of Nebraska on April 2, 1915. They had seven children. In the 1920s they owned the Steinbach Telephone Exchange. Since there were many Peter Toews', they became known as "Central Toews". In the 30s they sold the Telephone Exchange and bought a farm at Ste. Anne. Peter Toews was a gifted painter and painted many Biblical signs. Many a person has marvelled at the beautiful signs and what good influence these signs have had we have no way of knowing. ["Central" Toews was also a pioneer photographer.]

Peter T. Toews died October 1, 1937 and is buried in Steinbach. He was the father of Gilbert Toews, long-time Steinbach machinery dealer.

No. 11: **Jacob M. Penner**, the seventh child of Martin and Aganetha (Toews) Penner, was born in 1885 in Blumenort. He moved with his parents to Greenland in 1891. On November 23, 1905, he married Margaretha Barkman. They bought a farm in Greenland around 1912 and farmed until retirement. Now his grandson farms it.

They had eight children. On November 15, 1918, Mrs. Margaretha Penner passed away. On June 8, 1919 he married Anna Warkentin. They had nine children. In 1931 Jacob Penner was elected as deacon for the Greenland Church. On December 9, 1951 Mrs. Anna Penner passed away. On August 3, 1952, he married Barbara Friesen, nee Sobering. He died October 24, 1970 and is buried in the Greenland cemetery.

No. 12: **John M. Penner**, the eleventh child of Martin and Aganetha (Toews) Penner, was born in Greenland in 1892. On October 3, 1915, he married Helen Penner. They had seven children. He had a sash and door factory with brother Martin. He later sold his share and moved to Greenland.

On July 22, 1931 John was ordained to the ministry of the Greenland Church. He was active in organizing the Ste. Anne Co-op which is a very going concern today and also the Landmark Cheese Factory. During the Second World War he was involved with the C.O.s in alternative service projects. Right after the war Frank Wenger and John M. Penner went to Europe to investigate relief projects under MCC Mennonite Central Committee. He was very active in evangelistic efforts for his church. He died September 19, 1971 and is buried in the Greenland cemetery.

No. 13: **John T. Toews**, the fourth child of Peter (Grote) and Anna (Toews) Toews, was born in Blumenort in 1893. In 1894 he moved with his parents to Greenland. In 1911 they moved to Needles, B.C. but returned to Ste. Anne in 1912 where they farmed. John T. Toews married Annie Reimer on November 20, 1913. They had three children. They lived in Winnipeg. John Toews passed away on April 27, 1974.

No. 14: **Cornelius T. Toews**, the third child of Peter (Grote) and Anna (Toews) Toews, was born in Blumenort. On November 13, 1913 he married Mary Penner. They had eight children. They farmed at Ste. Anne and he also was a Rawleighs dealer. He was often known as "Rawleighs Toews". He died on March 21, 1972 and is buried in the Greenland cemetery.

No. 15: **Gerhard de Veer**, the fourth child of Isaac and Anna (Toews Wiebe) de Veer, was born in Blumenort in 1886. He moved with his parents to Greenland in 1894. Gerhard de Veer went to Gretna to get his Grade VIII and a teacher training course with Cornelius T. Toews and they taught in the fall of 1911 in a two-room school in Greenland. About that time the Greenland people were moving to Needles, B.C. in the Watshan Valley. On September 10, 1914 he married Katherine Wiebe. They had eight children.

Gerhard taught at Needles, B.C. too. In 1917 they moved to a farm north of Acme, later called Linden. On January 15, 1922 he was ordained into the ministry by the Church at Swalwell, later Linden. In 1929 they took a homestead at Crooked Creek, Peace River country and also taught school again. In 1942 he served as a pastor in the C.O. camp at Seebe, Alberta. In 1948, he served in the mission post at Camp 45 Mexico.

He died on March 24, 1981 and is buried at Crooked Creek, Alberta.

No. 16: **Aron M. Penner**, eighth child of Martin and Aganetha (Toews) Penner, was born in 1887 in Blumenort. He moved with his parents, Martin Penners, to Greenland in 1890. In 1910 he married Mary Goossen and moved to their farm a mile north of his parent's farm. They had 14 children. The Penners had one of the best farms in Greenland and it was well taken care of. He died on November 11, 1963 and is buried in Greenland. [Aron M. Penner was the grandfather of Steinbach realtor Bob Schinkel.]

No. 17: **Henry G. Toews**, the eighth child of John and Elizabeth (Geerkie) Toews, was born at Gruenfeld (later Kleefeld) in 1888. He moved with his parents to Greenland in 1890. He married Anna Toews on December 22, 1920 and farmed just east of Sunnyslope, Alberta. They had six children. He is buried in the Linden, Alberta cemetery.

# The Family Stoesz

By Henry Schapansky,  
914 Chilliwack St., New Westminster, B.C.,  
V3L 4V5

The Stoez family name is one of the Mennonite surnames which was rare even in the 1700s. This suggests with a high degree of certainty that all the Mennonites with the name Stoez are descendants of one or two families. The name itself can be written as Stees, Staess, Staefts etc..., and in handwriting is often hard to distinguish from names such as Toews. Gustav Reimer suggests that the name is derived from the first name Steven or Steffan, and that possibly Stoez and Steffens are related names.

There were apparently two families of this name extant in the mid 1700s. Jacob Stoez (17.9.1726-2.6.1753) lived at Krebsfeld and his widow Elisabeth (nee Fast) married a Johann Reimer in 1753. She may have been the widow listed in the census of 1776, occupation Grutzer, with 2 "sons" and 1 "daughter". They may have only had one son themselves, Johann Stoez (27.8.1751-8.8.1807) who also lived at Krebsfeld, but probably not listed in the census under his own or the Johann Reimers name.

The other Stoez was Kornelius (28.12.1731-28.12.1811). He was listed in 1776 at Krebsfeld, with one son, and also a Grutzer by occupation. It seems very likely that Jacob and Kornelius Stoez were brothers. Since Kornelius had children who are not included in the census of 1776, I suggest they may have been living with the widow Reimer in 1776, or working and living with other family members.

Kornelius Stoez married Maria Andres 1.1.1755 and remarried Anna Thiessen in 1773. Anna Thiessen died 30.12.1811. It seems Kornelius sold his mill to his brother-in-law Heinrich Thiessen and moved to Rosenort, not far from Krebsfeld.

Kornelius Stoez had the following children who survived to adulthood:

Kornelius (b. 4.3.1756)  
Abraham (b. 24.10.1757, d. 1807)  
Anna (b. 8.1762)  
Johann (b.22.8.1765, bapt. 1786, d. 17.4.1819)  
Maria (b. 29.5.1769, bapt. 1786)  
Heinrich (b. 5.2.1777, bapt. 1797, d. 21.5.1803)  
Jacob (b. 4.1.1780, bapt. 1797, d. 16.9.1859)  
Kornelius (b.3.3.1784)  
Gerhard (b. 23.9.1786)

Anna Stoez apparently married a Gerhard Thiessen and immigrated to Russia, although it is difficult to locate this family in Russia.

Maria Stoez married Gerhard Wiebe and immigrated to Russia in 1803, settling in Halbstadt, Molotschna. Gerhard Wiebe was



*Peter Stoesz (1838-1908), Saratov, Russia. Appears to be the only one of the children of Jakob Stoesz (1780-1859) of whom a picture is available. Photo courtesy of Our Stoesz Heritage, page 11.*

likely the son of Peter Wiebe of Walldorf, West Prussia. He died in 1830.

Heinrich Stoez did not marry. Kornelius Stoez (b. 1784) married Anna Klassen in 1804 and moved to the Koenigsberg area where he was apparently quite successful in economic endeavours.

Jacob Stoez (1780-1859) immigrated to Russia in 1817. It seems likely he settled at Halbstadt, possibly staying with his sister, and where he met his first wife Sara Dyck who was a charge of the Gerhard Wiebes. This Sara Dyck was likely the daughter of Heinrich

Dyck and Sara (nee Fast) who settled at Schoensee, Molotschna in 1803. Heinrich Dyck died before 1808 and his family was living with the in-laws the Arend Janzens in 1808. Jacob Stoez and Sara Dyck married on 24.10.1820, and Sara Dyck died 2.1.1822.

Jacob Stoez's second wife was Barbara Wiens (11.8.1893-16.6.1878). It seems she was the daughter of Jacob Wiens (1761-1812) of Rosenthal, later Chortitz, in the Old Colony, who was a minister in the church. In 1839 the Jacob Stoez family moved to the newly founded Bergthaler Colony, probably directly from Halbstadt. After Jacob's death, his widow married Heinrich Bergen (10.3.1804-23.10.1872) of Bergthal.

The children of Jacob Stoez are well documented in the Bergthaler records:

Maria (b. 10.11.1823) married 9.2.1843 Johann Klassen (b. 29.12.1820)

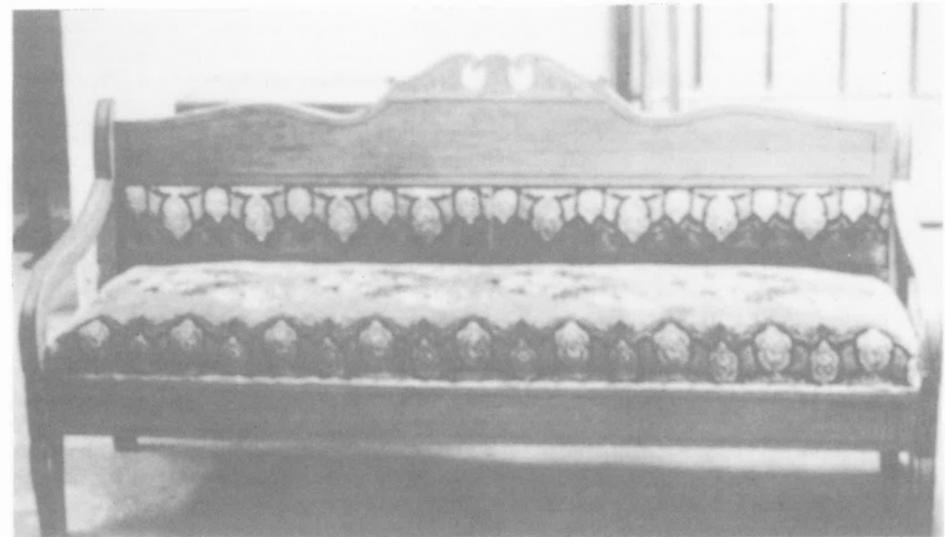
Anna (b.22.4.1827) married 6.4.1847 Frantz Harder (b. 8.1.1824)

Katherina (b. 2.6.1830) married Kornelius Peters (b. 17.7.1816, d. 22.3.1887). [He was a brother to Oberschulz Jakob Peters. Katherina's daughter Margaret married Johann S. Rempel and daughter Barbara married Chortitz deacon Johann D. Wiebe.]

Jacob (b. 21.5.1834, d. 12.10.1892) married 12.3.1857 Anna Wiebe (b. 12.3.1835, d. 3.7.1922). This family settled at Blumstein, near present-day Kleefeld, Manitoba, where they are listed in the 1881 Census.

Kornelius (b. 13.5.1836, d. 4.6.1900) married 11.8.1859 Aganetha Wiebe (b. 27.11.1840, d. 19.5.1914). This family also settled at Blumstein, Manitoba, where they are also listed in the 1881 Census. Kornelius was a minister in the Bergthaler Church.

*continued next page*



*An upholstered Ruhbank (rest bench or settee) built by Jakob W. Stoesz (1866-1952) of Grossweide, West Reserve, the son of Rev. Cornelius Stoesz (1836-1900). Jakob was a deacon in the Sommerfelder Gemeinde. The Ruhbank was built according to traditional Mennonite design and style. It is made of pine, has mortised and tenon joints with dowelling, and measures 181.7 centimetres long and 59.2 centimetres wide. It is part of the collection at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. Photo courtesy of Our Stoesz Heritage, page (ii).*

# Loeppky Heritage Cemetery

by Otto Loeppky, Steinbach, Manitoba

The Loeppky Heritage Cemetery located on the homestead of Johann T. Loeppky NW 6-7-4E tells some of the history and hardships of three generations of Johann Loeppkys: (1) Johann G. Loeppky (1833-1912), SW 6-7-4E; (2) Johann T. Loeppky (1857-1913) NW 6-7-4E; (3) Johann H. Loeppky (1878-1932) NE 6-7-4E.

Johann G. and Susanna Loeppky arrived Manitoba in July 1875 and settled in the village of Strassburg, south of present-day Niverville. They arrived with their 10 children. He took out a homestead on SW 6-7-4E. In 1875 the oldest son Johann T. married Helena Hiebert and then filed for a homestead on NW 6-7-4E next to his father's farm.

Johann and Susanna had another son, Heinrich, born in 1877. As was common in pioneer days, children often died very young. On December 17, 1880 Heinrich (age 3) died and was buried close to the road next to the driveway of the Johann G. Loeppky farm.

Less than a month later tragedy struck again. On January 12, 1881 Helena H. Loeppky died 12 days after the birth of their second child and the next day the daughter Helena died also. She and her infant daughter were buried together next to young Heinrich on the farm of Johan G. Loeppky.

Johann T. Loeppky married Anna Dueck in June of 1881 and during the next 11 years they had 7 children. Then in December 1900 their son Abram died at the age of 8.



*Loeppky Heritage Cemetery on NW 6-7-4E: View towards the west. The cemetery was restored by Peter Loeppky and Elizabeth Loeppky who farmed here until they retired to Niverville in about 1960. Abe. F. Loeppky of Niverville has looked after the cemetery since then. The farm is presently owned by Cornie F. Loeppky - "Loeppky Brothers". Photo courtesy of Jacob L. Peters, Winnipeg.*

There had been no burial in the cemetery since 1881 and for some unknown reason Abram was buried on the yard of his parents farm. Three days later Abram's grandmother, Susanna Toews Loeppky, also passed away and was buried next to her grandson Abram on the Johann T. Loeppky farm. Three months later 2-year-old Helena, the daughter of Johann T. and Anna Loeppky, was also buried there. This was the beginning of the Loeppky Heritage Cemetery.

