

Preservings

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"A people who have not the pride to record their history will not long have the virtues to make their history worth recording; and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great." *Jan Gleysteen*

Feature Story **Steinbach: The "old" and the "new"**

by D. Plett

50th Anniversary

In honour of the fiftieth birthday of the incorporation of the Town of Steinbach in 1946 the June and December issues of *Preservings* will include a special section. Steinbach, Manitoba, was founded in 1874 by 18 Kleine Gemeinde (KG) families originally from the Molotschna area in Imperial Russia. Seven or almost a half of the settlers came from the village of Steinbach in Borosenko, northwest of Nikopol, hence the name (see chart below).

A commonality of the pioneers of Steinbach, Manitoba, was that the majority of them were among the last Mennonite families to leave Russia in fall of 1874. Nine of the 18 families were in the last group of 20 KG families who left Nikopol, Russia on August 2, and arrived in Quebec City on the S. S. Austrian on August 31. Another 5 families including the influential four family Reimer group, came on the second last ship of 1874, the S.S. Hiberian, arriving in Quebec City three days earlier on August 27.

The Steinbach group only arrived at the landing site at the confluence of the Red and Rat Rivers on September 18, 1874: Dietrich S. Friesen, *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 45. It was a cold and rainy day. Fortunately they were given warmth and shelter by their brethren in Gruenfeld: Peter W. Toews, *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, 140. But the settlers came by way of Blumenort: G. G. Kornelsen, *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 235. Shortly after their arrival Jakob M. Barkman preached a Thanksgiving Sermon on the text Deuteronomy 27: 6-7, "Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God . . . and rejoice before the Lord thy God."

A disadvantage of arriving in the East Reserve, Manitoba, late in the season was that most of the land had already been claimed or reserved for relatives and friends. The only block of land large enough for the group was in the northeast quadrant of Township 6-6E. That the property was still available was possibly because it was the farthest away from the landing site and the business centre of Winnipeg. It was also blocked off from the other settlements by the Clearsprings settlement of Scottish, Irish and English people, which sprawled across the south part of Township 7-6E to the north. The soil was a light loam, sandier than what the settlers had previously farmed in Russia.

The group "decided to take the land that was available and prepare for winter": G. G. Kornelsen, *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 255. Section 35-6E was chosen as the village site and surveyed, a procedure which many of the the settlers had experienced several times in the "old" country. The village was laid out from northwest to southeast, with the main street parallel to the creek which was given the name "Steinbach" creek.

The land also had some positive attributes. Good water was available and there was ample firewood. In fact, the entire village plan of six sections (Sections 25,25,27 and 34,35 and 36-6-6E) was "covered with both large and small poplar trees of which, however, many were dead [which]... left a fairly

desolate picture": G.G.Kornelsen, *Pioneers*, page 255. The settlers first had to clear poplar bush in order to be able to drive down the Main Street.

The area of the village also included some good timber. John B. Toews (1865-1967) later recalled that "in the early years several of the surrounding villages got their supply of timber from Section 32-6-6E" southeast of Mitchell where Rempel Drive is located today. Some of the trees produced logs up to 30 feet in length. There were also miles and miles of virgin pine forests to the south and east of Steinbach.

Origins of Steinbach pioneers

<u>Lot No.</u>	<u>Name of Settler</u>	<u>Place of Origin</u>
1	Klaas B. Friesen (1838-1922)	Annafeld, Borosenko
m	Maria de Veer (1842-1916)	
2	Cornelius Fast (1840-1927)	Steinbach, Bor.
m	Helena Fehr (1850-93)	
3	Gerhard Warkentin (1848-1900)	Fischau, Molotschna
	Widower	
4	Heinrich R. Brandt (1838-1909)	Steinbach, Bor.
m	Katharina Warkentin (1850-88)	
5	Jakob M. Barkman (1824-75)	Friedensfeld, Bor.
m	Katharina Thiessen (1829-89)	
6	Cornelius P. Goossen (1839-1916)	Annafeld, Bor.
m	Katharina Barkman (1851-1912)	
7	Jakob S. Friesen (1850-1921)	Nikolaithal, Kherson.
m	Margaretha Giesbrecht (1852-1936)	
8	Abraham S. Friesen (1848-1916)	Steinbach, Bor.
m	Katharina Reimer (1850-1912)	
9	Peter P. Toews (1838-82)	Steinbach, Bor.
m	Elisabeth Reimer (1843-1918)	
10	Johann R. Reimer (1848-1918)	Steinbach, Bor.
m	Anna Warkentin (1844-80)	
11 &	12Klaas R. Reimer (1837-1906)	Steinbach, Bor.
m	Katharina Willms (1836-75)	
2m	Helena Warkentin (1852-84)	
13	Gerhard R. Giesbrecht (1846-1907)	Gruenfeld, Bor.
m	Anna Kornelsen (1851-85)	
14	Johann Wiebe (1841-1909)	Blumenhoff, Bor.
m	Maria Neufeld (1840-1921)	
15	Jakob T. Barkman (1848-1935)	Rosenfeld, Bor.
m	Aganetha Giesbrecht (1848-1918)	
16	Peter K. Barkman (1826-1917)	Rosenfeld, Bor.
m	Anna Toews (1827-81)	
17	Johann S. Friesen (1853-1937)	Nikolaithal, Kherson
m	Anna Barkman (1854-1923)	
18	Heinrich Fast (1826-90)	Nikolaithal, Kherson
m	Scharlotte Loepp (1828-87)	
19 & 20	Franz Kroeker (1827-1905)	Steinbach, Bor.
m	Margaretha L. Plett (1842-1920)	

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Panoramic view of Steinbach, Ukraine April 11, 1996.

It was my privilege to see the site of the village of Steinbach, Borosenko, on April 11, 1996, during the "Second Annual Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour" to Russia and Ukraine. The village was laid out from east to west on the west bank of the Basavluk River. The river flowing from north to south jogs to the east for approximately three-quarter mile at this point. The village of Steinbach was located on the south and west bank. The east end of the village commenced in the river valley flats at the point

Steinbach, Borosenko, Russia.

In many ways the "old" Steinbach, the village in Russia, shaped and articulated the beginnings and subsequent development of the "new" Steinbach in North America. The village of Steinbach in the Borosenko settlement was located some 30 kilometres northwest of the Nikopol on the Dnieper River in Imperial Russia, today Ukraine. The village was established in 1865 and was laid out from east to west along the west bank of the Basevluk River. It is already shown in a military map of the area of 1865. The Russian name of the village was *Kizmitskoye*.

Steinbach was the first village established in Borosenko after the KG purchased 18,000 acres of land for 184,000 rubles, roughly \$10.00 an acre. The purpose was to provide additional land so that the young families of the denomination could acquire their own farms, something which less than one in four were still able to do in the Molotschna Colony from where the KG had originated. Over 100 KG families settled in the Borosenko area in the years after 1865.

The village of Steinbach, Russia, was founded by two wealthy KG Vollwirten, Gerhard Siemens (1805-77) of Grossweide, Mol, and Jakob Classen (1832-69), Pordenau, Mol. Steinbach pioneer Klaas R. Reimer has written that in 1869 he "bought land [165 acres] from the company, Jakob Klassen and Gerhard Siemens on the Basavluk river for 20 rubles per acre . . . and moved there with my family": Klaas R. Reimer, *Storm and Triumph*, page 23. The village was connected to the other KG communities to the west by a bridge across the Basavluk River which sometimes overflowed its banks in spring. On February 3, 1873, Abraham F. Reimer recorded that "the bridge was completely covered [with water] so that the people

had to cross [through a ford] at Zawitzky," a small estate upstream where two KG families lived.

In addition to the seven families listed above, the village of Steinbach, Russia, included the following inhabitants: Gerhard Siemens (1834-1908) (Rosenort, Man.), David Thiessen (1834-1906) (Rosenort, Man.), Abraham F. Reimer (1808-92) (Blumenort, Man.), Klaas R. Brandt (1845-1901) (Rosenort, Man.), Peter R. Reimer (1845-1917) (Blumenort, Man.), Peter Buller (1836-1902) (Jansen, Neb.), Peter B. Friesen (1838-1900) (Neuanlage, Man.), Maria Brandt Plett (1843-1927) after 1873 (Gruenfeld and later Steinbach), Cornelius S. Janzen (1848-73), and Jakob Classen (Jansen, Neb.). The places where they settled in North America is indicated in brackets.

Considerable information is known about life in Steinbach, Russia, from 1865 to 1874, because Abraham F. Reimer (1808-92), the ancestor of many people in present day Steinbach, Manitoba, lived in the village and maintained a journal for the years 1870-74. All the known residents of Steinbach, Russia, except Jakob Classen, belonged to the Blumenhof KG, and not to the Heubodner KG, whose members later tended to emigrate to Rosenort, Manitoba and Jansen, Nebraska.

The KG settlers sold their farms to other Mennonites in 1874-5. These inhabitants of Steinbach were slaughtered on December 7, 1919, by the soldiers of Machno, the Ukrainian freedom fighter. Ukrainians were settled into the now deserted village. Fierce defensive fighting beset the area at the time of the retreat of the German army in 1944. Several former KG villages in the area were completely obliterated.

What was left of Steinbach was relocated across the river to the Russian village of

Mironovka leaving only a three-quarter mile long row of trees to mark the location where the village once lay pristinely nestled along the banks of the River Basavluk. Another source indicates that Steinbach was never occupied after the massacre and that the property of the inhabitants was basically stolen and the buildings eventually completely removed as the bricks could be reused elsewhere. Obviously more research needs to be done.

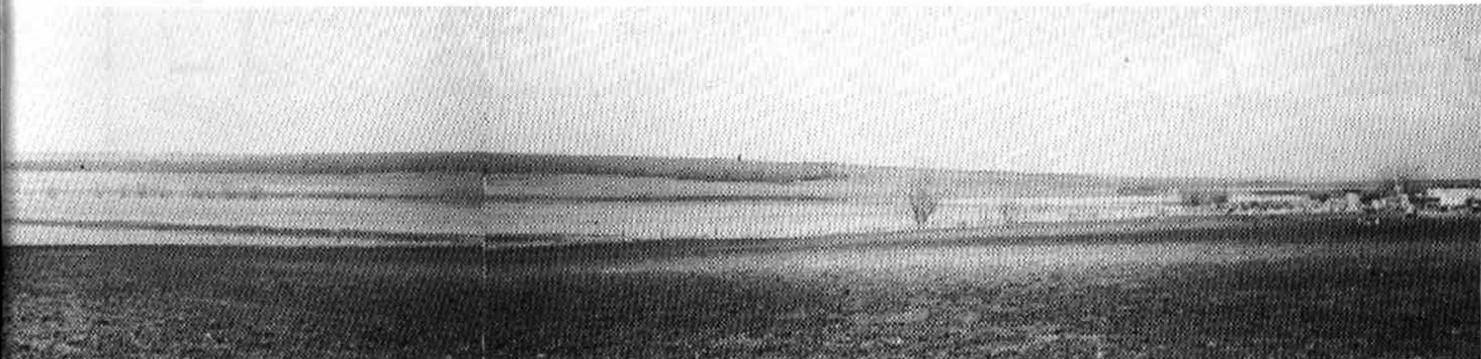
I feel a personal attachment to Steinbach, Borosenko as my grandmother Elisabeth F. Reimer was born there on June 29, 1870. Her mother was Mrs. Peter R. Reimer, nee Elisabeth S. Friesen, sister to Steinbach pioneer Abraham S. Friesen. Elisabeth died in Steinbach, Russia, at 11 A.M. on Saturday June 9, 1873, at the age of 23 years, 6 months and 21 days. She was buried in the village cemetery two days later.

On my next visit to the Ukraine I hope to be able to personally survey the site of the former village and particularly to locate the original cemetery. It would also seem appropriate to hold a memorial service in honour of the 54 residents of Steinbach who were slaughtered that fateful night of December 7, 1919.

Today only the 1,000 year-old Scythian burial mound on the hill at the west end of the village street stands guard over the memory of the Steinbach that once was, and over the spirits of those who once lived and died there.

Steinbach: name origin.

The name Steinbach originated with the estate of Klaas Wiens (b. 1767), first Oberschulz of the Molotschna Colony in 1804. Wiens was a friend of the founding members of the KG as they agreed on many matters of church polity and social organization. It was probably Wiens' intercession for the KG which saved the early



where the river turns south again. Across the river on the east side is a slight mound strewn with white boulders which may have inspired the name. This area is currently used as a sheep enclosure. The village street ran some three-quarter mile to the west rising some 20 feet up a gentle swell to the elevated level of the flat plateau to the west. The west end of the village is marked dramatically by a Sythian burial mound. A large Russian village by the name of Mironovka is located across the river on the east bank and visible on the panorama; to the south (left hand side of photo) and north (right hand side of photo).

leaders of the movement from banishment to Siberia in 1812: see Klaas Reimer, "Ein Kleines Aufsatz," *Leaders*, pp. 32-5.

Klaas Wiens was granted a large tract of land by Czar Alexander I in honour of his work in establishing the Molotschna settlement which had become the economic model and show place for all of Russia with some 30,000 inhabitants by 1874. The tract of land received by Wiens became the estate or "chutor" of Steinbach. Contemporary diaries and letters show that the KG people had continued dealings with Peter Schmidt (nephew of Wiens) who later took over the estate. Wiens' work as a social reformer was later taken up in grand scale by Johann Cornies (1789-1848), a friend and neighbour of Abraham Friesen (1782-1849), the second Bishop of the KG.

It is difficult to decide whether Steinbach on the Basevluk river should be referred to as Steinbach, Ukraine, or Steinbach, Russia. The Borosenko, Zaporozhye and Molotschna areas were part of Imperial Russia and also of the Soviet Russia or the U.S.S.R. until the 1950s when the region was transferred to the Ukraine by Nikita Khruschev. It seems that current references should be to the Ukraine and historical references to Russia.

The Friesens of Steinbach.

Johann S. Friesen and Jakob S. Friesen and teacher Dietrich S. Friesen were brothers, sons of Jakob K. Friesen (1822-75) of Gruenfeld, Man., who drowned in the Red River in 1875 together with Rev. Jakob M. Barkman. Historian Henry Fast has concluded that Jakob K. Friesen was not one of the original Steinbach pioneers although his widow later lived there. The sons of Jakob K. Friesen were second cousins to Steinbach pioneer Abraham S. Friesen, the son of Abraham F. Friesen (1808-1891) of Jansen, Nebraska.

Pioneer printer and publisher Jakob S. Friesen (1862-1931) was not related to any of these Friesens: see Henry Fast, "Jakob S. Friesen," in *Preservings*, No. 2, July 1993, page

7; Henry Fast, "Gleanings from the 1835 Molotschna census: Hermann Friesen," *Preservings*, No. 5, Jan. 1995, page 11; and Henry Schapansky, "Hermann Friesen ca. 1750-1819," in *Preservings*, No. 6, June 1995, page 25. Klaas B. Friesen (1838-1922) came from the Klaas Friesen family of Lindenaу and was not related to either of the above Friesen families.

There is some question as to whether Jakob S. Friesen or older brother Dietrich S. Friesen (1849-1901) was the original owner of Wirtschaft 7 in Steinbach. The lists of pioneers published in the 1934 and 1949 *Gedenkfeier* books all show Jakob as the first owner. In his 1915 article "Steinbach: Then and now," Gerhard G. Kornelsen makes the unequivocal statement that "Dietrich S. Friesen settled on number [7]. He gave over his pioneer work in 1878 to his brother Jakob S. Friesen and moved to Blumenfeld. Two years later however he returned to teach school in Steinbach": *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, 258. The answer to this question will have to await a further opportunity. Dietrich S. Friesen (1849-1901) was the father of Cornelius F. Friesen (1876-1980), well-known Steinbacher who lived to be 104 years old.

Friedensfeld, Man.

The district to the south of Steinbach, Manitoba, where many of the settlers had their home-stead quarters, or later purchased land, was called Friedensfeld in honour of Rev. Jakob M. Barkman who originated from the village of the same name in Russia located 50 kilometres north of Nikopol. Barkman was the leader of the settlement who drowned in the Red River in 1875 in the service of his community.

It should be noted that Friedensfeld and Gruenfeld in Russia, technically, were not part of the Borosenko settlement. These villages were located on smaller parcels of land acquired by individuals groups of KG in the area to the north. For additional information in the Borosenko settlement and the KG movement out of the Molotschna during the 1860s, which

also included settlements at Markuslandt (30 miles east of Einlage on the Dneiper River) and in the Crimea, see Chapter Eleven, "Physical Expansion," *Storm and Triumph*, pages 185-200.

Matrilocality.

At the HSHS Annual Meeting January 26, 1996, Professor Royden K. Loewen introduced the audience to "matrilocality", an anthropological concept which refers to the influence which pioneer women had over important family decisions such as the village in which they would settle, etc. The theory is that in many cases such decisions were made because of matrilineal considerations, e.g. two sisters who wanted to live in the same village, or a widowed mother who wanted all her children to live near her, etc.

This concept is probably no where more applicable than in the case of Steinbach, Manitoba. Steinbach was always known for the Reimers who bunkered down boldly right in the middle of the village and continued to play a leading role as they had previously in the "old" Steinbach in Russia. The Reimer clan included the prominent brothers, Johann and Klaas, joined by sisters Elisabeth and Katherina whose husbands Abram S. Friesen and Peter P. Toews chose to settle in Steinbach and remain there notwithstanding that their parents and the rest of their siblings settled in the United States.

But this does not explain why all the Reimers did not settle in Blumenort, a wealthier and larger village, where their parents Abraham F. Reimers and three other siblings settled. Perhaps the answer is simply that the four siblings wanted to live together in the same village as they had done previously in Russia and Blumenort--which was physically settled a few weeks sooner--was already too full to accommodate them all.

The Barkmans were another prominent patriarchy in the village: father Peter K., son Peter T, and son-in-law Johann S. Friesen, settled in a cluster to the south of the Reimer clan. Peter K. Barkman was a cousin to Rev. Jakob M.



Map of Nikopol Zaporizhyia Area. Map courtesy of Peter F. Golbeck, Tiverton, Ontario, May 17, 1987. The location of the village of Steinbach as well as Blumenhof were incorrectly shown in the map of Borosenko and Seifertsland published in Petermann's Mitteilungen 44 (1898), p. 169. However, the map was helpful as it included the Russian names of the Kleine Gemeinde villages in the area. This information was critical in enabling Ukraintours guide Olga Schmakina of Zaporozhye to make a positive identification of the site of the village of Steinbach by interviewing long time residents in the neighbouring village of Mironovka.

Barkman who had settled towards the north end of the village, together with his son-in-law Cornelius P. Goossen, connecting 5 of the 18 families.

Other male connections include the Friesen brothers: Johann S. Friesen; Dietrich S. Friesen, at the other end of the village, whose wife was the sister of Klaas B. Friesen; and brother Jakob S. Friesen who took over Dietrich's place in 1878, and who was married into the Giesbrecht clan. Their father Jakob K. Friesen, who drowned in the Red River in 1875, had settled in Gruenfeld 10 miles away so that their choice to settle in Steinbach was obviously decided by their wives' family connections.

The four Warkentins among the 1874 settlers represented a more sophisticated example of matrilocality. They were children of Peter Warkentin (1820-ca.1857), son of Gerhard Warkentin (1796-1848), KG Vollwirt from Pordenau and later Lindenau. Gerhard, in turn, was the son of the family patriarch Martin Warkentin (1764-1853), a pioneer in Blumstein, Molotschna in 1804. Both Gerhard and son Peter had died young so that almost nothing was known about the family until a few years ago.

Peter Warkentin was married for the first time to Elisabeth Friesen (1819-50), the aunt of Klaas B. Friesen on Wirtschaft One. Their children, daughter Anna Warkentin who married Johann R. Reimer, and son Gerhard, were both

pioneer settlers of Steinbach although Gerhard came over from Russia by himself later in the fall of 1874 and stayed in Ontario over the winter. Peter Warkentin married for the second time to Katharina Thiessen, daughter of Jakob Thiessen and Anna Enns of Neukirch. Their daughter Katherine T. Warkentin later married Heinrich R. Brandt whose first wife was her cousin. Their second daughter Helena T. W. married widower Klaas Reimer in March, 1875.

Peter Warkentin died ca. 1857 after which his widow married Jakob M. Barkman of Waldheim. But the connections become even more interesting, as Jakob was also connected to the Giesbrecht clan. His first wife Elisabeth Giesbrecht (1830-1858), daughter of KG Vollwirt Jakob Giesbrecht (b. 1787) of Muntau, Mol., was the aunt of Gerhard R. Giesbrecht, who would become village Schulz in 1882; Aganetha Giesbrecht, wife of Jakob T. Barkman; and Margaretha Giesbrecht, wife of Jakob S. Friesen, thus connecting 8 of the pioneer families. The foregoing makes it easier to understand why Jakob M. Barkman was automatically accepted as the spiritual leader of the community or why Gerhard Giesbrecht became Schulz in 1882/3.

Another Giesbrecht sibling--Wilhelm T., later Holdeman evangelist, moved to Steinbach in 1879 purchasing the Wirtschaft formerly owned by Gerhard Warkentin, "because his

mother and siblings lived in Steinbach." The circle goes on, however, as it turns out that Wilhelm's mother was Aganetha Thiessen, a sister to Katarina. Between the two of them, the Thiessen sisters from Neukirch, Mol. influenced by blood relations or marriage well over half of the pioneer families in Steinbach.

Katarina's second husband drowned in the Red River in 1875 and on April 2, 1877, she married for the third time to Cornelius Loewen (1827-1893) from Gruenfeld who then moved to Steinbach to live on her Wirtschaft. This brought to the village the Loewen dynasty whose descendants later established the millwork factory, the Loewen Funeral Group, and many other significant enterprises.

Franz M. Kroeker, a wealthy farmer at the south end of the village serves as another example. His two brothers Jakob and Peter lived in Rosenort where they served as the Bishop and minister respectively. A sister lived in Jansen, Nebraska. Therefore, why did Franz chose to settle in Steinbach? The answer apparently was that Cornelius S. Plett (1820-1900), his wife's father, was planning to settle north of Steinbach in 1875 in a village to be called Blumenhof. The Plett family was a very tightly-knit clan and it appears there was no way that Margaretha was going to live that far away from her family.

Also in Steinbach was Margaretha's first

cousin Cornelius Plett Goossen on Wirtschaft 6. In 1877 when the Johann S. Friesen Wirtschaft next door came up for sale, the wealthy widow Isaac L. Plett, nee Maria R. Brandt of Gruenfeld, bought the place to live near her brother Heinrich R. Brandt as well as her sister-in-law Margaretha Plett Kroeker. This brought another prominent clan to the village. Maria Brandt Plett's grandson Abram D. Plett later relocated to Rosenort where he founded Westfield Industries, a large implement manufacturer.

Speculation about family connections, of course, could go on indefinitely. The foregoing will illustrate that the women of the KG played a leading role in determining who settled where and when. In a community without any obvi-

ous natural resources, it was the energy and ability of its inhabitants which articulated and fueled its further development. The subsequent growth and success of Steinbach indicates that the women made sound choices for themselves and their community.

Feature Section.

The feature section on Steinbach includes five articles about the "new" Steinbach: Ralph Friesen has written an introduction to two largely unknown articles written in 1895 and 1904 as well as an early photograph of Main Street taken around 1900; Evelyn Gerbrandt writes about her great-grandparents Klaas B. Friesens who settled on Wirtschaft 1 at the north

end of the village; Ernie Toews writes about his grandmother Elisabeth Reimer Toews, and the fourth article also by Ernie P. Toews describes the Main Street of 1930 and the history of some of the establishments thereon. The fifth tells the story of teacher Corneius Fast, a Steinbach pioneer.

Of course, everything pales relative to the horror of the night of December 7, 1919, when the world in the "old" Steinbach exploded in a whirlwind of bloodshed and satanic fury. Heinrich Epp's graphic account of this indescribable nightmare provides a chilling contrast to the establishment and peaceful evolution of the "new" Steinbach.

D. Plett editor

The day the world ended Dec. 7, 1919 Steinbach, Russia

by Heinrich Epp (1899-1989), translated by Delbert F. Plett

[Warning: This article contains graphic scenes of brutality and death which will be offensive to some readers.]

It was at the end of the month of October 1919, when I changed my place of residence from Felsenbach to Schoendorf. The time period in which we lived was a very disturbed one. It was War! Batyko Machno was fighting the White Army and this was happening in our own region. We were on the side [of the lines] in which Machno belonged.

Most of the time we were without any real government for all intents and purposes. There were no laws or police. It was as they say, "Everyone had to look out for themselves." During the day it was mainly the local Russian nationals from the region or young men who visited us repeatedly. Each time they took something which caught their fancy as their own property. When they departed from us they always took something along home with them—one time it was a horse, a cow, a pig, a wagon, a plow, or anything else.

But far more fearful were the nights when the so-called bandits came, for such visits rarely passed by without some life being given as sacrifice. Another great plague was the military which was passing through the country side at the time, for they had to be provided with quarters for the night and then the next day they had to be transported to their next destination with our vehicles. In many cases they kept them for up to an entire week before they were released so that they could again return home, by which time they could easily be a hundred miles or more away.

Most of the time they were typhus-infected soldiers who had become ill while in the army and who now wanted to get out of the big City. They were all covered with lice and now also spread the pestilence throughout the entire land, including among our people.

I will now describe a particular incident of

the aforementioned night bandits. It happened on a Sunday evening that such a band visited us. There were 12 horsemen and their leader who was known only as "Shurka". Immediately upon arriving in the village he gave the command that a representative from each "hof" (farm) was to make an appearance at the home of the village mayor. After a curt greeting, each property owner accompanied by one of his men was sent back to his farm and told to gather all their money and to bring it back to him.

Amid great friction, Father came bursting into the house, while his companion, a soldier armed with a rifle, remained standing at the door. But he pushed his rifle into the room and gave a stern order that "he [Father] should quickly gather all his money and reappear or else he would be shot." After father had gathered all his money, they disappeared again.

It was already quite late by the time father returned home again and all of us were elated just to see him among the living once more. He then related to us what he had all experienced that evening with the bandits at the home of J. Funk, which was where they had all assembled themselves.

There were musical instruments in the Grosse Stube (living room) at this place and so he [Shurka] had ordered their son David to start playing. Then he had demanded that he should play church songs and he tried to dance to the music. At first he danced alone and then he had taken anyone of the farmers as his partner. As he quickly perceived that this was very painful for them, for example the minister Ohm Isaak, he had a lot of fun. Then he went to get his riding whip from outside in his saddle and whipped them over their legs so that the dancers would thereby be induced to lift their legs higher.

But this was not the worst of it. He tried to find someone who would contradict something that he said or who would not obey him in some respect, so that he would have an excuse to say that they had not been obedient to him. Our eld-

erly men were also painfully aware of this. As they had already seen their death before their own eyes they did everything that he required. This was not always easy for the requests were not reasonable. He thrust his sabre about in the air and then everyone had to kiss him and other similar things. If everything was not done, the result was a box over the cheek or some other punishment . . . !

In particular, he admonished Uncle Rempel, an elderly man over 70 years of age, who in his opinion had not brought enough money. He had to take off all his clothes and sit naked in the middle of the floor. Then he wanted to hack him into pieces with his sabre but his own men would not allow it. It went as far that one of the neighbours had to take off his trousers and he had to kiss him on his bare behind. But, no one was killed during this evening.

And this is how days and weeks went by: on some days there were more occurrences and less on other days. Until the beginning of December when we received the horrible news of the massacre at Ebenfeld and Steinbach.

I believe it was the 7th of December [1919] when a man by the name of Furman came to us in our house and brought us the news that "Father's brother Cornelius Funk and his family in Steinbach had been massacred by the ban-

Announcement

Next Issue

The next issue, number 9, will feature the pioneers and entrepreneurs of Steinbach. If you are interested in contributing an article on this or any other topic of interest to the history and culture of the Hanover Steinbach area please send your manuscript to the Editor, *Preservings*, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, or telephone (204) 326-6454 or 474-5031.

dits as well as all the German inhabitants of Steinbach." This man lived in the vicinity and had taken it upon himself to bring Father the news. He also knew that some of the children had survived although wounded and were wandering about in the village.

We immediately decided that this was a situation where help had to be provided and that it had to come from us as it was our duty. And yet, "who" and "what" was the big question? My wife's brother Franz volunteered that if a means of driving there would avail itself, he would go. We others were all quiet, for it was a huge risk to place oneself into the path of the murderers' operations. I looked at my wife questioningly, and she nodded back, so I announced I would be willing to go.

Now there remained the second question, how would we obtain a vehicle in order to get there? We had managed to retain one lame horse in our barn and also a wagon. We asked our neighbour, whose parents lived in Ebenfeld and who were Russian, if he would hitch his horse onto our wagon? "If I can go along, then yes," he replied.

And so the three of us left immediately. First we went to Ebenfeld. We drove onto his parents' yard where we unhitched the horses and put them into the barn. The three of us then went through the village by foot, from house to house. What a horror came over me!

We found uncle Schmidt sitting dead in his bed in the first room. The floor was covered with bed feathers and the walls were covered with blood, evidencing his struggle to stay alive during his last moments: he had raised himself up and then collapsed again. As far as we could see his wounds were mainly to his head, and made by a sabre. As he had a full beard, the blood had first run unto his beard and afterwards it had frozen solid. His entire head had the appearance of a glob of blood.

Then we went further and came to the next establishment belonging to Korn. Loewen. We went along through the barn and noted that the cattle were bound in their stalls in front of empty cribs and were calling for food. We took a moment and released them so they could forage freely around the yard for food as there were enough stacks of hay about.

The next place was Hildebrandts--my cousin Maria, nee Penner, presently married to a Hildebrandt. Here I saw a scene of indescribable horror which I will never forget as long as I live. Mrs. Hildebrandt lay in the small bedroom (Kleine Stube) just inside the door to the corner room, completely unclothed. One of her arms had been chopped off and lay on the floor in the middle of the room. Her youngest baby lay dead in the cradle. Its neck had been hacked off. This woman was one of those that had been raped, before or after her murder.

We then went to the Quiring's house. Here there was only uncle Quiring and his brother-in-law A. Penner (from Blumenhof). They each lay in their beds, dead. With one of them, their legs were hanging over the side of the bed. We could see how they had hacked the flesh off his legs in strips.

The next place belonged to Bernhard Penners. Uncle Penner lay in the dinning room under the table. Several of the children lay there as well. I believe they must have been eating supper. Aunt Penner was not to be seen. She had fled before the murderers arrived to my uncle Peter Epp's place, who lived just behind them in a small house. But she never made it to her destination. The murderers had seized her along the way and hacked her apart. This is how we found her, lying outside, dead.

I did not go into my uncle Peter's house. The others went inside; the door was open. They told me that their son Heinrich had come home [for a visit] and also lay dead in the house together with his parents; and yet, Tina was missing.

Next we came to Abram Penners, my father's oldest sister. Their daughter, the widow Von Kampen, also lived here. These they had all herded into the summer room and hacked them apart there. Nine corpses were lying there on a pile, mostly unclothed or completely naked.

First, we went into the small bedroom [Kleine Stube] where we found one of the boys, the son of Von Kampen. He was still alive, that is to say, he was still breathing. He lay all alone in his empty bed, without a blanket, dressed only in a nightshirt. The back of his head was completely hacked open. The wounds were wide open so that we could see into the innermost part of his head. I tried to speak with him but he gave no sign that he understood me. Why he was in the small room all by himself and not with the others in the pile, was a total mystery to us which only eternity will be able to solve.

Of the family Von Kampen, only son Jakob--who presently lives in Saskatchewan--remained alive. It just so happened that he was not home and was not living at home at the time. I also had the opportunity to send word to Abr. Enns who lived on the *chutor* [an estate], that he should come and take the young Von Kampen to his house and provide him with the necessary care. I heard later that he had also immediately come to get him; but he had died during the first night.

I will return briefly to the family Bernhard Penner. I want to mention that seven members of this family survived. Some of them had hidden themselves, some saved themselves by fleeing during the night, and others were not at home.

From Abr. Penners we did not go further. We turned around there and returned to our vehicle. We were not sure whether we would get the same treatment for many people had come into the village since we had arrived. The next establishment (hof) in the row in the village was where the Abr. Penners lived--my father's other sister. They were, as we were told, also hacked apart with sabres.

Next in the row was Jakob Bergen's place. Of this family, only son Johann was at home in Ebenfeld. A few days later aunt Bergen was recognized by the bandits in Felsenbach and was murdered in a shameful way. Uncle Bergen as well as also the boys Jakob and Heinrich, and also the daughter Susanna, all remained alive. They had all hidden themselves in Felsenbach,

as they were of the view that their lives were very uncertain in their home in Ebenfeld or even on their yard.

Along the street behind Bergens there were a number of smaller premises [huts], as for example, the village blacksmith's little house, the night watchmen, the windmiller - which I believe was a Russian family, and the former herdsmen who remained alive; the Germans were all murdered--rich or poor.

Then on the other side of the street, there lived Dietrich Penners. At the Penners place, son Abram escaped with his life during the murders. He had been with the other children in the Kleine Stube [small bedroom] and had witnessed how they had first called his father, then the mother to the corner room [Eck Stube] and hacked them apart. When his turn came, he jumped through the window. He took a shot in his right arm during the jump, and fell down on the ground outside. He lay there without moving for a time as if he were dead while they murdered the rest of his siblings inside and then left.

When he came to during the night he had fled to the Krauses', his friends, who lived in the lower end, near the river. When he arrived there during the night, he had not said anything to anybody. Rather, he had hidden himself in the attic of an ancillary house or barn, where he had spent the entire night all by himself.

David Penner, the oldest of the Penner boys, who was a student at the Charkower University, but who had been at home as a guest exactly at this time, had tried to flee. The murderers caught him halfway to the windmill. First they hacked off his foot just above the ankle and then they put him to death. They found the foot lying approximately 20 feet from the corpse.

After he had first brought two girlfriends, Tina Epp and Susie Penner, into hiding, Dietrich Penner had gone back and having found his dear ones in such circumstances, he surrendered himself to the murderers who also immediately put him to death.

Further along that side of the street was the school. The murderers had also turned in there where the school teacher lived, and as he was also a German, they murdered him as well. They found him lying on the ground, outside the school house. This was the last establishment. In total there were 67 corpses.

There was another reason why we had turned around at Abram Penners and why we had not gone further. I was convulsing in my entire body. It is a terrible thing to find such a mass of murdered people. But when they are also closely related and very dear friends, the way these were to me, it is doubly hard or even unbearable. Most of these had been from my circle of relatives, my beloved uncle and aunt and their children who were my cousins. Indeed, Ebenfeld was always a beloved place for me, where I loved to visit as a guest. I knew everybody there and they all knew me.

By this time the entire village had filled up with Russian peasants from the region who had heard about what had happened and who had come to see if there was not also something left

for them to take. The robbery now commenced: all property, movable or unmovable, dead or alive, now went over into their hands. In one place, I witnessed a woman turn a dead body over onto its back and tore off his coat. She dealt with the corpse as if it were a head of livestock.

By the time that we had returned to our vehicle we noticed very quickly that they were eyeing us very closely. It was now high time to take our leave. We were truly glad that we had our neighbour with us as it was not as dangerous for him since he was a Russian. But we were truly anxious about our circumstances.

This then is the last information from Ebenfeld. I never saw the village again. These are my last recollections which I will never forget.

We quickly harnessed our horses and got under way to Steinbach which was approximately 3 to 4 miles from here. As we drew near to the village we were informed by some Russians that there were 3 wounded among the murder victims in Steinbach who were still alive. For the time being they had been brought to the home of Peter Neufelds where they also received some treatment.

Consequently we immediately drove onto Neufeld's yard and found them as they had told us, that they had been brought inside into the Kleine Stube [small room] where they were heating and it was warm already. We found that a number of elderly women were with them and were nursing the sick in so far as they knew how.

The three wounded who had been sheltered there were: Anna Neufeld who had a bullet wound through her back. She was conscious and we were able to speak with her. The other was Lisa Funk who had many sabre wounds to the back of her head. We were not able to talk with her. She was in a highly delirious condition, extremely agitated and horrified. Likewise the third one, a boy of 10 to 12 years. He was the son of the Lutheran family Pauls, who lived in Steinbach at the time. When Anna heard us talking German she looked at us with big eyes. All of a sudden she said, "You are Germans also?" They had told her that all the Germans had been exterminated.

Peter Neufeld, which was Anna's brother, had also remained alive. He had already left Steinbach earlier. By coincidence he had met Cornelia Funk on the street and together they had fled across the fields to Felsenbach. At an opportune time Peter later gave me a detailed description of the way in which the murderers had commenced with the murders. And this is what he told me.

At first one of murderers had come onto their yard on foot all by himself and had asked for a breast harness. His brother Abram brought the breast harness out to him with the plea that this was the last one left to them and had asked him to leave them at least one breast harness for the one horse they still had. Whereupon the bandit answered, "You will not have any need for a breast harness any more."

When Abram came back into the house to them he said, "I think our end is come." And so they quickly gathered everyone together in the

living room [Grosse Stube] and knelt down and all prayed together.

After a short time, they [the bandits] had made their appearance. The leader immediately gave the order that they should all line up in the rear of the house, one behind the other. Abram as the first in the row had asked "if they could still say a prayer."

"Not too long," was the answer.

Abram then prayed for everyone in German and then went over to Russian to pray for those who wanted to murder them. The bandit leader immediately started screaming for him to stop and then shot his weapon. He wanted to kill them all with one bullet. But the bullet passed by Peter who had bent himself somewhat out of line. But he threw himself down just like the others had fallen as if he had also been hit and was dead.

Later, after everybody had already left, he got up and walked into the village. Along the street he had met Cornelia Funk and together they fled to the village of Felsenbach running over field and steppe. Cornelia had a bullet wound across her face. The bullet had entered in her right cheek under her ear and had gone straight through and exited by her nose.

We did not go further among the houses in Steinbach for the day was coming to an end and our time was already proscribed. We gave ourselves upon the way back, and it was already dark for a long time by the time we arrived at home.

A group of curious neighbours had gathered together in our home, and they were waiting for us. They had heard that we had gone on the journey and now wanted to hear about it from someone who had personally been there. We related what we had seen. It was immediately decided to gather a group of men who should go there forthwith on the next day in order that the corpses could be buried by some means. I did not volunteer myself this time. My nerves

had not yet returned to NORMAL. During the day it had convicted me sorely.

The three wounded in Steinbach were quickly taken away by relatives. Two went to Felsenbach and one to her friends in Eigengrund. Anna was healed from her wounds and fully restored to normality. But the other two both died thereafter.

I believe it was on December 9, 1919, that the corpses in Steinbach--54 in number--were buried in the cemetery in Steinbach in a mass grave. The Ebenfelder were buried a few days later. Here there were 67 corpses.

The days following the massacre were horrible ones for us. We lived in constant fear for we knew completely for certain that the same sentence had been issued for us by the Machno Government, namely, to exterminate all Germans. That we were still there only meant that they had not yet carried out the sentence in our case. "When would our end come?" This thought dominated our minds both night and day.

Until the time on January 3, 1920, when the Red Army from the north came to us and freed us from the fearful bandits and instituted a government according to their way which has subsisted until the present time.

These then are some recollections of the Machno-Bandit time, which had now come to an end. What I have written down here are such matters which do not allow themselves to be forgotten. The End.

The "Journal" of Heinrich Epp (1899-1989) describing the massacre in Steinbach, Russia, is courtesy of Heinz Dyck, 2827 Grant Crescent, Calgary, Alberta, T2E 4K9, and Frank Dyck, 4028 Vincent Place N.W., Calgary, Alberta, T3A 0H3, both of whom were born and raised in the Borosenko area of Russia.

Early Perspectives on Steinbach

by Ralph Friesen, 306 Montgomery Ave., Wpg, R3L 1T4

Introduction.

Two different perspectives on the early days of Steinbach, one written, the other pictorial, have received scant attention, or none at all, until now. One is an article entitled "The East Reserve" which appeared in *Der Nordwesten*, a German-language newspaper published in Winnipeg before the turn of the century (and still being published today, as the *Kanada Kurier*).

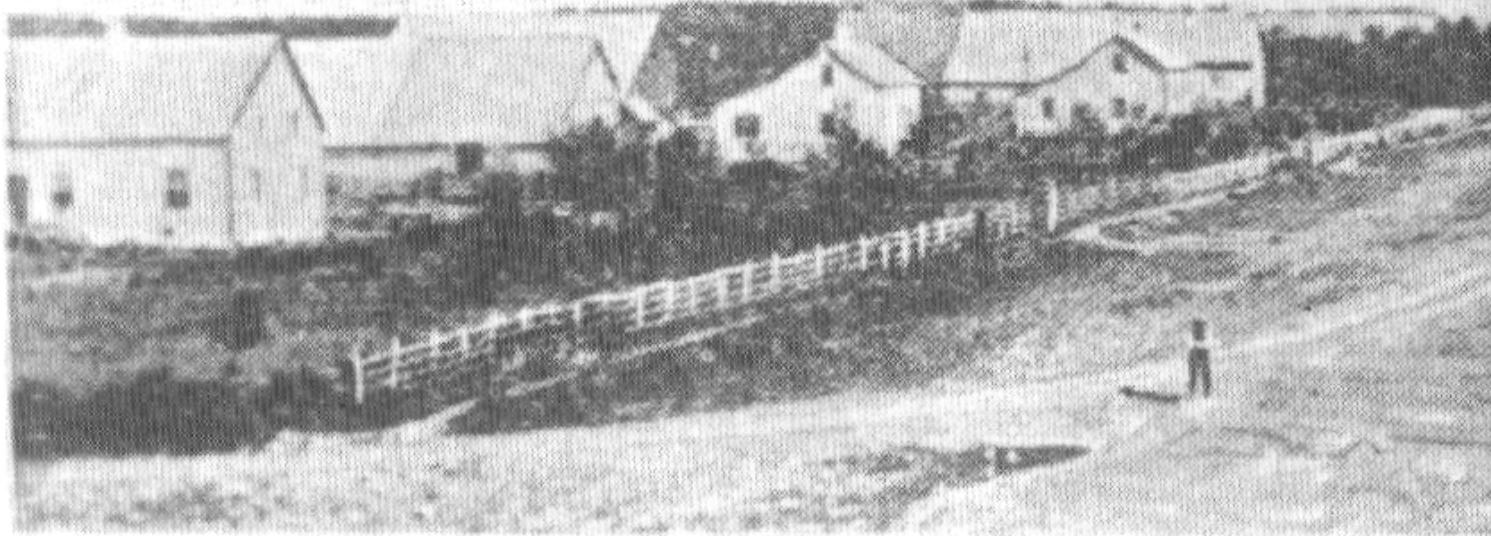
The other perspective is a photograph--it may be the first one--taken of the town of Steinbach and printed in Alexander McIntyre's elementary school text book, *The Canadian West, a Geography of Manitoba and the North-West Territories*, published in Toronto in 1904.

The *Nordwesten* article, written by a correspondent named J. Harbs, appeared on March 28, 1895, and recounts the writer's impressions from several days of travelling through the villages of the East Reserve in mid-March, gath-

ering information on the agricultural, commercial and social life of the Mennonites. Harbs also hoped to gain more subscribers to *Der Nordwesten*, as he freely admits. He was a sympathetic observer, describing with enthusiasm the farms and enterprises of the Reserve but devoting most of his attention to Steinbach, which was already "the business centre of the whole district."

The population of Steinbach in 1895 was approximately 290, extrapolating that figure from an estimated 265 in 1889 and a known 366 in 1901. Harbs was perhaps right in his observation that it was more of a town than a village, given the number of industries and range of activity it supported: a flour mill, tannery, machine shop, saw mill, cheese factory, blacksmith shop livery, several general stores and a tin smithing shop.

Of all these businesses there is no evidence today, except for Friesen Machine Shop (est.



Steinbach Main Street circa 1900. View from the north to the southeast.

1892), which is still being run by descendants of the pioneer Abraham S. Friesen. Klaas R. Reimer's creative idea of damming the little creek running behind the village and making a fish pond never, as far as is known, came to fruition.

The saw mill operation "River Park", owned by "Mr. Loewen of Hochstadt" and located east of Steinbach just past LaBroquerie, is described by Harbs with a clarity and lyricism that transport the reader to the time and place. "Already from far away," he writes, "making its way through the tall trunks and the puffing sound of the hard-working steam engine, one hears the noise of the circular saw." Wood cutting and saw milling, of course, were vital to the economy of Steinbach in its early years.

The article, which I have translated, appears in its entirety below.

1895 Nordwesten Article

"The East Reserve"

"About 30 miles south of Winnipeg, east of the Red River, is a large German settlement known by the name "East Reserve." It was in this area, which today is shown on the map as the Hanover municipality, where our German Mennonites settled as pioneers of the Canadian west almost 20 years ago. It is a pure German settlement, which can also easily be determined from the names of the numerous villages, mostly only a few miles distant from each other.

"Admittedly the land here is not as densely settled as on the West Reserve at Gretna, but this affords the farmers the opportunity to keep a larger number of cattle and to shift their efforts more to mixed farming. Now, when wheat prices are low, this is a definite advantage. As well the farmers there are in the favourable position of being able to take their products to the Winnipeg market themselves. Each farmer owns

an impressive number of livestock: horses, cattle, sheep, pigs; and there is also no lack of the usual poultry: chickens, ducks and geese. One farmer, for example, told me that in one year he had realized not less than 18 dollars from a brooding goose. In some places this year there has been an unusual mortality incidence among lambs; one farmer, for example, has already had 10 out of 23 die.

"As there are often problems with the manufacture of butter on the farm, especially in summer, people have taken to processing milk wholesale in order to get a higher price for milk products. These initiatives have proven successful both for the farmers and the entrepreneurs. There are now five cheese factories in the district, one each in Steinbach, Blumenort, Gruenfeld, Hochstadt and hHochfeld; in Gruenthal the construction of another one is planned for next summer. The cheese factory in Steinbach has begun operation again and is already taking in ca. 2,000 pounds of milk a day; in summer it is 5,000-6,000 pounds a day. At the moment suppliers get 75 cents ready money for 100 pounds of milk. How much such a source of revenue is worth will probably be known best by the farmer, whose butter can only be exchanged for goods in the store.

"The people of the East Reserve, who do not fail to visit the "Nordwesten" on their frequent trips to Winnipeg, are for the most part known to us personally, and the goal of our recent little trip was to pay a return visit to them on their farms and in their homes. On March 14 I travelled by train to Niverville, where our friend Martin Friesen was already waiting for me.

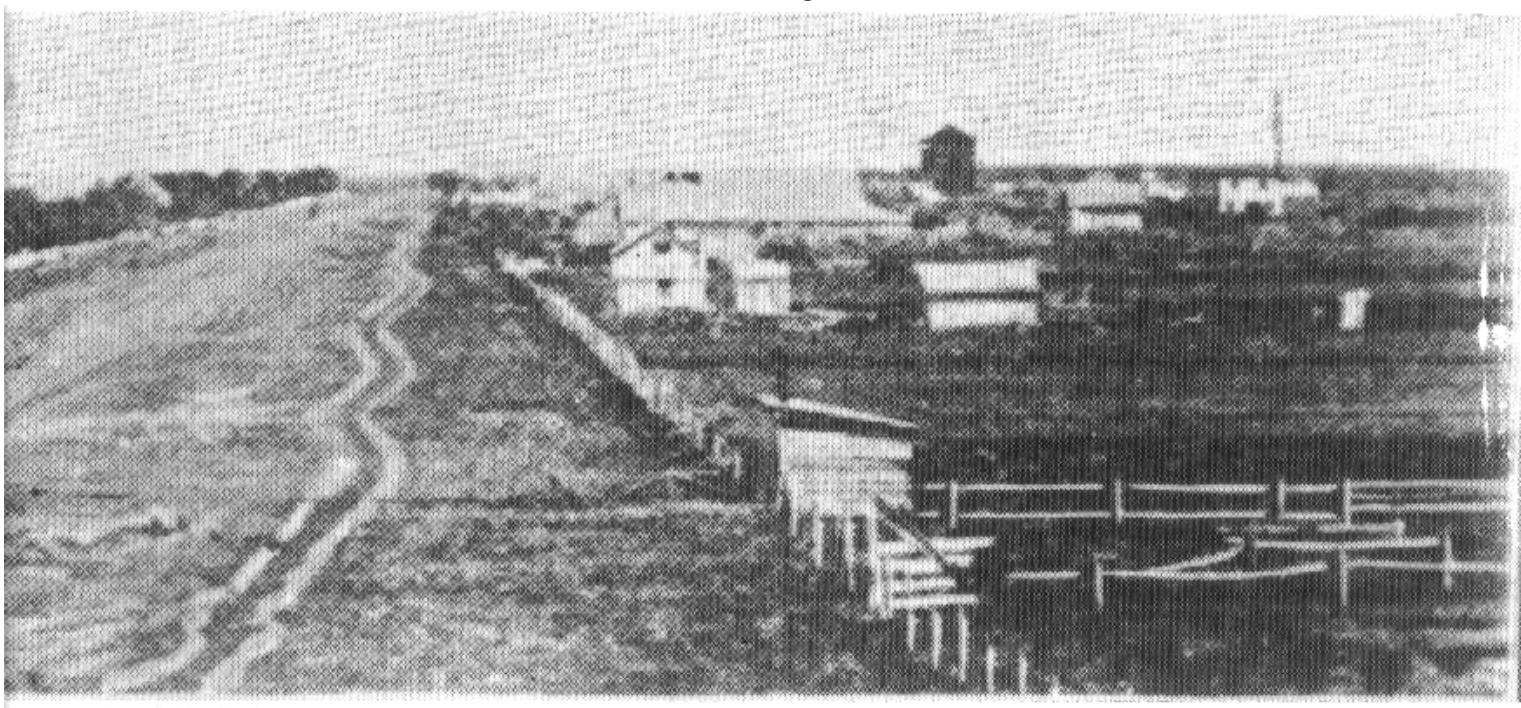
"While at Gretna the snow was altogether vanished for two weeks already, here everything was still covered with a white blanket. Mr. Friesen said he was ready to drive me around on his sleigh for the next few days and so I had the opportunity to greet some old acquaintances

in their homes and also to win some new friends for the "Nordwesten." On our trip we stopped briefly at Osterwick, Schoenthal, Schoenwiese, Chortitz, Vollwerk, Reichenbach, Ebenfeld, Bergthal, and Clear Springs before arriving on Saturday in Steinbach, where I stayed for the following days.

"Steinbach is the business centre of the whole district; although only a village it is more worthy of the name "town" than some other places in Manitoba through which the railroad runs. When, from a distance, one sees the tall chimneys with smoke coming out of them, one might almost think that this was a small factory city. A whole row of industries is represented here in Steinbach: the latest model of steam-run mill, owned by Reimer, Barkman & Co., which produces the best flour for the whole district; the mill is driven by a 55 horsepower machine and everywhere the eye is pleased by cleanliness and order, which otherwise is often not the case with such operations.

"Next to the mill are situated huge supplies of good quality firewood, for which the millers pay between 75 cents and \$1.25 a cord. Further down the street we find a steam-engine-driven tannery, which has made very good progress during the short time since it was begun. Unfortunately the owner, Mr. Toews, lacks the necessary wherewithal to buy and process skins in large quantities, so his main business till now has been with customers personally known to him.

"Then there is the machine repair shop of Friesen & Sons and their saw mill with a shingle-cutting apparatus and a planer. At the other end of the village is Klaas Reimer's cheese factory. Also to be mentioned is the blacksmith shop and the livery stable of Mr. Toews, further down the street. Steinbach now has 4 stores: Klaas Reimer, H.W. Reimer, Penner and the Reimer brothers. In addition Mr. H.W. Reimer also has



a tin-smithing shop where almost all the sheet metal bought in the district is manufactured.

"Already some distance before one gets to Steinbach the bush begins and then extends farther east and south. Just behind the village a small stream meanders along. Mr. Klaas Reimer is thinking of building a dam in the stream valley in the summer and creating a small fish pond. The vicinity of Steinbach and also the village itself with its gardens full of trees must afford a beautiful view in the summer time. On Sunday evening I had the opportunity to see the community's youth assembled for a song service in the school, which is located in the middle of the village.

"On Monday I visited Hochstadt, Schoensee and Gruenthal and then on Tuesday morning accepted a friendly invitation from Mr. Regehr of Hochstadt to visit the forest. Just a few miles east of Steinbach the tree growth already begins to get thicker. The usual poplars become less common, giving way to spruce, pine and tamarack. Further east there are also cedars. The further one goes, the thicker and higher grow the trees. Coming from the bald open prairie one feels removed into altogether different surroundings, in the middle of giant evergreens striving for the sky. Unbidden memories came to me of the even more beautiful beech and oak forests of north Germany in the summer.

"But staying here in the summer time is supposedly not at all as pleasant as one might like to believe. The swampy terrain and the wind-protected location favours an ideal breeding ground for all sorts of vermin. Mosquitoes and other even worse pests are said to be present here in such large numbers in the summer time that it is impossible for man or beast to linger. After a 3-1/2-hour trip we reached River Park, where the saw mill of Mr. Loewen of Hochstadt is located. Already from far away, making its way through the tall trunks and the puffing sound

of the hard-working steam engine, one hears the noise of the circular saw.

"Work goes on in full force from 7 in the morning to 12 at night, as the approaching warm weather will soon make the logging road impassable. Unfortunately we could no longer get to the significantly bigger Pine Hill saw mill about nine miles further east, and so we contented ourselves with roaming through the area on foot within a circumference of some miles. In the deep, soft snow it was impossible to proceed very far from the road and into the heart of the forest. The forest and the logging road are always astir with life.

"One hundred full sleigh loads of wood go through Steinbach alone every day. This year the saw mills will keep only a little wood for their own store. On the next day we drove back through the French settlement of LaBroquerie and arrived in Steinbach in the afternoon. In the meantime warm thawing weather had set in and a powerful stream of water was flowing down Main Street. After looking up our friend Cornelius Epp in Schoenthal that same evening I set out for home on Thursday.

"I would like to conclude with heart-felt thanks to all our friends and readers for their hospitality and friendly welcome." by J. Harbs

The Photograph

One of the first photographs--if not the first one--ever taken of the town of Steinbach was printed in Alexander McIntyre's elementary school text book, *The Canadian West, a Geography of Manitoba and the North-West Territories*, published in Toronto in 1904. The picture, seven-eights of an inch high by three-and-five-eights wide, appears on page 213, in a chapter entitled "The People," by which McIntyre seems to have meant ethnocultural groups other than British, French or Aboriginal. The cutline

"Steinbach, a typical Mennonite village" appears underneath the illustration.

Alexander McIntyre does not provide a photographer's credit for the panoramic photograph of Steinbach which appears in his book, so it is not possible to give a date for the picture, except to be certain that it was taken in 1904 or earlier. Because of the small size of the picture and the heavy dot pattern, details are not clear. It is a view of Main Street from the north, looking south. The street is wide, flanked with buildings on both sides, though the buildings to the left (east) are evidently residences while those on the right are likely enterprises.

The dark, angle-roofed structure on the right would seem to be the steam-driven flour mill owned by Abram A. Reimer, Peter T. Barkman, Peter K. Barkman and A.A. Reimer, built in 1892.(1) The building with the tall chimney to the west of the mill could be part of the A.S. Friesen machine shop complex. A photograph of the Friesen place, published in Abe Warkentin's *Reflections On Our Heritage* (p. 83) does show such a tall, thin chimney, and the location would be about right. In the right foreground the gate-like fencing looks like the entrance to a farmer's field.

On the left the neat, horizontal-bar fencing in front of the residences seems to extend all the way down the street. As well, bushes or trees grow in front of each place, forming a kind of green buffer. As Harbs wrote in *Der Nordwesten*, "the village with its gardens full of trees must afford a beautiful view in the summer time." The houses are wood frame, 1-1/2 storey. The longer, steep-roofed buildings look like the traditional "barn-house." The yard of the house on the far left looks as though it has vegetation, probably a vegetable garden, growing on it. There is, of course, no telephone wire, no light standard.

The near house on the left, the most north-easterly Wirtschaft on Main Street, would have been on lot 1, settled by Klaas B. Friesen (1838-1922), and situated where Victoria Plaza stands today. Highway 12 would later be constructed south of the Friesen residence.

The picture must have been taken following a heavy rainfall, as there is a pool of water in the foreground and the street looks uneven and muddy. A graded path curves by the water. On the right, a wagon trail twists along parallel to the fencing. Perhaps it was along this trail that the “powerful stream of water” mentioned by J. Harbs flowed down Main Street.

Mysteriously, a man stands alone in the middle of the street, casting a shadow in a direction that would indicate it is late afternoon or early evening.

The same photograph appears, without comment, in Lydia Penner's book *Hanover: One Hundred Years* (1982). Penner used a copy of the photo which she found in the Manitoba Archives, but the Archives copy was also taken from McIntyre's book.

Introduction to McIntyre.

McIntyre's little book appeared in 1904, when Manitoba was still a “postage stamp” province and the Northwest Territories consisted of parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta. At the back he lists populations from the 1901 census showing Steinbach with 366, smaller than Winkler (391), Plum Coulee (394) or Morris (465). It is a smidgen larger than Altona (356). Overall, Germans, including Mennonites and Hutterites, were already the second-largest population group in the province, at 27,265, behind British (around 175,000) and well ahead of French (16,021).

Alexander McIntyre was the vice-principal of the Normal School in Winnipeg, and his primary aim, of course, was to produce a school text. He states in his preface that “this is in no way a picture-book,” but in fact it is very liberally illustrated with maps, drawings and photographs. McIntyre, naturally, wrote from a British perspective, and judged the progress of the various ethnocultural communities he described by the extent to which they were prepared to embrace the English language and customs. He writes from a “we -they” point of view, but manages to be relatively charitable and reasonably accurate. The part of the text in which he deals with Mennonites reads as follows:

The Canadian West 1904.

“We are well enough acquainted with our own people from Eastern Canada, both English and French; and we are also familiar with the English, Scotch, and Irish people.... We are not, however, so well acquainted with the Icelander, Mennonite, (Scotch) Crofter, Galician, and Doukhobor.

The Mennonites of southern Russia were among the pioneer settlers of Manitoba; and their thrift and industry have made the settlements about Steinbach, Gretna, Rosenfeld, and Winkler, among the most prosperous in the country. These people, being somewhat like the Quakers in belief, had to leave their native land,

Germany, and settle in Russia to escape a forced military service. In turn they were obliged to seek a new home in the Canadian West, where their peculiar ideas have never been interfered with. At first the Mennonites settled in villages, where their houses, built of mud and sticks, and thatched with straw, stood with ends facing the one main street or roadway.

“The land belonging to each village was divided into arable, pasture, and hay land, and was allotted to each head of a family in strips, great or small, according to what each person was able or willing to cultivate. For some years past many of these villages have been broken up, and their residents have gone to the original homesteads, but there are yet many villages following the old order of things. Though as a rule opposed to any state control, they are yearly growing more in sympathy with our educational system.”

Conclusion.

In 1904, Steinbach was still “following the old order of things,” as it would until 1910, when the village system was broke up.

The Anglo-Saxon spokesmen of the Dominion may have been uneasy with the Mennonites’ reluctance to come entirely under state control, but they were quick to recognize that the economic goals of the government would be greatly assisted by these “peculiar” people. And if McIntyre was a trifle optimistic about the extent to which the Mennonites were open to the

government’s education system, he would ultimately be proved right on this point, too.

McIntyre was not the first to praise the Mennonites for their thrift and industry and ability to create prosperity out of difficult circumstances. His observations echo the much earlier ones given by Lord Dufferin in 1877. “When I visited these interesting people,” wrote Dufferin, “...I passed village after village...furnished with all the conveniences and incidents of European comfort.”(2) The *Nordwesten* article adds another voice to this hymn of approval.

The residents of Steinbach in its early days were very cautious about the dangers of pride, and we can imagine that their response to the public approbation they received, insofar as they were even aware of it, would have been self-effacing. For Steinbachers today, prosperous inheritors of the pioneer legacy of sacrifice and hard word, the challenge must be the same as it was back then—to balance off an appropriate pride of accomplishment with a humble recognition of God’s grace.

by Ralph Friesen

Sources:

1. Abe Warkentin, *Reflections On Our Heritage* (Steinbach: Derksen Printers, 1971), p. 55.
2. Quoted by Cornelius J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1967), p. 156.

Klaas B. Friesen (1838-1922)

by Evelyn Gerbrandt, Box 202, Niverville, R0A 1E0

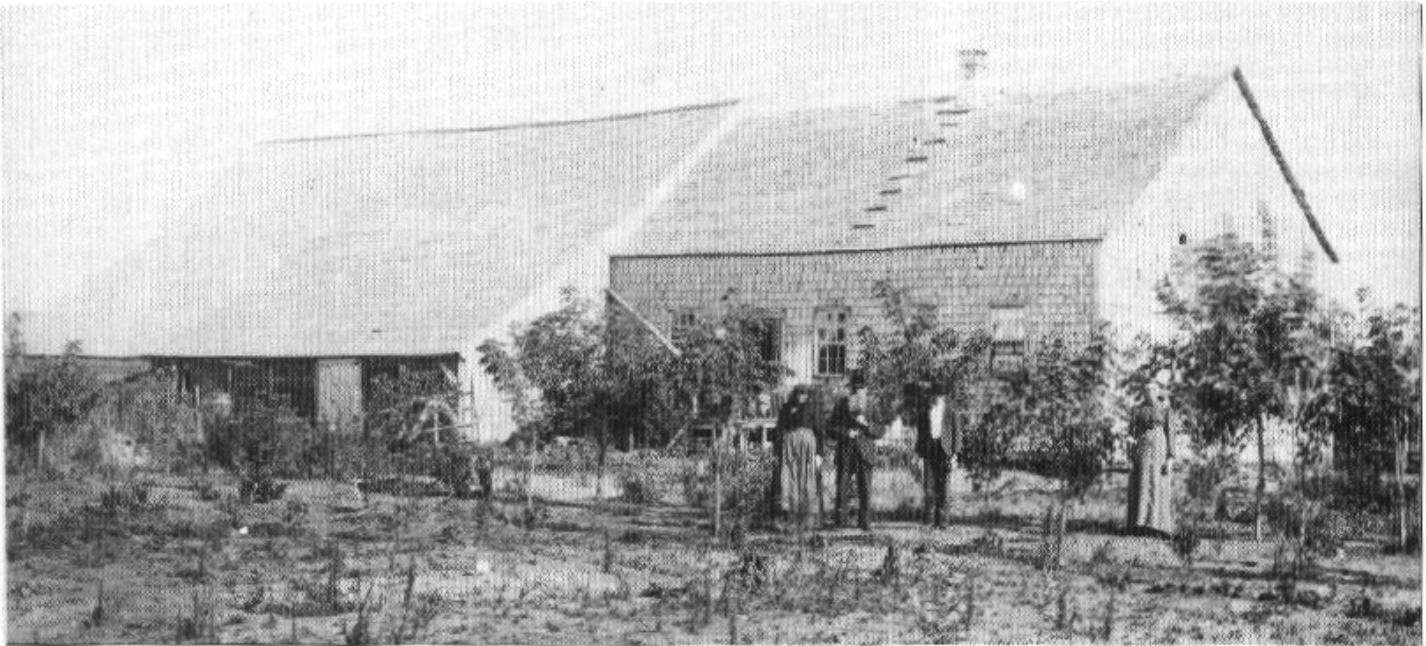
Klaas B. Friesen was born in the village of Lindenau, Mol. in 1838. He was named in honour of his grandfather Klaas Friesen, a pioneer settler of that village in 1805. His father Cornelius F. Friesen (1810-92) was a teacher

and hence young Klaas lived in various of the Molotschna villages where his father taught. (See article about his sister Maria elsewhere in this issue.)