We can only speculate as to the reasons for beginning a new cemetery. Oral tradition (as told by Jacob D. Loeppky to his son Abe F. Loeppky) has it that Johann T. Loeppky thought it was not right that his first wife, Helena and infant daughter were buried in a different location than the rest of the family. He offered \$50-\$100 to anyone who would dig up Helena's grave and move her remains to the present Loeppky Cemetery. There were no takers on this offer and her remains are in the unmarked location near the end of the driveway of the Johann G. Loeppky homestead.

In 1900, Johann T. Loeppky's oldest son, Johann H. married Saara Kliever and moved to the quarter section east of his father's farm. This was the third generation of Johann Loeppkys to farm in Strassburg.

In 1902, Anna T. Loeppky Kliever passed away and was buried in the cemetery.

In 1905, Jacob, the 10-month-old son of Johann H. and Saara, passed away, making him the first of four generations of Johann Loeppky descendants to be buried in the family plot.

In 1912, Johann G. Loeppky died and was buried next to his wife Susanna.

In 1913, Johann T. was also buried in the

cemetery beside his parents and 2 of his children.

In 1920, Peter, the 8-year-old son of Johann H. and Saara, was buried in the cemetery.

In 1928, Saara, the wife of Johann H., died and was buried in the Loeppky Cemetery. Six years later in 1932, Johann H. was laid to rest next to his wife Saara.

In 1947, Anna, the second wife of Johann T., passed away; she was buried next to her husband. This completed the burial of three generations of Johann Loeppkys and their spouses.

In 1962, the youngest son of Johann T. Loeppky, Peter D., was buried in the cemetery. In 1991, the youngest daughter of Johann T. Loeppky, Anna D., was also buried in the Loeppky Cemetery.

At present, the cemetery has two empty plots. Could these be in memory of young Heinrich and Helena with her infant daughter who are buried in the unmarked location on the Johann G. Loeppky homestead?

## The Family Stoesz

*continued from previous page*

Peter (b. 11.7.1838) married Augusta Klassen. William Schroeder tells the story of how Peter became disillusioned with the Bergthalers and left for the Samara Colony where he died at Saratov in 1909.

Johann (b. 9.10.1839) married 13.11.1860 Maria Hoepfner (b.22.9.1841)

David (b. 5.10.1842, d. 16.1.1903) married 27.11.1862 Maria Wiebe (b. 18.12.1844). David was the Aeltester of the Chortitzer Gemeinde in Canada from 1882. In the 1881 Census, he is listed at Bergthal, Manitoba.

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Coming in the  
December 1996  
issue of *Preservings*;  
Feature Story:  
The Pioneers and Entrepreneurs  
of Steinbach

# “Totally Indiscreet and Vain”

## Helena Siemens Friesen 1812-88

by Ralph Friesen,  
306 Montgomery Ave, Winnipeg, Mb  
R3L 1T4

The dog barks and Helena closes the oven door on the loaves she has just put in, straightens her back with a small groan, and walks quickly to the window. She sees two wagons, one pulled by a brown horse, the other by a spotted grey, coming up the drive, passing the blooming plum trees. She looks more intently—her eyes are not what they used to be—and recognizes Goossen and Loewen in one wagon, and the young Bishop Toews, upright and stern, in the other.

She wipes her hands nervously on her apron. Abraham is not home. She knows why these elders have come. Her heart beats faster. They will have hard questions—will God provide her with wise answers?

Such might have been the scene leading up to one of the most critical moments in the life of my great-great-grandmother Helena Friesen (nee Siemens, Feb 15, 1812-Sept. 1, 1888). Although very little is known about her, we do know that, as a Mennonite woman in 19th Century Russia, she dared to raise her voice in passionate opposition to the elders of the Kleine Gemeinde. She did this even though she knew very well that women were expected to be meek and obedient.

As nothing of her own writing exists, we have only the perspective of the elders themselves, of her encounters with them. Whatever she said has to be inferred. What is not in doubt is her courage in speaking at all.

Helena was the daughter of Claszi Siemens (1758-1834), a well-to-do Wirtschaft owner of Rosenort, Molotschna Colony, and Catherina Friesen (b. 1768) whose family originated in Muensterberg, Prussia. She was the youngest in a family of nine children (Note 1).

In 1830 at the age of 18, Helena married Abraham F. Friesen (1807-1891), the eldest son of a Grosse Gemeinde ministerial family. For a time, they lived with his mother and step-father on Wirtschaft 19 in Rosenort. Abraham became a successful Wirtschaft owner in Neukirch, Molotschna, and one of the leading ministers in the Kleine Gemeinde.

As his wife, Helena would have been expected to set an example of correct behaviour. She would have come under especially close scrutiny because her brother-in-law, Johann F. Friesen, who also lived in Neukirch, was elected Aeltester in 1847.

Helena had 11 children altogether, and of the five children born consecutively between 1838 and 1846, all died in infancy. That period of her life, from age 26 to 34, must have been filled with grief.

At the same time, Helena was accustomed to the relative comfort of having her own home and above average household income.



*Helena S. Friesen (1835-1911) and her husband Heinrich B. Friesen (1836-1900) Jansen, Nebraska. Helena later married the Kleine Gemeinde Bishop Abraham L. Friesen and moved to Meade, Kansas. Her son Abraham F. Friesen served as the first minister of the Brüderthaler Gemeinde (E.M.B.) in Steinbach. Photo courtesy of great-grandson W. A. “Bert” Friesen, Montrose Street, Winnipeg.*

There was, for example, enough money to enable her to buy or make an attractive new dress and wear it to church, one Sunday in late June of 1856 in Neukirch. But this pride of appearance offended the ministers, who wanted the wife of one of their leading members to set an example of humility and modesty.

Before the service began that day, she was admonished by some of them “regarding her new-fashioned dress.” Helena was 44, an age that might have been considered inappropriate for a woman to want to take pains about her looks.

To be admonished in the presence of the Gemeinde would have been humiliating for anyone, and doubly so for a leading minister’s wife. Still, Helena must have raised an argument, because the elders threatened her with exclusion from communion. There was really no alternative but to give in. As she “promised to let it go and not to be a stumbling block, she

was allowed to partake of communion.”(Note 2).

Despite this unpleasant incident, Helena was otherwise active in support of Abraham’s ministerial work. During the early 1860s she sometimes accompanied him on his frequent travels to the Crimea to visit families and minister in the Kleine Gemeinde congregation there. Their ministry was received as warm and loving, as described in a letter by Jakob A. Wiebe written in 1869:

“Oh, my beloved Ohm Abraham, how will we not rejoice if we could once more personally receive you together with your wife, as brothers and sisters. . . often it felt as if we were in heaven while we sang many a beautiful song together” (Note 3).

In 1867 the Abraham Friesen family moved from Neukirch to the Borosenko vil-

lage of Rosenfeld, where they established their Wirtschaft. Helena's brother Gerhard, seven years her senior, and his wife and children also settled in Borosenko, in Annafeld.

Then in 1871, when Helena was nearly 60 and looking forward to a future of peace and respect in the community, a great disruption occurred. Some time in the month of August or September she and Abraham took a trip to Molotschna, where they stayed for at least two weeks. They left their youngest son Johann, 19 at the time, at home alone with the hired maid, Helena's niece a daughter to her brother Gerhard. The niece was also named Helena.

The younger Helena was 29, unusually old for an unmarried "girl," and perhaps it was for this reason, as well as the fact of her close kinship, that led the parents to believe that no harm would come of leaving her and Johann together to take care of the homestead. As it happened, however Helena became pregnant, and four months later this became public knowledge (Note 4).

An extensive inquiry into the matter, led by the 30-year-old leading minister Peter Toews, began in December, 1871. The elders took swift action against the younger Helena Siemens, a church member, separating her from the Gemeinde. When she expressed her remorse she was taken back in at a brotherhood meeting on Sunday, February 27, 1872. At that same meeting the elder Friesens were reprimanded for not having been "watchful enough," but they were forgiven for this failure.

On May 9th the baby—who would also be named Johann—was born. Just five days later Johann Friesen presented himself as a candidate for baptism, a prerequisite both to church membership and to marriage. These events prompted the elders to resume their investigation.

At some time during the next few days Helena Friesen, according to Toews, "made certain statements, respecting which the Gemeinde did not want to be satisfied." The elders, seeking to be satisfied, went to see the Gerhard Siemens' in Annafeld, and became convinced that Abraham and Helena Friesen had more responsibility for what had occurred than they had been willing to admit.

The elders drove directly from Annafeld back to Abraham in Rosenfeld "and presented to him how we found the matter. That his wife had definitely said things which were totally indiscreet and vain."

The blame for the wrong-doing of the young people, which for a time had rested on the younger Helena Siemens (no one seems to have thought that Johann shared in the responsibility); had now shifted to the elder Friesens, with Helena Friesen singled out for special criticism.

Toews does not repeat the "certain statements" which were unsatisfactory, those "things which were totally indiscreet and vain." Maybe Helena was "indiscreet" in questioning the elders' motives in going to such lengths on the matter. Perhaps her "vanity" consisted of a spirited defence of herself.

Whatever the case, her willingness to express outright disagreement was almost unheard of, for a Mennonite woman of her time.

Abraham was not persuaded to join in the criticisms against his wife. When the elders now again pointed out to the Friesens that "their conduct to the youth had been too careless. . ." Ohm Abraham Friesen together with his wife became "very indisposed, and in their passion renounced the Gemeinde."

And that is the historical record of Helena Siemens Friesen. From the point of view of the Gemeinde's male hierarchy, Helena is depicted as hot-headed, disrespectful and stubborn.

But what would her perspective have been? What did she say? That there are worse sins than to love beauty or to be passionate? That her son and niece had admitted to wrongdoing and loved each other and wanted to marry, so everyone should now get on with life? That she had not condoned what had happened, and had always given of herself for the Gemeinde. That the elders had gone too far in trying to turn her husband and other members of her family against her?

She and Abraham certainly had some sympathy from the Gemeinde. Not only were the elders faulted for "not having been careful enough" in their dealings, but Toews was actually obliged to postpone a planned trip to Molotschna, as "many brethren presently stood in suspicion of us here regarding the withdrawal of Ohm Abraham Friesen."

The rift between the Friesens and the Toews [Blumenhoff] branch of the Gemeinde was never healed. Helena and Abraham associated themselves with the Gemeinde of Aeltester A. L. Friesen, and when they emigrated in 1874, they stayed with the Heubodner group, going to Jansen, Nebraska, while their three children went to Manitoba. Their renunciation of the Gemeinde therefore, was not absolute, as the A. L. Friesen group

was a part of the Kleine Gemeinde.

Young Johann S. Friesen was received into the Gemeinde through baptism on Sunday, August 13, 1872, leaving the way open for marriage to his cousin Helena Siemens on August 24th. The couple emigrated to Blumenort, Manitoba in 1874, then moved to Nebraska to join Johann's parents in Jansen (Note 5).

When Helena died in 1888, she and Abraham had been married for 58 years. She was survived by her husband and three of her 11 children. In their last years, Helena and Abraham lived in Jansen with their daughter Helena, who was later to marry Heubodner leader A. L. Friesen, as her first husband Heinrich B. Friesen had died.

Youngest son Johann and his family lived quietly on a farm in Nebraska, and my great-grandfather, Abraham S. Friesen, became an entrepreneur and community leader who, like his mother, had more than one clash with church authorities. [Editor's note: A granddaughter, Elisabeth F. Reimer married Heinrich E. Plett of Blumenort, Manitoba, and founded a large family of over 2,000 descendants many of whom live in Belize and Mexico.

#### Endnotes:

1. Delbert Plett, "Hans Siemens, Neustaedterwald," unpublished manuscript, 1994, pp 1-2.
2. The diary of Reverend Johann Dueck, in *Leaders*, p. 477. Dueck refers only to Mrs. Friesen of Neukirch, and there were several Mrs. Friesens in the village. The most prominent one other than the Aeltester's wife, though, would have been Mrs. Abraham F. Friesen.
3. Plett, *Leaders*, p. 799.
4. Plett, *Profile*, p. 154. My description of the following events is based on the diary of Aeltester Peter Toews, pp. 151-157.
5. Plett, *Profile*, p. 271.

## Abram S. Friesen - 1913 Reisebericht

by Ralph Friesen,  
306 Montgomery Ave, Winnipeg,  
Mb R3L 1T4

Half a year after the death of his wife Katharina, on February 26, 1913, my great-grandfather, Abraham S. Friesen (1848-1916), then 65, embarked on a train journey of epic proportions. He covered at least 10,040 miles, and traversed half the North American continent, twice. He reported on his journey at length, in the pages of several editions of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*.

Beginning in Steinbach, Manitoba, his home since immigrating from South Russia in 1874, Abraham went down to Nebraska and Kansas, then to California and Oregon. After

an extended stay on the west coast, he returned to Kansas and Nebraska, went back to Oregon, and finally home to Manitoba, crossing the western provinces. He returned to Steinbach on October 7, 1913, seven-and-a-half months after he had begun, no longer alone. He had with him a new bride, the widow Maria Ediger.

It was customary for Manitoba Mennonites of Abraham's time to visit friends and relatives on these trips to the south, eating and lodging with them, and visiting. Although Abraham had been a hard-working businessman all his adult life, he now threw himself into a round of non-stop socializing. Taking as a home base his younger brother Johann's

*continued next page*



Abram S. Friesen in his retirement years. Courtesy of Reflections on our Heritage, page 82.

*continued from previous page*

home in Jansen, Nebraska, Abraham stopped in at place after place, usually for lunch or fasha:

“On Monday we stayed at home until noon and then drove to Rev. D. A. Friesens for fasha and to Abraham Rempels in the evening. On the 18th [of March] we drove to Gerhard Rempels for lunch and from there to Aeltester J. J. Fast. They have a sick daughter, who cannot walk. For the evening we drove to Isaak Thiessens, my brother’s children, and then back home for night” (MR. 08/13/13).