In 1861 Klaas married Maria de Fehr, daugh-



Klaas F. Friesen (1869-1954) was the son of Klaas B. Friesen. Klaas Jr married Anna Wiebe Friesen (1876-1965) 1898. After their marriage they moved to Greenland where they farmed until 1913 when they sold out and moved to Needles, B.C. They remained there for seven months and returned to Manitoba where they bought the farm of Heinrich Rempel in Friedensfeld. In 1938 they retired and moved to a home on William Street in Steinbach not far from the site where Klaas grew up as a young boy. Photo and caption courtesy of Klaas J. B. Reimer. The Klaas F. Friesens were the parents of Albert W. Friesen of Steinbach & Peter W. Friesen of Greenland.



Original housebarn belonging to Klaas B. Friesen on Wirtschaft one in Steinbach. The house was built in 1880 and the barn and hay mow somewhat later. View from the northwest towards the southeast. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Gerbrandt. Photo dates from 1897.

ter of Johann de Fehr (died 1862) and the widow Maria Regehr, nee Giesbrecht (1800-1855) of Muntau, Mol. Sometime in the mid-1860s the Friesen families, including Klaas and his parents moved to Annafeld, Borosenko, northwest of Nikopol. Neighbour Abraham F. Reimer has recorded that on Monday March 14, 1873, he visited Klaas Friesens in Annafeld and that "Klaas Fr. was very sick, and had been so for 5 days and Hei. Brandt came already on Friday early at 2 o'clock that my wife should come there."

In 1874 Klaas and Maria Friesen immigrated to Manitoba together with their two sons Cornelius and Klaas. On August 13, 1874 Klaas and his travelling group arrived in Hamburg, Germany, from where he wrote a letter to Peter Toews the Bishop of the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) who was still in Russia. Klaas wrote that his party was "thanks be to God, relatively well, with the exception of a few children and Mrs. Heinrich Brandt." Klaas already missed the homes which they had just left, writing "in my thoughts I was often with your assembly on Sunday." He described some of the details of 19th century travel, transferring from one train to another, and the night lodgings, etc.

Some of the emigrants were impressed by the sights and sounds of the big City but not Klaas. Referring to the worship services back home in Borosenko he wrote, "But my body was here in the city, wherein I can take little pleasure, with its great rushing to and fro of the world." The travellers were anxious for news of their fellow immigrants. He reports that "here in Hamburg we received the letter which our brethren in America sent us, which Ohm J. Barkman read to us Wednesday evening." Klaas closed with a request for prayer, "in the hope, that you will remember us before God in your prayers. We remain your loving Geschwister":

Pioneers and Pilgrims, page 30-31.

The Klaas B. Friesens were among the eight-



Mr. & Mrs. Klaas B. Friesen with their two youngest children Katherina (1882-1924) who married Herman Krebs (1860-1950) and Johann (1885-1950) who lived in Winnipeg. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Gerbrandt.

teen KG families that founded the village of Steinbach. They filed for a Homestead on SE25-6-6E on November 10, 1874. But they settled in the village on the most northwesterly *Wirtschaft* or farmstead along Main Street, more-or-less where Victoria Plaza stands today. In 1875 they insured their equipment and livestock for \$150.00 and their feed inventory for \$100.00. On September 30th they added buildings for \$50.00. On April 25, 1882, they were stricken from the insurance rolls, a sign that the family had left the KG and joined the Holdeman church.

According to the 1883 tax rolls Klaas Friesen owned a 160 acres of land with 30 acres cultivated, buildings assessed at \$25.00 and furniture \$75.00, 2 oxen and 11 head of cattle, mower, wagon and other pieces of machinery for a total assessment of 427. By 1884 their assessment had risen to 617 about in the middle among the Steinbach villagers.

In 1889 they built a new set of buildings which stood on the site in fairly good condition until they were demolished in 1960 by developer A. D. Penner.

Klaas B. Friesen's upbringing in a teaching family did result in some interest in education as he served as a trustee of the Steinbach school from 1894 to 1897.

In 1915 Gerhard G. Kornelsen wrote that "it became too difficult for him [Klaas B. Friesen] to farm, and [so] he sold it to the village association, but kept the building site. In the year 1910 he had to move to the east side of the lot and erected new buildings. On the west side, the Municipality has recently opened a street, so that the westerly part on which teacher Gerhard Kornelsen lives is somewhat cramped for space"--*Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 258.



Cornelius F. Friesen and Helena Goertz Friesen (second marriage) and children Klaas, Johann, Cornelius and Jakob. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Gerbrandt. Cornelius' daughter Helena Friesen (1897-1986) married Peter Hamm and they were the parents of Evelyn Gerbrandt.

Klaas J. B. Reimer has written that the older buildings were sold to Gerhard W. Reimer in 1909 "who only lived in it for about a year, then sold it to G. G. Kornelsen, at that time teacher in the Steinbach public school"--*Reflections*, page 39. Mr. and Mrs. Friesen retired from active farming in 1909.

Son Klaas F. Friesen married Anna Wiebe, daughter of Kleine Gemeinde deacon Heinrich Wiebe (1851-1876) of Blumenort who died dur-

ing a blizzard. She was a sister to Peter H. Wiebe, or "Post" Wiebe, the Postmaster of Steinbach. The Klaas F. Friesen family belonged to the Holdeman Church. In 1886 son Cornelius F. Friesen married Helena Klassen and moved to the village of Osterwick, west of present-day New Bothwell. In 1892 he remarried to Helena Goertz. The Cornelius F. Friesen family belonged to the Chortitzer Gemeinde. Son Jacob F. Friesen (1878-1962) lived in Kansas.

Elizabeth Reimer Toews 1843-1918

by grandson Ernest P. Toews, Box 75, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

Where the strength of some people's character and determination comes from is one of life's unanswered questions. Mrs. Elizabeth Reimer Toews would surely have been one of these people. Did adversity and hardship in life build her character or did her inherent strength come to the fore in the face of adversity?

Elisabeth R. Reimer was born in 1843 in the village of Rosenort, Molotschna Colony, South Russia, to her parents Abraham F. Reimer and Elisabeth Rempel. Her father was known by the nickname "Fula" or lazy Reimer which probably explains why her parents were not in good circumstances financially. Her mother earned most of the household income through her work as a seamstress. The Reimer children, including young Elisabeth, were all taught a very strict work ethic by their mother and all the children had to work out at an early age. Family historian John C. Reimer has written that "As a young woman and later in life, she was tall, and erect in her posture, and in her middle age somewhat heavy": *Familienregister... Reimer*, page 170.

In 1860 Elizabeth R. Reimer married Peter

P. Toews, son of Peter Toews (1818-67) and Elisabeth Penner (1818-1905) of Kleefeld, Molotschna. Peter Toews Sr. may have been the son of Cornelius Peter Toews (b. 1783) who is shown as the owner of Wirtschaft 24 in Schoenau, Molotschna, in the 1835 census records.

Peter P. Toews Jr. was 22 years old and his bride turned 18 in the fall of 1860. Peter, who had no known Kleine Gemeinde connections and Elizabeth whose grandfather was Klaas Reimer, the founder of the Kleine Gemeinde, found their first church home in the "Grosse" Gemeinde in the Molotschna settlement in southern Russia. Sometime later they changed their church membership to the Kleine Gemeinde and moved to the newly established Borosenko settlement.

Peter Toews, being a somewhat sickly man, suffering from respiratory ills of undefined nature, was not a very aggressive farmer but earned his living as a drayman and teamster. Together with his wife's brothers he often was on the road to the Black Sea ports carting farm produce for

the Mennonite farmers. They lived in the village of Steinbach, Borosenko Colony, which was also the home of some of the Reimer siblings. John C. Reimer has written that "The nature of his [Peter Toews'] work necessitated his being away from home a good deal, and his wife with the assistance of hired help, had to run the farm."

But life in Steinbach, Borosenko, for the most part was peaceful and relatively easy. Father-in-law Abraham F. Reimer has recorded some of the happenings around the Toews household. On January 8, 1873, he wrote that "his wife had been at the Toews home all day helping Toews to make a fur coat. On January 13, "Pet. Toews had driven to Rosenfeld and their Russian maid had finished her service." On January 21, "at 8 A.M. morning, Toews and Hei. Brandt left for Ekatherinoslav to purchase flour." They returned on the 26th. On February 7, "After dinner I was here [visiting] by Toews', but he had driven to Ebenfeld." March 23, "I and Mrs. Abr. Friesen went along with Toews to Penners in Rosenfeld. March 5, "here at

Toews' they were setting potatoes and were plowing along the ditch." April 13, "Wednesday Toews from here went along with Lemke [a Russian neighbour] to Nikopol and returned on Thursday."

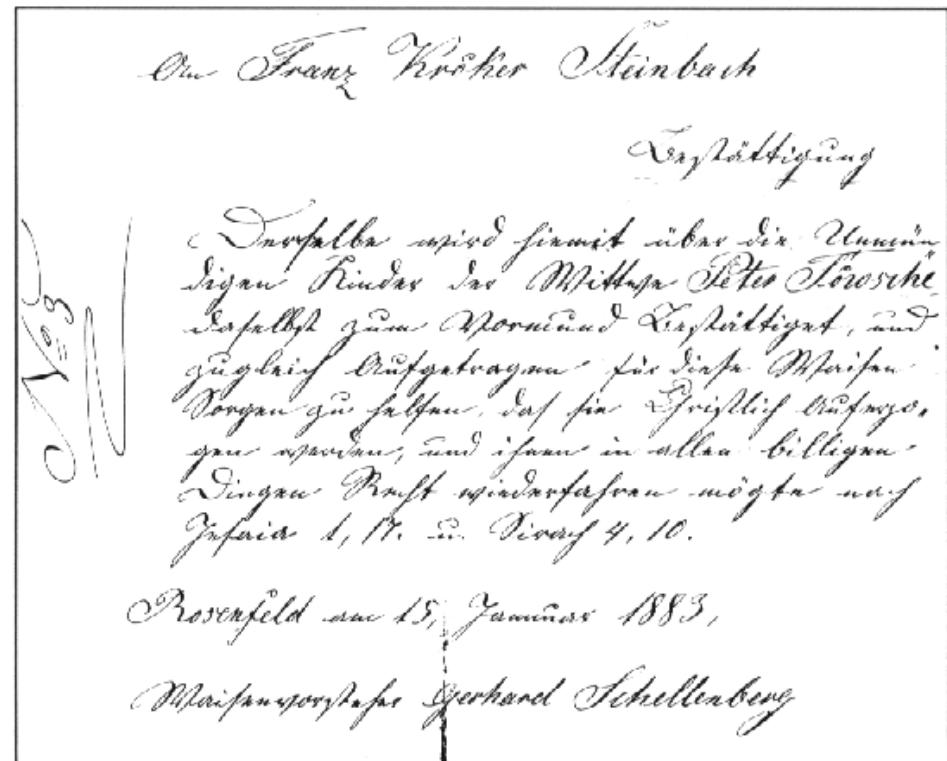
There was also time to socialize with friends and relatives from afar: April 21, "Yesterday Toews had two pairs of guests, his brothers ..." May 14, "the young Quirings from Kleefeld, Mol. came to Pet. Toews' for the evening."

From time to time sickness affected the routine activities of the home as Elisabeth Toews suffered her share of illness. On May 16, her father recorded that "Mrs. Toews here has been sick for 3 nights." Over the next six weeks Abraham refers to his daughter's illness no less than 6 times. Several people in the village had died during this time including daughter-in-law Elisabeth Friesen Reimer, Mrs. Heinrich R. Brandt, and neighbour Cornelius S. Janzen, and so Abraham's concerns were well taken. On June 12th the day after the death of son Peter's wife, Abraham mentions that Elisabeth "is again very sick." On July 8th, Abraham writes that "three of the Toews children were sick of small pox, Peter only little; but Maria very severely, and she had to lay down a lot the first 3 days from Sunday and was very restless; and Katri. even more and was bedridden almost all of the time": Abraham F. Reimer, "Journal 1873," translated by D. Plett.

In 1874 the Kleine Gemeinde emigrated from Russia to North American. The kinsfolk of Elizabeth moved to Manitoba. Her brothers, Klaas and Johann, and sister Katherina (Mrs. Abraham S. Friesen) settled in the village of Steinbach. Her parents, Abraham F. Reimers and brothers Peter R. and Abraham R. Reimer, and sister Margaretha, Mrs. Abraham R. Penner Sr., founded their homes in Blumenort. None of the Peter Toews' family moved to Canada at that time. In the following years three Toews brothers and two sisters came to North America and being very individualistic and independent by nature did not settle together. Peter and Elizabeth therefore found their social and family ties in the Reimer clan.

Elizabeth Reimer Toews came to Steinbach, Manitoba in September of 1874 at age 29 with her husband Peter (P(enner) Toews, age 33. They had six children (4 girls and 2 boys). The oldest four were girls, ages 13 to 4 years and the boys were son Peter, age two and a half, and six month old baby Abraham. In the following year the youngest daughter Maria age five years died having been a sickly child. A daughter was born two years later and two more sons, Klaas and Johann, came along after that.

The villagers in Steinbach laid out the settlement along the creek that today has largely been filled in on Section 35-6-6E. There were 18 original families living on lots 220 feet wide along Steinbach's Main Street in September, 1874. Peter Toews filed for a Homestead on the NE 25-6-6E on November 10, 1874. But the Toews home was situated in the village almost in the middle on Lot #9 which later became the site of C. T. Loewen & Sons' lumber business. They were flanked on the northwest by Abraham S. Friesen and to the southeast by Johann R. and Klaas R. Reimers.



Waisenamt Order No. 3 by Waisenman Gerhard Schellenberg appointing Franz Kroeker (1827-1905) as the Advocate on behalf of the Toews children. It is noteworthy that daughter Katharina Toews later married Cornelius P. Kroeker, Franz Kroeker's only son, who also became a successful large scale farmer like his father had been. The original of the Waisenamt Order is courtesy of Elvina Loewen, nee Toews, the daughter of Klaas R. Toews.

Peter Toews immediately constructed a modest dwelling house, probably a semlin as the Kleine Gemeinde insurance records show insurance coverage of \$25.00 for a building, \$100.00 livestock and \$100.00 for inventory and feed. The insurance coverage for the house was increased to \$75.00 in 1877.

It appears that Peter P. Toews suffered a severe financial setback by the move from Russia. After the emigration the Toews family was frequently in need of financial assistance which was freely given by the church. Kleine Gemeinde deacon records should that "a disbursement of \$50.00 was made in 1874 to Peter Toews of Steinbach to purchase a cow and to repay some debts": *Golden Years*, page 351.

The family did not thrive economically and Peter Toews' health did not improve in the harsh living conditions and climate of Manitoba. He was soon in the employ of his brother-in-law Friesen as a handyman and night watchman in his steam plant. K. J. B. Reimer has written that, "The going wage was 50 cents a day per long night shift and it was obvious not many luxuries could be afforded." Peter Toews did not work all his own farmland and on May 1, 1880, he rented a parcel to his neighbour Cornelius Loewen for six years, being Kagel no. 2 on Section 27-6-6E: Cornelius Loewen, "Journal," page 20.

On April 25, 1881, another \$75.00 was added to the insurance coverage for the Toews residence bringing the total to \$150.00. In the 1882 census the total value of the Toews' property is only assessed at slightly more than \$400. This

is about the time that Peter W. "Schmidt" Toews (no relation) from Gruenfeld reported that he and his brothers were "bringing out wood for Peter Toews, Steinbach, on half shares; namely, one load for Toews and one load for us." Evidently the wood had been cut in the woods east of Steinbach by Peter Toews and was then hauled to the village with the Gruenfeld Toews' acting as teamsters: *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 143.

Peter P. Toews' health continued to deteriorate; his breathing difficulties worsened and after seven and a half years in Manitoba he died on May 9, 1882. Abraham F. Reimer of Blumenort recorded the events leading up to his

Announcement

Klaas B. Friesen Reunion

A Friesen Reunion will be held in the Niverville Arena on Sunday, July 7, 1996. These are the descendants of Klaas B. Friesen and Maria De Fehr who were among the original 18 pioneer families who founded the village of Steinbach, Manitoba in 1874.

For further information contact Evelyn Gerbrandt, Box 202, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0, or phone 388-4156



Peter R. Toews (1872-1953).



Abram R. Toews (1873-1966).

son-in-law's death: "May 7, Sunday: Peter Toews got very ill yesterday, he brought up all day and ate only little... and great thirst. May 8, ...both of them slept only two hours, and at 1 A.M. he became very sick so that he could hardly talk and at 5 A.M. she had sent word to Kl. Reimer, Joh. Reimer and Abr. Friesen, and after that time he remained speechless... Abr. Reimer with Joh. Reimer to Steinbach, and P. Reimers went there and after vespers they went to get Dr. Warkentin but he had no counsel. May 9,... and P. Toews' had finished the seeding on Saturday of the previous week... and yesterday morning we drove along with Abr. Reimers to Steinbach to P. Toews'; I stayed at Kl. Reimers for night, and he died P. Toews at half eight in the evening. May 10, at 10 A.M. in the morning I had Kl. Reimers' Peter drive me home [to Blumenort]; Mrs. P. Toews was very sick from Monday until Tuesday, and she had not slept the entire night, and she sat up in watch and much was revealed to her; her man on a pile of ashes wherefrom he arose [like a phonix]; a luminous voice; so that she felt a sure hope for him, and that she acquired a much firmer confidence to our Gemeinde and that she could make

herself completely free from Holdeman; and yesterday Hei. Brandt, Abr. Friesen and Kl. Reimer's Heinrich made the coffin and today we went along with Abr. Penners to the funeral. May 11, ... Yesterday we went home roughly at 6 P.M.... After dinner I went to Steinbach to P. Toews', he had achieved the age of 44 years and 3 months": Abraham F. Reimer, "Journal 1879-1886," courtesy E. R. Goossen Estate, translated by D. Plett.

Obviously Elisabeth Reimer Toews was fortunate that she had a large extended family including her parents and siblings to comfort her in her grief and to help her in her widowhood. The pioneer community also assisted the family in various ways. One example was the appointment of a "Vormund" or children's advocate for the minor children. The appointment was made January 15, 1883, by Gerhard Schellenberg (1827-1908) of Rosenfeld who was the head or Vorsteher of the Kleine Gemeinde Estate and Trust Organization or Waisenamt. The order issued by Schellenberg appointed neighbour Franz Kroeker (1827-1905) as the advocate for the Toews children with the responsibility to "see to that the children were raised and nurtured in the Christian virtues and that they were properly treated in accordance with Isaiah 1:17 and Ecclesiasticus 4:10" which states: "Be as a father unto the fatherless . . ."

Elizabeth Reimer Toews found life as a widow with eight children, aged 20 years to one year very difficult. In spite of being a person of strong character and body the early years in Manitoba were a great test to her. The church fathers, being concerned about the infant children, at first suggested to her that the children be put into care homes in the extended family. The brothers of Elizabeth, Peter in Blumenort and Johann in Steinbach, came to their sister's aid and the family could stay together.

The oldest daughter "Lies" had married Johann W. Reimer from Blumenhof the year before her mother was widowed and the second daughter Anna married Cornelius B. Loewen in the year of her father's death. The third girl in the family, Katharina, usually called Teen, later Mrs. Cornelius P. Kroeker, was 15 years old when the father passed away and the oldest son, Peter R. Toews was ten. To these two children now fell the task of running the farm. Together they plowed, harrowed and seeded and the men of the village assisted with the harvest. Peter would lead the oxen and Teen held the plow. Into Peter's hands were given the barn chores and Teen had to also help her mother with the garden and household tasks.

Elisabeth Reimer Toews was an accomplished seamstress and sewed men's suits and overcoats, an art which she had undoubtedly learned from her mother Elisabeth Rempel Reimer: see *Preservings*, No. 7, pages 2-9. Thereby the family earned their meagre living. One of the earliest remembrances of the youngest child Johann R. Toews was told in his own words to the Toews' reunion in 1960 thus - "The first knowledge in my life that I remember was when I slept with my mother after our father died, I awoke one night and saw my mother kneeling

in bed praying with tears flowing down her face. When she asked me to pray too, and I didn't want to, she said that I should at least kneel with her even if I did not say anything."

Peter R. Toews became the man of the house very early in life. At age 12 his mother sent him to Winnipeg with the ox team and wagon to sell the potato crop. He travelled together with his uncle Klaas R. Reimer and the trip lasted four days. The enterprising young lad had thoroughly enjoyed the experience and adventure. Later he recalled tethering his oxen at the forks where the ferry crossed the Red River. Many years later, in 1989, Peter R. Toews' grandson, the Honourable Jake Epp, Minister of Mines and Energy, opened the Forks Centre at the same site. In his later years Peter R. Toews became a very strong man, like his mother, in spite of also suffering from lung ailments like asthma in his later years.

With the help of the children moderate financial progress was slowly being made. By 1887 Elizabeth Reimer Toews was able to build a new barn with the help of son-in-law Cornelius B. Loewen as \$200.00 was added to the insurance increasing the total coverage to \$350.00. In 1890 the fire insurance was increased again to \$350.00 house, \$100 equipment and \$100 feed and inventory. At this time Elisabeth Toews also received a marriage proposal from a Mr. Warkentin, but "after due consideration she declined this proposal."

After being a widow for ten years Elizabeth Toews remarried to Heinrich L. Friesen (1851-1910) of Rosenhof near Morris, her second cousin. He was a brother to Abraham L. Friesen, the Bishop of the Kleine Gemeinde in Jansen, Nebraska. Heinrich was well regarded in his community and served as the Brantaeltester for the Rosenort area from 1882 until 1910. (The descendants of Mr. Friesen today are the builders of the famous Friesen Bins.) Mr. Friesen was a fairly well-to-do farmer and he paid all the debts of his new wife and family.

In 1892 he moved his new bride and her four youngest children to his farm home in Rosenhof. Elizabeth (Toews) Friesen became the mother of her husband's family (five sons and three daughters). The stepbrothers, however, as often happens developed somewhat of a rivalry and Klaas Toews being 13 years old and of a somewhat independent nature was often in scrapes with the new stepbrothers. He also found it difficult to relate to his stepfather. After being in the Friesen household for about two and a half years he returned to Steinbach and went to work for his uncle Abraham S. Friesen.

The oldest of the four Toews siblings, Abraham had returned to Steinbach in the first year after his mother's remarriage and daughter Margaretha had married Cornelius Ratzlaf from Nebraska and also left the Friesen household in that first year. Mrs. Elizabeth Friesen now had only her youngest son Johann with her and she often longed for her Steinbach kinsfolk. Steinbach and Rosenhof were almost worlds apart in those years. e.g. On April 1, 1898 Johann W. Dueck recorded in his journal that "Mrs. Heinrich L. Friesen travelled to Steinbach

Steinbach Main Street 1930: Part One

by Ernie P. Toews, Box 75, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

Introduction.

The intention of this article is to provide a profile of the Main Street of Steinbach as it might have appeared in 1930. This is to be the first of a series of four articles, each to cover approximately a two block stretch of Main Street.

Such a compilation will enable social historians and researchers of specific families and businesses to bridge the gap from the present

(1996) to Gerhard G. Kornelsen's article "Steinbach: Then and Now" which surveyed the businesses and residences located along Main Street in 1915 and the various developments which had taken place since 1874.

This article will deal with the two blocks between what is today Elm Avenue and Reimer Avenue. This area originally consisted of lots 7, 8, 9 and 10 in the 1874 village plan which was converted to a legal plan of survey no. 1711

in 1910 under the leadership of then mayor Johann G. Barkman. Each original Wirtschaft included a 6 acre lot on the east side of Main Street, known as "Feuerstatten", where the settlers established their original farmyards. Each Wirtschaft also included a 4 acre lot on the west side of Main Street, known as "Kattstatten" where workers and private residences were often located.



Photo 1. The view along Steinbach's Main Street, circa 1914. View from the north looking south.

continued from previous page

to be at the bedside of her daughter Mrs. C. B. Loewen who expects to die": *Prairie Pioneer*, page 60. She recovered but died four years later.

During the 18 years of life with her husband Heinrich L. Friesen, the physical needs of the early pioneer years were almost forgotten. Life in the Rosenort-Rosenhof district posed a totally different set of day to day chores. The water quality was not good like it had been in Steinbach. Drinking well water was difficult because of the bad taste and the salt and sulphur content. Rainwater had to be trapped and allowed to settle out and then became drinkable. Household practise was to "brew" some homemade beer and choke cherry wine. These tasted better than rainwater. Fuel for heating and cooking was made from cow dung and straw which was not clean and good smelling like the firewood of the East Reserve. Travel by buggy after a rain was not easy in the heavy Red River mud and in the spring there was always the fear of another flood.

In spite of these different living conditions life was much easier than it had been when she was a widow when the money needs had been earned as a seamstress and farming by the hand of young children. John C. Reimer has written that "There was now no lack of money to buy the necessities and even the comforts of life." Elisabeth also won the respect and love of her

step-children "who regarded her just as they would have their own mother."

In 1910 Heinrich L. Friesen passed away and Elizabeth returned to Steinbach. She was now a moderately wealthy widow as under the Kleine Gemeinde inheritance laws she received one-half of her husband's estate which amounted to over \$11,000.00, a goodly sum for the time. Her Notary Public brother-in-law Abram S. Friesen handled all the legal work and the Estate Settlement Agreement signed by all the parties involved is still extant among Friesen's papers which are currently in the possession of the Vilage Museum in Steinbach.

Her daughter Katharina, Mrs. Cornelius P. Kroeker, lived in a large two story house at the south end of Main Street. (Corner of Kroeker and Main today.) Here the family built a small house for her on the Kroeker yard. After several years she moved into the Kroeker residence. Now she enjoyed the company of her grandchildren for the first time of her life in comfort and relative good health.

The life of Elizabeth Reimer Toews Friesen came to an end in the flu season of 1918 and she was buried in the Steinbach Pioneer Cemetery not far from the burial place of her first husband and her sister Katharina and brothers Klaas R. and Johann R. Reimer.

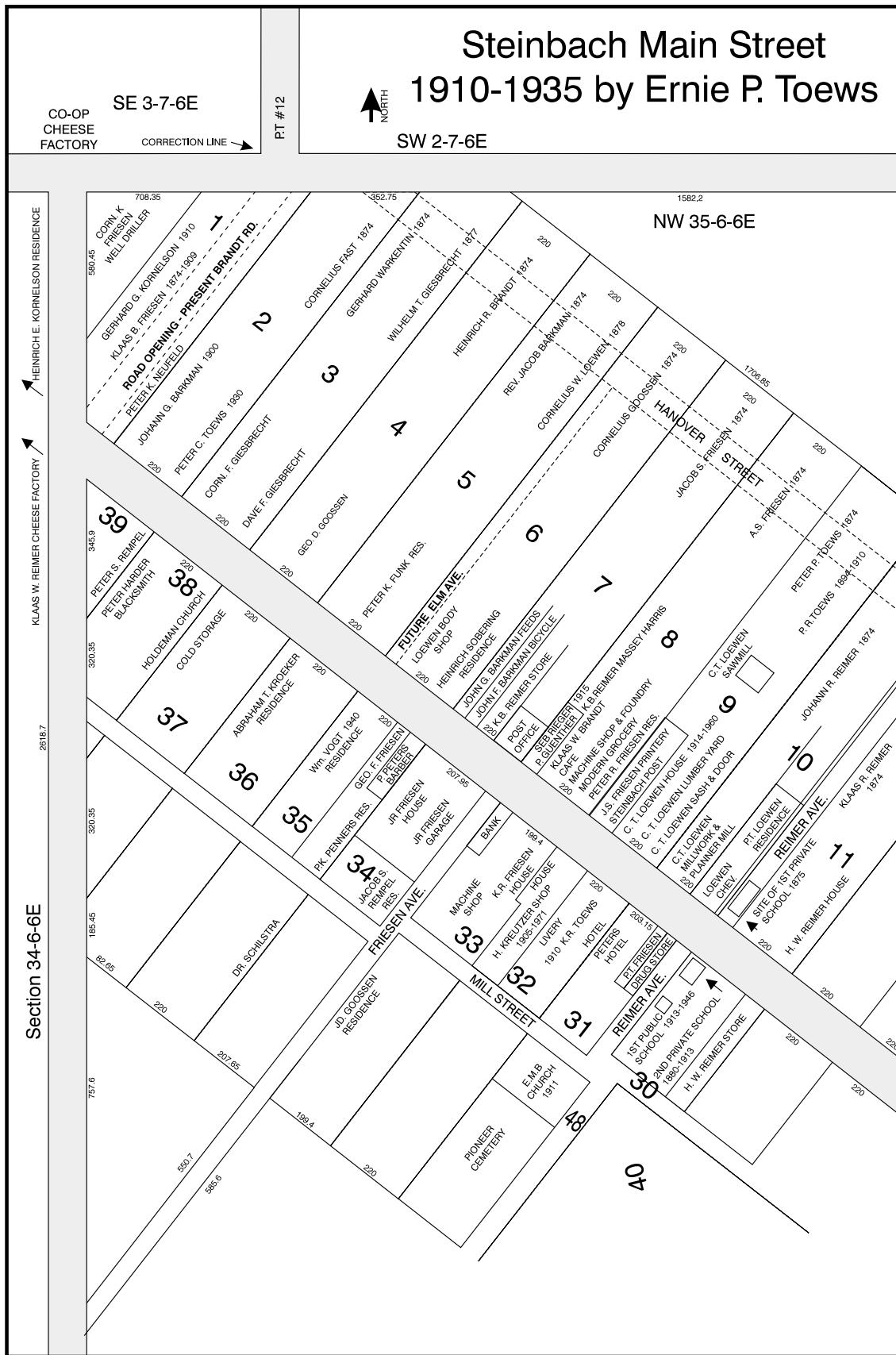
Historian John C. Reimer has written the following tribute for Elisabeth Reimer Toews Friesen: "During her lifetime she had shown

herself a woman of courage, initiative and resourcefulness. These qualities had stood her in good stead both in her early married life and later in her widowhood. Moreover she was a woman of strong character and when she said something, she meant it. She had a strong faith in God. At one period during her life she took into strong consideration the question as to whether or not to join the Church of God, (Holdeman) but eventually decided against it": *Reimer* book, page 171.

Descendants of Elisabeth Reimer Toews in the Steinbach area included: A.A. Toews, former owner of 5 to \$1.00 Store; John P. Toews, R. M. of Hanover Councillor; granddaughter Mrs. A.P. Unger, Landmark; all the "T." Loewens--C.T., A.T., J.T.; all the "T" Kroekers--C.T., H.T., Klaas T., etc.

Sources:

- John C. Reimer, *Reimer...Familienregister*, pages 170-171.
- Klaas J.B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach," Carillon News, 1952.
- Abraham F. Reimer, "Journal 1873," and "Journal 1879-1886," courtesy of Ernest R. Goossen Estate.
- Cornelius Loewen, "Journal," courtesy of E.M.C. Archives.
- A.P. Toews, *The Chronology of the Toews Family*.



Map of Steinbach Main Street 1930

The map shows land ownership relative to lots 1 to 10, Plan 1711 WLTO covering Brandt Road to Reimer Avenue. Please note that the west side of the original village lots have now been legally registered as separate lots. Lots 31 to 39 are really the portions of the original lots 1 to 10 which were on the west side of Main Street and contained within Section 35-6-6E. The original owners are listed at the rear of the lots and the 1930 owners are listed along the street. Map by Ernest P. Toews, Steinbach, Manitoba, March 28, 1996.

Lot 7 west side: Photo 1.

The building at the extreme right side is Peter B. Peter's first barbershop. This is where the MTS building is located today. A small meat market was located immediately to the north of the barbershop which was operated by Gerhard F. Friesen (nephew of Abraham S. Friesen), who had recently returned to Steinbach from Oregon. The Peters family later moved further east along Main Street and founded the Tourist Hotel.

Next to the south are J. R. Friesen's Ford dealership buildings, being the garage and a small sales office which came right up to the street. These buildings burned down. The buildings that replaced them also burned in 1940 and were then replaced with the present Fairway Ford building.

Lot 8 west side.

The building seen just past the hydro pole was the Northern Crown Bank located where Manitoba Mennonite Mutual relocated to in 1996. The Northern Crown Bank was later bought out by the Royal Bank.

Friesen Avenue was located between the Bank building, originally owned by J. D. Goossen, son-in-law to A. S. Friesen, and the J.R. Friesen dealership. It was located on the boundary between lot 7, originally owned by Jakob S. Friesen, and lot 8 originally owned by Abraham S. Friesen.

The trees just to the south of the Bank were in front of K. R. Friesen's house built in 1893 and his machine shop built in 1892. The house was set back some 50 feet from the street and the machine shop some 300 feet. The machine shop also had a woodworking section in one end which became a sash and door factory for Martin M. Penner and John M. Penner when they moved to Steinbach in 1913. In 1918 Martin M. Penner moved to the Lumber Avenue location and started Steinbach Lumber Yards.

The Friesens' yards are pictured in Abe Warkentin's *Reflections on our Heritage*, pages 83 and 107. The Friesen properties as well as the Bank building were situated on lot 8 originally settled by Abraham S. Friesen. The J.R. Friesen garage and house were located on lot 7: see Preservings, No. 7, Dec. 1995, page 50.

Lot 7, east side.

The buildings on the east side of Main Street can be seen in bigger detail on **Photo two** which picture is taken from the south. From the left to right: Johann G. Barkman's Feed Store office (not visible on photo one), Johann F. Barkman's bicycle and hardware store, and Klaas B. Reimer's General Store. These buildings were located where Steinbach Furniture and Steinbach Hatchery are located today. The awning is on Klaas B. Reimer's General Store.

An empty lot lay just to the south of the General Store and to the south of vacant property was the Steinbach Post Office. The very tip of the facade is visible on **photo two**. Just to the south of the Post Office was the residence of Peter H. Guenther, Steinbach's Postmaster from 1908 to 1917. Sebastian Rieger opened his Tailor shop and clothing store in 1915 in a building located immediately in front of the Guenther house, between the house and the street.



Photo 2. The buildings on the east side of Main Street (Lot 7) shown in larger detail. View from the south circa 1916 or 17. From left to right: Johann G. Barkman's Feed Store Office, Johann F. Barkman's Bicycle and Hardware Store and K. B. Reimer's General Store, which is being enlarged as the photograph is taken. Jakob F. Barkman, a brother to Johann, John D. Goossen and Peter "Store" Friesen, the father-in-law of Eugene Derksen, also operated their stores in these buildings at various times.

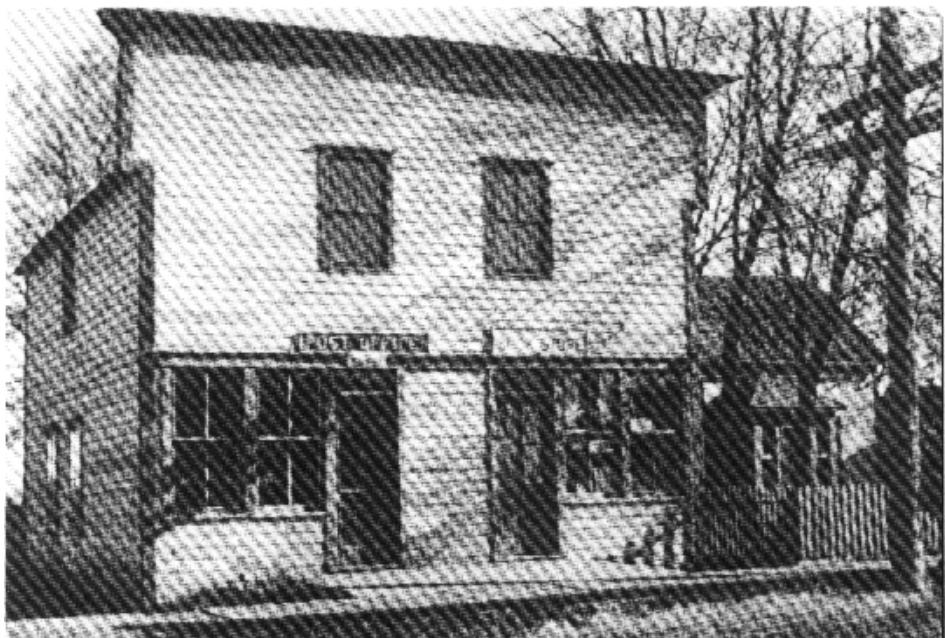


Photo 3. The Steinbach Post Office around 1915 when Peter H. Guenther was the Postmaster. The building stood at the corner of Main and Friesen Avenue where the Penner Tom-Boy parking lot was later located. The bookstore in the building was owned by Ed Reimer, son of K.B. Reimer. The Peter H. Guenther residence can be seen to the rear right of the photograph. This photo was published in *Reflections of our Heritage*, page 132, where the erroneous statement is made that John D. Goossen had a barbershop in this building, etc. This is not correct. The premises from the Post Office to Johann G. Barkman's feed office were built on what was originally lot 7 owned by Jakob S. Friesen (1850-1921).

Lot 9, east side.

The Peter P. Toews family settled on lot 9 in Steinbach in 1874. The Abraham S. Friesen family (Mrs. Toews and Mrs. Friesen were sisters) settled next door on lot 8. The development of commercial enterprises on the Abraham S. Friesen property began very shortly after the settlement was founded in 1874.

Because Peter P. Toews (1839-82) was a sickly man and quite poor the church brotherhood assisted the family with moving costs. He was soon in the employ of his brother-in-law Friesen as a handyman and night watchman. Consequently the Toews property remained

more-or-less as an agricultural farmyard until past the turn of the century.

Peter P. Toews died in 1882 at the age of 43. His widow Elisabeth Reimer Toews and eight children lived in the house pictured in **photo 5** until Elisabeth remarried to her second cousin Heinrich L. Friesen of Rosenort in 1892 and moved to Rosenort. Two years later 1894 son Peter R. Toews married Elisabeth Rempel and moved into his mother's house. They lived here until 1910.

For some years Cornelius B. Loewen, son-in-law of Elisabeth Reimer Toews, had already operated a sawmill on lot 9, on the east side of the Steinbach creek.



The village system was dissolved in 1910 and Peter R. Toews relocated his farmyard to his farmland (NE 36-6-6E) one and one-half miles east of Town where his grandson Earl Toews is still living today. The parental house and property was sold in the same year to C. T. Loewen, a grandson of Elisabeth Reimer Toews. "C.T." was to become one of the most successful of Steinbach's entrepreneurs.

When "C.T." married in 1914 he moved his grandmother's old house (**photo 5**) east across the creek close to the sawmill. The former residence of Cornelius F. Friesen was acquired by John R. Toews and C.T. Loewen and moved to the site of the C.T. Loewen lumberyard offices where it became C.T.'s lumber yard office and store. **Photo 6** shows the new house that "C.T."

Photo 4. Northern Crown Bank building housed the first bank in Steinbach in 1918. After one year as the Northern Crown Bank it became the Royal Bank of Canada. John D. Goossen operated his conveyancing and insurance business out of an addition that was added to the left side of the building in later years. This building was purchased by Peter D. Friesen in 1948 and moved about 200 feet south to the site of the present CHSM building. Peter D. Friesen had a book store and watch repair business in the building until it was destroyed by fire in 1960. In 1948 owner John D. Goossen built the "Goossen Block" on the same location and the Royal Bank continued to operate in the new premises until it relocated to its present site in 1953. Although frequently renovated this building housed the law offices of Ernest R. Goossen until 1972 as well as the first offices of the Town of Steinbach. Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company relocated to the building in 1996.



Photo 5. The Peter P. Toews' house and the Jakob S. Friesen printery which were both located on lot 9, view from the rear or east looking northwest. The house is being moved by a steam engine owned by Cornelius P. Kroeker, son-in-law of Elizabeth Reimer Toews. The shorter man standing in the middle by the door is C. T. Loewen. The man standing at left with his back to the camera is steam engine owner Cornelius P. Kroeker. The man standing beside the door may be Cornelius T. Kroeker, son of Cornelius P. Kroeker and the man on the steam engine may be Jakob B. Kroeker from Rosenort. Any assistance in identifying the men on this photograph would be much appreciated.



Photo 6. 1919 photograph of the Jakob S. Friesen printery where Steinbach Dry Cleaners is situated today. This was on the north boundary of lot 9. Behind the printery to the north the residence of Peter R. Friesen can be seen. Behind this were the original buildings of Abraham S. Friesen. To the right side of the picture is the new house of C.T. Loewen built in 1914 after the original Peter P. Toews house was moved.



Photo 7. C. T. Loewen sawmill located on lot 9, further east across the creek. The mill is powered by the same steam engine shown on photo 5.

built on the site of the old Peter P. Toews house. **Photo 7** shows his sawmill located east of the creek where he later built the bees wax processing factory.

The building seen behind the new C.T. Loewen house was the Jakob S. Friesen print shop. Jakob S. Friesen had relocated from Giroux to Steinbach in 1913. The same structure was later Gerhard D. Goossen's barber shop and pool room where many of the area's younger men spent their idle hours, to the chagrin of their elders. A frontal view of the Jakob S. Friesen printery is shown on **photo 6**.

To the north of the printery were the premises of Peter R. Friesen and the original buildings of Steinbach pioneer Abraham S. Friesen. The latter two premises were located on the original lot 8.

Lot 9, west side.

In 1910 Klaas R. Toews built Steinbach's first hotel and livery stable west across the street from his mother's house on lot 9. He operated the hotel and express service here. The picture shows the hotel and livery barn with the new

four room public school (the "Kornelsen" school where the Town office is located today), built in 1913 on lot 11 on the south side of Reimer Avenue.

In 1918 Klaas R. Toews sold the hotel and livery barn to Heinrich Coote.

Just to the south of the K.R. Toews hotel (on lot 10) was the Peter B. Peters barber shop (see **photo 9**) which had been moved from its former location (see **photo 1**) further north along Main Street. The Peters barber shop was later expanded to become the Peters Hotel. Later Peter B. Peters bought out Coote and in 1947 the two buildings were joined to become the Tourist Hotel. See Linda Buhler, "Agnes Toews Kornelsen, Hairdresser," *Preservings*, No 5, January, 1995, for a photograph showing the two hotels side by side in 1930.

The livery barn was demolished in the late 1940s and Abram A. Toews, a grandson of Elizabeth Reimer Toews built his "5 to \$1.00" store there. The present "Steinbach Fabric Shop" owned by Dave Friesen is located where the driveway was between the hotel and the livery barn.

Main St. 1930s lots 10 and 9.

Main Street as it was in the 1940 looking north from Reimer Avenue is seen on **Photo 10**. On the extreme right is the Loewen Chevrolet dealership founded by Peter T. Loewen in 1920, located on lot 10 originally owned by Johann R. Reimer. Next to the north is the first C. T. Loewen Sash and Door factory. The sign visible somewhat further north is the C.T. Loewen lumber yard office. These two buildings were replaced in 1948 with the building that stood on the site until about 1988 when the property was sold to Steinbach Towne Square and developed into a "Mall". This was the end of the Toews family ownership of lot 9.

The building on the extreme left on **photo 10** housed the medical offices of Dr. Reg. Whetter and McBurney's Drug Store. Next is what is today Pioneer Inn as it was in 1918. This structure appears to be the oldest continuously used commercial building in Steinbach. Peter T. Friesen, son of *Steinbach Post* owner Jakob S. Friesen, operated a bookstore from this building for a number of years. We see his store



Photo 8. In 1910 Klaas R. Toews built Steinbach's first hotel and livery stable west across the street from his mother's house on lot 9. The recently constructed Kornelsen school further south on lot 11 across Reimer Ave. can be seen in the background. This is where the town offices are presently located.



Photo 10. Main Street 1940. Looking north from Reimer and Main.

and the beginnings of Peter's barber shop and Tourist Hotel just to the north.

Next to the north is the Coote Hotel and livery barn. The Coote Hotel had a men's only beer parlour and Henry Cootes was the bartender. Behind the trees are Heinrich Kruetzer's house and blacksmith shop and next to that, the Klaas R. Friesen house and machine shop.

Kruetzer's blacksmith shop.

In 1905 Peter R. Toews sold a piece of his mother's garden land from Lot 9 on the west side of Main Street to Heinrich Kruetzer. Kruetzer was a young German Lutheran who opened his blacksmith shop with financial aid from area farmers and from his former employer P.W. "Schmet" Toews.

The land sale caused considerable consternation because the *Strassendorf* system was still functioning and in effect and required the approval of all the villagers for someone to buy property in the village. Kruetzer was not a Mennonite but because he was a most reputable person, being honest, religious and hardworking, the deal was allowed. Kruetzer's blacksmith



Photo 9. Peter B. Peters' barber shop to the right which later became the Peter's Hotel. To the left is Peter T. Friesen's bookstore which was later sold to Aron F. Toews (father of Ernie S. Toews from Barkman Concrete). Aron F. Toews changed the bookstore to a restaurant and confectionary named "the fruit store". This restaurant changed hands frequently and is presently "Pioneer Inn" owned by Marcie and Pete Schellenberg. Standing in the photo is Margaret, sister to Peter T. Friesen.

shop became the first non-Mennonite business in Steinbach.

Lot 10.

Lot 10 was originally the home of Johann R. Reimer (1848-1918), the brother of Mrs.

Peter P. Toews, nee Elizabeth R. Reimer, and Mrs. Abraham S. Friesen, nee Katharina R. Reimer. The Reimer place remained a farmstead until about 1916 when they moved to the farm on NW36-6-6E. At that time, Mr. Peter S. Rempel built the "Central Garage" (Photo 11)



Photo 11. Standard Garage 1918. Central Garage was owned by Peter S. Rempel. Photo courtesy of Ray Rempel.

on the south half of lot 10 and became the dealer for Grey Dart automobiles. This building later housed the Chevrolet dealership after the dealership was purchased from Peter T. Barkman by Peter T. and Cornelius T. Loewen in 1920. It is the same building that we see in photo 10. This building was remodelled a number of times before it was demolished in about 1980 when "Loewen Chev Olds" relocated to Highway 12 north of Steinbach.

The first school house in Steinbach, a log structure 14 feet wide by 28 feet long, stood approximately where Reimer Avenue is today on the east side of Main Street more or less where the Toronto-Dominion Bank stands today. In 1880 the second school building was built almost directly across Main Street, where the Post Office is today. The first cemetery in Steinbach was begun on the west end of lot 10 in the fall of 1874 shortly after the village was founded (see separate article on "Pioneer Cemetery").

Johann R. Reimer served as the village Schulz or mayor in about 1880. His brother-in-law Abraham S. Friesen had served as the first mayor. Mrs. Johann Reimer passed away in 1880 and two years later Mr. Reimer married Aganetha Barkman, daughter of Jakob M. Barkman who had drowned in the Red River in 1875. The second Mrs. Johann R. Reimer became well known as the premier midwife and undertaker in the Steinbach area; see *Preservings*, No. 6, June 1995, pages 23-4.

Reimer Avenue on the west side of Main Street was just a trail to the cemetery at first and was located where the present Royal Bank building sits. The street was relocated to its present location in 1953 when the bank built its new building and vacated its original site in the Goossen Block at the corner of Friesen and Main. The parking lot, presently behind the Bank was once Reimer Avenue.

The new public school, built in 1913, was located where Reimer Avenue is today and faced the original street about midway between Main Street and First Street, or Mill Street, as it was originally known. The Brüderhalter (EMB) church was relocated to its present site at Reimer and First Street in 1911. It had begun in a

small building at the corner of First Street and Friesen Avenue in 1897 and was the third congregation to form in Steinbach.

References.

An excellent article on the history of Steinbach's Main Street was written by Gerhard F. Kornelsen in 1915 and serialized in the *Steinbach Post* between February 23 and April 12, 1916. This article was translated by Steinbach historian Henry N. Fast in 1989 and published in *Pioneers and Pilgrims* (Steinbach, 1990), pages 255-260. Another helpful article "Steinbach Village Plan" was written by John C. Reimer and published in Klaas J. B. Reimer, editor, *75 Gedenkfeier der Mennonitischen Einwanderung in Manitoba, Canada* (Steinbach, 1949), pages 152-161. The article was also translated and published in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 249-253. Also helpful are a series of articles under the title "Historical Sketches of Steinbach and District Pioneers" written by former Town of Steinbach councillor Klaas J. B. Reimer and serialized in the Carillon News in 1952.

Peter T. Friesen: Pioneer Photographer.

All photographs used in this article were taken by Peter T. Friesen (1893-1983), son of pioneer printer and publisher Jakob S. Friesen who moved to Steinbach in 1913 and changed the name of his German paper to *Die Steinbach Post*. Unless otherwise stated, Peter T. Friesen's photographs of Steinbach were presumably taken between 1913 and 1920 when he moved to Winkler.



Self-portrait of Peter T. Friesen (1893-1983) with his two nephews Joe Isaac and Henry Isaac in about 1923. The photo is taken in Steinbach in the back yard of the Jakob S. Friesen printery and residence on Main Street. Joe Isaac presently lives in Crooked Creek, Alberta, and Henry Isaac lives in Kleefeld, Manitoba. The photograph is courtesy of Mrs. Gertrude Friesen, Box 1332, Steinbach, Manitoba.

These priceless photographs are presently in the possession of Gertrude Friesen (Mrs. Abr. D. Friesen) of Steinbach. Gertrude is a sister to Peter. The HSHS is grateful to her for making these photographs available.

Announcement

Cairn Unveiling

The public is invited to the unveiling of the Commemorative Cairn at the Pioneer Cemetery, Steinbach, Manitoba, to be held at 3:00 p.m., June 23, 1996. The special guests include Les Magnusson, Mayor of Steinbach and the Honourable Yvon Dumont, Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba.

The Cairn commemorates the 18 Kleine Gemeinde pioneer families who established the village of Steinbach in September 1874.

Coffee and refreshments to follow.

The Cairn project has been organized by a committee consisting of Ernie Toews, Chairman, Harvey Bartel, Sec. Treasurer, and committee members Albert Goossen, Harold Unger, Harvey Kroeker, Steve Brandt and John Henry Friesen.

Editor's Note

Coming in the Next Issue

We hope to have another article by Ernie P. Toews for the December 1996 issue, continuing the history of Main Street 1930 for the section between Reimer and Barkman Avenue.

Cornelius Fast 1840-1927

by Delbert F. Plett

Cornelius Peter Fast, b. 1786.

The grandfather of Cornelius Fast (1840-1927), was **Cornelius Fast**, born 1786. Genealogist Henry Schapansky has written that Cornelius Fast Sr. was born in Mierau or possibly Orloff on April 17, 1786. The father of Cornelius may have been Peter Fast baptized in 1785, whose father was a Peter Fast (1722-1807) listed in the 1776 Konsignation or census as resident in the village of Broseke, West Prussia, as follows: "mm [medium wealth], 7 sons, and 2 daughters."

Cornelius Fast emigrated to Russia in 1823. He married Maria Pauls. Cornelius Fast is listed in the 1835 census as the owner of Wirtschaft 20 in the village of Friedensdorf: Cornelius Peter Fast age 49, wife Maria 43, children Kornelia 23, Cornelius 22, Helena 18, Judith 13, Maria 12 and Agata 2." There is presently no information on any children other than Cornelius (1813-1855).

Cornelius Fast II 1813-55.

Cornelius Fast II married Helena Warkentin, daughter of Johann Warkentin (1760-1825). Warkentin was a wealthy Vollwirt who had settled on a double farm in the Molotschna village of Blumenort in 1804. Cornelius and his bride lived with his parents in Friedensdorf for the first year.

In 1841 the couple moved to Tiegerweide, a newer village founded in 1822. Here Cornelius II served as the village blacksmith. In 1854 the family moved to Kleefeld, a new village just being settled. He worked for Johann Willms--a village Vollwirt--helping him set up his Wirtschaft. Willms was the brother-in-law to Klaas R. Reimer later Steinbach pioneer. Kleefeld was home to KG Vollwirthen: Cornelius S. Plett (1820-1900); Johann Loewen (1823-81); Franz M. Krocker (1827-1905); Abraham M. Friesen (1834-1908); Peter Toews (1818-1867); Jakob F. Friesen (1820-88); and Klaas R. Reimer (1837-1906) and Abraham R. Reimer (1841-91) who were Anwohner.

Two years later the Cornelius Fast II family moved to *Altehirr*, the chutor or estate of David Cornies where he served as blacksmith. Cornelius Fast II came to an untimely death in 1855 when a bomb that he was dismantling for Cornies exploded. His widow again resided in the village of Kleefeld. Three of her daughters later immigrated to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, namely: Aganetha, Mrs. Heinrich Esau; Susanna, Mrs. Jakob Goertzen; and Margaretha, Mrs. Martens." Mrs. Cornelius Fast died in Russia in 1864.

Cornelius W. Fast III 1840-1927.

Cornelius W. Fast was born at the home of his grandparents in Friedensdorf, Mol. in 1840. When his father died in 1855 he was left with the responsibility of looking after his widowed mother and siblings. He worked briefly for Peter Warkentins in Kleefeld, and then for 2 years for Dietrich Wiebe, where his father had died.

Dietrich Wiebe was the famous "Doctor" Wiebe in Lichtfelde.

In approximately 1857 Cornelius commenced work in Blumenort, Mol. He served for 2 years as a carpenter. He then apprenticed for 2 years in Lindenaus as a wheelright. He was baptised on Pentecost, 1860.

Helena Born was serving in Lindenaus as well and in 1861 they were married. The couple may have moved to Mariawohl, Molotschna, shortly thereafter. On Thursday, June 24, 1866, a Cornelius Fast of Mariawohl confessed to the KG brotherhood "that he had once struck his herdsman. He confessed and apologized to his brethren and was also forgiven."

By the 1870s Cornelius and Helena were living in Steinbach in the new KG settlement of Borosenko, northwest of Nikopol. Cornelius served as the village school teacher. On November 1, 1872, Abraham R. Friesen recorded in his journal that he "sent 10 *Biblische Geschichten* (Bible Story books) along with Cornelius Plett for Cornelius Fast of Steinbach."

Dietrich S. Friesen, a teacher in nearby Rosenfeld sometimes refers to Cornelius Fast. In late February and March, "Prufungen" or examinations were held in the KG schools. In 1873, for example, Prufungen were held on February 23rd in Gruenfeld, February 24th at H. Wiebe's in Heuboden, the 26th in Blumenhof, the 27th in Rosenfeld, and on March 6th in Steinbach. The teachers attended each other's Prufungen and assisted in the examination of the children. They also assisted each other by critiquing each other's methodology and subject matter.

The Prufungen were also held late each fall. On November 2, 1873, Friesen recorded that "the Cornelius Fasts were here [Rosenfeld]." On November 11, "[school] conference was held at our place [Friesens]" where Fast would have attended as well. On the 18th another conference was held in Blumenhoff where Peter L. Dueck was the teacher. On December 30th, Friesen recorded that "the Fasts were here in the evening." On January 9th and 16th conferences were held in Steinbach and Gruenfeld.

Dietrich S. Friesen and Cornelius Fast also spent time in socializing. On April 1, 1874, the Friesens went to worship service in Steinbach and visited at the Fast home. The next day, Friesen together with Fast drove to Nikolaitthal, Kherson Province. They spent Easter Sunday visiting Friesen's parents there before returning home on Easter Monday.

Steinbacher Abraham F. Reimer ("Lazy R") referred to the Fast family in his journals. "Mrs. Fast died of small-pox on May 2, 1873. She had been sick for 12 days so that she could not speak out loud." Two other women of the village died of small-pox at the same time: Mrs. Heinrich R. Brandt, nee Anna Warkentin (May 30) and Mrs. Peter R. Reimer, nee Elisabeth S. Friesen (June 9). Abraham F. R. recorded that the coffin for Mrs. Fast was built by his son Peter R. Reimer on May 3, 1873. The next day her cof-

fin "was put into the grave already in the morning because of the smell . . . and the funeral service was held in the afternoon."

Cornelius Fast's colleague Dietrich S. Friesen supported him in his grief. On May 9, 1973, he went to get Cornelius from Steinbach to stay with them for a few days. The next day, the menfolk drove together to Blumenhof where they visited with fellow teacher Peter L. Dueck. On May 11, Fast went back to Steinbach but had returned in time for dinner. On May 12th Fast and Friesen visited at the home of Friesen's "in-laws" in Annafeld and at Cornelius P. Goossens. On Sunday, May 12th, Friesen and Fast went to Blumenhof for the worship service and later they visited at Peter Ungers. Friesen has recorded that on the 17th, Ascension Day. Fast came and took his entire family home with him.

On August 23, 1873, Abraham F. R. wrote that Cornelius Fast "had left for the Molotschna on his two wheel cart . . . He expects to be back in two weeks." In September 1873, Cornelius married for the second time to Helena Fehr, daughter of Jakob and Maria Fehr of the Old Colony. On November 29, 1873, Helena's parents and oldest brother, "visited at the Fasts and stayed for night." On October 1, 1873, "the in-laws came and visited Cornelius Fast and his bride." They also visited at the Reimers. On October 26, "teacher Fast drove to the Old Colony with Helena to the doctor as she was ill."

The couple made their home in Kronthal in the Old Colony, possibly living with her parents. On March 6, 1874, Cornelius wrote a letter to KG Aeltester Peter P. Toews, Blumenhoff, Borosenko, stating "that he and two of his brothers-in-law have taken up the job of digging a well." He was making some headway financially as in a letter of March, 1874, the former KG Aeltester Heinrich Enns of Fischau, Molotschna, wrote that he "received a letter from Cornelius Fasts of Steinbach, wherein he informs me that he has paid the debt in Hierschau for which I had signed as guarantor and that I shall have the monies that are left over; which I have also received, namely, 10 ruble and 5 kopek."

In 1874 Cornelius Fasts and his parents-in-law and his wife's sister, Mrs. B. Bergen, and her family emigrated from Russia together with a number of other families from Steinbach, Borosenko. The Fast family received financial assistance from the church for the traveling expenses. KG deacon records show that \$105.00 was paid to A. Friesen (presumably Abraham S. Friesen of Steinbach) for reimbursement for traveling expense incurred on behalf of Cornelius Fast.

The family settled on Wirtschaft 2 in Steinbach, Manitoba. Cornelius himself writes that "they only arrived at our building site (at Steinbach) on October 1, 1874. Our first winter in Manitoba was a very harsh one. We like many others had a sod house" (*a semlin*), for the first

winter, which was partially built into the ground. Fast later recalled that "the cash outlay for the windows, doors, rails, etc. to build the home was \$3.50, but we had a warm house." Cornelius Fast is entered in the KG Brandordnung with insurance coverage of \$12.50 for buildings, \$75.00 for livestock and equipment, and \$25.00 for feed and inventory. Fast filed for a homestead on NW 1-6-6E which was in the Friedensfeld area south of Steinbach and not within the village limits of Steinbach itself.

Historian Klaas J. B. Reimer has written that; "[Cornelius W. Fast] was one of the few immigrants who learned to speak English in the old country. This proved to be a great help during the first fall when Mr. Fast was able to speak to John Peterson, the friend of the settlement, who was only too glad to give advice so that the newcomers could prepare themselves for the coming winter." Cornelius Fast's skills as a carpenter were also useful during this time. John B. Toews later recalled how Cornelius and his neighbour Klaas B. Friesen "built and used a lumber sawing rig that depended entirely on human power. A hole 6 feet deep was dug, a contraption built to roll the log into position, a platform was erected on top of the log for the other man to stand on, and the tedious sawing job got underway."

Mrs Fast's parents, Jakob and Maria Fehr and Bernhard Bergens—her sister and brother-in-law, lived with them that first winter. In 1875 the Old Colony people immigrated to Manitoba and settled in the West Reserve around Winkler. Jakob Fehr and the Bernhard Bergen family also moved to the Winkler area. In 1876, Jakob Fehr was on his death bed. He wanted to see his children and the Fast family was summoned as well. Because the Fasts had no wagon, the Fehrs decided to come and get them.

Due to the time it took for the letter exchange and then the long trip, Jakob Fehr died an hour before they got there. At this time the Fast family decided to stay in the West Reserve. Cornelius Fast returned to his former profession as a teacher and also worked as a carpenter in his spare time.

Cornelius Fast was not able to sell his property in Steinbach right-a-way. On December 15, 1876, the Abram S. Friesen outfit was standing at the "old Cornelius Fast's place" when a blizzard roared through southeastern Manitoba in which Heinrich Wiebe of Blumenort was frozen to death. Peter T. Barkman remembered that the crew had gathered at the threshing machine the next morning when the mishap was reported and how devastated the big Englishman John Carlton had been when he heard the news.

Things were not always easy in a pioneer society. In a letter of January 6, 1875, Jakob M. Barkman, the local KG minister writes about certain concerns expressed by Fast regarding "nourishment and shelter" and also his unhappiness with the Church. The result was that Fast was separated from the Gemeinde. Possibly Fast was unhappy that he had not been hired as the school teacher in Steinbach, the position he held in the "old" village of Steinbach in Russia.

Fast was subsequently reaccepted into the Gemeinde. But his church problems came to a head on January 6, 1877, when "... the matter of Cornelius W. Fast was presented [to a broth-



Cornelius Fast

erhood meeting]. He had resigned from the Gemeinde." In 1878 Cornelius Fast finally sold his Wirtschaft 2 in Steinbach to Johann G. Barkman.