In all, as he stated with some pride, Abraham made 54 visits in Jansen in the month he was there.

In May Abraham took the train to California. Near Reedley, he looked up the Franz Ennses, who had acquired a large alfalfa and dairy farm. By Abraham’s careful calculations, the farm would yield an annual revenue of \$15,000.00. Abraham was impressed, but not at all carried away:

“I have been to so many places on my trip, and I liked almost all of them very much. ... but that is something I have found out on this journey, that our loving God has a piece of land on this earth for each person, from which he can make a living until he is called away. Then, at the end, he needs only a very small place” (MR 08/27/13).

On a visit to the Salomon Edigers at his next stop in Dallas, Oregon, Abraham listened with great interest to the news that Mrs. Ediger’s sister, Maria, a widow, wanted to travel from Kansas to Oregon and then to Manitoba, but was unwilling to undertake the journey alone. Then and there, Abraham decided he would go to Kansas and ask her to be his travelling companion “for the rest of

our lives.”

In Kansas he went straight to the town of Inman and proposed to Mrs. Ediger, who accepted. When Abraham took the train back west, he had a travelling companion.

In early October, 1913, the Friesens returned to Steinbach. Two years later they moved to Dallas, where they lived until Abraham’s death in November, 1916. At the end, as he had said, he needed “only a very small place.”

His “Reisebericht”, which I came across after publishing his story in *Historical*

*Sketches* is a treasure of anecdote and folk philosophy, revealing a contemplative and wryly humorous side to this very active member of Steinbach’s pioneer community.

[Editor’s Note: It is expected that the “Reisebericht” of Abram S. Friesen, which is representative of the travelling done by well-to-do residents of the East Reserve of the time, will be published in Volume Four of the “East Reserve Historical Series”, together with an introductory and explanatory chapter by Ralph.]

## Rev. Heinrich Doerksen 1855-1933

by Randy Kehler, Steinbach, Manitoba

Throughout the years, researchers of the East Reserve have been able to come up with approximate locations of most of the early Mennonite villages and the year that each broke up. My great-grandfather Rev. Heinrich Doerksen lived in the village of Schoenthal, approximately two miles southeast of present-day New Bothwell, for over twenty years.

It has been suggested that this village had been situated on the NE20-7-5E according to a village study done in 1988. Most seem to agree that Schoenthal was dissolved shortly after a tornado struck the village in 1891.

Recently I visited the Manitoba Public Archives to research some of the old homestead records and came across a letter that Rev. Doerksen had written to the Department of Interior. Contained in the letter is the information as to the location of the village and the exact year that it broke up.

Both differ from what researchers over the years had concluded. The letters contain great historical significance to the early years of Schoenthal. Please note that the letters were translated by someone in the Department of the Interior and are reproduced exactly as found.

### Letter One:

Translation from German

Chortitz, 3rd February, 1897

To the Minister of the Interior  
Ottawa, Canada

Honoured Sir:

To bring my petition clearly before you it is necessary to lay the circumstances before you, which I do most humbly.

Thus, in the year 1874, I immigrated (in my twentieth year) with my parents to Manitoba. In February 1875 to secure a living for myself, I took up a homestead namely the N. W. 1/4 and the N.E. 1/4 to be bought later (pre-emption) on Section 21. Tp.7-Range 5. E.



Heinrich Doerksen Homestead. The house was built in 1896 and was the first house built outside the village of Schönthal. Photo courtesy of Erdman Kehler, Steinbach, Manitoba.



1913. Rev. Heinrich Doerksen (1855-1933) and Katharina Dueck (1860-1943), of the village of Schönthal, approximately two miles southeast of present-day New Bothwell, Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Randy Kehler, Steinbach, Manitoba.

In the spring of 1875 more friends came from Russia, and as most of the open prairie land had been taken up, my uncle Peter Epp, persuaded me to give up my pre-emption which I had took up as a homestead. About five years later he left the said 1/4 section and settled on the West - Reserve. I tried to obtain the 1/4 section at the Dominion Land Office as a pre-emption, but was refused.

In as much as in 1876 I married and my family may be termed one rich in blessings, consisting of 7 sons and 4 daughters (with the exception of the second youngest son) we are all alive. I feel obligated to look about for more land. Not long ago I called to the Dominion Land Office, in regard to the above named 1/4 section, which is now for sale @ \$3.00 per acre. First this is to expensive for me, the land lies low and if there is much rain is under water, for the most part.

About 5 years ago I made a ditch for draining between my homestead and the said 1/4

section, one mile long as far as the N 1/2 section 28. where there is a small river. This succeeded in drying up a large part of the said place, which was only for my own benefit to take away water from the easterly part of my homestead. But \$3.00 per acre is much to expensive for me, as there is a good bit of work to be done to dry it entirely.

This my petition is to request most obediently that you will allow me to take up the pre-emption. i.e. at a rate of \$1.00 per acre. If not, still kindly let me know what your wishes are on the subject.

Respectfully  
Your obedient well-wisher

Rev. Heinrich Doerksen  
My address is:  
Rev. H. Doerksen  
Chortitz P. O.  
Manitoba

**Letter Two:**

Translation from German  
To His Excellency  
The Minster of the Interior  
A Request: Honored Sir:

I received permission from you three years ago to take up as a homestead the N.E. Quarter, Section 21. Township 7. Range 5.E. (which lies next to my Homestead). I have drained the said Quarter completely, by means of a ditch 20 feet wide and 3/4 mile long and have also 7 acres under the plough. Therefore I humbly beg you to send me the Patent for the afore mention quarter.

In the hope that you will take my request into consideration, and will fulfil it. I sign myself as  
Your obedient servant and well-wisher

Rev. Heinrich Doerksen  
Chortitz P. O.  
November 22nd 1902

**Third Letter:**

Translation from German  
Chortitz P. O.  
January 31rst 1903

To the Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
Ottawa

Honourable Sir:

Your letter of instant to hand. An error must have crept into the statement of the 13th of the month. I lived in the village from 1874 to 1895 and managed my homestead, which I entered in the month of February 1875, from the village. The village is situated on the S.W. 1/4. Sec. 21. 7. 5E. In 1896 the village was broken up and I moved onto my own homestead where I still live.

On the first February, 1897 I asked you in a letter, whether I could buy the N.E. 1/4. Sec. 21. 7. 5. which lay vacant beside my homestead, for \$1.00 an acre adding the remark that the said quarter was very low, and would be useful to me only for pasture land and hay, and that only in part.

Thereupon I received a letter from the Department, that the said quarter section could not be sold under \$3.00 per acre, but at the same time I obtained permission to take up said 1/4 Sec. 21.7.5. as a second homestead, which I did on the 11th June, 1897.

I have not cultivated the acres required by law, directly on the said 1/4 section, but I have broken 30 acres of pasture land beside the ploughed land on my first homestead, the N.E. 1/4, and have sowed it three times already. I did not do this out of trickery, but firstly to have the ploughed land adjacent and in one piece. Secondly because the 30 acres of pasture land were better suited for ploughing then any part of the N.W. 1/4, and in this way I had 110 acres of ploughed land in one piece on the N.W. 1/4 section.

On the N.W. 1/4 section I have merely 7 acres under cultivation and after I have now drained this said quarter section dry. I have used and arranged the remaining 153 acres for hay and pasture.

# 1873 Bounty Grants

## Jean Baptist Desautels dit Lapointe, the French-Canadian land owner on the Mennonite East Reserve

by Jacob K. Doerksen,  
Ile Des Chenes, Manitoba.

When the Canadian Government offered the Mennonite delegation from Russia eight townships of land the term must have been used rather loosely because at the time that the offer was made on July 23, 1873, eight quarter sections of those offered had already been given to other settlers and a number more were given others before the Mennonites arrived.

One of those to receive a quarter section in 1873 was Jean Baptiste Desautels dit Lapointe. He received the NW23-7-6E. This was one of the quarters dividing the two villages of Blumenort and Blumenhof.

Jean Baptist and his wife Julie Amyot were both born to French-Canadian parents in Joliette, Quebec. They left Quebec for the United States with their two children sometime before 1858. Three more children were born to them before they came to what was called Red River in June of 1864. They lived in St. Boniface before moving to Lorette, a community of four families, in 1868.

They stayed over winter at this location only until the summer of 1869 before moving further southeast to Oak Point, now Saint Anne des Chenes. Two mile east of the village Jean Baptist bought a tract of land from the old Indian Chief "Grandes Oreilles". The property was located between the Seine River and Coulee des Sources. They built their home close to the Coulee. At this point a beaver dam stretched across the Coulee. Jean Baptist reinforced it for a source of water power and set up a saw mill and flour mill which he operated for many years.

On December 1 of the year that the Desautel family moved to the Coulee, the territory originally granted to the Hudson Bay Company was to be transferred to the Government of Canada. The Government intended to govern this newly acquired territory from Eastern Canada. The Metis living in the territory feared that land ownership would not be honoured and as a result formed a Provisional Government, led by Louis Riel, to negotiate Provincial status for the territory. The transfer was delayed until June 15, 1870.

In the process, one, Thomas Scott was executed by the Metis. This caused a big uproar in Ontario. Troops were sent from eastern Canada to facilitate an orderly transfer of ownership. A year later the troops were discharged of their duties. Many returned back east but many stayed on as settlers. Each one was offered a Military Bounty Grant of land for the service they had rendered.

The Order in Council of April 25th, 1871 made provision for all ex-serviceman: "Each officer and man who is or has been in the First

or Ontario, or in the Second or Quebec Battalion of Rifles, now stationed in Manitoba. . . shall be entitled to a free grant, without actual residence, of one quarter section." Subsequently, until 1877 every recruit taken for service in the garrison maintained at Winnipeg got the same. Jean Baptist was awarded the NW 23-7-6E.

The story of how he became owner of his quarter section of land goes somewhat as follows. In July or August of 1873 Jean Baptist and a surveyor by the name of Mr. Nelson visited the land in question and it appears that there must have been an error on the surveyor's Post. The quarter that he had picked was actually on Section 23-7-5E but the post was marked range 6E and that is how it was registered.

In December 1877, Johann Warkentin

(1817-1886) of Blumenhof approached Jean Baptist and asked if he would let him have the land in question if in turn he would receive the same quarter in range 5E. Jean Baptist agreed and surrendered his title to Mr. Codd the Dominion Lands Agent. It took until December 11, 1884 for Jean Baptist to get the quarter he had originally picked and Johann Warkentin got the land bordering Blumenhof for \$1.00. Jean Baptist retained ownership of the land in range 5E for another ten years. In 1895 he sold his last holding on the Mennonite Reserve to Johann Doerksen for \$500.

Editor's Note: For additional information regarding this incident from the standpoint of Johann Warkentin (1817-1886) of Blumenhof, see Royden K. Loewen, *Blumenort*, page 231-232



Jean Baptiste Destautel dit Lapointe and his three sons - Avila, Eugene and Alexandre, age one year. Photo courtesy of Manitoba Pageant September 1958 (*Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba*, 1958), page 9.

# Johann E. Funk

## Pioneer Photographer: A Photo Essay

by Linda Buhler

Johann Funk was born on January 26, 1878 to Peter Funk (b. Nov. 25, 1841) and Elizabeth Derksen (b. March 25, 1846). His parents had arrived in Canada on the S.S. Peruvian No. 27 in July 1874 and are recorded as residents of the Schoenwiese area (East Reserve) in the 1881 Federal Census.

Traditionally, a child adopted his mother's maiden name as his/her second name in which case Johann would have used the initial "D" for Derksen. However, because there was already a Johann D. Funk in the area, he had to use his mother's given name. This caused him much grief in school when he was called upon to sign his full name as "Johann Elizabeth Funk".

He was possibly better known as "Trailer Funk" because of the cars that he rebuilt into trailers (they numbered over 100), however his earlier occupation as area photographer has now earned him recognition because of the historical significance of his work.

Over forty of his original glass plate negatives are still in existence and provide valuable insight into those early years. It is said that a large number of the glass negatives were recycled as windows in his chicken coop. Although the exact years are not known during which he offered his professional services, it would seem that they date around the late 1890s, ending approximately 1904. It is possible that he quit this type of work after he married Barbara Wiebe (b. August 4, 1884) in 1903.

Funk was one of the first in the Reinfeld area to own an automobile and was often called upon when someone needed a ride to Winnipeg or needed the services of a doctor or midwife. As the new Mennonite immigrants arrived in Niverville in the 1920s, he was known to pick them up at the train station and drive them to their new homes. Their home was also opened to some of these families until such time as they found a place to live.

Another one of Funk's ventures was the co-op telephone exchange in the Chortitz area which he began in 1912. Some years later, his brother Jacob took over the exchange.

Despite losing one eye in the 1920s when some metal chips flew into his face, Funk continued to be his entrepreneurial self. From drilling wells with the rig that he bought to designing and building spinning wheels with his wood lathe, he was always interested in new things.

His first wife Barbara died of tuberculosis in 1907 at the age of 22, leaving Johann with a small daughter named Maria. Funk remarried the same year to Helena Klippenstein (b. Dec. 16, 1886), daughter of Heinrich Klippensteins of Chortitz. Nine children were

*continued on p. 43*



1902. Johann E. Funk and first wife Barbara Wiebe, daughter of deacon Johann D. Wiebe (1853-1909), Chortitz, see Presevings, No. 6, p9.



The Johann Funk (b.1841) and Katarina (nee Derksen) Funk farm in Schoenwiese on SE 9-7-5e. Later sold to Ben Klippenstein whose sister Helena was Johann E. Funk's second wife. Klippensteins moved to Paraguay and sold to Heinrich L. Hiebert whose wife Katharina was a sister to Johann E. Funk.



NE 18-7-3 Abram Loepky residence in Schanzenberg area, 1900.