Cornelius Fast has written that "Because of circumstances, we had to stay there [West Reserve] until 1892" at which time they returned to the East Reserve. In 1892 Cornelius Fast taught in Heuboden. Johann L. Dueck (1833-1894), mayor of the neighbouring village of Grunfeld, made several references to Fast. On February 20, 1893, he writes that "Cornelius Fasts were here for a visit. I gave him a package of white flower..." On March 11, 1893, Cornelius Fast bought the Grunfeld community bull for \$11.00 "payable before December 31, 1893." These journal entries indicate that Fast was reintegrating into the KG community after 15 years absence living in the West Reserve.

More tragic events followed. On March 15, Dueck writes that "Cor. Fast was here a little" presumably to inform Dueck that his wife had died and to make funeral arrangements. The next day, Dueck's son "Jakob helped dig a grave for Mrs. Fast." The funeral was held on the 17th. Dueck recorded that "Friesens came over before dinner for Mrs. Fast's funeral, which was at Jakob Duecks. We were all there too. She was buried in our graveyard. Cornelius Fast has written that his second wife died "of an internal infection."

Cornelius Fast married for the third time to the widow Mrs. Johann I. Wiebe, nee Anna Baerg, of Blumenort. She was the daughter of senior KG minister Peter Baerg (1817-1901) of Grunfeld, Manitoba. Fast's dealings with the Grunfelders continued. On May 8, 1893, Johann L. Dueck brought 10 head of cattle to pasture at his place. On the 12th six yearlings were returned to Grunfeld as "They had apparently ran away from Fasts because of the rain."

By 1890 Cornelius Fast already had acquired a property in Steinbach which was insured for \$100.00 and also \$100.00 worth of furniture. On August 25, 1890, the insurance coverage was increased by \$100.00. On April 25, 1892, the insurance coverage was struck completely. On November 28 of the same year Cornelius took out insurance for furniture in the amount of

\$200.00. It seems that Cornelius Fast may have purchased a property in anticipation of returning to Steinbach, and then sold it, opting to rent instead.

By 1895 the Cornelius Fast family was again resident in Steinbach where they are listed in the tax rolls as renters. The Fast family moved around, seemingly whenever Cornelius obtained a different teaching position. In 1906 the Cornelius Fast family moved to Steinbach [again] where he "took up carpenter work on a small scale." In 1912 Cornelius Fast and his family moved to Neuental where he taught school. He also taught school in Hochfeld, Ebenfeld and Blumengard for 5 years. After this they retired and moved again to Steinbach.

In 1916 they were living in the house originally built by Steinbach pioneer Franz Kroeker, and used for church services for many years. Here they looked after Mrs. Peter B. Friesen, who was mentally ill, at the expense of the church. Later they looked after Julius and Maria Redenzel. This church sponsored facility was the first care-home or hospital-type institution in the Steinbach area. No doubt the experience he acquired working for "Dr." Wiebe in Lichtfelde, Mol., served Cornelius in good stead as a caregiver during this his last career.

Cornelius W. Fast maintained a "Familienregister" in which he recorded various details of his family. He also wrote a short autobiography as a remembrance for his children which he presented to his daughter Margaretha. Cornelius was a good story teller. In his sketches of Steinbach pioneers, Klaas J. B. Reimer has written, "The writer remembers that he got his first lessons in carpentry from Mr. Fast when the latter built the home for the writer's father [Johann R. Reimer]. The writer also remembers how patiently the carpenter tried to teach him and with what intense interest he listened to the stories of the olden days as told by Mr. Fast."

Descendants

Cornelius W. Fast died in 1927. He had lived a long and fruitful life and had experienced several careers. He was the patriarch of a large family of 24 children of whom 18 lived to adulthood and 16 married and founded their own families. Daughter Aganetha Fast was a trained nurse who returned to Steinbach to help fight the 1918 influenza epidemic and was "responsible for saving a great many lives." Son David served in W.W.I. Daughter Margaretha was also a nurse and assisted courageously when the flu epidemic struck Landmark in 1930. Later she became the third wife of Kleine Gemeinde Bishop Peter P. Reimer. Daughter Katharina married Peter F. Loewen of Landmark. Daughter Justina married Jakob F. Remier of Steinbach.

Grandsons Verner and Cornie Fast of Blumenort, Manitoba, founded the "Fast Brothers" road construction firm during the 1940s which was widely known in the area.

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Articles

Menno Simons: 500th Birthday

What Mean These Stones? A Biography of Menno Simons by William Schroeder,
434 Sutton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0T3.

And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, '**What do these stones mean?**' tell them 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over." Joshua 4: 20-23

In the 16th century Europe was a place of uncertainty and change. Martin Luther had challenged the mightiest power on earth in his day, the Roman Catholic Church, causing many people to abandon that medieval institution and to follow him in his teachings. However, the torch of the Reformation did not remain there but was taken up by other reformers who modified Luther's teachings in some important respects and soon gained a following of their own.

The Anabaptists in Zurich, led by Conrad Grebel, constituted such a group. They advocated a personal faith in Christ, adult baptism and separation of church and state. Persecution compelled them to flee to neighbouring countries, and so to spread Anabaptist ideas. In the Netherlands one of their converts, Menno Simons, became their leader and in the course of time the whole movement adopted his name.

Menno Simons was born in Witmarsum, Friesland, in 1496, four years after Columbus discovered America.(1) In 1520, at the age of twenty-four, he was ordained as priest and assigned to the Catholic Church in the village of Pingjum, two kilometers west of Witmarsum.

Menno was a successful and contented priest before a series of events brought about a crisis and radical change in his way of life. First, while carrying out his usual priestly duties, doubts came to him about the reality of a miracle transpiring within the Mass. Did the bread and wine he was using actually change into the body of Christ? When these doubts persisted, Menno discussed his personal perplexity and doubt with his superior. He searched the writings of the Church Fathers and the Reformers but none could offer a satisfactory solution to his questions. Finally, and with great apprehension, Menno decided to search diligently in the New Testament, a book he had never read before. He was surprised to discover that the Bible taught nothing of the traditional teaching of the Church on the Mass.

The second event that changed Menno's life occurred in Leeuwarden on March 20, 1531. On that day a tailor named Sicke Freerks was publicly beheaded because he had been rebaptized. When Menno heard that the victim was a good,

God-fearing man, he wondered why a man would be ready to die for faith linked to his baptism. He wondered whether the Catholic Church could be mistaken about child baptism as it was wrong about transubstantiation? Once more he

turned to the Scriptures for an answer. He discovered that there was in fact no Biblical basis for infant baptism.

In spite of all his inner turmoil, outwardly Menno still appeared as a successful priest. He



Menno Simons (1496-1561). This likeness of Menno Simons was made by Jakob Burghart, a Hollandisch copper engraver in Hamburg in 1683. It is hanging in the Hamburg-Altona Mennonite Church.

was promoted to the position of pastor in Witmarsum.

The third occurrence that changed Menno's life was the tragedy at Bolsward on April 7, 1535. On that day a group of some three hundred radical Anabaptists (Melchiorites), who had taken refuge in an old cloister and had barricaded themselves against government forces, were overpowered and slain. Among those killed was Menno's own brother. This catastrophe, occurring less than four kilometres southeast of Witmarsum, made a profound impression on Menno Simons. He saw the victims as poor, misguided sheep who, although in error, dared to face death for their convictions. He, on the other hand, knew the truth of the gospel but didn't have the courage to follow it. While in this traumatic state of mind and soul, Menno turned to God for forgiveness and was fully changed. The whole truth dawned on him gradually. For another nine months he remained within the Catholic Church, but in January, 1536, he gave up his priestly office. He turned his back on a life of ease, security and pleasure, and deliberately chose the way of the cross.

For several months after his conversion and subsequent renunciation of the priesthood, Menno went into hiding in the vicinity of Witmarsum. He stayed in the home of Hermann and Gerrit Jansz who lived about one kilometre southeast of the village, for at least part of the time. Their house was one of a cluster of four cottages. A small shed (Scheune), which was almost totally hidden from view by the four neighbouring dwellings, was attached to the Jansz house. According to tradition it was in this Scheune that Menno was baptized. It was also there that he married Gertrude, his life's companion. And it was there that he first preached the gospel and won men and women to faith in Christ.(2)

When Menno's activities and hiding place became known, his persecution at the hand of the state and church officials commenced. On October 24, 1536, the public prosecutor of Friesland demanded that Hermann and Gerrit Jansz publicly admit their error or be sentenced to death for having sheltered "Menno Simonzoon", the former pastor in Witmarsum. However, before they could be apprehended, the two couples fled to the vicinity of Groningen. In Groningen Obbe Philips and several other leaders of the moderate wing of the Anabaptists persuaded Menno Simons to accept ordination as elder of their new church. From that day forward Menno, his wife and their three children wandered from one hiding place to another and from one city or state to another wherever Anabaptists were tolerated. In 1543 he fled to Emden, in 1545 to Cologne, and in 1546 to Wismar. It was during his stay in Emden that his followers were first referred to as "Mennists".

Wherever Menno Simons went he preached the gospel, baptized new converts, ordained ministers, organized churches and wrote books.(3) At all times he had to travel and work in secret because of threats to his life. In 1542



Arlin and Florence Yost, Linda Reimer-Tremere, Yolanda Hiebert, and Pauline and Menno Penner, members of the "Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour" group of 1996, inspect the Catholic Church in Pingjum, three miles from Witmarsum where Menno served as Pastor at the time that he made his decision to join the Anabaptists in 1536. Note the Roman style arches of the windows. Local tour guides in the Ukraine such as Olga Schmakina tell us that an arched window style similar to this is often the first indicator that a particular building is of Mennonite origin. Photo by D. Plett April 23, 1996.



This monument was erected in 1879 on the site of the original Schuenenkirche and the home of Hermann and Gerrit Jansz. According to tradition Menno Simons addressed his first followers here. Mennonites held their meetings here from 1536 to 1877 when a new church was built in the village of Witmarsum. A map drawn by the Frisian historian Schotanuz in the seventeenth century marks this spot as Menno Simons' old church. Photo caption courtesy of William Schroeder. Photo by D. Plett April 23, 1996.



an imperial edict in the name of Charles V issued against Menno. The edict placed a price of 100 gold guilders on his head and forbade anyone from giving him aid or shelter and from reading his books. These edicts were not mere words, but were strictly enforced. In 1539, Tjaert Reyerts was tortured and killed at the wheel in Leeuwarden because he had given lodging to Menno Simons. Another man was executed because he had transported Menno Simons in a boat down the Meuse River from Fischerswert to Roermand. On April 16, 1545, Quirinus Pieters was burnt at the stake in Groningen because he had been baptized by Menno Simons six years earlier.

To help the government officials apprehend their most wanted criminals, Menno Simons being one of them, they employed artists to prepare posters which displayed sketches of the offenders and provided information about the reward. These posters were displayed in public places. It is believed that followers of Menno Simons retained some of these posters as treasured souvenirs. Later these sketches were used by artists such as van Sichem, de Cooge and van de Velde to prepared the first formal portraits of Menno Simons, some of which are available to us today. Menno's stay in Wismar,

from 1546-1554, was a relatively peaceful one. He was able to spend most of his time visiting newly organized Mennonite churches from Flanders to the Vistula Delta.

However, as time went on, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in Wismar made it difficult for Mennonites to reside in that city. They declared that all Anabaptists should be banished from Wismar by November 11, 1554. Menno fled to the village of Wustenfelde on the Fresenburg estate, north of Bad Oldesloe, a few months before the deadline. The owner of the estate, Bartholomaeus von Ahlefeld (?-1568), had participated in a military campaign against Charles V in 1542. He was greatly impressed with the Mennonites whom he had met in Julich, North Brabant and Antwerp.

When Bartholomaeus von Ahlefeld inherited Fresenburg in 1543, he immediately invited the Mennonites to settle on his estate. Many Mennonites eagerly responded to Ahlefeld's invitation and immigrated to Fresenburg. They settled on a small knoll about two kilometres northeast of Bad Oldesloe. Their settlement was locally known as Wustenfelde. In spite of numerous requests and demands from King Christian III and his brother Prince Adolph to evict the Mennonites from his property, Ahlefeld continued

to shelter them.(4) For Menno this was an ideal refuge where he could spend the last few years of his life.

Menno Simons wrote his first book just before he left the Catholic Church. He continued to write and publish books as he fled from one state to another. With the help of Ahlefeld he set up a print shop in what is now known as the Menno Cottage between Bad Oldesloe and Wustenfelde. There with the help of an experienced printer he revised and printed his earlier books and published some new ones. His sermons were Bible-centred and Christ-centred. The people who heard or read Menno's sermons thought his style and content were profound.(5) The fact that Philip II had the writings of Menno Simons placed on the Index(6) on December 10, 1557, confirms the effectiveness of his books.

Menno Simons died in 1561 at the age of sixty-five and was buried in the vegetable garden behind his house in Wustenfelde.(7)

Menno Simons created a place for himself in the history of the Christian Church. During the years of the most relentless persecution by Charles V and Philip II he encouraged the harassed brethren and gave them leadership in doctrine and faith. In 1541 a royal advisor in Friesland complained to the King's regent in the Netherlands, "The pesky sect of Anabaptists would have been eradicated by now if it weren't for Menno Simons who visits the area once or twice every year and leads many people astray." Menno caught a vision of what Christ meant when he said, "...teach them to obey everything I have commanded you."(8) For him Christianity was more than faith only.(9) It was faith and works, the fruit of the spirit, "for faith without works is dead." (10)

Stone markers have been erected in Witmarsum and Bad Oldesloe so that future generations may remember where Menno Simons lived, laboured and died. However, by far the most significant memorial is the church that still bears his name and whose members accept his understanding of discipleship.(11)

End Notes:

1. Historians disagree about the dates of Menno Simons' birth and death. The dates used in this article were suggested by Karel Vos (1874-1926), Jacob G. de Hoop Scheffer (1819-1894) believed the dates should be 1492 and 1559. The monument in Witmarsum bears the dates 1496 and 1561.
2. The church which stood at that sit for more than 300 years was always called the Scheuenenkirche.
3. Menno Simons also became involved in two prolonged public debates on theological problems of the day, first in Emden and again in Lubeck.
4. The region was under the sovereignty of the King of Denmark at that time.
5. Menno Simons published about 24 books and pamphlets. In his writings he discussed a wide range of topics relevant to the Christian Church: the authority of the Scriptures, the Holy Trinity, atonement, repentance, sin, justification by faith, regeneration, the church, non-resis-

tance, swearing of oaths, non-conformity to the world and others. His most important works are "The Foundation of Christian Doctrine" and "Of the True Christian Faith". Every book and every pamphlet he wrote had on the front page the motto, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 3:11

6. The *Index Lubrorum Prohibitorum* was a list of books which the Roman Catholic Church forbade its members to read.

7. Menno was survived by one daughter. He was predeceased by his son, one daughter and his wife.

8. Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Matthew 28:19, 20a

9. In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:17

10. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Galatians 5:22, 23 a

11. There are about 1,000,000 people around the world who are members of a Mennonite church.

Further reading:

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Writing (Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1944), 110 pages.

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Krahn, Cornelius, *Menno Simons* (North Newton, Kansas, 1982), 192 pages.

Wenger, J. C. , *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* (Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1956), 1092 pages.

About the author: William Schroeder is a teacher by profession. He is the recognized historian of the Bergthal Colony in Russia and a cartographer of Mennonite settlements all over the world. He has written *The Bergthal Colony*, originally published in 1973 and republished in a revised second edition in 1986. He was co-author of the *Mennonite Historical Atlas* and has also contributed many articles and maps to various publications.

Tulip named after Menno Simons

Menno Simons has been especially honoured in his homeland, when a new specie of tulip was named in his honour. The Mennonites are cel-

Editor's note

In honour of Menno Simon's 500th birthday, the next issue of *Preservings* will feature two additional articles. Dr. Harvey G. Plett is writing an article on the impact which Menno Simons had on the Kleine Gemeinde, a reform movement founded in the Molotschna Colony of Imperial Russia in 1812. Professor John Friesen of C.M.B.C., 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, will contribute a companion article on the impact of Menno Simons on the Berghaler who settled in the East Reserve in 1874-5 and came to be known in the Hanover Steinbach area as "Chortitzer".

brating the 500th anniversary of the birth Menno Simons.

The tulip was Christened at a Flower Show in Friesland by a government official with the words, "I baptise you in the name of Menno Simons" after which water was poured over the flowers. (from *Die Nederlanden*)

The Abram P. Martens (1875-1968) story

by great-grandson John H. Peters, Steinbach, Manitoba

The story of the 1920s immigration of Mennonites to Canada has been told many times but each retelling brings another unique interpretation of what occurred at that time and what impact it had on each individual and each family. History is after all just a collection of stories, stories told and retold in all their subtle variations until they become the patches of our historical quilt, the stories we have in common, the ones which give us an identity as a people and as a culture.

My great-grandfather, Abram P. Martens (1875-1968), emigrated to Canada in 1926 and because he died when I was just a teenager, I never really got to know him well. At that time in my life, my interest in the past was secondary to the exciting present or the even more exciting future. Even so, Great Grandpa's stories held a fascination for me when I spent time at my Grandparents' farm (The Abram Bestvaters) and Great-Grandpa Martens was living in their home.

The descendants of Abram P. Martens are many and wide spread. The industry known as Martens Printing in Steinbach is still owned and operated as a family business by his grandsons. Many educators, teachers, administrators and professors are part of the family. There are successful business people, farmers and artists; in short, the same sort of rich human legacy that

many of the immigrants of that period have left to this province and country. As descendants of those who endured great hardship and as people who have been able to enjoy the fruits of their courage and faith, we have the responsibility to record their sacrifices and remember their lives.

It seems that the best way to share the story of Abram P. Martens is to use his own words. With permission of the Abram P. Martens Family Book Editorial committee, (John Bestvater, Margaret Harder, John W. Martens and Helen (Bestvater) Peters), I have taken excerpts from his autobiography written in 1963, five years prior to his death. It is a story that tells so much in a few simple eloquent words. It tells of hardship, sorrow, and suffering and yet it stands as a testament of faith and hope. It is the story of one person, one family, one point in time, but it is also the story of many. May it help to serve as part of the patchwork quilt of our history as a people.

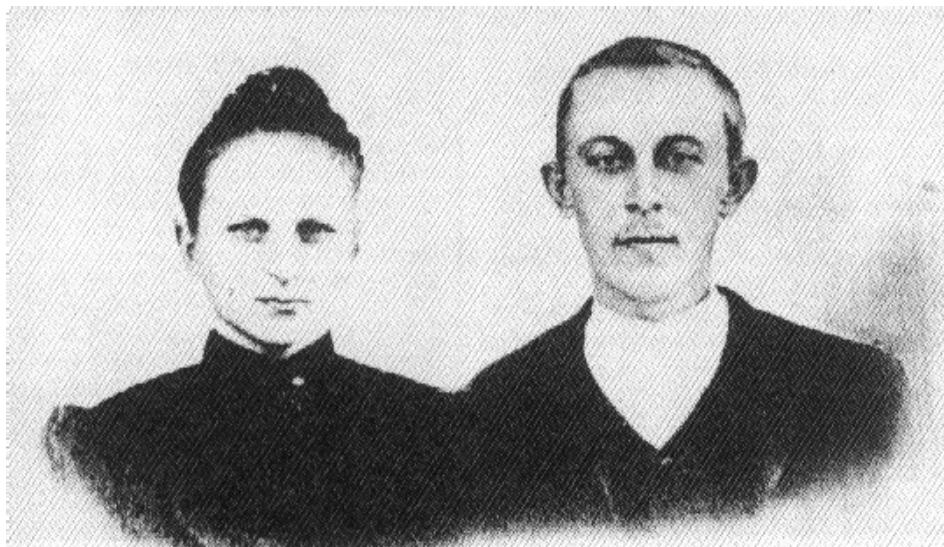
My Life's Pilgrimage - written by Abram Peter Martens of Grunthal, Manitoba (translated by Helen Peters, 1966).

Our village was called Steinfeld (translated Stone Field), [In the Krivoy Rog settlement northwest of Nikopol], although there were no

stones. I do not know who gave the village its name or where it came from. There were forty farm lots each with 50 desjatien land. The south end of the village was close to the river, and from there the river curved to the west and then to the east. This low lying semi-circle had about 300 desjatien land and was used for pasture. The river always had clean water and the area was rich in grass growth which provided good fodder for the cattle.

In the fourth year of settlement, when the spring thaw came, the ice was jammed to the corner of the village and there was a flood. It came at night and the people fled to the school which was on higher ground and to the windmill at the north end of the village, to save themselves. Because of this flood, the settlement was moved about half a mile to a higher level in spring. It was a beautiful village with many people until the raiding bands scattered them.

In my first year of school I was a shy student and did not want to go to school. The teacher, Peter Siemens, who was lame, came from the neighbouring village of Gruenfeld. He, or his wife, were related to my mother. He often came to see them. Then my mother would give him a few coins which he later gave to me for diligent studies and attendance at school. He was my teacher only in the first year, and taught only from the "Fibel" (a German reader which



Abram P. Martens and Mrs. Martens, nee Margaretha J. Olfert. Photo courtesy of the Martens book, page 15.



Abram P. Martens and Mrs. Martens, nee Katarina A. Friesen. Photo courtesy of the Martens book, page 16.

had a rooster on the cover), and the Bible. He was succeeded by a Hutterite named Michel Gross (translated “big”), although he was only of small stature and a bit ill-tempered, and often had trouble with the students. He was our teacher for five years.

At age seventeen I became seriously ill and the doctor gave me up. I did not eat for thirteen days and was unconscious a good deal. I was the only son of my parents, and God heard their pleas and I recovered. During convalescence I had much time to think, and received a change of heart and became more obedient. Today it would be called conversion.

What a blessing for a child to be in the care of godly parents! My parents were blessed with seven children, but four died in infancy. I, Abram was born June 2, 1875. Sister Maria followed on January 12, 1879. When she was grown, she married Abram Olfert of Steinfeld. Sister Elise was born October 5, 1885 and died October 2, 1961. She was married to Herman Froese of Steinfeld.

I found my partner in Margareta J. Olfert of

Steinfeld. We were married October 1, 1895 and our number in the Neu-Chortitza church book was 257. We lived four years with the parents, two years in their house and two years on the yard in the adjoining house. Then we bought a yard in the middle of the village with an old house on it and gradually began to build new buildings.

In October 1896 I had to go to the commission and receive a white ticket, which meant I was free from forestry service, an alternative to military service, a concession granted to the Mennonites because I was the only son in the family. I had the privilege to remain on the yard and help the parents. When I began my own farm, I specialized in grain farming and cattle raising. Usually in the spring I bought young cattle on the market and put them to pasture till fall. Then I sold them at home to the butcher, and made quite a profit. The cattle did not have to be fattened with grain for they had very rich pasture and clean water.

On the sideline in winter, I made everything I needed on the farm. I had a boy take care of

the cattle and I worked almost every evening on wood for wagons, and then had the necessary metal put on at the forge shop, painted them and sold them.

In the fall of 1912 we drove down to Gnadenthal to visit our families. Because of the strong wind we both caught bad colds on this trip and became sick. My wife could not shake it. It was only a distance of eight miles. Since she was already anemic she developed pneumonia, and all efforts to restore her health were fruitless. She became sicker and after a few difficult months she was able to go home to our heavenly Father. With trust in God she went Home. She passed away November 12, 1912 at the age of 36 years, 6 months, and 26 days. Then I often asked: Why? Why me? O Lord, why does this sorrow come to me? Am I chosen to carry this heavy burden? She left behind three sons and five daughters.

In 1910 I was elected as chairman of the Orphan fund, and served seven years as the assistant. When the leader, the dear uncle Herman Schapansky, died of old age, I became the leader until 1925, when with all the accountants from every village, together with Rev. Jacob Rempel, we gathered at our place to make the closing of the report. We had 103,000 Rubel in cash, all worthless money. Rev. Rempel and I went into the kitchen and stuck the money in the fire in the cookstove. The debt and village account books were given to the accountants. The closing off report was certified by the “Verband Holländischer Herkunft”. (Organization of Dutch descent) which at that time met in Gruenfeld. To them we also gave the iron cash box which we had at our place. That was “Schlusz”.

Since I was a widower with eight children, I looked for a wife and mother for my young children. In 1913, I found a helpmate in Katarina A. Friesen from the estate Kleefeld, three Verst from the village Hochfeld No. 5 Jasikowo, of the district of Jekaterinoslaw. Two sons and a daughter were born to us.

The First World War broke out in June 1914. We were terrified and made various plans. In 1915 the horrible war still raged, and we had many expenses and had to pay heavy taxes, which were forcefully extracted. All grain had to be delivered. The war continued in the year 1916, and I, as holder of a white ticket at age 41 had to appear before the commission at Kreisstadt, Werchnednjiprowsk. Because our Brother-in-law was already serving in the hospital medical corps, I was exempted from all compulsory service.

In 1917, the October revolution broke out and continued to rage into 1918. Thirteen good horses and much more was taken from us without payment. In 1919 on June 18 at night, five men, more rightfully called bandits, came with guns and stole all our money of about 6,000 Rubel, and also another 20,000 Rubel from the Orphan Fund which at the time was with us in the iron cash box. The next year was a year of changes, alternating political parties and currencies according to which party was in power. Famine spread throughout Russia in 1921-1922.



Homestead built in 1910 in Steinfeld. Photo courtesy of Martens book, page 19.

Many, many people died of hunger. Added to that was the typhus epidemic. When the need was at its height, help came from the United States, Holland, and Canada. We were quickly relieved of our gold articles and gold money, if there were any, for everything was traded for food. In the spring of 1919 when the land was taken from the peasants by the government, we had just planted about 3 acres of grafted fruit trees.

In 1925 more people left for Canada out of fear. Many, and I was among them, thought that these storms in our land would still end, and for a time it seemed they would. But then it became worse again, and in February, 1926, we too made application for passports for emigration. These passes cost 38 Rubel each and everyone over sixteen years had to have his own pass. At the same time we began to sell many of our things, and on May 7 we made an auction of everything moveable. The permission for the passes took time, as though the authorities did not want us to leave. To hasten the process we had to often generously lubricate the palms of the officials, that is pay extra. Finally, on August 9, 1926 we received our eleven passes, but three of the family still had to wait.

When the passes were handed out the cost was 250 Rubel each instead of the 38 Rubel. We had to buy fourteen passes. That just encouraged our desire to leave; the future (in this country) promised nothing good.

Mr. Martens then gives a detailed account of the family's trip from Steinfeld to Moscow via Sinelnikow, Lososwaja, Charkow, Belgard, Serpuchowa and Stolbowaja. He writes about the time spent in Moscow visiting various tourist attractions. They left Russia from Port Liebau on August 28, 1926 and landed in England on September 1. They left for Canada on September 4 and saw the shores of Newfoundland on September 9.

We landed at Quebec on September 11, at eight in the morning, without having been seasick. Here we were again examined. The train was ready to depart. They kept me back for a

few minutes, with the excuse that I was sick, or did they want something else? We received small Testaments (the four Gospels), and when we left they were going to take them from us again.

For three days we travelled through a vast expanse of lakes, forests and rock formations, and it seemed that there was no good land. We arrived at Arnaud station via Winnipeg. Here our relatives, Ketlers, were waiting for us. All the land, the vehicles and the clothing of the people seemed so strange. We were tired from the long, unaccustomed trip so we rested a bit and admired everything. All the ditches and holes were full of water, for it had rained much that year. It was good that we were here. Now, what did we want to do? We had many concerns.

In many fields the grain sheaves were standing in the water. Our girls went to help pull the sheaves out of the water to drier areas. All the way to Dominion City there was water like a sea! O dear! Four weeks we stayed with the Ketlers, and in that time we had learned to think:

The world is the same everywhere.

Reward and joy follows after labour and work.
-Goethe

We bought a farm from a trust company, but it was in poor shape. It was one of the last ones available. Many found a blessing through that farm. Many things (equipment) in bad shape had been brought here and exchanged for something better. The farm was five miles from the Otterburne station, or three miles west of the Kleefeld settlement (Gruenthal) in Manitoba.

In 1927 most of the seeding began on June 2; then a frost came when the wheat was blooming, and it resulted in a crop failure. The price of land was high, and so were the interest rates. We left that farm and took one near Schoensee, a cheaper, poorly equipped farm. The better farms had been taken two weeks earlier, before we arrived, and so we had to take what was left. We saw no future in staying on that farm, for the company demanded too much of us.

Our children, (Liese and Neta) worked for others and the income was very meagre. They

did not want to help pay for the company's farm, but preferred to pay for one bought through private sale. There were good farms available, but they were too expensive for us. We bought a farm of 160 acres from a French farmer for a medium price. There were few buildings, so we repaired them and gave 150 acres to the four youngest children and kept ten acres and the house for ourselves. This farm is about two miles north of Grunthal (on the corner of highway 216 and 205).

Since I was unable to work, we sold the house and the ten acres, and bought an acre of land in Grunthal. My wife and I went to visit in British Columbia and when we returned we built a house in Grunthal. Here we have a church, store, post office, and everything that we need and yet it seems that I can not become well. Off and on I have to go to the doctor for examination for skin cancer. I have also had a hernia operation, have had trouble with my nerves, and now it is a weak heart. My wife too, had a hernia operation and suffered much with congestive heart failure. We received medical help and sometimes our health would improve and then worsen again. Then she had two strokes and passed away September 27 and was buried October 1, 1957 (at the Grunthal cemetery). It was a difficult time for me and my family but our comfort was that she had a trust in God. I, too, hope to die in peace with God, for He is gracious and near to us. My life's clock is nearing twelve. Everything has an end, and so also our earthly existence.

On June 2, 1963, I reached a full 88 years of life. I have experienced many dark days and a few sunny days. Today, in my loneliness, I reflect on what I have experienced as I have written it. I am filled with a deep desire to go to my Heavenly Home. This is not the place of our stay. I wish that we will all meet in the Home above.

Sources:

- (1) John Bestvater, *et al*, editors: *The Family of Abram P. Martens 1875-1985*, Martens Printing, Steinbach, Manitoba, 1984, 623 pages.

Whatshan Valley Settlement, Needles, B. C.

by Ted de Veer, 1050-63rd St. S.E., Salmon Arm, BC V1E 4M3

Our forefathers, that is our grandparents and parents, were looking for a better climate than that of Manitoba and were tired of the Greenland mud. Some of the grandparents were old enough to remember the nice climate of the Ukraine, so they decided to move to B.C. My grandfather Peter T. Wiebe and possibly Peter H. Wiebe or Peter B. Toews were the organizers of the move. I believe they had a look at the property before they bought it.

Much of B.C. was sold by real estate people who did not think of the value of the land as long as they could sell. Most of B.C. had big timber (trees) on it, so it must be good land. The real estate people got our people to trade in their farms in Greenland and elsewhere for the B.C. land. The realtors made big promises to clear the land, plant orchards, irrigate the land and build houses for them.

After our people had signed their farms away, the real estate people did not keep their promises. This same thing happened to a lot of people buying land in the Canadian West.

[The first families settled in Whatshan Valley in 1911, namely: Peter B. Toews, commonly known as "Grote" Toews; Johann de Veer, Wilhelm Vogt, Peter T. Wiebe, Martin M. Penner, Peter H. Wiebe and his mother Mrs. Elizabeth Wiebe de Veer age 73. These families had their roots in Blumenort and Greenland, Manitoba. All of these families except Peter T. Wiebes were related in that they were the children or in-laws of Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908), the Kleine Gemeinde delegate to Canada in 1873. The "Grote" Toews and Peter H. Wiebe



Two sisters, Margaret (1889-1975) and Maria de Veer (b. 1896), daughters of Isaak de Veer and Anna Toews Wiebe. Margaret de Veer married Johann Esau and they lived in Peace River, Alberta. Maria de Veer married Ben Dirks who died in 1928. The Derk family lived in Cudworth, Saskatchewan east of Saskatoon. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Gerbrandt, Niverville. Her grandfather C. F. Friesen of Osterwick, Manitoba was a cousin to the de Veer sisters.