*L-r: Anna Friesen (b. 1881), Abram L. Friesen (b. 1879), Susanna Hiebert (b. 1885), David Hiebert (b. 1883), Aron L. Friesen (b. 1886) father of former Steinbach mayor Ernie Friesen. The Friesens were children of Aron Friesen and Anna Loeppky. The Hieberts were children of Jacob S. Hiebert and Katherina Hiebert (circa 1902). This photo is courtesy of Peter J. R. Funk, Mitchell.*



*The Jacob Doerksen family: L-R: Katharina (b.1889), Helena (b.1886), Mrs. Helena Doerksen (nee Dueck b. 1867) holding Anna (b.1903), Abram (b. 1887), Jacob Doerksen (b.1865), Jacob (b. 1892), Heinrich (b. 1894). Sitting in front: Elisabeth (b. 1898), David (b. 1900)*

born of this union.

The Funks lived on the NE8-7-5E until 1948 when they sold the farm and moved to Main Street in Steinbach where son Abe still resides. There are apparently three or four unidentified and unmarked graves on the old farmyard and it is not known if one of these belongs to his first wife.

One granddaughter fondly remembers being allowed to go to Winnipeg in the 1930s with Funk and being dropped off at a theatre there to watch a movie while he conducted business in the area. She also remembers the two cups on the kitchen window sill: one for his teeth and the other for his glass eye.

Johann E. Funk passed away in 1968 at the age of 90. No doubt he was unaware of the historical significance that his photographs would one day have. Many of his pictures remain unidentified. Anyone with information on his photographic work is invited to contact the HSHS.

Many of the glass plate negatives of Johann E. Funk have been preserved by his son Abe Funk of Steinbach which he has graciously made available to the HSHS. We acknowledge Jim Peters, Photography teacher SRSS for his assistance in reproducing them.



*Unidentified photo. A sports team perhaps?*



*Jacob E. Funk (brother to Johann E. Funk) and wife Margaretha Rempel (daughter to Johann S. Rempel, Chortitz)*



*Peter Funk (b. 1841), wife Elizabeth nee Derksen (b. 1846) and daughter Katharina. Peter Funks were the parents of Johann E. Funk. This photo courtesy of Elizabeth Loewen, Steinbach.*

# Material Culture

## H.W. Reimer House

by Heather Dram

It was more than a house - it was a great house and more importantly a home for many people.

What a wonderful thing to witness and be a part of, I thought, as I listened to Adeline Kroeker and Naomi Lepp reminisce about life in and around their grandparents' home, the H.W. Reimer house.

The grandeur and style of the home, which was built in 1911, reflected the family's success. The H.W. Reimer store was known throughout rural Manitoba and "had no equal for size" (Abe Warkentin pp. 123-125).

The house had 14 rooms, indoor plumbing, front and back verandas or porches, a summer kitchen, maple hardwood floors throughout, a solid oak bannister and massive staircase to the second level. Also located upstairs was a large sitting room or "courting room". The house had many windows, some with dormers, and a large attic at the top of the house.

Former Mayor Wes Reimer remembers playing for hours with his cousins in the attic, lost in the excitement of having their own space and peeking out the windows. Wes also recalls sliding down the bannister and Adeline stated that this was a **huge** game for all the grandchildren!

Another area of interest to the children of the house was the large pantry just off the

kitchen. A number of the grandchildren had special ties to the sewing room, as Naomi relates she and many others were born in that room. Adeline recalls that the furniture in the house was always in the same place and never re-arranged.

Further discussion of the interior of the house led to the ladies remembering how the alabaster walls were not painted but just washed down each spring. The doors in the house were made from hemlock wood which was sent from British Columbia. The doors into the living room and dining room each had one solid pane of olive-green stained-glass windows.

The rare indoor plumbing was installed throughout the upstairs and lower level. There was an ensuite bathroom off the large master bedroom on the ground floor. The nearby "stony brook" or Steinbach creek provided the water supply.

The house was located between the present site of the TD bank and the Steinbach Credit Union on Main Street in downtown Steinbach. The orchard of plum, apple and crabapple trees and the tennis court stretched out the back of the house behind the summer kitchen on the present day site of the TD Bank. Heinrich's store used to be just across Main Street from his house.

The landscaping around the house contained many flower beds, trees, sidewalks and



Heinrich W. Reimer walking over to see his store. Photo courtesy of Adeline Kroeker.



Anna Reimer, nee Wiebe (1866-1932). Photo courtesy of Naomi Lepp.



Heinrich W. Reimer (1864-1941). Photo courtesy of Naomi Lepp.

a fenced-in yard. The ladies talked about the beautiful scent of the apple blossoms from the two huge trees on either side of the front walk. The scent would fill the upstairs bedrooms when the windows were opened.

There was a great barn on the property where numerous horses, wagons sleighs and tack were kept and cared for. Travellers and shoppers looked forward to a much needed rest after their long journeys to town.

The house was home to Anna and Henry W. Reimer who were married on May 3, 1885. (John C. Reimer, ed., *Family Register ... Klaas & Helena Reimer* (Steinbach, 1958), pages 72-76. They were blessed with many children; Anna, Henry, Katherina, Elizabeth (died in infancy), Jacob, Klaas, John, Abram (died in infancy), Peter, Margaret, Bernard and Erdman (died in infancy). Many others found a home in the Reimer house. Naomi and Adeline talked about the "children's girl" or Kindermadchen, the nannies that kept care of the youngsters until the age of 16.

There was also a live-in seamstress (year round) and many maids, gardeners and caretakers. Some of these people were immigrants needing a place to stay before getting settled

*Sunny Sunday afternoons spent visiting on the porch. Photo courtesy of Naomi Lepp.*

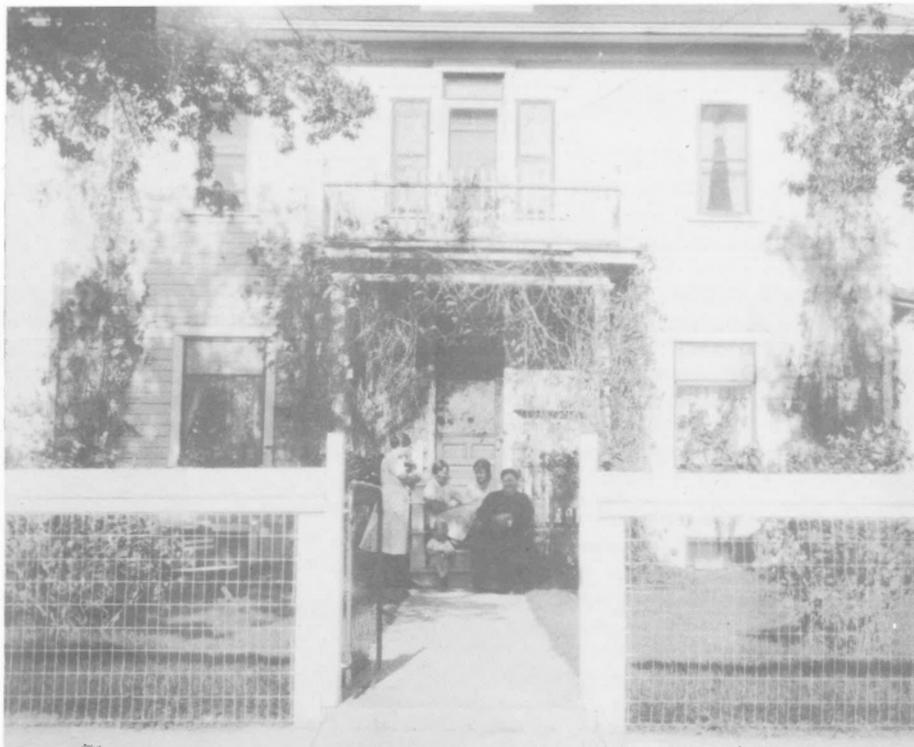
in on their own, or needing employment and others were people working on consignment to pay off bills owed to the H.W. Reimer store. The house was always bustling with activity. The ladies talked of spending Sunday afternoons in leisure, visiting and picnicking in the front yard.

The ladies discussed many wonderful and happy times at the H.W. Reimer house. Their eyes misted over with warmth and pride as they went through the collection of photos and family mementos. Such a strong sense of community and heritage will surely be a valuable contribution to this growing and vital town, for knowledge of the past leads us forward to a clearer and brighter future.

**About the Author:** Heather Dram is a homemaker and mother of two who recently moved to Steinbach. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in history and a Bachelor of Education. She is interested in Mennonite culture and the history of the Steinbach area.



*Heather Dram*



*H.W. Reimer House in full bloom of summer. Photo courtesy of Adeline Kroeker.*



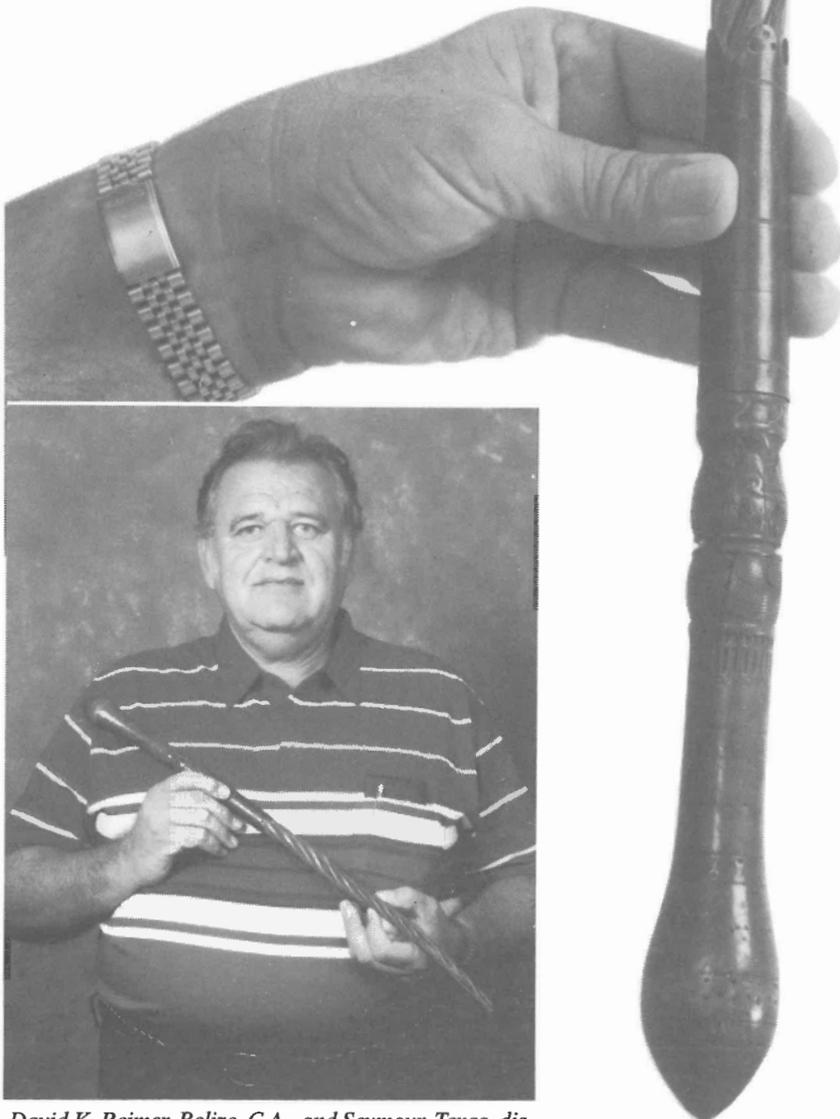
*H. W. Reimer House from afar. Photo courtesy of Adeline Kroeker.*

# Klaas Reimer's Cane

by D. F. Plett

The legacy of Klaas Reimer (1770-1837), founder of the Kleine Gemeinde church in Imperial Russia, has generally been associated with the churches which evolved from his ministerial work, namely: The Evangelical Mennonite Conference; the Canadian wing of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman); the former Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church (since amalgamated with the

*An enlargement shows the brass ring added by Johann F. Reimer, grandson of Ohm Klaas. An enlargement shows the intricate carving of the cane's handle, particularly the seven rings. Note that Ohm Klaas carved the year "1792" and his initials in the last ring, just above the brass. Photo by Cliff Inscho.*



*David K. Reimer, Belize, C.A., and Seymour, Texas, displays the walking cane carved by his great-great grandfather, Klaas Reimer founder of the Kleine Gemeinde church. Photo by Cliff Inscho.*

MBs); and the modern-day "Kleingemeinde" in Mexico and Belize.

One only needs to stand briefly at the Trans-Canada Highway to see trucks with names like "Reimer Express", "Loewen Millwork", "Barkman Concrete", "Penners Transfer", "Penn-co Construction" and "Southeast Transport" roaring down the highway, to appreciate the impact which Ohm Klaas's descendants have made in the economic realm.

Therefore it may come as a surprise to many that this sturdy reformer, who translated Dutch writings to German and who was willing to be banished to Siberia by the Russian Czar rather than compromise his faith, was also an artistic man and creator of wood carvings.

Two items of his work are still extant, a pencil box and a cane. He carved the cane in 1792 while he was still single. Later he and his wife bought a half share of her uncle Cornelius Epp's Wirtschaft in Neunhuben, Prussia, now Poland.

The handle of the cane is shaped with a bulb at the end with seven intricately carved rings. The year and the initials "K R" are carved into the ring separating the handle from the stem. The stem consists of a half dozen or so strands carved so that the strands curve and wrap around each other circularly all the way to the point, some 20 inches. The cane is carved out of one piece of wood.

The tradition with this particular artifact was that it was inherited by the youngest son. Thus it did not go to Klaas' oldest son Abraham—whose descendants settled in Blumenort and Steinbach, Manitoba in 1874; rather the cane went to son Klaas F. Reimer (1812-1874) whose descendants settled in Jansen, Nebraska. Like his father, Klaas Jr. was a successful Vollwirt, owing a Wirtschaft in the Molotschna village of Tiege.

But Klaas Jr. died just before the emigration, and so the cane was inherited by his youngest son of his first marriage, Johann F. Reimer (1860-1941).

Johann travelled to Manitoba in 1883 for the funeral of his sister Helena, and met Elisabeth, his wife to be, the daughter of his cousin, Blumenort deacon Abraham R. Reimer. After his marriage Johann and his family lived in Blumenort, Manitoba on SW 29-7-6e.