The family of Peter B. Toews (Grote Toews) taken on the bridge (Spray Bridge). The bridge located on the way to Needles, had a good sized waterfall above and below the bridge, it had a rainbow on the upper side of the bridge when the sun was shining. Mr. Peter B. Toews is sitting on the bridge and Mrs. Toews is standing just behind him.

families only remained in Needles for one year when they returned to Manitoba; the Wiebes to Steinbach and the Toews' to Greenland.]

[Families that arrived in 1912 were: Jakob W. Reimer from Alberta but originally from Blumenhof, Manitoba; David L. Toews and Helena Toews from Alberta; Peter P. W. Toews from Alberta; and the following from Manitoba: Gerhard K. Giesbrecht; Wilhelm K. Giesbrecht; George Friesen, Isaak Penner, Peter W. Reimer; Klaas F. Friesen and Ben Dicker.]

After our people had the land cleared all they had was gravel land with very little soil. My father Johann de Veer was a tradesman who spent six years logging in the nearby forest which was within walking distance. Most of our people were farmers, so they went back to the prairies.

Two of my siblings were born at Needles. The family told many nice and interesting stories of the good time they spent in B.C. There was lots of adventure for young people.

Had our people settled at some other place like here in the Okanagan they would very likely have stayed. Here is a lot of fruit some grain and cattle ranch and dairying.

Our people lived on a bench about 700 feet above the Arrow Lake four miles up a mountain side with a good sized creek and a small river coming from a lake nearby. They had lots of wild game, good fishing, and lots of waterfalls in the four miles going down to the Arrow Lake. The only travel in or out of that country was by paddlewheel boats. The lake was about 100 miles long and so there were a lot of boats to go on. We still go to see the place where our people lived which they referred to as Whatshan

near the Whatshan Lake. It is about 120 miles from Salmon Arm.

[The Mennonite settlement at Whatshan Valley dissolved in about 1917 when many of the families moved to other Holdeman settlements in Alberta.]

by Ted de Veer



Gerhard K. Giesbrecht (1872-1945) taught school in Whatshan Valley in 1918. He was the son of Gerhard R. Giesbrecht (1846-1907) who served as Schulz or mayor of Steinbach, Manitoba, in 1882. Gerhard K. Giesbrecht was the half-brother of Cornelius E. Giesbrecht (1891-1970) of Greenland, Manitoba, whose son Harold Giesbrecht lives in Whitemouth. Photo courtesy of Where is Edgewood, page 41.



1913 Wiebe Mountain, Needles, B. C.

by Ted Wiebe, Box 363, Benito, Manitoba, R0L 0C0

The picture of "Wiebe Mountain" Whatshan Valley or Needles, B. C. could have been taken around 1913. The photographer is unknown. It was found in the personal belongings of Daniel de Veer of Salmon Arm, B.C. after he passed away.

Bottom Row left to right:

No. 1 unknown.
No. 2 unknown.

No. 3 **Peter Vogt** (1894-1918), son of Wilhelm and Maria (B. Toews) Vogt. Mr. Vogt came from Gretna but later farmed in Greenland then moved to the Whatshan Valley in 1911. In 1916 they moved to Swalwell, Alberta. He died in 1918 of the Spanish influenza. He was an adopted son. More details are found in the *Cornelius P. Toews family book 1836-1908* edited by Henry E. Toews, Sinclair, Manitoba.

No. 4 **Willie Krebs**, born in Hungary April 3, 1892. Died at Spokane, Washington October 29, 1978.

No. 5 unknown.

No. 6 **Gerhard de Veer**, born 1886 to Isaac and Anna (Toews) de Veer in Blumenort. He moved with his parents to Greenland in 1894. In 1914 he married Katherine Wiebe and in 1917 they moved to Acme, Alberta. They moved to the Peace River country in the thirties and homesteaded at Crooked Creek. His life story is in the *Isaac de Veer family book* edited by Ted de Veer, Salmon Arm, B.C.

No. 7 Cornelius Toews (1891-1972), son of "Grote" Peter B. Toews who lived at Needles

B.C. for about a year. In 1913 Cornelius married Mary Penner. They farmed at Ste Anne on a river lot. He was known as Raleigh Toews. His son Leonard lives at Ste Anne and the youngest son Ronald has a hardware store at Killarney Manitoba.

No. 8 **Peter Penner** (1892-1970), son of Isaac and Margaretha (Toews) Penner, was born in Blumenort and moved to Greenland in 1894 and in 1911 to Needles B.C. He married Lena Ratzlaff. They had one daughter Dolores who lives in Enderby B.C. Peter Penner passed away in 1970 and is buried in B.C.

No. 9 Rube Buerge. There was a Buerge family at Harrison, Michigan and they came from Hesston, Kansas. Rube probably was from those Buerge's.

Second Row:

No. 1 **Elizabeth "Lizzie" Krebs Reimer**, born in Manitoba May 30, 1900.

No. 2 **Helena Reimer** moved with her parents Jacob W. and Susanna (Loewen) Reimer from Alberta to Whatshan Valley in 1912. In 1917 they moved back to Alberta. In 1922 she married David D. Toews. Their family is listed in the *Heinrich Fast Reimer family book*.

No. 3 **Margaret Loewen** was born to Abram T. and Helena (Isaac) Loewen. Her parents moved to the Whatshan Valley and eight months later back to Alberta. Margaret married Simon Ratzlaff and they lived in the Linden area. More of their story is found in *Footprints of Mi-Chig-Wun: Sunnyslope Memoirs*, Editor Ike Brown.

No. 4 **Elizabeth Reimer** was born to John W. and Elizabeth (Toews) Reimer in Blumenhof, Manitoba on April 21, 1884. She was visiting at Needles when the picture was taken.

No. 5 **John Penner**, son of Isaac and Margaretha (Toews) Penner, moved with his parents to Needles. In 1917 John started farming at Linden, Alberta. In 1921 he married Elizabeth Reimer. There is more information in the *Heinrich Fast Reimer family book*.

No. 6 **Lena Krebs Robbins** born March 20, 1895 in Manitoba. Died October 31, 1987, Woodinwilk, Washington.

No. 7 **Neil Wiebe**, son of Peter H and Katherine (Toews) Wiebe, moved with his parents to Needles in October, 1911. In 1917 they moved back to Steinbach. In 1925 he married Edith Reed of Ontario. They had one daughter Marion and she married Herman Loewen. They live in Winnipeg.

No. 8 **Martha Wiebe** was the oldest daughter of Jacob P.T. and Elizabeth (Mooney) Wiebe. In 1922 she married John P. Wohlgemuth. Most of their family live in the Steinbach area.

No. 9 **Margaret Reimer** was the daughter of Jacob W and Susanna (Loewen) Reimer. In 1912 she moved with her parents to the Whatshan Valley and back to Alberta in 1917. In 1919 she married Solomon Boese and they lived in Linden, Alberta, the rest of their life.

No. 10 **Susie Reimer** was a sister to Margaret Reimer. In 1928 Susie married Peter P. Wiebe. They also farmed in the Linden area.

No. 11 **Agnes Wiebe**, daughter of Peter H. and

Franz Thiessen and Elisabeth Hamm Sawatzky

by Marjorie Hildebrandt, Box 1420, Steinbach, Manitoba

Franz Thiessen (1833-1901) and the Widow Elizabeth Hamm Sawatzky (1826-1898) lived in Schoenthal in the Berghthal Colony. The village got this name because it was situated in a beautiful valley, just south of the Bodena River. It was three kilometers south-west from the village of Berghthal. By 1839 thirty-one families had settled in this pretty village.

Heinrich Thiessen (1802-1851) and Maria Thiessen, nee Doerksen (b. 1797)[BGB-A79], were one of those families. They were married 13 years and brought with them from the Chortitza Colony their five young children, Heinrich 12, Agatha 10, Franz 6, Anna 3 and David 1 year. That same year on December 30 Abraham was born in the village of Schönthal.

On April 7, 1851 Heinrich died at the age of 48 years. The oldest son, also named Heinrich, was 23 at that time. He would have to take the lead on the farm with 17 year old Franz as his helper. They had been well-trained by their father and could manage. In 1852 another loss was experienced in the family when daughter Anna passed away at age 16. That left mother Maria with four children at home. Heinrich had married Helena Hildebrand on November 13, 1849.

On September 21, 1858, at age 25 Franz married Elizabeth Hamm (1826-98) [BGB-B162]. [Elisabeth was the widow of Franz Sawatzky (1814-57), the paternal great-grandfather of Frank W. Sawatzky, founder of F. W. Sawatzky Construction Ltd of Winnipeg. BGB-B6] Elisabeth Hamm was Sawatzky's second wife and had a son, Cornelius who was two and a half years old, born February 9, 1856.

continued from previous page

Katherine (Toews) Wiebe, moved with her parents to the Whatshan Valley in 1911 and back to Steinbach in 1917. In 1923 Agnes married Peter S. Guenther, Mr. Guenther was a school teacher all his life.

Third Row:

No. 1 **Anna Toews** was the daughter of Peter P.W. and Katherine (Klassen) Toews. Her grandfather was Bishop Peter P. Toews. She married John Fricke of Ithaca, Michigan in 1922. They farmed at Middleton, Michigan. Their youngest son Raymond has the home place. One son Marvin Fricke lives at Grafton, North Dakota. No. 2 **Lizzie Wiebe** daughter of Jacob P.T. and Elizabeth (Mooney) Wiebe married Jacob Bartel in 1924. They farmed in the Clearspring area until they retired.

No. 3 unknown.

No. 4 **Mary Giesbrecht**, daughter of William K. and Susanna (Toews) Giesbrecht, moved with her parents to the Whatshan Valley in 1912 and in 1916 to Swalwell, Alberta. In 1923 she married Henry P. Dueck. In 1945 Mary passed away and is buried at Linden Alberta. Their oldest son Gordon lives at Swanson, Saskatchewan.

No. 5 **Margaret de Veer** was the daughter of



Circa 1859. Franz Thiessen and Elisabeth Sawatzky with Franz their oldest son. This historic picture is one of the oldest Mennonite pictures from Russia extant today. Photo courtesy of Marj Hildebrandt, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Isaac and Anna (Toews) de Veer. They moved from Greenland to the Whatshan Valley in 1911. In 1917 they moved on to Acme, Alberta. In 1919 Margaret married Johann T. Esau. In the thirties they homesteaded the Peace River country. Their oldest son Edwin lives at Enderby, B.C. Their daughter Pauline is married to Mennio Penner and they live in Swan River.

No. 6 **Mary Krebs**.

Fourth Row:

No. 1 **Frank P. Wiebe** also a son of Peter H. Wiebe, lived in Steinbach after coming back from Needles B.C. In 1922 he married Annie Barkman. In 1942 he was ordained into the ministry at the Steinbach Church of God in Christ. He was an accountant most of his life.

No. 2 **Peter Krebs**, born June 21, 1903, Giroux, Manitoba. Died December 30, 1995, at Aberdeen, Washington. Peter and Susan, his second wife, had a cranberry bog 6 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Their father Hermann Krebs was born June 14, 1860, at Leiden, Holland and died in Steinbach, November 27, 1950. Their mother was Barbara Reichel born January 2, 1870, at Karlsdorf, Hungary. Died July 26, 1913, Needles, B.C.

No. 3 **Jake Penner**, younger brother of Pete

Penner was born in 1898. He farmed with his father and stayed on farming till he passed away October 24, 1961.

No. 4 **Henry Reimer**, brother to Margaret and Susie Reimer, married Susie Toews July 9, 1922. He farmed all his life in the Linden area. He passed away February 23, 1954.

No. 5 unknown

No. 6 **Isaac Reimer**, son of Isaac and Anna (Penner) Reimer was born 1896 in Greenland, Manitoba. He must have been at Needles only a short while. In 1926 he married Annie Toews. They homesteaded at Crooked Creek, Alberta.

No. 7 **Peter Toews**

No. 8 **Neil Giesbrecht**, son of William K. Giesbrecht, brother to Mary Giesbrecht. He married Helen I. Toews March 11, 1923 and passed away May 9, 1954 in B.C.

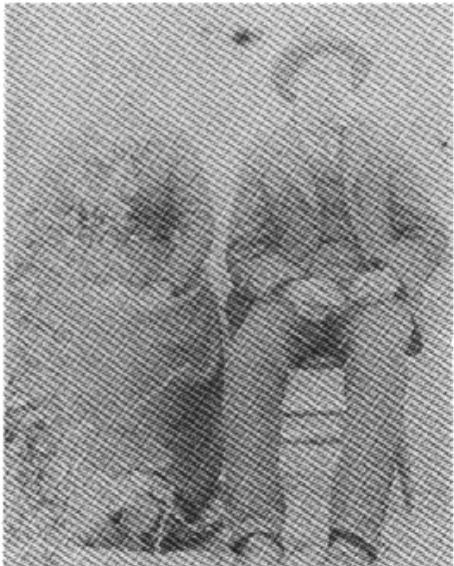
No. 9 **William P. Wiebe** was the son of Peter H. Wiebe and brother to Agnes, Neil and Frank. He married Mary Friesen October 2, 1924. He and his brother-in-law Bill Sawatsky built the first home made plane in Western Canada. He had a sign painting business.

No. 10 unknown

Photo caption for "Wiebe Mountain" by Ted Wiebe



Jakob H. Thiessen (1861-1953) with his second wife, Liese Fuchs. Photo courtesy of Helene Friesen, Genealogy of Peter P. and Agatha Friesen, page 8.



Agatha Thiessen and Peter P. Friesen on their wedding day. Photo courtesy of Helene Friesen, Genealogy of Peter P. and Agatha Friesen, page 25.

Franz Thiessen and his bride made their home in the village of Schöntal, in the Bergthal Colony. In August of the year 1873, the Bergthal delegates returned from their survey trip to North America. A wave of excitement went through the colony and that first Sunday the church was packed as the two men reported that Manitoba was making 160 acres of free land available to every adult. They also had a written statement giving complete exemption from the military. This was a great concern to the families living in the Bergthal Colony.

Franz had wondered about the outcome of this visit to North America. He and his two young sons, Franz and Jacob, were busy threshing when the news came that Peters and Wiebe had returned from their six-month journey. They took the time to hitch a buggy to drive the three or four kilometers to the Oberschultze. Franz

had to know what the verdict would be. He liked what he heard and told his wife and family they, too, would be leaving Russia.

In 1875 Franz 41 and Elizabeth 49 Thiessen emigrated to Manitoba, together with their four children, Franz, 15, Jacob, 13, Maria, 11, and Heinrich 3. One daughter, Elizabeth died in Russia in 1868 at 15 months. The children looked forward to the trip as an adventure, riding the train and then sailing the ocean. They sailed on the SS Samatian No. 28 with 509 Mennonites from the Chortitz and Bergthal Colonies on board.

The ship sailed along the St. Lawrence Seaway to the harbour in Quebec City arriving on July 6, 1875. Their arrival at the confluence of the Red and Rat Rivers caused quite a stir among those who had arrived a year earlier. The immigration sheds were still being used for settlers who arrived. These simple buildings gave shelter from wind and sun and partly from the rain. Fortunately for them, the settlers that had arrived the previous year were able to assist them in getting established in their own homes before the harsh winter months.

[According to the "Brotschuld Registers" of the Bergthal/Chortitzer Gemeinde, the Franz Thiessen family settled in the village of Reichenbach-Vollwerk, presently known as Mitchell, Manitoba.] The East Reserve was getting to be very crowded and by 1878 many settlers were ready to move on. As many others did, Franz walked to the West Reserve and chose a quarter section of land in the Schoenau district, near what is now Altona. Upon his return, he loaded up his belongings and moved his family to their new home near the American border [where they are listed in the 1881 census].

Their first shelter was built of sod, the same as they had done when starting out on the East Reserve. In 1895 Elizabeth passed away at the age of 72. Franz was lonely, in spite of having his children and grandchildren near him. Looking back, it had been a wise decision to move to Canada over 20 years ago. He lived only three more years after the passing of his wife. He died October 3, 1901, just before his 68th birthday.

Franz and Elizabeth had five children, Franz (1859-1939), Jacob (1861-1953), Maria (b. 1863), Elisabeth (1866-1868) and Heinrich (1872-1935). [Son Franz married Eva Dueck (1860-1918), daughter of Peter Dueck (BGB-B157). Their daughter Aganetha married Peter S. Rempel, son of Johann Rempel (1830-99), (see article elsewhere in this issue), and their daughter Margaretha Thiessen married Peter P. Wiebe, whose story is told in the family book *The Oak Tree*.]

[Jakob Thiessen (1861-1953) married Katharina Wiebe (1864-96), the daughter of Cornelius Wiebe (b. 1826) of Eigenfeld, whose son Heinrich (b. 1866) was the great-grandfather of poet Armin Wiebe; see story elsewhere in this issue. Jakob and Katharina Thiessen were the parents of Agatha Thiessen (1885-1978) who married Peter P. Friesen, so-called "Dr. Friesen" of Grunthal.]

[Jakob Thiessen (1861-1953) remained in the East Reserve. According to the family book by Helene Friesen he and his bride first settled in Neuenberg, where his daughter Agatha was born, and then lived in the Burwalde area, eventually residing again on 32-6-6E, just west of Eigenfeld, and southeast of modern-day Mitchell.]

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- The Bergthal Gemeinde Buch* ed. John Dyck; published by The Hanover Historical Society Inc. 1993.
- The Bergthal Colony* by William Schroeder
- The Genealogy of Peter P. and Agatha Friesen* compiled by Helene Friesen; 1978
- Manitoba Mennonite Memories*, p.68
- Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories*; The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc. 1990

Interviews: Grandfather of Marjorie Hildebrand, Steinbach, Manitoba, and Grandfather of Marvin Thiessen, Mitchell, Manitoba.

The Penners of Friedensfeld, Russia

Part One by Wendy Dueck, Box 139, Kleefeld, Manitoba, R0A 0V0

Johann Dueck 1801-66, Muntau.

In 1874 the village of Gruenfeld, later Kleefeld, was established by about fifteen families of the Kleine Gemeinde. Among them were four Dueck brothers, Johann, Jacob, Abraham, and Peter, sons of Johann Dueck (1801-66) from Muntau, Molotschna Colony, South Russia. They left two older siblings in Russia, Bernhard L. Dueck and Helena, Mrs. Jacob Penner. From Delbert Plett's *History and Events* (1982), we learn that these two families later joined the newly emerged Brüdergemeinde (Brethren). Their oldest sister, Anna, Mrs. Johann Loewen, also came to Canada in 1874, settling in Rosenhof, near Morris.

From the writings of Johan W. Dueck (1904),

"History and Events", we learn something of the lives of those left behind. Bernard had a dye-works and was relatively prosperous.

Jakob Penner (1829-ca. 1895).

Helena L. Dueck and Jacob Penner were wealthy estate owners in Friedensfeld, in the Borosenko area some 50 kilometres north of Nikopol and lived a very comfortable life. Then came the crash! It seems much money was owed and the rubel was greatly devaluated. This was all too much for Jacob and Helena, who lost everything and died within a few years of each other following this difficult time.

This article will follow the Jacob Penner family history. The records of Mennonite Ge-



The Peter D. Penner Family circa 1905

Back row left to right: Annie - Mrs. Abram B. Reimer; Abe Penner; Katherine - Mrs. Cornelius Penner; Peter U. Penner; Helen - Mrs. Dave Loewen, John U. Penner; front row: Jake Penner, Margaretha - Mary Margaret (seated) - Mrs. Ed Magilner, Louise - Mrs. Karl Schippers, Peter D. Penner. Photo courtesy of Wendy Dueck.

nealogy Inc., Winnipeg, Manitoba, indicate that the Jacob and Helena had ten children who reached adulthood and married. Their prospects in the 1890s in Russia were limited, so plans were made to come to Canada. Johann W. Dueck writes that "we friends in America collected and donated money and in this year--1903--have already helped three of the Penners' children to come here to America, namely: Johann D. Penners, B. Janzs' and H. Siemens." A number of the families first settled near Morris. I believe eventually all ten families made their way to Manitoba or Saskatchewan.

Who were they and what do we know of them? My information on some of the branches of this family is limited. The eldest daughter, whose given name is unknown, was married to John K. Epp (1841-1924). Their children included Baptist missionary Mary Epp.

Daughter Helena came next in the family. She was married to Benjamin Janz (1849-1916). They homesteaded in Main Centre, Saskatchewan. Their descendants include early Steinbach E.M.B. preacher, Rev. Benjamin P. Janz, and members of the well known "Janz Team" evangelists.

The eldest son was Peter D. Penner (1854-1925), married to Margaretha Unger (1858-1945). This is my Mennonite connection and

the family I will focus on in detail later in this article.

John D. Penner, second son, was married to Susie Lepp (b.1864). We understand that daughter Anne was a well-known piano accompanist in Mennonite circles from about 1920.

Daughter Anna was married to Bernard Friesen. One of their daughters married an Isaak Braun. The records also indicate that there was a third Penner son, named Jacob, but I have found no further information.

The last four surviving Penner children were daughters, whose names are unknown. Two of them married Neufeld brothers, one with the name Will. My family remembers a relative, Dr. William Neufeld, in Winnipeg, possibly a son. Two other Penner sisters married Siemens brothers, H. Siemens and Johann Siemens. Of these Neufelds and Siemens, I know nothing more.

Johann W. Dueck writes in his journal for July 28, 1910, that "[the] Heinrich Siemens of Winkler are visiting in our area. She is my cousin, an Elizabeth Penner": *Prairie Pioneer*: page 100. Johann W. Dueck also describes the death of Johann W. Siemens in the mental hospital in Selkirk, Manitoba, in April, 1910. Apparently he had bought two quarter sections of land and fallen deep in debt which caused him much grief. As a result he did not eat and was

mere skin and bones at the time of his death: *Prairie Pioneer*, page 76. This family had been helped over from Russia in 1905 by the four Loewen brothers of Rosenort and Johann W. Dueck who were all cousins of the Jakob Penner children.

Peter D. Penner and Margaretha Unger.

The rest of this article will focus on my family, Peter D. and Margaretha (Unger) Penner. Peter was the eldest son of estate owner Jacob Penner. He was a man who choose to follow his own path. He married Margaretha, daughter of Abraham Unger, the well known co-founder of the Brüdergemeinde congregation in Einlage, Chortitza Colony. From family stories we know that personal faith was important to Margaretha, but apparently was not so to her husband Peter.

They made their first home with the Penner family in Friedensfeld. Margaretha told her granddaughter, my mother, about a pleasant early married life. Russian servants did the work in the house. Margaretha cared for her babies and passed the time doing needlework. We can assume that Peter was involved in the business of the family estate. However, all of this changed. From the A.B. McKillop thesis. (University of Manitoba), we learn that Peter owned and operated a flour mill in Riga, Latvia, and



The Jake Penner family

Jake Penner (1880-1965), wife Rose, children Walter, Norman, Ruth and Roland (twins) and Alfred who passed away as a child. Photo courtesy of Wendy Dueck.

moved his family there. Why did he decide to leave his Mennonite community in South Russia? Did he invest before or after the economic crash that saw his father lose most of his property? We can only speculate.

By the turn of the century Peter's brothers and sister, living in south Russia with limited prospects, were making plans to immigrate to Canada. Why did Peter and Margaretha join them? Were things not going well at the mill? McKillop tells us that their eldest son, Jacob, now a young adult, was involved in revolutionary politics. Did this frighten his family? How I wish I could ask. The year 1904 saw the Peter D. Penner family also arrive in Canada with their nine children - Jacob, Katherine, Helen, Peter, John, Abraham, Annie, Louise and two year old Margaret Mary.

The Penners were no longer young and had never farmed themselves, so after spending a year in southern Manitoba, they choose to make their permanent home in Winnipeg. In his journal Johann W. Dueck refers to a number of visits with the Penners in Winnipeg which indicate that life was not always easy for them: *Prairie Pioneer*, pages 83, 95 and 106.

With a big family, they needed a large house to rent. They lived at various locations, eventually renting the house at 41 Lily Street, near the present location of the Manitoba Theatre Centre. There were few people of Mennonite background in the city, and the family began to rent rooms, eventually establishing a boarding house. Many rural people heard about the Penner home and spent a night. For at least fifteen years, with the help of their daughters, this was how the Penners supported themselves. A number of their daughters met future husbands who came to stay briefly at Lily Street. We can only imagine this was not an easy life for Margaretha, now cooking and cleaning for others.

In Winnipeg, Margaretha found a church

home at McDermot Ave. Baptist Church, known then as First German Baptist Church. Her father's early preaching in Einlage had been influenced by visiting German Baptists, so she had come full circle.

"Communist" Penner.

How did the Penner children fare in a new country? The oldest, Jacob (1890-1965) was the most well-known. Years later, he was an elected alderman on Winnipeg city council. As a young man, he attended a Russian teacher's college, so was literate in the Russian language. McKillop tells us that he followed this with two years as a land surveyor. Here he was exposed to the revolutionary activities of young intellectual emigres, who returned to the Ukraine to fight against Czarist Russia. In Riga he was involved in the Russian Social Democratic party, where he learned Marxist thinking. Apparently, by 1903, there was some concern for his life.

Jake taught a short while at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, when he first arrived in Canada. Once settled in Winnipeg, he worked as an accountant. In 1905, he was part of the formation of the Socialist Party of Canada. He was an active supporter of the Winnipeg General Strike in 1919, and by 1921 was a founding member of the Communist Party of Canada. He made at least one visit to the Soviet Union, following the Second World War, apparently returning somewhat disillusioned by what he saw.

Elected as a communist to city council in 1934, Jake served almost continuously until

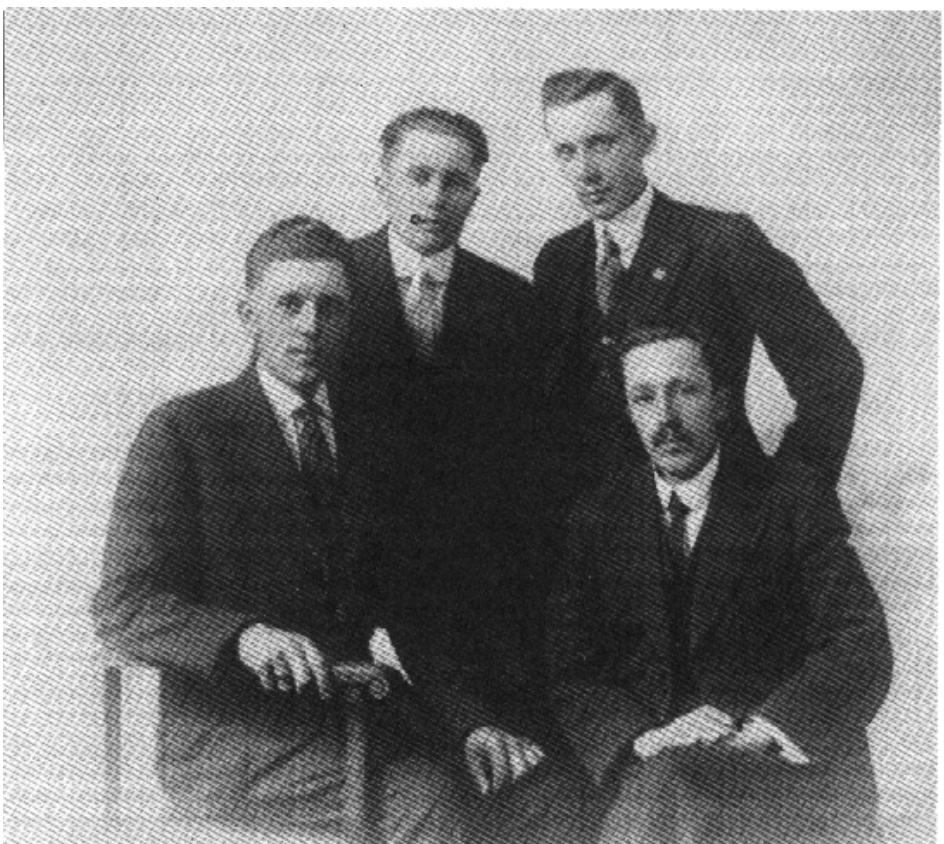
1961. His efforts during the depression with low rental housing and with many new Canadians in his north end constituency, won him national recognition. He married later in life to Rose who was of Jewish background. They had five children, between 1919 and 1926. One died as a child.

The oldest, Walter, was a manufacturer's agent and is retired in Toronto. Norman also lives in Toronto, where he is a writer and retired professor of Canadian studies at York University. He has a grandson who bears the name Jacob Penner. Roland will be remembered as a New Democratic Party member of the Manitoba legislature, who served as Provincial Attorney General during the 1970s and 80s. Roland is a Professor of Law at the University of Manitoba. His twin sister Ruth was a social worker and makes her home in Montreal.

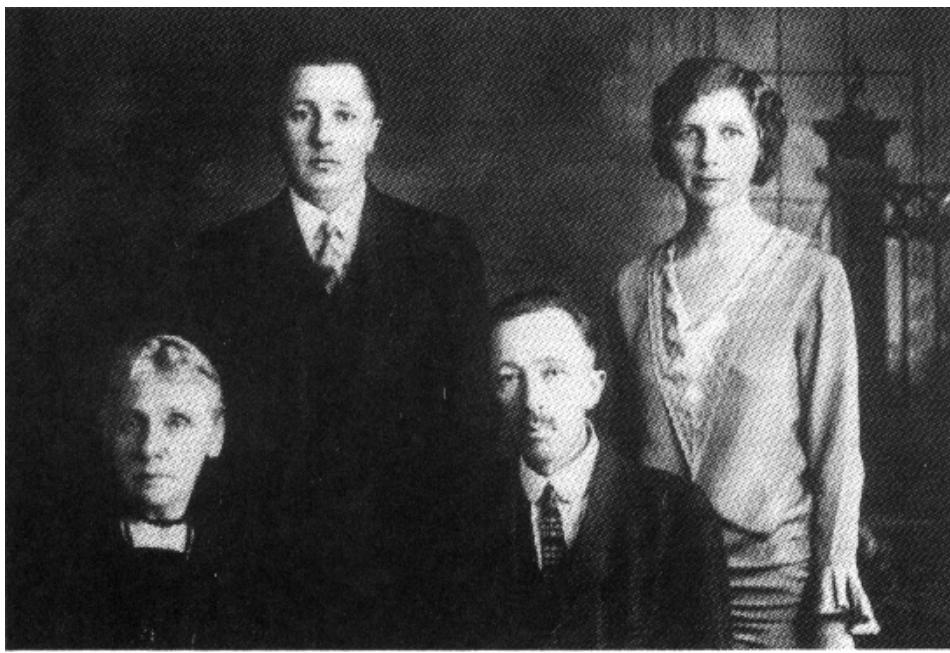
Peter D. Penner children.

The second child of Peter and Margaretha was daughter, Katherine (1882-ca.1910). She married Cornelius Penner, who farmed near Dalmany, Saskatchewan. One son, Henry, was born to them. Katherine died during a second childbirth, around 1915. Henry remained a bachelor and resided all his life in Dalmany.