It was Johann who fashioned a brass ring around the top of the stem of the cane to keep the strands from unravelling. On his death, the cane was inherited by his youngest son Peter R. E. Reimer, who followed his brother Bishop Cornelius R. E. Reimer to Mexico in 1948, and from there to Belize, Central America, ten years later.

At his death in 1968 the cane was given to David K. Reimer, his youngest son and also the youngest grandson of Johann F. Reimer. David K. Reimer is a machinery dealer with offices in Belize (Box 427) and Seymour (Box 768), Texas, 76380. Dave is keenly interested in the history of his people and is proud to be the owner of an artifact with such great historical significance.

# Jacob Doerksen "Irrgarten"

by Jacob Doerksen,  
Ile Des Chenes, Manitoba

One of the forms of Fraktur art of Dutch-German Mennonites while they lived in Europe was an "Irrgarten" (maze or labyrinth). One that has been preserved was one made by 14 year-old Jacob Doerksen in Schönthal, Bergthal Colony South Russia on February 28, 1851.

Jacob was the oldest son of Abraham Doerksen and Helena Schmidt. Jacob's father, Abraham had been left a widower with a four year old son, also named Abraham, in 1831. His first wife was Regina Hoepfner born in 1804. After being a widower for two years he married his second wife, Helena, on November 12, 1833. On May 23, 1836 Jacob was born. He got married to Magareta Penner in 1859 and died in 1873.

The following summer his widow and their six children came to Canada to settle in Eigenhof on the East Reserve. Here Mrs. Doerksen married Gerhard Schroeder in 1877. It is through their son, also named Gerhard, and Abraham Dueck that this "Irrgarten" has been preserved. It is now part of Kathy Barkman's collection.

The "Irrgarten" itself is a never ending circular maze cut about half an inch wide with a space of half that in between it's many paths. On the paths is written a maze of poetic thought. Even though some of the outside paths have been torn off and lost, the rest of it is quite readable. I have translated the "Irrgarten" as best I can, although some of the thought therein may be changed in my effort. Punctuation is mine.

## Translation of Irrgarten:

*Wer merken kann der schaue an wie es die Menschen gehen kann.*

"He who may observe should take note of what can befall mankind. A thought entered my mind that I should travel to my "Fatherland", to visit my kin, to bring back news I thought . . . to live on the streets fair and wide, came to a lovely place among the hills and vale, there stood a lovely wonder already decked out with many branches. I went in immediately. I wanted to see how it was shaped, the garden which I appreciate. Alone I want to say I wandered to and fro; both in length and width . . .

"I also came into a forest and didn't know which direction to take. There appeared an "Alter Herr" older man who was in deep thought. I called the man many times seeking tranquillity. I asked him which way to turn to find what was right, but the man answered not and then I thought, this might be my own reflection . . .

"I was terrified and said, 'I beg you dear Lord show me the right way to get out of these woods,' but he answered, 'I do not know because I am also lacking. For I too came here in deep thought and am unable to grasp that

there is only one Lord and God, but in three persons, for so say the scriptures. This makes me think fervently and now, also you come here and make me demented while in my thoughts I am hindered.'

"Quickly I told him, in the Godhead, God has been from everlasting, the Godhead has no beginning nor end, that is His Majesty. So fall on your knees and stop brooding about it. Go forward with courage for that is the only way we can come out of this sea.'

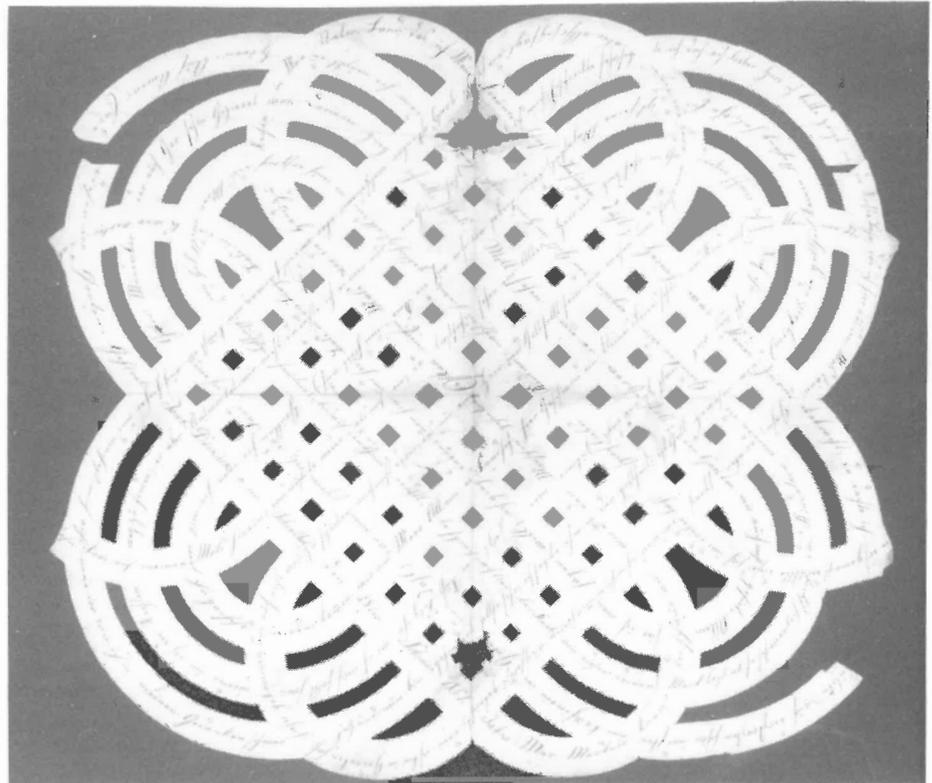
"Then suddenly appeared a fine small child with a small . . . in him made, the old man saw. He laughed at it and said, 'dear child

what are you doing, for your efforts are worthless. He replied, 'to bail the sea dry.' The old one spoke, 'Oh dear lad from this your work give up.'

"So hardly,' spoke the child, 'will your thoughts fathom God in heaven's rein because you must now stop.' Amen. End.

"This "Irrgarten" belongs to Jacob Doerksen in Schönthal February 28, the year of 1851."

Note: The author of this article and Jacob Doerksen, Schönthal, are not related.



*The Irrgarten.*

*Photo by and courtesy of Jim Peters, Steinbach, Manitoba.*

## Annual Meeting and Banquet

Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

Saturday, January 13, 1996

Redekopp Hall, Concord College

Annual Meeting: 5:00

Banquet: 6:30

Presentations by: Al Reimer, Harry Loewen  
and Victor Doerksen

Tickets for the banquet are \$15.00.

Please call Richard Thiessen at 669-6583 or 338-3893 to reserve tickets.  
Reservations should be made by January 4, 1996.

# Schroeder Bible

by Cathy Barkman,  
Steinbach, Manitoba

The Gerhard Schroeder Bible was an interesting item that came in a box of items that my mother, Evelyn Friesen, picked up at the auction sale of Mrs. Abram Dueck, nee Broesky, formerly of Rosewood Drive, Steinbach. Abram Dueck (deceased) was a descendant of Gerhard Schroeder.

The Bible is in German and was printed in 1857 at Coln, Germany. It has no family pages as many of the old Bibles did.

Upon opening the cover the words which

appear on the first page are "Gerhard Schroeder in Bergthal 1868, Gerhard Schroeder in Eigenhoff 25 January 1879, 1884.

On the second last page of the Bible it says "How many world countries/divided, five-Europa, Asien, Australian, Afrika, und Amerika". The last page says "Gerhard Schroeder-Eigenhoff, 1897, December 16".

Who was Gerhard Schroeder? What were the events in his life that brought him to North America. Let's look at the background of Gerhard.

The Schroeder's are documented by

church records and census' back to the Prussian era. The following are the generations up until Gerhard: 1) Isaac Schroeder (1738-1789) m-Maria Siebrand (1742-1778); 2) Johann Schroeder (born 1763) m-Katarina Kasdorf (born 1774); 3) Johann Schroeder (1807-1884) (born in Schonsee, Prussia) m-Maria Schellenberg (1813-1859); 4) Gerhard Schroeder (1848-1910) m-Anna Harder (1848-1876).

Katarina Kasdorf was the daughter of Isaac Kasdorf (born 1735) and Anna Toews (born 1742) from Rosenthal, Russia. Maria Schellenberg was the daughter of Aron Schellenberg (1773-1853) and Helena Neubauer (1769-1842) of Furstenwerder, Molotschna whose family has many descendants in the Kleine Gemeinde Church, including the Kleefeld Schellenbergs.

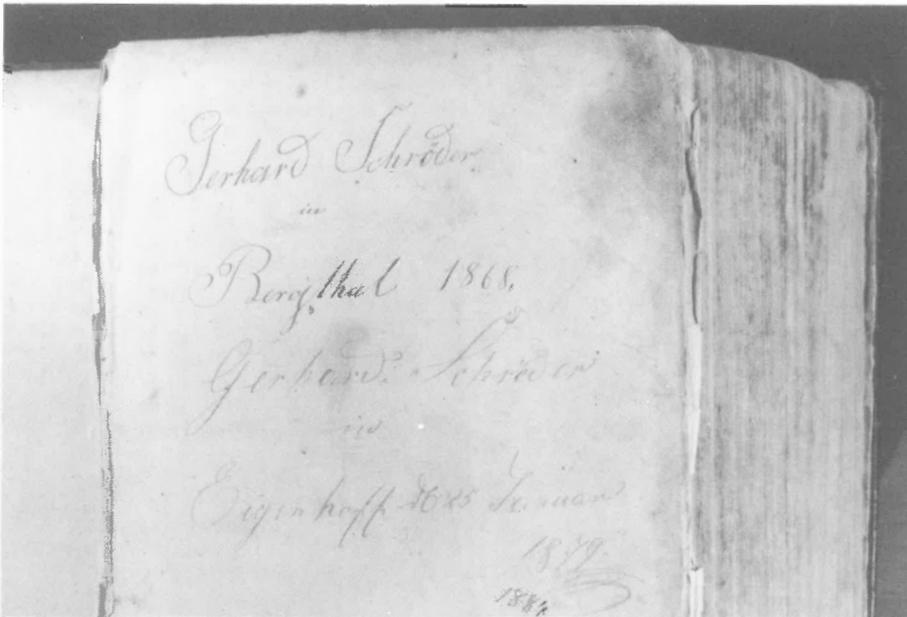
Gerhard Schroeder was born on March 20, 1848 to Johann and Maria Schroeder. Gerhard's parents, lived in Rosenthal, Russia before moving to the Bergthal Colony. According to the church records, Johann had three wives and 15 children with Gerhard being the middle child. Gerhard and his brother Abraham and their families came to Canada on the S.S. Peruvian which landed in Quebec on July 27, 1874.

Their father Johann came to Canada three months later with his third wife, Maria Dyck and four unmarried children Jakob, Dirk, Maria and David. Anna, age 18, who travelled with the family appears to be Anna Spent, who later married Gerhard's brother Jakob. Gerhard's sister Katarina (1830-1906), married to Jacob Rempel (born 1823), came with her family in July 20th, 1875. Brother Johann came in July 27th, 1875 and Aron approximately a year later with their families.

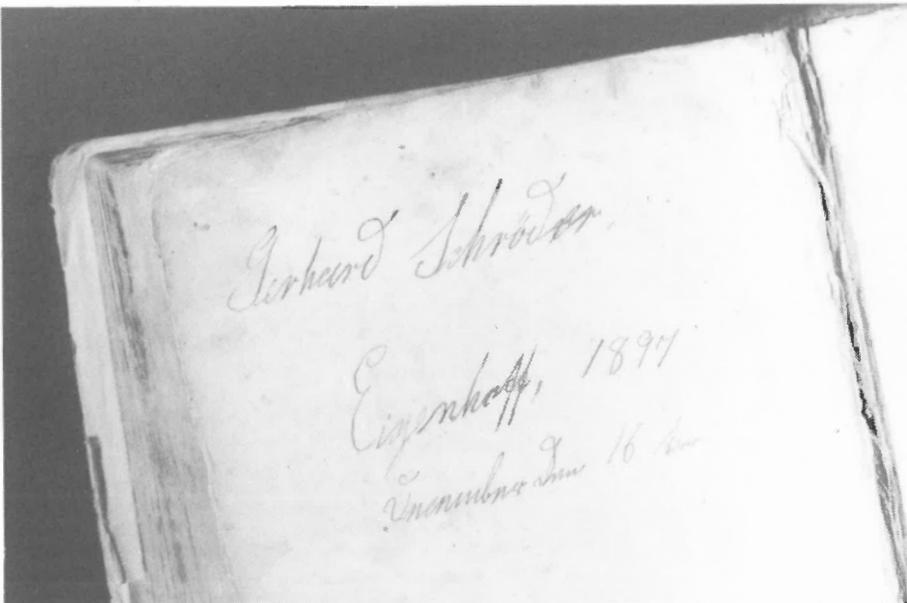
By 1881 they had settled as follows: father Johann, Aron and Katarina in Schoenhorst, West Reserve, Gerhard in Eigenhoff, East Reserve, Johann in Heuboden, West Reserve, and Abraham in Alt-Bergthal, West Reserve. Three of Gerhard's siblings died in infancy. I can not seem to find any information on the others: Helena born Jan. 22, 1839 and Peter born Jan. 19, 1852.

Gerhard's first wife was Anna Harder whose ascendants are also recorded back to Prussia as follows: 1) Peter Harder (1786-1849) m-Anganetha Thiessen (1782-1824); 2) Franz Harder (1824-1894) m-Anna Stoesz (1827-1895); 3) Anna Harder (1848-1876) m-Gerhard Schroeder (1848-1910). Anna Stoesz was the daughter of Jacob Stoesz (1774-1859) and Barbara Wiens (born 1803) from Neuendorf, Chortitz, Russia. Her paternal grandparents were Cornelius Stoesz (1731-1811) and Anna Thiessen (1748-1811).