The third child in the Penner family was Helen (1884-1974). She was married to David Loewen from Winkler. Seven children were born in this family between 1910 and 192: Arthur, Walter, Victor, Louis, Esther, Ted and Linda. Sometime in the 1920s the Loewen family moved to Chicago, looking for better opportu-



Four sons of Peter D. Penner: left to right: Abe (1892-ca.1970), Peter (1888-1952), John (1890-ca. 1970) and Jake (1880-1965). Photo courtesy of Wendy Dueck.



Mrs. Peter D. Penner with her three children who remained in Winnipeg: Peter standing, Jake seated and Louise (Mrs. Schifflers) standing. Photo courtesy of Wendy Dueck.

nities. After the War, the family began a poultry farm near Portland, Oregon.

Some years later, Arthur and Victor operated small businesses in Portland, one in upholstering, the other with picture framing. Walter worked many years for Sears-Roebuck. Louis was injured in the Second World War and received a disability pension and Ted sold real estate. Esther and Linda were homemakers.

Dave and Helen died in the early 1970s. Most of their descendants live in the Northwestern states or California today.

The second son of Peter and Margaretha was born in 1888, and was named Peter (1888-1952) after his father. He was a quiet man, whose life focused around church and music. He joined McDermot Ave. Baptist church, following the leading of his mother, where he met his future wife, Hattie Blank (1902-1983). Pete played the violin, and was involved in joint concerts between his church and nearby First Mennonite Church. He was employed in the furniture wholesale business and died in 1952. Pete and Hattie had two children, Joan, my mother, who did secretarial work in Winnipeg, and Lloyd, from Vancouver, a retired Air Canada flight attendant. At one time more than a dozen members of the extended Penner family held their church membership in the McDermot congregation, but today Joan is the only one.

The fifth child born to the Peter D. Penners was son John. He never married, living most of his adult life in Edmonton, where he worked as a cook and hotel employee. Like his brother, Jake, he was involved in the early days of the unionization of workers in that city. A fascinating episode in his life was his service with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Alberta Regiment, during the First World War. He was sent to Vladivostok, on the Russian Pacific coast. Perhaps he remembered some of the Russian

language. His brief account of his war service in an old diary, his soldier's pay book and some very faded pictures make an interesting memory of this forgotten man, who never returned to Winnipeg to visit his family.

His brother Abraham, known as Abe, was the tallest in the family and was also a bachelor. He followed the Loewens to Chicago, where he was with the Chicago city police force for many years. He retired and died in Phoenix, Arizona.

Annie born in 1894, was the second wife of Abe B. Reimer, originally from Steinbach. His parents were Klaas W. and Maria Brandt Reimer. They met at the Lily Street boarding house. Abe had an interesting career in real estate, first in Chicago and later in Los Angeles in the forties and fifties. He did well, and a visit to the Reimer home in the 1950s is remembered as a grand event. They returned to Manitoba to visit family here a number of times. Annie and Abe Reimer had three children, Elvira, a homemaker, born in 1923, Gilbert, born in 1925, also injured in the Pacific in the Second World War, and who did limited work, and Garnet, born in 1929 who was employed by I.B.M. The Reimers died in the mid-seventies some years after celebrating their Golden wedding. Their descendants live mainly in southern California.

The eighth child born to the Peter D. Penners was Louise. She was born in Riga in 1897 and lived all her adult life in or near Winnipeg. She told us stories of her childhood memories in Riga. She worked at Eaton's Department store and later married Karl Schifflers, a German/Canadian businessman. Her life included several trips to Germany in the 1930s. However, she was struck by crippling arthritis and her marriage failed. As a family we remember fondly our visits to her small suite at the Bethania Nursing Home near Middlechurch. She was the keeper of the family memorabilia, which was handed down to me. She had no children.

Margaret Mary was a baby when the Penner family moved to Canada. She helped her family in the boarding house and later worked at various jobs in Winnipeg. Single for many years, she met her American husband, Ed Magilner, in Chicago. Mary and Ed operated a taxi business and later retired in Phoenix, Arizona, where they are buried. They did not have a family.

Conclusion.

After twenty years in Canada, most of the family were established on their own and many had already moved from Winnipeg. By 1925, in failing health, Peter D. Penner died. Margaretha outlived her husband by twenty years, making her home with her son, Peter, or daughter, Louise. Pictures show her reading and enjoying her grandchildren. My mother remembers her as an interesting and enlightened woman, always particular about the way she dressed. She made several trips, including a visit to the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. When the first old age pension cheques were issued, about 1940, Margaretha was reluctant to accept this money. Her children reminded her to take it, saying, "Mother, you earned it!" She passed away in 1945, in her 87th year, while reading the Winnipeg Free Press.

About the author: Wendy Dueck is a substitute teacher and a homemaker. She and her husband Ron serve on the ministerial of the Kleefeld E.M.C. Church.

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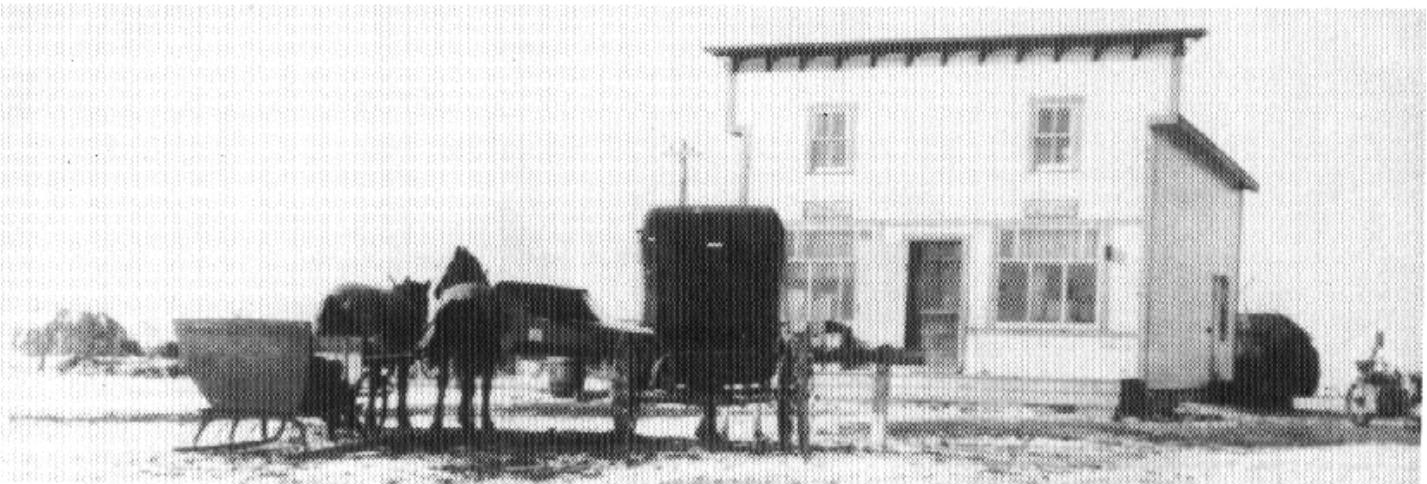
Mennonite Genealogy Inc. Records.

"Obituary" Jake Penner b. 1880.

Interviews with Joan Aarons.



Peter U. Penner (1888-1952) his wife Hattie (Blank) Penner (1902-1983), daughter Joan Penner (mother of author Wendy Dueck), and son Lloyd Penner. Photo courtesy of Wendy Dueck



The store in Chortitz, view to the north. This building was constructed by Peter F Wiebe (grandson of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900). It was owned and operated by his brother Henry F Wiebe from 1928 to 1941. Then it was purchased by Henry R Barkman. The store burned down in July, 1962, after which it was moved a mile south to the corner of P.T.H. 52 and P.R. 206. The store was the trading centre for a large area. Groceries, dry goods, hardware, appliances, tools, etc. were sold. People would also bring grain, firewood, garden produce, even livestock, for sale or trade. Note the hitching posts in front of the store on this picture. Photo courtesy of Ed Wiebe, Steinbach. Photo circa 1920.

Chortitz: 1920-48: A Photo Essay

by Rev. Cornie Rempel, Box 60, Randolph, Manitoba, R0A 1L0

Introduction.

Pioneer settlers established the village of Chortitz (now Randolph) in 1874. Aeltester

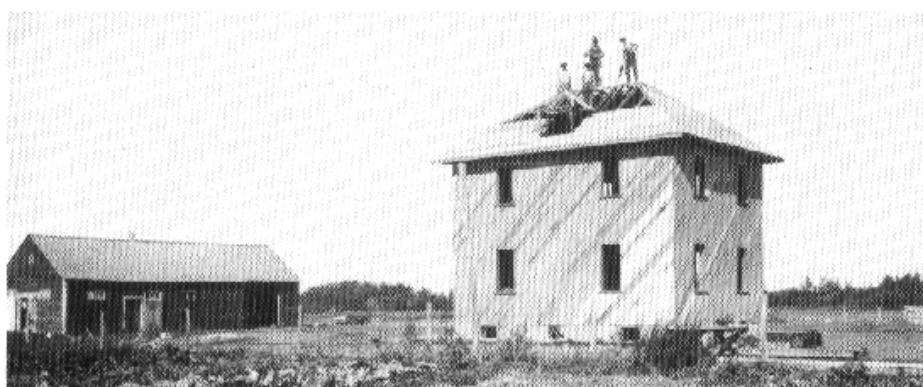
Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) arrived in 1875.

This is where the first worship house of the Bergthalers in Manitoba was built (Could it be

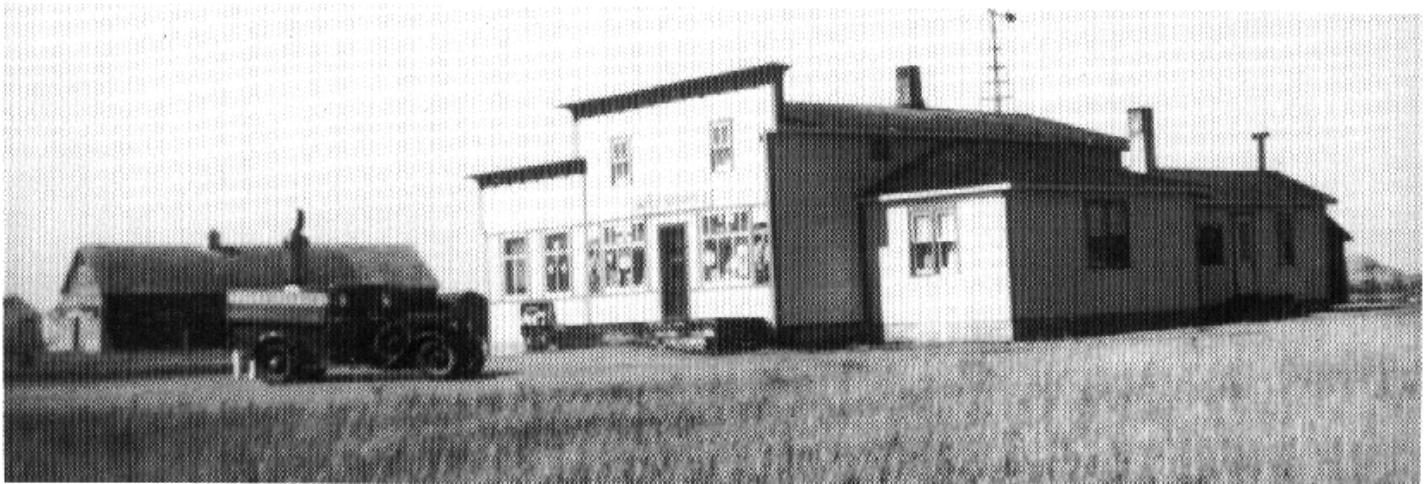
the first Mennonite church in Western Canada?) Tradition has it that the Bergthaler people on the East Reserve became known as the Chortitzer because of the location of the church.

In addition to the church, the village had a school, a store, a post office, and for a time, the office of the municipality of Hanover, a bank branch office, and a telephone exchange.

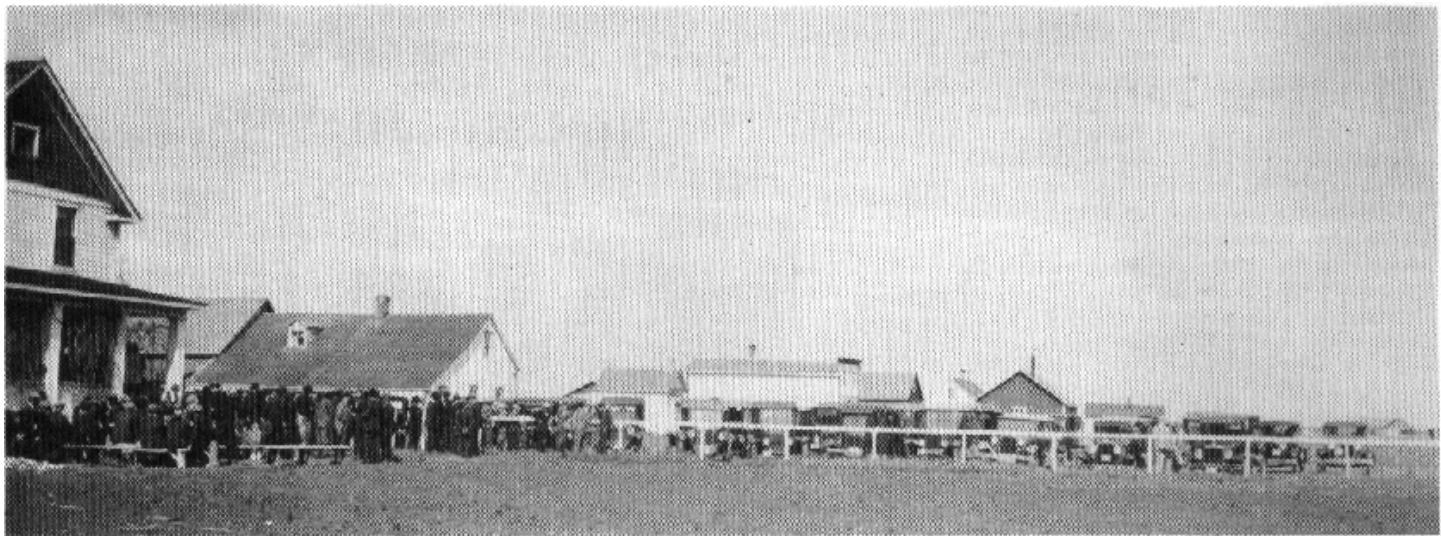
Cornelius P. Rempel (1896-1978) is the photographer of the photographs featured in this article except where otherwise indicated. This is a small sample from his personal collection. Cornelius P. Rempel was the son of Johann S. Rempel (1855-1928); see *Preservings*, no. 7, Dec. 1995, pages 30-31.



The Johann P. Rempel house under construction in the 1920s on NE5-7-5E. View to the northwest.



Henry F Wiebe enlarged the store. They added more floor space. They also constructed the living quarters. This picture shows the hitching post replaced by the hand operated gasoline pump. Note Johann S. Rempel barn to the rear left. The photo dates from the early 1940s. Photo courtesy of Ed Wiebe, son of Heinrich F Wiebe, Chortitz.



Picture of a gathering of people at the Johann S. Rempel farm. It could be the funeral of Mrs. Johann S. Rempel, nee Margaretha Peters, in 1934. View to the northeast from the village street. Several buildings could be mentioned, going from right to left: 1) The Rempel blacksmith shop to the far right; 2) The former Jakob D. Wiebe premises are visible between the blacksmith shop and the H. F. Wiebe store. The Jakob D. Wiebe farm (SE 10-7-5E), which was also the homestead of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), is presently owned by Rev. Cornie Rempel; 3) The store owned by H. F. Wiebe at the time; 4) The bank building which was a branch office of the National Bank, St. Pierre; 5) The original Johann S. Rempel housebarn which was replaced by the new house at the far left, built in 1919.

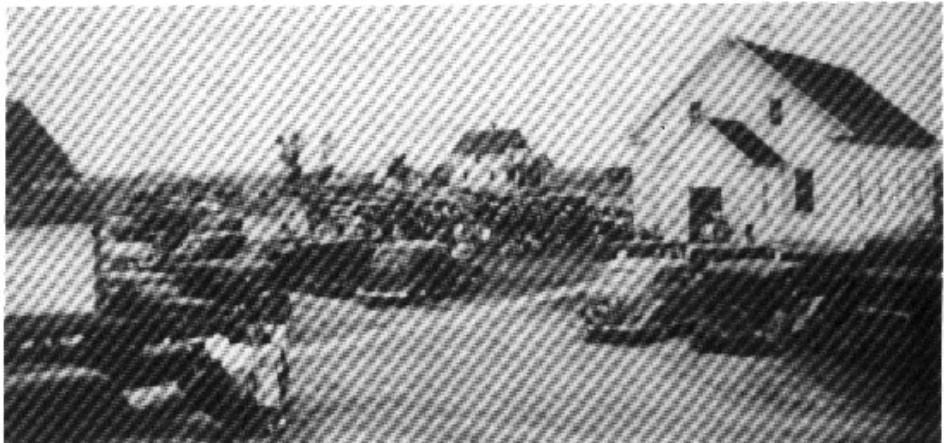


The Chortitz Church as seen from the south, that is to say, from the cemetery. It was built in 1897. There are some cars as well as buggies. The photo dates from the early 1930s. Next year, 1997, will be the centennial of the Chortitzer worship house at Randolph.

Announcement

Coming in the next issue:

Article by D. Plett about wealthy estate owner Jakob Penner (1829-ca.1895), Friedensfeld, Borosenko, and the story of how his father joined the Kleine Gemeinde and became a minister, through a chance meeting with Bishop Klaas Reimer (1770-1837) on October 10, 1814



The last farewell for Chortitzer emigrants leaving for Paraguay, 1948. View from the church to the northeast. Note Johann S. Rempel residence to the rear. Photo by John F. Rempel. Courtesy of Hanover 100 Years, page 18.

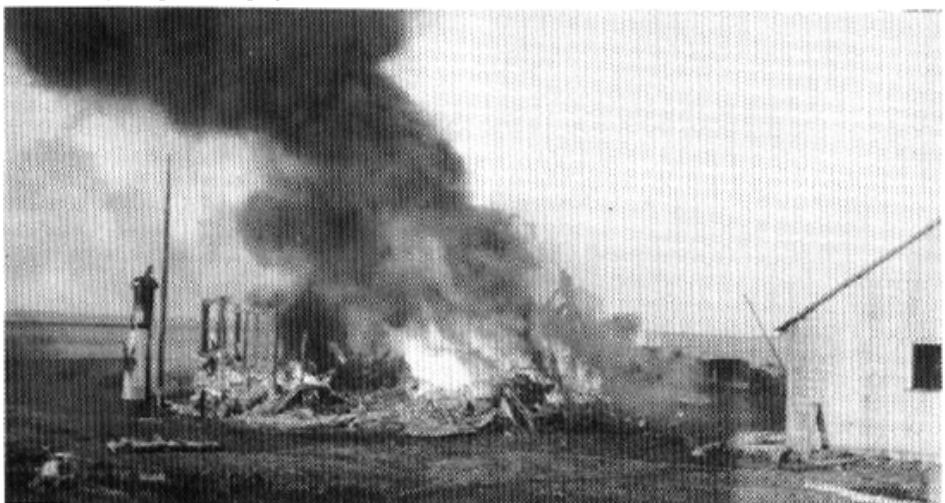
Researching Pioneer Families

by John Dyck, 48 Coral Crescent,
Winnipeg

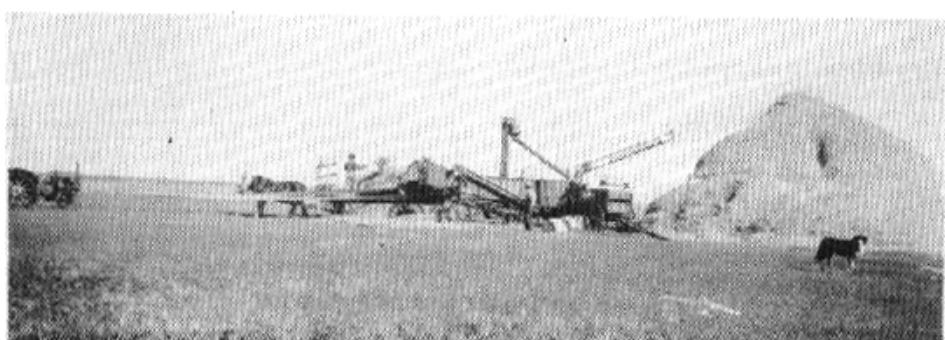
Researching family histories is one of the fastest growing hobbies in North America. Fortunately, much research material previously available only on old and faded documents has now been transcribed and published. In addition, some records from Russia previously thought to be lost or irretrievable, have been found and made available in archival collections.

For families who came to Canada in the 1870s

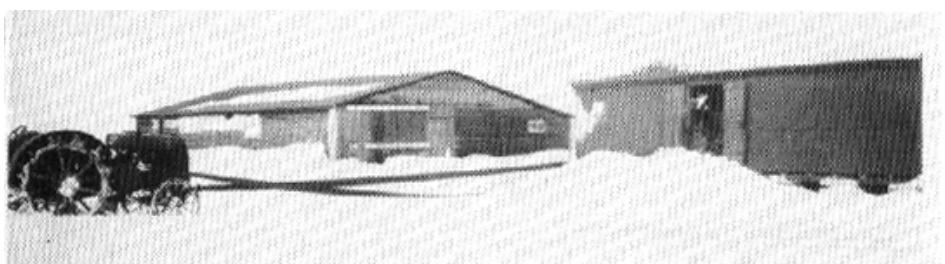
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The first building of "Neufeld Garage" burned down in 1939 or 1940. It was located at the northwest corner of NW 2-7-5E. Mr. Ed Neufeld owned the garage at the time. The garage did general repairs and welding--at first it was acetylene welding but soon also electric arc welding. After the fire the garage was relocated to its present site some 100 to 200 metres north.



The brothers Cornelius and Frank P. Rempel had a 1927 John Deere Model D tractor and a 1918 Case 22 by 36 threshing machine. Threshing meant hard work but it was usually an enjoyable time.



1927 John Deere Model D harnessed for crushing grain (barley and oats) for livestock feed on the Johann S. Rempel farm. View to the northeast.

a wealth of material is now available in book stores and libraries. It is possible to trace the lineage of most families from the 1870s migrations to their ancestors born in the early 1800s and sometimes even as far back as the late 1700s. A list of some helpful books is given at the end of this article.

1870s Immigrants

If you know names and birthdates of an 1870s immigration family, or have the names of both spouses, the index to heads of households in the passenger lists found on pages 411-435 of the *Berghal Gemeinde Buch* is a good place to start. This index cross references most families of that migration to church family records, passenger lists and 1881 census records. The latter two lists and the *Berghal Colony (Russia)* church family records are reproduced in that book.

Cross references to lists not in the book include 1) the Kleine Gemeinde in Russia, as published in Delbert Plett's *Histories and Events or Pioneers and Pilgrims*, 2) the East Reserve Chortitzer Church for which indexes are included in the *Berghal Gemeinde Buch*, 3) the West Reserve Reinlaender church as published in the *Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch* and 3) the unpublished Sommerfeld and 4) West Reserve Bergthaler church records. Cross references provide page and family numbers. A few families in the West Reserve who could not be identified in the church registers have been cross-referenced to the 1880 West Reserve Settlement Register, an internal Mennonite census.

Cross references to the 1881 federal census give an indication of the village where the family lived in 1881. Remember that village names inserted in the published census records were added for the book as an aid to researchers. The census taker sometimes returned to record a family who had not been home on a first visit and as a result families are not always in sequence according to place of residence.

Neighbours in a village, or families travelling on the same boat, are important clues to family relationships, so you may want to look at both those lists. Frequently extended families travelled together. Sometimes an older couple came on the same boat with one or more of their married children. Sometimes a young couple would come with either the husband's or wife's siblings.

East Reserve Chortitzer Records

When the people from the Berghal Colony arrived in Manitoba in the years 1874-1876 they settled, with very few exceptions, on the East Reserve. The Berghal Church Register 1874 was started shortly after their arrival here to identify all members of those families who made up the church here. After a number of families left Manitoba for Minnesota and North Dakota, and many others relocated within the East Reserve from their initial place of settlement, a new register was started in 1878. The Berghal/Chortitzer Church Register 1878 is the most comprehensive record of Berghal Colony families in Manitoba.

After a large number of these families had moved to the West Reserve from 1878-1882, it again became easier to start a new register than to update the old one and so the Chortitzer Church Register 1887 was started. These three registers can be extremely helpful in tracing families who were part of the Bergthaler immigration to Manitoba.

When new families arrived in Manitoba they applied for homesteads to which they received letters patent after having made certain improvements to the land. Sometimes homesteads, which had appeared to be desirable properties, were less appealing when spring floods inundated the land. The homesteader was then at liberty to cancel an application and make a new one for a different quarter section. The list of cancelled homestead applications can help identify where families moved within the East Reserve.

Use of this list is complicated somewhat by the duplication of names. For example, the 1878 Chortitzer Church Register lists no fewer than twelve Peter Wiebes, eleven Peter Friesens, eleven Jacob Hieberts and ten Jacob Doerksens. Sometimes the Homestead Records, which can be seen on microfilm at the Steinbach Bible College Li-

brary and at the Manitoba Public Archives in Winnipeg will provide clues to help identify the person you are seeking. At times that can only be done by a process of elimination.

Homestead records which include correspondence in reference to homestead entries can also be a valuable resource for family research. Sometimes these include copies of homestead applications which provide information about individual family members and about the improvements made to the homestead each year. These are available on microfilm at the Steinbach Bible College library.

Old journals and diaries also provide a great deal of information on families. These can run all the way from a few pages in an old family bible to large journals like the David Stoesz and Heinrich Friesen journals published in *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve*.

1920s Immigrants

For immigrants of the 1920s the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization Records at Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives are an excellent resource. Searches on these records are now much easier with the help of an alphabetical index to the names prepared by Rudy Regehr in 1995.

Comments.

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that prior to 1874 many 1870s immigrants and parents of the 1920s immigrants lived in the same villages in Russia. Many 1870s immigrants left siblings behind; probably all of them left cousins. This shared heritage means that sometimes research is made easier if those two streams work together on their common ancestral history.

Also for those who are researching the Chortitz Old Colony roots of Bergthal families be sure to record the Wirtschaft Number from the various village lists published by B. H. Unruh. The false mythology that the Bergthaler came from landless people is so all pervasive that that sometimes even experienced researchers overlook the details of Wirtschaft and other property owned by a particular ancestor. Such information is vital in developing a family history to its full potential. Emigration strategies are typically such that it was usu-

ally the well-to-do who had sufficient means and economic skills to establish their children in a new settlement such as Bergthal.

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In Russia

Benjamin Heinrich Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederrheinischen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18., und 19. Jahrhundert*, (Karlsruhe, Germany: B. H. Unruh, 1955), 432.
 Molotschna Census of 1835 with index at Steinbach Bible College Library, at Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and at Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. Names all residents of Molotschna villages with their ages in 1835; organized by family and by village.

Henry Schapansky, a series on "The Old Colony Russia: The First Settlers: 1788-1803," published in the quarterly *Mennonite Family History* since 1990, (articles include Neuenburg, Einlage, Neuendorf, Rosenthal, Schoenhorst, Chortitz, Kronsweide, Insel Chortitz)

Newspapers are a valuable source of information. *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 1878 to the present, had readers and correspondents among Russian Mennonites in Canada, USA, Russia. Is on microfilm at Steinbach Bible College, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies and Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Steinbach Post, 1915 to 1966, had readers and correspondents in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and Nebraska and a few in Russia. Is on microfilm at Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives.

Der Nordwesten, 1889 to the present, had readers and correspondents in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Oregon and a few in other USA points and a few in Russia. Is on microfilm at the Legislative Library.

Coming in the next issue: Part two of this article by John Dyck will deal more specifically with information available from various government sources and how and where to find it. The article will also include of checklist of information which must be included in any "basic" pioneer biography.

Brot Schult Registers

Compiled and edited by Irene Enns Kroeker, Steinbach, Manitoba

Twenty-seven booklets containing lists of names, dates and amounts of money were lying tucked between thick registers at the Chortitzer Waisenamt. As I picked them up, I noted that the debts incurred by the people in the Bergthaler villages in the East Reserve began in August of 1874. Many of the first entries read "the journey from Hamburg to Quebec" followed by the amount of debt incurred during their travels. Details such as individual items bought were included, along with yearly interest charges, and repayment amounts. It became clear, that these were the records of the *Brotschuld* or *Brotkasse* (breadbanks).

E.K. Francis explains the concept of breadbanks used by the Bergthaler Mennonites at the time of immigration. Substantial sums of

money had been made available to the immigrants in the form of loans granted either by the Government or the Ontario Mennonites. All the money, including the Government loan, had been raised collectively, guaranteed collectively, and doled out by the Ontario Aid Committee and managed by Shantz through the "bread banks" in the Manitoba colonies. The Kleine Gemeinde and the Bergthaler received \$23,638.52. This was remitted by Shantz in five instalments between March, 1874 and June, 1876. In addition to this money, the Kleine Gemeinde and the Bergthal group received \$35,329.83 as their share in the government loan (total loan \$100,000).

It is interesting to note that the money received through Shantz was referred to as

Brotschuld, or debt for bread. Apparently, provisions were usually bought collectively through the bread bank. In addition, small loans were made to individuals. These had to be repaid in eight years with 6% interest per annum. Another 1% was charged on every loan as a contribution for the poor.

The booklets I had stumbled across were the records of each individual's use of the money made available through them in order to help them through these first few years. The following is an alphabetized list of names of the individuals that appeared in each village in these booklets. For further information or details, please contact me, Irene Kroeker at 326-2777.