Gerhard married Anna Harder on November 26, 1867. Both were baptized on June 5, 1867 in the Bergthal Church in Russia. Anna was born on November 23, 1848 to Franz and Anna Harder. According to the church records Franz and Anna had six chil-



Personal inscription on the title pages of Schroeder Bible. Photo by Jim Peters, Steinbach, Manitoba.



Personal inscription on the last page of Schroeder Bible. Photo by Jim Peters, Steinbach, Manitoba.

dren. Anna and her brother Franz were the only two that came to Canada. The others died in infancy or childhood. Anna's brother Franz married Katarina Toews. In 1881 Franz Sr. and Franz Jr. lived with their families in Silberfeld on the eastern part of the West Reserve in Manitoba.

It appears that Gerhard and Anna began their married life in the Bergthal Colony. They had two sons: Johann born on August 27, 1870 (who married Katharina Doerksen) and Franz born October 1872 (who married Maria Stoesz). Gerhard, with his wife and two young sons, Johann age 4 and Franz age 1 at the time, came to Canada on the S. S. Peruvian in 1874. It is written that Gerhard settled with his young family in Blumstein close to where Anna's parents the Franz Harders lived. Anna lived for only a short time after she arrived in Canada. She died on January 16, 1876 at the age of 27 years.

Gerhard married for a second time to the Widow Margaretha (Jacob) Doerksen (1839-1926). Margaretha was the daughter of Heinrich Penner and Katharina Thiessen from Heuboden, Russia. Gerhard and Margaretha lived in Eigenhof on the East Reserve just a few miles west of Steinbach, Manitoba along with Margaretha's widowed father and her brother Heinrich. Margaretha brought to their marriage six children from her previous marriage - Jacob, Margaretha, Katharina, Heinrich, Helena and Maria Doerksen. Gerhard and Margaretha had five children of their own - Peter (1879-1906), Anna (born 1881), Aron (1886-1936), Abraham (born 1880) and Gerhard (1877-1958).

It is interesting to note that Johann, a son of Gerhard and Anna, married Katharina who was a daughter of Jacob Doerksen and Margaretha Penner. Johann Schroeder became a minister in the Chortitzer Church (see *Preservings*, No. 4, July 1994), page 3.

Gerhard Schroeder lived an active life in Eigenhoff. He was a respected carpenter as



Gerhard Schroeder (1848-1910) and Margaretha Penner Schroeder (1839-1926) in 1888. Children L - R: Peter (1879-1900), Abram, Anna, Mrs. Peter Dueck, George and Aaron. Photo courtesy of Peter N. Friesen, Steinbach.



The Anna Harder Picture of a sleeping boy. Photo by Jim Peters.

well as a community leader serving as Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Hanover from 1901 to 1907. Gerhard Schroeder died on November 22, 1910. He was the great-grandfather of Aron C. S. Friesen, the current Reeve of Hanover.

The Gerhard Schroeder Bible contains several interesting items that lay between the pages. One was a funeral announcement for Katharina Penner which was written about in the last *Preservings*. Another item, an "Irrgarten" is featured elsewhere in this issue.

The third item found in the Bible is a picture of a young boy who lies sleeping against a huge black dog. The boy is dressed in a white shirt with a red tunic and blue pants. A ring lays against the boy which was probably used for a game that was played at that time.

The words on the picture are in Russian language. On the bottom left of the picture it is says "Moscow Censor's allowed this pic-

ture December 20, 1867." The picture is entitled "Faithful Companion" printed in the centre. On the right hand side it reads "Printed by the Publishing House of Andre Abramov, Deukin St."

On the back of the picture in someone's handwriting is written "Anna Harder, 27 December 1869", once in a brown ink and again just below it in pencil.

How Anna received the picture I do not know. What significance the picture was at that time is another question that is unanswered. According to Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen, Russian Mennonites often placed these type of pictures into their dowry trunk, although often the pictures were of royalty.

It is interesting to note that Moscow Censor's allowed the picture and one wonders what they might have had against the picture in the first place. Needless to say, it is a very old piece brought over to Canada from Russia.

Where is the Gerhard Schroeder Bible and the "Faithful Companion" picture now? How fortunate for me that I agreed to Delbert's suggestion to write an article for this paper. When I went to my mothers to see the Bible and get the information about it she passed it over to me and said, "You might as well have it." Thank you mom! I will treasure the Bible and am glad for this opportunity to share with you the history it has to tell us.

#### Credits:

- Thank you to Jane Gnatyuk for her translation of the Russian to English on the picture of the young boy and his dog.

- Photo credits: Jim Peters, Steinbach, Manitoba.

# Jakob D. Barkman 1886-1971

by D. Plett

In the June, 1995, issue of *Preservings*, Linda Buhler wrote the story of the apple tree which was planted in 1906 by Anna Barkman on their property at what today is the corner of Barkman and Main Street in Steinbach.

However, the family has another claim to fame, namely, Anna's husband, Jakob D. Barkman was one of the community's pioneer photographers. Most villages in the East Reserve had one or two individuals who documented the life and times of their community with their cameras. (See Linda Buhler's photo essay on the work of Johann Funk of Chortitz elsewhere in this issue.)

Steinbach had several of these adventurous people as well whose role in preserving the record of the early days has never been fully recognized. One of these was Peter T. Toews, commonly known as "Central" Toews. Some of his pictures were recently featured in an article in the Carillon News. Peter T. Friesen, son of Jakob S. Friesen, pioneer publisher and founder of the *Steinbach Post*, was another local photographer who signed his work with

the initials "PTF".

Jakob D. Barkman was the son of Martin G. Barkman, who settled in Hochstadt, south of Kleefeld, Manitoba in 1874, together with his father-in-law Gerhard Doerksen (1825-82).

Jakob worked for his wife's uncle Peter T. Barkman, who owned the flour mill just across the street from where they lived. His photography work has been featured in both Abe Warkentin's *Reflections on our heritage*, published in 1974, and Gerald Wright's *Steinbach: there's no place like it*, published in 1993.

We are fortunate that a substantial part of Jakob's photography has remained intact as one body of work. There would be ample material for a coffee table book featuring his photographic impressions of Steinbach in the 1920s and 30s. However, such a publication would require substantial funding. In the meantime, we hope to feature some of his photography in future issues of *Preservings*.



"J.R. Friesen & Sons" now "Fairway Ford" in Steinbach. According to the automobile, bottom left, the photo was taken around 1952. The most significant thing about the picture is that it shows the "J.R.Friesen" house in its original location. We hope to have an article in our next issue with the story of this house, and its subsequent move to Hanover Street, where it still stands today as the home of G. & Bev. Friesen. Photo by Jakob D. Barkman.

# Mennonite Burial Customs

by Linda Buhler

## Part One

### Introduction.

When Delbert originally asked me to research and write about Mennonite burial customs, I must admit to feelings of revulsion for such a morbid topic. Granted, the unearthing of the Schoenfeld graves earlier this spring raised many questions. Had the bodies been buried wearing shrouds? Was there a significance to the ribbon tied around their hands? Was the shape of the coffin indicative of their Mennonite denomination?

Some research on this topic proved interesting. In reading Loewen's "Blumenort" book, he states that eulogies or obituaries praising the deceased were strictly forbidden (in the Kleine Gemeinde Church) and that the coffin was never brought inside the church. Only after serious opposition did the practice change with the exception of excommunicated members whose bodies they continued to leave outside.

The coffins were made of raw, unfinished wood that was painted black for adults and bright yellow for children. The bodies were laid on a jut bag "mattress" filled with straw. Loewen also writes that the midwife was called on as village undertaker and would often help to wash the body and cover it with a white, pleated fabric which was nailed to the coffin sides.

Irene Enns Kroeker states in her article on Blumengart (Historical Sketches of the East Reserve 1874-1910) that the Chortitzer Mennonites buried their dead facing the east as it was thought that in His Second Coming, Jesus would appear in the east. This way the dead would then be able to rise up and be ready to greet their Lord. Bertram S. Puckle, however, states in his book "Funeral Customs: Their Origin & Development", that this custom goes back in time to the common practice of sun-worshipping.

Was the burial gown/attire much the same among the different groups of Mennonites? Were there differences between the different migrations or even with those who had remained in Russia? In the book "The Kuban Settlement" by C.P. Toews *et. al.*, we read an excerpt from a letter written in 1946 from Kazakhstan, "... I had no clothes for the deceased. . . Finally, however, I was able to obtain three metres of gauze, and we were able to dress the deceased in white after all. . . Since we had no other room her body remained in the corner until she was carried to the cemetery. . . We read a Scripture passage, prayed, sang several hymns, and then proceeded to the cemetery: the children with the corpse, I on the other wagon."

An interview with Curator Daryl Friesen at the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum brought forth more questions as he showed me two burial gowns in their collection of artifacts. Little is known about their background



Coffin Picture of Mrs. P. Dyck, Plum Coulee who died September 17, 1928. Photo courtesy of Justina Friesen, Mrs. David C. Friesen.

but both are identical in design although one is shorter and appears to be hip length. Both have the initials and death years embroidered at the base of the 12" deep slit the begins at the neckline and extends down the centre of the shirt. One's initials are T.B. with the year 1905 and the other gown was used twice and is marked "F.R. 1829" below which is "A.R. 1893".

This one was used by a Rempel father and son and was hand sewn in a hand woven flax linen. Was the embroidered part on the front or the back of the gown? With its nightshirt-style construction and narrow sleeves, was it not difficult to dress and later, undress, the deceased?

Since both gowns are very similar and there is no known connection between the donors of these artifacts, I wondered if this had been the customary practice in the 1800s. However, after interviewing several women, I began to suspect that these funeral gowns were the chemises that the deceased wore before being dressed in the funeral shroud the day before (or the day of) the funeral. Although no one I interviewed had heard of the chemise being removed before the shroud was put on, the construction of the chemise and the two funeral gowns at the Museum is strikingly similar.

Without doubt, it was the women in the Mennonite communities who took care of the burial arrangements. Therefore for this article in this series of stories on Mennonite women, I have chosen to include excerpts from my interview with various women from different Mennonite backgrounds as they spoke about the funerals way back when. Part II of this

article includes more excerpts and will follow in the next issue of this newsletter. Accompanying photos were submitted by Irene Kroeker and are not connected to these interviews.

### Interview with Mrs. Katherine (John) Bergen:

Mrs. Bergen was born in 1903 and grew up in the Altona area on the West Reserve (Yantsied). As children did not attend funerals unless it was a close family member, her earliest recollections date to around 1920. Funerals here with the families taking care of their own loved ones. Some women were known to make their own funeral dresses which were then constructed much like a night shirt with long sleeves, simple bodice, and open along the back. But for those whose funeral attire was made after their death, they were dressed first in a chemise after the body had been washed, and later in a shroud that was made from white muslin or cotton folded to look like a shirt with long sleeves edged with narrow black ribbon on the cuffs. Women were buried wearing the black "haube" which they had always worn before their death "for this reason, not many original ones remain."

Coffins were painted black and were constructed so that they were wider at the head end, tapering towards the feet and slanted towards the bottom. The washed body was kept in the living room on heavy boards or planks that were laid across the backs of chairs so that the body was kept quite high off the ground. The body was covered with a white sheet and was not "dressed" in its shroud until it was placed in its coffin the day

prior to the funeral. More white fabric was nailed to the edges of the coffin from waist height to foot end and edged by back ribbon. Sometimes a shallow hole was dug outside in order to place the casket where the body might remain cooler.

When her brother died in the hospital of typhoid around the year 1930, his body had been prepared in Winnipeg prior to its return for the funeral and was wound and wrapped in white bandages, much like a mummy. They were given permission to slit the bandages that covered his face so that they could be pulled aside enough for his face to be seen.

Coffins were left open at the front of the church during the funeral service and covered before proceeding to the cemetery.

#### **Interview with Mrs. Aganetha (David G.) Hiebert:**

Born in 1903 in Chortitz, E. Reserve to Johann S. Rempels, Mrs. Hiebert remembers the burials prior to 1920 in the Chortitzer Church in this manner: Often the home made coffins were painted black and were tapered—they were wide at the head end and narrow at the foot end with a domed lid. Both men and women were buried wearing a white shroud that was tucked in over the shoulders but left the back bare.

Some lightweight undergarments were used under their funeral garb. The “skirt” was nailed onto the sides of the coffin from the waist down to the feet. The edges of the coffin were often edged in black ribbon or lace. By the time her father and mother died (1929 and 1934 respectively), they were buried wearing their everyday clothes.

Mrs. Hiebert also mentioned that in order to keep the bodies cooler, the coffins were sometimes lowered into their graves prior to the funeral. However, at such times, the lids were not closed to aid air circulation.

#### **Interview with Mrs. Helena Toews:**

Prior to moving back to Canada in 1990, Mrs. Toews played an active role in funeral

preparations in the Bergthal Colony in Paraguay. With not undertaker in the area, church, family and friends all took part to help the bereaved family. Having been instructed by the older women in the church in order to keep the traditional customs, their procedures in 1980 were almost identical to those practised in Manitoba prior to their emigration in the 1920s.

Because of the heat, funerals in Paraguay were planned as quickly as possible. There was not time to paint the home crafted coffin black as had always been done in Manitoba. As soon as the coffin was ready, the appointed woman (there were several within the church who were called upon to perform these duties) would pad the bottom with approximately four inches of shavings and then line it with heavy white cotton. The fabric would often extend about three inches over the rim of the coffin and this would later be cut into fringes once the black ribbon had been tacked onto the edge.

In order to conceal the tacks, the ribbon was folded back at intervals, tacked down, and then laid down against the edge again, resulting in a pleated pattern. Coffins were made only as the need arose and were never made in advance. These services were provided as a token of love, so although they needed to hurry with their task, pride was taken in their work. A cushion was also sewn from white fabric and was stuffed with shavings, although sometimes the bereaved family would provide feathers to be used instead. The cushion, although not very thick, did extend to the sides of the coffin.

The funeral shroud was also constructed from the same fabric as the pillow and casket lining. The fabric was cut a little longer than the length of the body and a centre slit was cut to be later folded over and ruffled together at the neckline. Three one-and-one-half inch folds were ironed in on each side of the neckline extending to the foot of the gown if the deceased was a woman. A man’s shroud had only one deep fold on each side. The shroud

was now ready to be placed over the washed body. The tops of the shoulder extensions were placed around and under the body, just enough to keep it anchored and the neckline was gathered and held together with a black ribbon tied in a bow. The sleeves were now pulled up onto the arms and the shroud fabric folded over at the shoulder where it met the sleeve so that it appeared to be a one-piece article of clothing. The only sewn seams were the ones on the undersides of the sleeves.

Black ribbons were tied at the cuff. The fabric and ribbon for the coffin, cushion and shroud was provided and paid for the church. Mrs. Toews recalls some women placing the hands of a deceased woman so that she was holding a folded handkerchief but she herself had not been taught that way. However, she did tie the hands together with a black ribbon so that they remained in place for the viewing but this ribbon was removed just before the funeral service. On occasion when the body was not keeping well, the casket would remain closed. Otherwise, the domed lid was put on only after the funeral service to be opened again at the gravesite before the final commitment. At that time, it was screwed shut.

#### **Interview with Mrs. Sarah (Sawatzky) Funk, age 95:**

Excerpt from conversations with Grandma about funerals in the Chortitzer Churches in the Grunthal area: Coffins were made according to individual preference. Some were built wider at the head end with angled corners and narrower at the foot end and tapered at the sides, while others were ordinary rectangular boxes.

White funeral gowns consisting of a blouse and skirt were sewn by a member of the family. The skirt fabric was gathered at the waist for women but was sewn into pleats for men. Often black ribbon bows were stitched onto the sleeve cuffs for women while men had a blue bow tied at their necks. Early childhood memories include pails of cold water placed around her grandmother’s body to keep it chilled as well as memories of the water being blue (possibly “bluestone” added for antiseptic effect?).

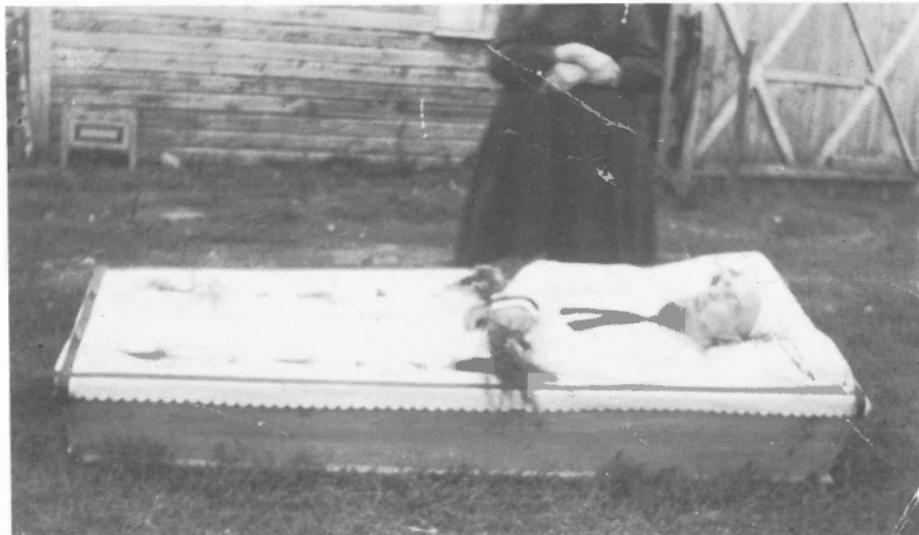
#### **Sources:**

Royden K. Loewen, *Blumenort: A Mennonite Community in Transition*, Steinbach: Blumenort Mennonite Historical Society September 1983, pages 176, 177, 219.

John Dyck, editor, *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve 1874-1910*, Steinbach: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society 1994, pg. 96.

C.P. Toews, Heinrich Friesen, Arnold Dyck, *The Kuban Settlement*, Winnipeg: CMBC Publications/Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society 1989, p. 87-88.

Bertram S. Puckle, *Funeral Customs: Their Origin & Development*, London: T. Werner Laurie Ltd. 1926, p. 148-149.



*Coffin Picture of Rev. Cornelius T. Friesen who died in September of 1922 at the age of 83. Photo Courtesy of Justina Friesen.*

## Book Reviews:

Please forward review copies of books of relevance to the history and culture of the Steinbach and Hanover areas to the Editor, *Preservings*, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0.

Levi Dueck, *et.al*, *Prairie Pioneer: The Writings of John W. Dueck* (Rosenort, Manitoba, 1995), 382 pages. Softcover. Available for \$14.50 plus postage from John D. Kornelsen, Box 142, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, (326-2627).

The last several decades has seen the publication of various primary source documents and writings pertaining to the Russian history of the Mennonite pioneers who settled in Manitoba in 1874 and later. These works have established a base upon which more current research can now be founded.

Johann W. Dueck was one of the early intellectuals of the Mennonite community in southern Manitoba. He was active in preserving records and information about the early days going back to the "Old country". Thus it is most fitting that a group of his grandchildren and other descendants have collected and published many of his writings under the title *Prairie Pioneer*.

Johann W. Dueck was born in 1865 in the village of Gnadenthal, Molotschna, South Russia, where his father, Peter L. Dueck, was a school teacher. With his parents he came to Manitoba in 1874. Later he took over his father's book store business which he operated out of the H. W. Reimer store in Steinbach

in 1890. (page 55-56).

In 1893 he married Maria Kroeker, the daughter of Jakob M. Kroeker the Bishop of the Kleine Gemeinde in Rosenort.

Johann W. Dueck served his church for 29 years as a songleader and for 19 years as a teacher. In 1913 he started a store in Rosenhoff.

*Prairie Pioneers* opens with a reprint of an English language translation of Johann W. Dueck's "History and Events" which was previously published in 1982 and almost out of print. "History and Events" is a valuable record of young Johann's boyhood days in Russia and of the pioneer years in Manitoba. e.g. When this reviewer hosted the "Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour" to Russia in April of 1995, we relied on his boyhood recollections several times to locate various landmarks in the Borosenko settlement northwest of Nikopol.

"History and Events" is followed by extracts from Johann's diary and translations of various of his letters and commentaries commencing from 1890 until his death in 1932. These records are chock full of detail of life and local culture during these years. There are descriptions of everyday events on the farm, church, community, travelling, etc.

Two examples from 1898: January 14 "Dr. Carl Jung of Chicago held a talk on life and nature in our school building in Rosenhof. Almost all the villagers were present at this meeting" (page 57). April 1 "Mrs. Henry L. Friesen travelled to Steinbach to be at the bedside of her daughter, Mrs. C. B. Loewen, who expects to die" (page 60).

The pages of *Prairie Pioneer* are filled with human interest stories with appeal to young and old alike. From 1910: July 14. G. G. Kornelsen has withdrawn his membership in our Gemeinde and joined the Mennonite Brethren in Winkler, being rebaptized in a river. . . his father is his partner in teaching. Together they serve a school of between 70 and 80 pupils in Steinbach (page 91). July 28. Heinrich Siemens of Winkler are visiting in our area. She is my cousin, an Elizabeth Penner. July 30. Peter D. Loewen has purchased a gas tractor for plowing his farm three miles west. . . They plow from early morning till late at night and the thing never gets tired like horses do. It uses a drum of gasoline every two days and this costs 20 cents a gallon (page 101). November 21. The Kornelsen brothers of Jant sied. . . related that Mrs. Peter Ginter of Steinbach passed away at age 38 last week. She was a Philigene Schnyder by birth, and had joined the "Peters" church along with her husband, Steinbach's postmaster (page 108). December 4. Heinrich L. Friesen was buried this afternoon and the church was more than full. Rev. Cornelius Plett [from Steinbach] preached. Friesen had the (peaceful) look of one who sleeps and some wondered if he was really dead (page 110).

This book will be of interest to professional historians, students and family members alike. A good purchase for the "history buff" on your Christmas list.

The family of Johann W. Dueck can be proud indeed of their achievement in publishing *Prairie Pioneer*. This book will be a treasured item in numerous private collections as well as public libraries for years to come.

The publishing committee included the following: Peter L. Dueck, translator; Levi Dueck, translator and committee chairman; Lorraine Loewen; Alvina Wiebe, committee secretary; Eleanor Zacharias; Marion Dueck; Mary Friesen; Mary B. Dueck; Agnes Kornelsen; and Elizabeth K. Dueck; Alvin D. Friesen, committee treasurer; Lorne Loewen; Ed L. Friesen; Dick Zacharias; Henry Dueck; Greg Reimer, computer keyboardist; Elma Dueck; John D. Kornelsen; Mrs. Agnes Friesen and Margaret Dueck.

Reviewed by D. Plett

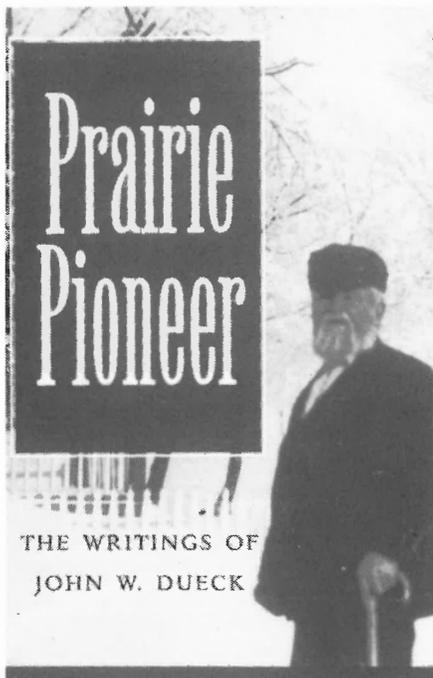
Ernest Neufeld, *Ernestly! Happy Yesterdays* (Neufeld Publishing Ltd., Box 400, Weyburn, Saskatchewan S4H 2K4, 1990), 335 pages, softcover.

I would urge you to read *Ernestly! Happy Yesterdays* by Ernest Neufeld if you have not already done so. Now of course, I have to admit my bias up front, since the author is my uncle, but I found the book informative and highly entertaining. It is written in a plain and transparent style that seems effortless, but is quietly subtle. No doubt, that comes from his many years of writing newspaper articles.

Ernest Neufeld worked for a number of years for the *Carillon News* in Steinbach, in addition to various big city dailies, before he bought the Weyburn Review with his brother-in-law Bruno Derksen. His father-in-law Gerhard S. Derksen and his sons had taken over the Steinbach Post and later established the *Carillon News*. He gives as the reason for writing the book that "if I were told that an ancestor of mine had spent half a century in the communications business at any level or in any medium, and had left no record of it, that person would incur my scorn".

The book however is much more than a family history. The book contains many of the editorials he had written over the years, but adds many new pieces. It includes sections on establishing his business in Saskatchewan, working for newspapers in the big cities, Canadian history, travel, and a historical sketch of the Steinbach area. This last topic may be of most interest to local readers.

I was pleasantly surprised by how interesting the history of the establishment of his own newspaper business was. He met with many anxious moments and stirring business challenges. Often he found himself in situations where his previous employment experience



A picture of the *Prairie Pioneer* book. The publishing committee is to be complemented for the beautiful cover and design of the book.

gave him no guidance, but he persevered and established a profitable venture despite the many obstacles. In all likelihood if he had known all the difficulties in advance he would never have started the enterprise.

He also provides a very short exposition of his family in Canada. His father dies in Hanley, Saskatchewan in 1927 a few years after the family arrived in Canada from the Ukraine. His mother was left to fend for herself and her five children. With little or no social assistance, they lived in poverty, but never allowed it to smother them.

Naturally, being a Steinbacher, I found the historical sketch of Steinbach most interesting. He provides fascinating memoirs of growing up in Steinbach in the 1930s. A highlight of this part of the book is a description of a walk down the main street of Steinbach at that time. He describes businesses and homes that many will fondly remember, including among others, the machine shop of Isaac Plett, the shoe repair shop of C.F. Toews, the general store that became the business of Peter A. Vogt, the print shop, Modern Grocery, and the early car dealers.

He describes the creek and many social activities including sports, old swimming holes, the community pasture operated for a while by his brothers (one of whom was my father), and the local police. In a few brief strokes he paints a picture of the town. He describes the domination of the church over community life. He tells us about eating and living in a very poor fatherless family, while maintaining humour and dignity.

He writes about children's activities, Eaton's catalogues, crystal radio sets, and gopher harvests to name only a few. He tells us about holiday festivities, scooters, hoopsticks, and hairstyles. I particularly enjoyed his apt description of gathering of young and old at the Peter A. Vogt residence and eclectic groups that gathered there for a variety of fun and games.

All in all, I would submit that the book provides a delightful trip down memory lane that all can enjoy.

**Reviewed by John E. Neufeld, Steinbach, Manitoba**

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Henry J. Braun, et. al., editors, *Braun Family Tree: Jakob D. Braun 1826-1919 Katharina (Funk) Braun 1827-1919* (Braun Family Tree Committee, Box 1192, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2A0), 282 pages. \$25.00.

It all started in 1967 when a family gathering took place in remembrance of Jakob D. Braun (1826-1919) and Katharina S. Funk (1817-1919). Four years later the first edition of the *Braun Family Tree Book* was printed and a tradition of interest in family history had begun. Over the years many a family member can be identified by being in, or having in their possession, the 1971 "Blue Braun" book.

Now two decades later, it is evident that the tradition continues. Starting with another family reunion in 1993, a parallel model emerged with the publication of the 1995 edi-

tion of the *Braun Family Tree Book*. This edition is a take-off from the earlier one, but is a much larger, up-dated version.

This book includes eleven generations listing approximately 10,400 people, some as often as three times. For example, there are 750 Funks, 740 Harders, 540 Giesbrechts and 530 Wiebes.

Although the intent of the book is to trace all the descendants of Jakob and Katharina Funk Braun, there is also considerable information on their parents and grandparents. This information was not available to the compilers of the first edition. Much credit needs to be given to Ernest N. Braun for his interest and research in obtaining an additional two generations.

To compile and publish this amount of family history required the efforts of a committee of 12 individuals. Special recognition must be given to Henry J. Braun who not only initiated this enormous task, but also through his diligence and determination saw the project through to completion.

And, there are plans for more. A two day Braun reunion is scheduled for July, 1996, and an expanded hardcover edition of the family book with photographs is on the drawing board.

If you are interested in obtaining your copy of the 1995 Second Edition please contact the following: Al Hamm, Box 755, Steinbach, Manitoba, 326-6557; Henry J. Braun, Box 1192, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2A0, 436-4742; or Abram B. Giesbrecht, Colony Meno, Loma Plata 31, 883 Asuncion, Paraguay.

**Review by Al Hamm, Steinbach, Manitoba.**

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Benjamin Dueck, *The Schellenberg 1634-1995 Descendants* (Box 20191, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2T1, Man. Canada, 1995). 112 pages.

*The Schellenberg Descendants* is the genealogy of one branch of the family of Paul Schellenberg (1634-1719) and more specifically that of his descendant Abraham Reimer Schellenberg (1839-1924) and his children.

Observing that the Schellenberg name originated in Liechtenstein towards the end of the 8th Century, the author provides brief biographies of Paul Schellenberg (1634-1719), Jacob (1687-1757), Gerhard (1725-1802), Jacob (1772- ) and David (1803-1854).

The book becomes more specific with the advent of Abraham (1839-1924) and his wife Margaretha Esau, of Tiege, Molotschna. Seven children were born to them the oldest being Jacob, of which line the author of this book comes. In 1874, the family settled in Gruenfeld (Kleefeld), Manitoba.

Jacob (1870-1943) married Helena, daughter of Steinbach pioneer Johann R. Reimer and they had 15 children. Jacob maybe was better known as a horse trader in the Steinbach area. The book goes on to record also the genealogies of Margaretha (1872-1900), Johann (1873-ca.1914), Anna (1880-1903),

Susanna (1883-1947) and Helena (1888-1934).

The book closes with a series of maps peculiar to Mennonites and their migrations including Land of Menno Simons, The Vistula Delta, Russia and also maps of the West and East Reserves, in Manitoba, with historical comments on many of them.

Mr. Dueck is to be commended on the scope of his research. The book will make a valuable addition to the history of the Schellenberg lineage.

**Review by David K. Schellenberg, Steinbach, Manitoba.**

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Jake Penner, *Those were the days: Jake Penner Stories* (Blumenort, Manitoba, 1995), 233 pages, paperback.

*Those were the days* is a biography written by Jake Penner, who was born and raised in the Greenland area. The book is a collection of short stories that take place in Greenland and Blumenort, and at various bush camps in the Whiteshell.

A few chapters are devoted to alternate service during the war years, when young men could choose between working in bush camps, or military service. The author's literary style shows that he is thinking in Low German but writing in English. This makes it more interesting reading for someone with a Low German background.

Bush work started early in the East Reserve because of its close proximity to the forests to the east. At first it was for firewood and logs for building, and later for dimensional lumber, fence posts and pulp.

Many individuals started saw mills, employing farmers and young men, to complement their farm income. The author shares many of his experiences from the various camps he spent time at and these stories will push memory buttons for many individuals that spent winters working in the bush.

The book has many references to the finer details about camp life. Every bunkhouse needs a storyteller that can stretch things. The author refers to this as "... the bunkhouse stories were again full sized, and you would think that the blanket had been twenty feet long when they told of how far they had been under them."

The toilet facility is described as "the finest plumbing, air conditioned, and all the simplicity that nature provides." The Eaton's catalogue also performed an important function besides reading, while using this fine facility. The heating system in the bunkhouse was hard to regulate, either too hot at bedtime, or too cold in the morning. Who gets up to start the fire in the morning? The first to get cold.

Penner uses "Low German proverbs" or words of wisdom. As an example, "No matter how cheap anything is, you paid too much, if you never use it." Low German philosophy is illustrated in a chapter devoted to answering the question, "If you had a team of horses, one willing and one unwilling to work, what

would you do?"

The author goes on to relate this concept to the human world, and he makes this horse-human illustration very real. As an example: if a job in the community needs doing, who do we ask? Usually someone who is busy already.

*Those were the days* is interesting reading for those "old" experienced bush workers, and for those who want to experience "the good old days."

The book is available for \$19.00 plus postage from the author, Box 157, Blumenort, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

**Review by Norman F. Plett**, Blumenort, Manitoba.

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Victor Janzen, *Vom Dnjepr zum Paraguay Flub* (Steinbach, Manitoba, 1995), 165 pages, paperback.

The German book *Vom Dnjepr zum Paraguay Flub* is a series of articles about the life of Mennonites in Russia during the Second World War. It tells of the trek westward and the trip to South America where the Mennonites started a new settlement in the jungle of East Paraguay. Author Victor Janzen experienced this as a young lad.

In spite of the many dangers and difficulties he and his family experienced, he finds them to be adventurous. For example, when a Russian fighter bombed his parent's village, he found it more interesting to be outside watching what was going on, than to be hiding in the crowded, dark kitchen. The voyage on the oceanliner "Volendam" from Holland to Argentina was an adventure to him, rather than a trip into an unknown future, as it was perceived by many adults.

In his book he tells of the sense of community and responsibility people took for each other. No matter how difficult the trek often was and how difficult it was to find a place to stay, the refugees tried to stick together. This was also evident when the Janzen family settled in their village of Osterwick, Paraguay.

The book is well organized. It is divided into four main chapters with many short sections. This makes reading very easy. In the first part, Janzen describes the life of the villagers in the Ukraine during Soviet rule; the collective farming system, the schools and the church during that time, etc. He also relates a variety of situations and personal experiences during World War Two, including the evacuation from their home.

In chapter two the author relates the family's experiences as refugees during their stay in Germany. He tells of trying to find a job and a place to stay, of life in refugee camps, of bombing attacks, of the ever-present fear of being sent back to Russia and of preparations to emigrate.

In parts three and four Janzen describes the trip across the Atlantic Ocean and the new beginning in Paraguay. Many other books have been written about the same events in history, but the fact that Janzen experienced

all this as boy and young man captivate the reader in a distinctive way. The sense of adventure and the optimism of youth is dominant in the book, giving a unique angle to this topic.

The many appropriate pictures and a map of the German settlements in Saporoshje, Ukraine and of West Germany compliment the written text. A map showing the new settlement in Paraguay would have been a helpful piece of information for the less informed reader. Janzen uses many Low German expressions, which help to make the book real and interesting, adding a special flavour.

*Vom Dnjepr zum Paraguay Flub* is a book well worth reading. By sharing his personal story, Janzen is to be commended for retelling a piece of our Mennonite history in a new way. The book is available from the author at Box 1509, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, for \$20.00 including shipping and handling.

**Reviewed by Isbrand Hiebert**

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Lorna Penner, *Johann S. Janzen Family Book 1840-1905* (Blumenort, Manitoba, 1993), 49 pages, paperback.

The genealogy of the Johann S. Janzen family is straight forward and easy to follow. It begins with a paragraph which introduces the patriarch who was born in Neukirch, Molotschna, Russia. Johann married Margaretha Penner and together they had four children. They originally settled in Rosenort in 1874 but moved to Blumenhoff, east of Blumenort shortly thereafter.

The first page gives the birth, marriage and death dates of the parents of Johann S. Janzen, namely, Cornelius Janzen (1812-1864) and Sara Siemens (1809-1885), as well as of all of their children and their spouses. In the pages following, the remainder of the book concentrates on the Johann S. Janzen line covering six generations until the present which are also complete with birth, marriage and death dates.

The book is available from the author at Box 53, Blumenort, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, for \$4.00 plus postage.

**Review by Cathy Barkman**, Steinbach.

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Margaret Barkman, Al Fast, Lois Janzen, Lorna Penner, Annie Plett, compilers, *Janzen Cookbook and Memories* (Blumenort, Manitoba, 1995), 252 pages, spiral bound.

This cookbook is like none other. Not only does it contain mouth-watering recipes but it includes reminiscing and anecdotes about the Cornelius and Agatha Janzen family. He was the oldest son of Johann S. Janzen, above. His wife Agatha was born to Cornelius P. Friesen and Agatha Klassen. She was a sister to the well-driller Cornelius K. Friesen.

The recipes are not arranged in the traditional method of cakes, cookies, breads, etc. but rather each chapter represents one of the children born to Cornelius and Agatha Janzen.

Each is complete with delightful memories, pictures and recipes from various members of the extended family.

The cookbook is available from Lorna Penner, Box 53, Blumenort, Manitoba, R0A 0C0, for \$10.00 plus postage.

**Review by Cathy Barkman**, Steinbach.

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Abraham B. Giesbrecht, *Die ersten mennonitischen Einwanderer in Paraguay* (Loma Plata, Paraguay, 1994), 84 pages, softcover.

Coming directly from Loma Plata in Paraguay and endorsed by the current Oberschulz of the Kolonie Menno, Mr. Bernhard F. Wiebe, this book contains a list of all families that immigrated to Paraguay during the years 1926-1935.

In comparing the comprehensive list Abram B. Giesbrecht has compiled to the current records still held in the Chortitzer Waisenamt in Steinbach, Manitoba, I found the records to be accurate and detailed.

Particularly of interest to researchers and genealogists, the charts published are clear and easy to read. Birthdates, ages and general areas of origin for each family group enable fast and easy identification. A date and place of departure, stopovers, and a date of arrival are recorded for each group.

A brief one page introduction by the author and a forward by Heinrich Ratzlaff have been included. However, please note that since the intent of the book was to publish the names of the immigrants only, it does not include any account of the immigration procedure itself.

Anyone interested in this book may contact the HSHS office.

**Review by Irene Enns Kroeker**

#### **Book Notes:**

Anna Z. Siemens, *Genealogy and History of the J. R. Friesen Family 1782-1990* (Meade, Kansas, 1990), 81 pages, Metal clip binding. \$15.00 U.S. Available from the author at Box 396, Meade, Kansas, 67864.

Kevin Enns-Rempel *et al.*, *A History of the Peter F. Rempel Family August 4, 1995* (Shafter, California, 1995), 71 pages \$7.00 U.S. Available from Shirley Funk, 314 Bree Drive, Shafter, California, 93263.

Helena Koop Johnson, *Tapestry of Ancestral Footprints: Groenings Duecks Enns Koops Friesens Kroekers* (Lockport, Manitoba, 1995), 282 pages. \$30.00 paperback. Available from the author, Box 20, Group 20, R.R. 1, Lockport, Manitoba, R0C 1W0.

Although none of these books are directly related to the East Reserve, or R.M. of Hanover, they are of interest because of the numerous genealogical connections to local residents. The *J.R. Friesen Family 1782-1990*, provides a great deal of information about life in the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) settlement at Jansen, Nebraska, and later Meade, Kansas.

For those students of the KG perennially confused by the six Abraham Friesen living in

Jansen during the late 19th century, this book will provide some relief, listing patriarch Abraham W. Friesen (1812-1889), from Rückenau, Molotschna, son Abraham B. Friesen (1834-1903), known as "Radmacher" or wheelwright Friesen, and grandson Abraham K. Friesen (1859-1913), known as the "Young Radmacher" Friesen.

His daughter Susanna (1887-1919) married Jacob R. Friesen, son of KG Prediger Cornelius L. Friesen. It is the story of Susanna and Jakob which is told in this book. J. R. Friesen was quite active in adopting American Fundamentalist forms of religiosity and this book describes many of his experiences. The book contains a good amount of valuable social history.

The *Peter F. Rempel* book starts with a well written introduction to "Our Mennonite Heritage" of the KG and Jansen, Nebraska, written by Kevin Enns-Rempel, Archivist at the M. B. Seminary in Fresno. It also publishes for the first time a paper written in 1981 by Marilyn Rempel Harms and Ralph Friesen, a member of the HSHS. Ralph's mother was a daughter of Peter F. Rempel. Genealogical charts and pictures contribute to an excellent work. One suggestion for future updates would be to tie in more of the recent genealogical connections made possible by the 1835 Molotschna census and the work of researchers such as Henry Schapansky, who has concluded that all the KG Rempels are descended from Bernhard Rempel resident in Reinland, Prussia during the late 18th century.

*Ancestral Footprints* is the product of one woman's determination to discover her roots as a heritage for her granddaughter. Helena Johnson makes good use of journals and other family sources to compile not only her history but that of the six family lines listed in the sub-title.

Helena Johnson has left no stone unturned in using all the latest research to discover that her Koop family, who immigrated to Canada during the 1920s, were actually descendants of Heinrich Koop (1801-1850), a wealthy KG Vollwirt from Muntau, Molotschna, and later of Landskrone. His wife Anna (1804-1867) was a sister to well-known Molotschna school teacher Cornelius Friesen (1810-1892), who settled in Blumenort, Manitoba, in 1874.

Book notes by D. Plett

Delbert Plett, *Sarah's Prairie* (Windflower Communications, 844-K McLeod Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2K 3N3, 1995), 349 pages, softcover. \$14.95 plus shipping.

Set in southeastern Manitoba, Delbert Plett has woven a lot of history into this novel. A coming of age story, the book traces three generations of Old Laenders who emigrated from Russia to the fictional community of Sarah's Prairie.

The main character Martien Koep is raised in a traditional Mennonite home. Growing up he hears stories and anecdotes about his neighbours and friends. Personal crisis, family and community discord, mold his character

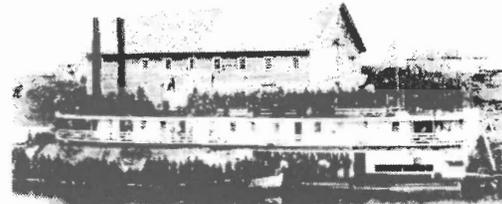
and shape his relationships with the people around him.

Martien faces challenges through his youth as he tries to find spiritual peace, notwith-

standing religious conflict surrounding him and his family.

Book note by Irene Kroeeker

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