Brot Schult Registers

Tanenau

- 1 Buekert, Abraham
- 2 Derksen, Johann (Witt)
- 3 Dyk, Abraham (Derk)
- 4 Dyk, Derk (Alte)
- 5 Harder, Derk
- 6 Jansen, Johann
- 7 Lemke, Gerhard
- 8 Neufeld, Carl
- 9 Nickel, Heinrich
- 10 Penner, Peter (Jacob)
- 11 Schmidt, Abraham
- 12 Schmit, Heinrich
- 13 Schmit, Peter (Alte)
- 14 Wall, Jacob
- 15 Wiebe, Heinrich

Grosweide

- 1 Abrams, Heinrich
- 2 Abrams, Peter (Alte)
- 3 Abrams, Peter (Junge)
- 4 Dyk, Jacob
- 5 Giesbrecht, Peter (Jacob)
- 6 Hamm, Jacob
- 7 Kaethler, Heinrich
- 8 Loewen, Heinrich (Alte)
- 9 Loewen, Heinrich (Junge)
- 10 Schelenberg, Johann
- 11 Spenst, Jacob
- 12 Stobe, David

Schoenhorst

- 1 Buekert, Witwe
- 2 Funk, Johann (Alte)
- 3 Harder, Jacob
- 4 Kauenhowen, Abraham (Junge)
- Bernd)
- 5 Penner, Johann (Joh)
- 6 Rempel, Jacob (Alte)
- 7 Schroeder, Johann (Junge)
- 8 Wall, Heinrich
- 9 Winter, Heinrich

Neuenburch

- 1 Bergen, Isaak
- 2 Dyk, David (D)
- 3 Dyk, Peter (Peter)
- 4 Froese, Abraham (Burwalde)
- 5 Gerbrand, Johann (Joh)
- 6 Reimer, Cornelius
- 7 Reimer, Johann (Alt)
- 8 Reimer, Johann (Joh)
- 9 Reimer, Peter (Joh)
- 10 Thiesen, Abraham
- 11 Thiesen, Heinrich (H)
- 12 Thiesen, Heinrich (Junge Heinrich)
- 13 Thiessen, Franz (H)

Gnadenfeld

- 1 Braun, Jacob
- 2 Ensz, Franz (Kleine)
- 3 Ensz, Franz (Peter)
- 4 Ensz, Frannnnnz (Grosser)
- 5 Funk, Abraham (Peter)
- 6 Funk, Jacob (Peter)
- 7 Funk, Johann (Peter)
- 8 Funk, Peter (Peter)
- 9 Giesbrecht, Peter
- 10 Harder, Jacob (Peter)

11 Harder, Peter (Jacob)

- 12 Hiebert, Peter (Junge)
- 13 Hiebert, Peter (Alte Schullehrer)
- 14 Hiebert, Wilhelm
- 15 Klassen, Jacob (Jacob)
- 16 Klassen, Jacob (Witt)
- 17 Krahn, Johann
- 18 Peters, Jacob (Herman)
- 19 Priesz, Jacob

Gnadenfeld (Book #2)

- 1 Braun, Jacob (Alte)
- 2 Funk, Abram (P.)
- 3 Funk, Jacob (P.)
- 4 Funk, Johann (P.)
- 5 Funk, Peter (P.)
- 6 Giesbrecht, Peter (Eh)
- 7 Harder, Jacob (Peter)
- 8 Hiebert, Wilhelm
- 9 Peters, Jacob (Herman)
- 10 Priesz, Jacob

Schoensee

- 1 Buhr, Peter (Cor)
- 2 Dyck, Frans (Eh)
- 3 Dyk, Johann (H)
- 4 Falk, David (Witt)
- 5 Falk, Peter (D)
- 6 Friesen, Abraham (Ab)
- 7 Friesen, Johann (Ab)
- 8 Klassen, Martin
- 9 Krahn, Peter (Gorg)
- 10 Loepcke, Peter
- 11 Peters, Johann (Witt)
- 12 Peters, Peter (Joh)
- 13 Wiebe, Cornelius (Alte)
- 14 Wiebe, Cornelius (Junge)
- 15 Wiebe, Heinrich (B)
- 16 Wiebe, Jacob (B)
- 17 Wiens, Jacob (Joh)
- 18 Wiens, Peter (Jacob)
- 19 Winter, Johann

Schoensee 1878

- 1 Buhr, Peter (C)
- 2 Dyck, Gerhard (Ab)
- 3 Dyk, Franz (Ehrs)
- 4 Dyk, Johann (H)
- 5 Falk, David (Witt)
- 6 Falk, Peter (D)
- 7 Friesen, Abraham (Ab)
- 8 Friesen, Johann (Ab)
- 9 Hiebert, Cornelius (Alte)
- 10 Klassen, Martin
- 11 Loepcke, Peter
- 12 Peters, Johann (Witt)
- 13 Peters, Klas
- 14 Peters, Peter (Joh)
- 15 Wiebe, Cornelius (Junge)
- 16 Wiebe, Heinrich (B)
- 17 Wiebe, Jacob (B)
- 18 Wiens, Jacob (Joh)
- 19 Wiens, Peter (Jacob)
- 20 Winter, Johann

Schoenwiese

- 1 Buhr, Jacob
- 2 Dyck, Abraham (Fastsche)
- 3 Ensz, Franz (Kleine)
- 4 Ensz, Frannnnnz (Grosser)
- 5 Funk, Abraham (Peter)
- 6 Funk, Jacob (Peter)
- 7 Funk, Johann (Peter)
- 8 Funk, Peter (Peter)
- 9 Giesbrecht, Peter
- 10 Harder, Jacob (Peter)

3 Dyck, Abraham (Peter)

- 4 Friesen, Johann (Ab)
- 5 Funk, Johann (Joh)
- 6 Funk, Peter (Joh)
- 7 Gerzen, Abraham
- 8 Gerzen, Cornelius
- 9 Gerzen, Heinrich (Witt)
- 10 Kehler, Jacob (alte)
- 11 Kehler, Martin
- 12 Rempel, Abraham
- 13 Wiens, Jacob (Joh)

Kronsgart

- 1 Dyk, Cornelius (Corn)
- 2 Falk, Jacob (D)
- 3 Friesen, Abrah (Martin)
- 4 Harder, Johann (Jacob)
- 5 Harder, Peter (Franz)
- 6 Heinrichs, Heinrich
- 7 Heinrichs, Jacob
- 8 Hiebert, Jacob (H)
- 9 Sawatske, Franz (C)
- 10 Sawatske, Heinrich (Peter)
- 11 Sawatske, Peter (C)
- 12 Striemer, Heinrich
- 13 Striemer, Karl
- 14 Wiebe, Cornelius (Ab)
- 15 Wiens, Johann (H)

Kronsgart (1878)

- 1 Dyck, Kornelius (Cor)
- 2 Falk, Jacob (D)
- 3 Friesen, Abram (Martin)
- 4 Harder, Johann (Jacob)
- 5 Harder, Peter (Franz)
- 6 Heinrichs, Heinrich
- 7 Heinrichs, Jacob
- 8 Hiebert (alte H)
- 9 Sawatzky, Franz (Cor)
- 10 Sawatzky, Heinrich (Peter)
- 11 Sawatzky, Peter (Cor)
- 12 Striemer, Heinrich (H)
- 13 Striemer, Karl
- 14 Wiebe, Cornelius
- 15 Wiens, Johann (H)

Friedrichsthal u. Kronsgart (1876)

- 1 Abrams, Johann (Alte)
- 2 Dyk, Jacob (Grosser)
- 3 Dyk, Peter (Hein)
- 4 Falk, Jacob (David)
- 5 Friesen, Abraham
- 6 Friesen, Heinrich (Ab)
- 7 Friesen, Jacob (Ab)
- 8 Gerbrand, Johann (Peter)
- 9 Gerbrand, Peter (Peter)
- 10 Harder, Jacob (Peter, alte)
- 11 Harder, Johann (Peter)
- 12 Harder, Peter
- 13 Harder, Peter (Franz)
- 14 Harder, Peter (Joh)
- 15 Heinrichs, Heinrich
- 16 Heinrichs, Jacob
- 17 Rempel, Johann (G)
- 18 Sawatske, (Cornel)(Kronsgart)
- 19 Sawatske, Heinrich (Peter)
- 20 Sawatske, Jacob (Franz)
- 21 Sawatske, Jacob (Peter)

Fransz

22 Sawatske, Johann (Joh)

- 23 Sawatske, Peter (Cor)
- 24 Striemer, Carl (H)
- 25 Striemer, Heinrich (Hein)
- 26 Wiensz, Abraham (Hein)
- 27 Wiensz, Johann (Hein)

Ebenfeld

- 1 Hiebert, Abram (Junge)
- 2 Hiebert, Johann (Alte)
- 3 Klassen, Johann
- 4 Klassen, Jacob
- 5 Wiebe, Peter (Heinrich)
- 6 Bergen, Heinrich
- 7 Bergen, Peter
- 8 Penner, Abraham (Hans)
- 9 Friesen, Martin (Abrah)
- 10 Klassen, Heinrich
- 11 Neufeld, Johann (C)
- 12 Wiebe, Derk (Heinrich)
- 13 Falk, Peter (Alte H)
- 14 Unger, Peter (Alte)
- 15 Neufeld, Peter (Jacob)
- 16 Neueld, Jacob (Peter)
- 17 Neufeld, Jacob (Alte Jacob)
- 18 Derksen, Isaak
- 19 Wiebe, Peter (Grosse)
- 20 Wiebe, Kornelius (Alt. Ab.)
- 21 Wiebe, Kornelius (Junge Kor)
- 22 Wiebe, Abraham (Alte)
- 23 Hiebert, Jacob (Ab. Schullerer)

Schoennenberg

- 1 Derksen, Abraham
- 2 Derksen, Aron
- 3 Derksen, Heinrich
- 4 Derksen, Jacob (Alte D)
- 5 Derksen, Jacob (Jacob)
- 6 Derksen, Jacob (junge Jacob)
- 7 Dyk, Jacob (Grosser D)
- 8 Dyk, Johann (Ab)
- 9 Harder, Peter (Philip)
- 10 Heinrichs, Peter
- 11 Heppner, Anton
- 12 Kauenhowen, Abraham (B)
- 13 Kauenhowen, Bernd (Witt)
- 14 Kauenhowen, Jacob (B)(under same name of Jacob Dyk)
- 15 Kehler, Abraham
- 16 Kehler, Johan (Philip)
- 17 Klassen, Derk (Derk)
- 18 Penner, Bernd (Joh)
- 19 Thiesen, Aron
- 20 Thiesen, Jacob (Alt)
- 21 Thiesen, Jacob (Peter)
- 22 Thiesen, Peter (Alt)

Rosenthal

- 1 Derksen, Jacob (Kleine Jacob)
- 2 Dyk, Heinrich (Peter)
- 3 Friesen, Peter (Alt)
- 4 Giesbrecht, Jacob (Ab)
- 5 Giesbrecht, Wilhelm (Ab)
- 6 Giesbrecht, Wilhelm (Alt)
- 7 Harder, Abraham (Peter)
- 8 Harder, Philip
- 9 Harder, Wilhelm (Jacob)
- 10 Heppner, Peter
- 11 Hiebert, Peter (Ab)

Preservings Part Two

12 Klassen, Gerhard	28 Unrau, Wilhelm	16 Krahn, George (Witt)	20 Schroeder, Gerhard
13 Klippenstein, Johann		17 Neufeld, Jacob (Ab)	21 Wieler, Jacob
14 Laempke, Jacob		18 Penner, Peter (D)	22 Wiebe, Gerhard (Aeltester)
15 Lemke, Abraham		19 Reimer, Jacob (D)	
16 Lemke, Martin		20 Schroeder, Cornelius	
17 Neufeld, Bernd		21 Schroeder, Franz	
18 Neufeld, Johann		22 Schroeder, Siemon (Witt)	
19 Penner, Abraham (Joh)		23 Schulz, Aron	
20 Reimer, Johann (Alt)		24 Wiebe, Bernd (Peter)	
21 Reimer, Peter (Jacob)		25 Wiebe, Heinrich (M)	
22 Schulz, David			
23 Striemer, Heinrich (Alt)			
24 Suderman, Ab. (Witt)(under same name as Johann Reimer)			
25 Wiebe, Wilhelm			
26 Wiens, Johann (Suderman)			
Gruenthal		Blumengart	
1 Dyk, Gerhard (H)		1 Banman, Cornelius	
2 Dyk, Heinrich (H)		2 Banman, Fransz (Alt)	
3 Harder, Cornelius (Franz)		3 Banman, Julius	
4 Kauenhowen, Abraham		4 Dyk, Johann (Witt Joh)	
5 Klassen, Abraham (Ab)		5 Dyk, Peter (Derk)	
6 Klassen, Johann (Ab)		6 Ensz, Abraham (Peter)	
7 Neufeld, Johann (Philip)		7 Ensz, Peter (Peter)	
8 Peters, Johan (Joh)		8 Fast, Gerhard (Witt)	
9 Rempel, Johann (Peter)		9 Fast, Jacob	
10 Sawatske, Peter (F)		10 Gerbrand, Derk	
11 Wiens, Jacob (Jacob)		11 Gerbrand Johann (Alt)	
Schoenfeld		12 Gerbrand, Peter (Joh)	
1 Dyk, Heinrich (Alt)		13 Giesbrecht, Fransz (Jacob)	
2 Enbrecht, David (Witt)		14 Kehler, Gerhard (Alt)	
3 Groening, Cornelius		15 Kehler, Peter (Witt)	
4 Groening, Heinrich		16 Rempel, Jacob (Peter)	
5 Groening, Jacob		17 Wiensz, Johann (Joh; Friedrichsthal)	
6 Groening, Peter			
7 Harder, Abraham (Franz)			
8 Hiebert, Abrah (Alt)			
9 Hiebert, Jacob (H)			
10 Hiebert, Johann (Peter)			
11 Reimer, Derk (Junge)			
12 Siemens, Cornelius			
Rosengart			
1 Dyk, Abraham (Aron)			
2 Dyk, Aron (Aron)			
3 Dyk, Cornelius (Aron)			
4 Dyk, Cornelius (Isaak)			
5 Dyk, Heinrich (Derk)			
6 Dyk, Isaak (Isaak)			
7 Dyk, Isaak (Witt)			
8 Dyk, Jacob (Derk)			
9 Dyk, Jacob (Derk)			
10 Falk, Heinrich (Alt Heinrich)			
11 Friesen, Heinrich (H)			
12 Funk, Johann (Joh)			
13 Funk, Peter (Joh)			
14 Gerbrand, Jacob (Witt)			
15 Guenter, Cornelius			
16 Guenter, Johann			
17 Guenter, Peter			
18 Hamm, Abraham			
19 Harder, Frans (Witt)			
20 Harder, Peter (Philip)			
21 Neufeld, Bernd (Jacob)			
22 Neufeld, Bernd (Jacob)			
23 Penner, Jacob (Joh)			
24 Penner, Peter (Johann)(Burwalde)			
25 Peters, Johann (Ab)			
26 Unrau, Abraham			
27 Unrau, Johan			
Hochfeld			
1 Buekert, Isaak			
2 Derksen, Johann (Abrah)			
3 Dyk, Peter (Cor)			
4 Ewert, Johann			
5 Falk, David (Alt)			
6 Falk, Heinrich (David)			
7 Friesen, Abraham			
8 Friesen, Heinrich			
9 Heppner, Johann			
10 Hiebert, David (David)			
11 Hiebert, David (Witt)			
12 Hiebert, Peter (David)			
13 Kehler, Gerhard (M)			
14 Kehler, Johann (Alt)			
15 Kehler, Johann (Junge)			
16 Krause, Peter (Witt)			
17 Neufeld, Jacob (Abrah)			
18 Penner, Peter (David)			
19 Schroeder, Cornelius (Siemon)			
20 Schroeder, Frans			
21 Schroeder, Siemon (Witt)			
22 Schulz, Aron			
23 Wiebe, Bernd (Peter)			
24 Wiebe, Heinrich (Witt)			
25 Wiebe, Peter (Peter)			
Hochfeld (Book #2)			
1 Bueckert, Isaak			
2 Dyck, Peter (C)			
3 Ewert, Johann			
4 Falk, David (Alte)			
5 Falk, Heinrich (D)			
6 Friesen, Abram			
7 Friesen, Heinrich			
8 Heppner, Johann			
9 Hiebert, David			
10 Hiebert, Jacob			
11 Hiebert, Johann			
12 Hiebert, Peter (Peter)			
13 Kehler, Gerhard (Michael)			
14 Kehler, Johann (Alte)			
15 Kehler, Johann (J)			
Reinfeld			
1 Braun, Jacob			
2 Braun, Johann			
3 Braun, Peter			
4 Funk, Peter			
5 Rempel, Jacob			
6 Unger, Peter			
7 Wiens, Peter			
Reinfeld (1878)			
1 Braun, Johann			
2 Braun, Peter			
3 Ensz, Fransz (Kleine)			
4 Funk, Jacob (Klei)			
5 Funk, Peter			
6 Hiebert, Peter (Peter)			
7 Martens, Jacob (Alte)			
8 Rempel, Peter (Ab)			
9 Unrau, Jacob			
10 Wiens, Peter			
Chortitz			
1 Defehr, David			
2 Penner, Jakob (H)			
3 Wiebe, Peter			
4 Vogt, Wilhelm			
5 Esau, Peter			
6 Redekop, Peter			
7 Braun, Isaak			
8 Klassen, Abraham			
9 Quering, Johann			
10 Nekel, Johan			
11 Gerzen, Heinrich			
12 Neufeld, Cornelius (nach Kroenthal ueber gesiedelt)			
13 Klippenstein, Johann (alt)			
14 Klippenstein, Heinrich			
15 Wiebe, Johann			
16 Braun, Jacob (Witt)			
17 Kauenhowen, Jacob (Witt)			
18 Wiebe, Heinrich			
19 Penner, Heinrich (Alt)			
Berghal			
(Book #2)			
1 Derksen, Johan			
2 Dueck, Bernd (Witt)			
3 Funk, Jacob			
4 Funk, Johan (Grosse)			
5 Hamm, Peter			
6 Harder, Heinrich			
7 Hiebert, Heinrich (Jacob)			
8 Hiebert, Peter			
9 Kehler, Gerhard			
10 Kehler, Jacob			
11 Klassen, Derk (Alt)			
12 Klippenstein, Bernd			
13 Klippenstein, Peter			
15 Krahn, Wilhelm			
16 Rempel, Peter			
17 Rempel, Peter			
18 Sawatske, Cornelius			
19 Stoes, David			
20 Toews, Peter (Derk)			
21 Unger, Jacob			
22 Unger, Johann			
23 Wall, Gerhard			
24 Wiebe, Peter (Alt)			
Berghal			
(Book #2)			
1 Derksen, Johan			
2 Dueck, Bernd (Witt)			
3 Funk, Jacob			
4 Funk, Johan (Grosse)			
5 Hamm, Peter			
6 Harder, Heinrich			
7 Hiebert, Heinrich (Jacob)			
8 Hiebert, Peter			
9 Kehler, Gerhard			
10 Kehler, Jacob			
11 Klassen, Derk (Alt)			
12 Klippenstein, Bernd			
13 Klippenstein, Peter			
14 Krahn, Wilhelm			
15 Rempel, Peter			
16 Stoesz, David			
17 Toews, Peter			
18 Wiebe, Peter (Alt)			

Preservings Part Two

Kronthal

- 1 Braun, Abraham
- 2 Dyk, Cornelius (B)
- 3 Dyk, Heinrich (Joh)
- 4 Dyk, Isaak (B)
- 5 Friesen, Bernd (B)
- 6 Friesen, Heinrich (von Junger)
- 7 Friesen, Peter (B)
- 8 Gerbrand, Klas
- 9 Giesbrecht, Heinrich (Jacob)
- 10 Giesbrecht, Isaak (Jacob)
- 11 Giesbrecht, Jacob
- 12 Giesbrecht, Wilhelm (Jacob)
- 13 Hilbrand, Isaak
- 14 Jansen, Franz (Alt)
- 15 Jansen, Franz (Junge)
- 16 Neufeld, Abraham
- 17 Penner, Peter (Joh)
- 18 Reimer, Abraham (Joh)
- 19 Thiesen, Heinrich (J.)
- 20 Wiebe, Gerhard (C)
- 21 Wiebe, Martin

Kronthal (1878)*

- 1 Blatz, Daniel (Alte)
 - 2 Blatz, Daniel (J.)
 - 3 Dyck, Gerhard
 - 4 Dyck, Johann (Alte)
 - 5 Falk, Heinrich (Grossmutter)
 - 6 Funk, Johann (G)
 - 7 Giesbrecht, Johann
 - 8 Harder, Fransz
 - 9 Klasen, Johann (Mart)
 - 10 Reimer, Abram (D)
 - 11 Sawatzky, Toms
 - 12 Schroeder, Abram
 - 13 Schroeder, Aron
 - 14 Schroeder, Johann (Alte)
 - 15 Stoesz, Cornelius
 - 16 Stoesz, Jacob
- [* The title page of this booklet states "Kronthal 1878" but the list of villagers appears to refer to Blumstein 1876.

Blumstein (1876)

- 1 Blatz, Daniel (Alte)
- 2 Blatz, Daniel (Daniel)
- 3 Dyk, Gerhard
- 4 Dyk, Johann (Alte)
- 5 Dyk, Johann (Witt)
- 6 Falk, Heinrich (Grosse Vater)
- 7 Funk, Johann (Peter)
- 8 Giesbrecht, Peter
- 9 Harder, Fransz (Alte)
- 10 Harder, Franz (Junge)
- 11 Klassen, Johann (Martin)
- 12 Reimer, Abraham (Derk)
- 13 Reimer, Derk (Alte)
- 14 Reimer, Johann
- 15 Sawatske, Toms
- 16 Schroeder, Abraham
- 17 Schroeder, Aron
- 18 Schroeder, Gerhard
- 19 Schroeder, Johann (Alte)
- 20 Stoesz, Jacob
- 21 Stoesz, Cornelius

Reichenbach

- 1 Bergen, Abraham
- 2 Funk, Jacob
- 3 Harder, Jacob (Jacob)
- 4 Hiebert, Heinrich (Alt)

5 Martens, Cornelius

- 6 Martens, Jacob (Alte)
- 7 Martens, Jacob (Alte)
- 8 Martens, Jacob (Junge)
- 9 Martens, Peter
- 10 Peters, Cornelius
- 11 Peters, Jacob (Jacob)
- 12 Peters, Peter (C)
- 13 Sawatske, Franz
- 14 Unrau, Jacob

Reichenbach (Book #2)

- 1 Bergen, Abram (C)
- 2 Bergen, Isaac (Blumengart)
- 3 Dyck, David (alte)
- 4 Dyck, David (David)
- 5 Dyck, Peter (Peter)
- 6 Froesen, Abram
- 7 Gerbrand, Johann (Joh)
- 8 Kroeker, Kornelius (Alte)
- 9 Kroeker, Kornelius (Junge)
- 10 Reimer, Cornelius (J.)
- 11 Reimer, Johann (Geh)
- 12 Reimer, Peter (Joh)
- 13 Thiesen, Abram
- 14 Thiesen, Franz
- 15 Thiesen, Heinrich (Alte)
- 16 Thiesen, Heinrich (J.)

Pastwa

- 1 Berg, Jacob (Jung)
- 2 Berg, Johann
- 3 Buhr, Peter
- 4 Dyk, Derk
- 5 Dyk, Franz (B)
- 6 Dyk, Peter (B)
- 7 Friesen, Ab (Witt)
- 8 Friesen, Abraham (Jacob)
- 9 Friesen, Abraham (letb)
- 10 Friesen, Aron
- 11 Friesen, Jacob (Peter)
- 12 Friesen, Johann
- 13 Friesen, Peter (Peter)
- 14 Funk, Jacob (Johann)
- 15 Gerbrand, Peter (Alt)
- 16 Groening, Abraham
- 17 Hiebert, Jacob (Ab)
- 18 Hiebert, Susana
- 19 Kroeker, Cornelius (Alt)
- 20 Kroeker, Cornelius (Jung)
- 21 Loepcke, Abraham (Joh)
- 22 Loepcke, Heinrich
- 23 Loepcke, Jacob (Alt Joh)
- 24 Loepcke, Johann (Alt. Joh)
- 25 Loepcke, Johann (Jacob)
- 26 Loepcke, Johann (Junge Joh)
- 27 Loepcke, Abraham (Jacob)
- 28 Loewen, Peter
- 29 Neufeld, Johann (Frau)
- 30 Peters, Isaak
- 31 Toews, Jacob (Derk)
- 32 Toews, Johann (Derk)
- 33 Unger, Peter (Junge)

Bergfeld (1876)

- 1 Derksen, Salomon
- 2 Falk, David (David)
- 3 Harder, Heinrich
- 4 Hiebert, Cornelius
- 5 Klassen, Peter (Alte)
- 6 Klassen, Peter (Alte)
- 7 Loewen, Jacob

8 Loewen, Johan (Junger)

- 9 Loewen, Johann (Alte)
- 10 Martens, Gerhard
- 11 Sawatske, Heinrich (C)
- 12 Sawatske, Jacob (Franz)
- 13 Sawatske, Johann
- 14 Toews, Cornelius
- 15 Toews, Julius
- 16 Toews, Peter (Alte)
- 17 Toews, Peter, (Peter)
- 18 Unger, Peter (Witt)
- 19 Wiebe, Jacob (Joh)
- 20 Wiebe, Johann
- 21 Wieler, Johann

Bergfeld (Book #2)

- 1 Derksen, Salmon
- 2 Falk, David (D)
- 3 Harder, Heinrich
- 4 Hiebert, Cornelius
- 5 Klassen, Peter (Alte)
- 6 Loewen, Jacob
- 7 Martens, Gerhard
- 8 Sawatske, Heinrich (C)
- 9 Sawatske, Jacob (Franz)
- 10 Sawatske, Johann (C)
- 11 Toews, Cornelius
- 12 Toews, Julius
- 13 Toews, Peter (P)
- 14 Unger, Peter (Witt)
- 15 Wiebe, Jacob (Joh)
- 16 Wiebe, Johann
- 17 Wieler, Johann

Sitzlose

- 1 Bergen, Cornelius (Joh (bei Pembinau)
- 2 Buekert, Abraham
- 3 Defehr, Jacob (Alte) (jetzt wohnhaft Pembinau)
- 4 Derksen, Salomon (Witt) (bei Pembinau)
- 5 Driedger, Johann (bei Dufrin)
- 6 Dyk, Gerhard
- 7 Dyk, Jacob (David (Philip Harder Schwiegersohn)
- 8 Dyk, Klas (in Berlin)
- 9 Falk, Abraham
- 10 Friesen, Abrah (Jacob) (in Minesota)
- 11 Funk, Jacob (Joh; Alt)
- 12 Harder, Peter Jacob (frueher aus Schoenfeld)
- 13 Harder, Peter (Alt Peter)
- 14 Hiebert, Abraham (Heinrich)
- 15 Hiebert, Abraham (Junge)
- 16 Hiebert, Katharina (Tochte von Alte Ab. H.)
- 17 Klassen, David
- 18 Klassen, Martin (ist nach Kansas)
- 19 Klassen, Peter (Ab)
- 20 Neufeld, Peter (Philip)
- 21 Penner, Erdman
- 22 Penner, Peter (Schiegersohn Heinrich Wiens)
- 23 Toews, Kornelius (Gruenfeld)
- 24 Unger, Jacob (Peter)
- 25 Wiebe, Heinrich (Ehr) zu kirchen angelegenheit)
- 26 Wiens, Heinrich (Alt; wohnt in Dufrin)

Sitzlosen (1880)

- 1 Arons, Jacob (bei Morheit)
- 2 Bergen, Cornelius (Pembinau)
- 3 Buekert, Abram
- 4 Defehr, Jacob
- 5 Dueck, Jacob (David)
- 6 Dueck, Klas (bei ?W lin)
- 7 Falk, Abram (H)
- 8 Friesen, Cornelius (bei Mohrheit)
- 9 Funk, Jacob
- 10 Funk, Jacob (Jacob)
- 11 Funk, Johan (Jacob)
- 12 Harder, Peter (Alt P.)
- 13 Hiebert, Abram (Heinrich)
- 14 Klassen, David (D)
- 15 Klassen, Peter (Abram)
- 16 Neufeld, Peter (Philip)
- 17 Striemer, Karl (Alte, bei Morheit)
- 18 Toews, Cornelius (Gruenfeld)
- 19 Unger, Jacob (Peter)

Unidentified Village #1 [1878]

- 1 Derksen, Johann (Witt)
- 2 Dyck, Abraham (Derk)
- 3 Dyk, Derk (Alt)
- 4 Enns, Franz (Grosser)
- 5 Harder, Derk
- 6 Harder, Peter (Jacob)
- 7 Janzen, Johann
- 8 Klassen, Jacob
- 9 Klassen, Jacob (Pet?)
- 10 Kleinegemeinde Schuld
- 11 Krahn, Johann
- 12 Neufeld, Carl
- 13 Nikkel, Heinrich
- 14 Penner, Erdmann
- 15 Penner, Peter (Jacob)
- 16 Schmitt, Heinrich
- 17 Wall, Jacob

Unidentified Village #2 [1878]

- 1 Giesbrecht, Abram (A)
- 2 Harder, Jacob (Jacob)
- 3 Hiebert, Heinrich (Alte)
- 4 Hiebert, Peter (Alte)
- 5 Martens, Kornelius
- 6 Martens, Peter
- 7 Peters, Peter (C)
- 8 Sawatzky, Franz (F)

Unidentified Village #3 [1878]

- 1 Braun, Abram
- 2 Dyck, Heinrich (W.)
- 3 Dyck, Isaac (B)
- 4 Dyck, Kornelius (B)
- 5 Friesen, Bernd (B)
- 6 Friesen, Gerhard
- 7 Friesen, Heinrich (Vorsaenger)
- 8 Friesen, Peter (B)
- 9 Gerbrandt, Klas (j.)
- 10 Giesbrecht, Heinrich (j.)
- 11 Giesbrecht, Isaac
- 12 Giesbrecht, Wilhelm (j.)
- 13 Giesbrecht, Wilhelm (j.)
- 14 Hildebrand, Isaac
- 15 Janzen, Franz (alte)
- 16 Janzen, Franz (Junge)
- 17 Neufeld, Abram (Witt)
- 18 Penner, Peter (Joh)
- 19 Reimer, Abram (jn.)
- 20 Wiebe, Gerard (C)
- 21 Wiebe, Martin

The following names are recorded on the first four pages of the unidentified villages:

Schoenthal

Cornelius Friesen
David Doerksen
Abraham Doerksen
Peter Hildebrand

Rosengard

Abraham [?] Thiessen
_____ Duek

Tannenau

Peter Penner
Johann _____
Abraham Duek
K. Neufeld
H. Wiebe

Bergthal

Peter Rempel
Jakob Klassen

Peter Hamm

Johann Doerksen

Reinfeld

Jakob Rempel
Johann Braun
Jakob Rempel

Steinreich

Abraham Hiebert
_____ Wiens

Osterwick

Johann Penner
_____ Penner
Isaac Funk

Schoenfeld

Cornelius Siemens
H. Groening
Abraham Hiebert

Johann Hiebert
Abraham Hiebert

Ebenfeld

Johann Klassen
Doerk Wiebe
Martin Friesen
Peter Wiebe

Blumengarten

Peter Duek
Kornelius Baumann

Schoenberg

Jakob Thiessen
Peter Heinrichs
Joh. Kehler

Friedrichthal

Peter Duek
Joh. Abrahams
Jak. Szwatzky
Heinrich Friesen

Rosenthal

_____ Neufeld
Jakob Giesbrecht

Peter Hoeppner

Philippe Harder
Hein Striemer

Gortitz

Joh. Wiebe
Gerh Wiebe
Isaac Braun
Heinrich Kloepenstein
Isaac Braun

Pastwa

Abr. Friesen
Franz Duck
Jakob Hiebert [?]
Aaron Friesen
Abr. leppky
Peter Friesen
Jakob Friesen
Cornelius Kroeker (Junge)
Cornelius Kroeker (Alte)

Johann Schroeder 1807-84

by William Schroeder, 434 Sutton Ave., Winnipeg, R2G 0T3

Johann Schroeder was born on Monday, November 11, 1807 in the village of Rosenthal, Chortitza Colony, Russia. His parents were Johann Schroeder (1763-?) and Katharina Kasdorf (1774-?). He had three older sisters Anna, Katharina and Magdalena. His parents who were members of the Flemish Mennonite Church had arrived in Chortitza in 1789 with the first group of Mennonite immigrants from the Vistula Delta.

His father came from the village of Kerbswalde a few kilometers south of Elbing (Note 1), and his mother's family came from the village of Stolzenberg near Danzig. In Prussia Johann's father had made his living as a carpenter. In Chortitza he supplemented his farm income by doing carpentry work. Johann's mother died when he was about two or three years old. A few months later his father married Katharina Olfert (1787-?) who had worked as a maid in the home of Johann's uncle Isaac Kasdorf in Rosenthal. Katharina was born in Petershagen, Prussia and had emigrated to Chortitza with her father Abraham Olfert in 1803.

The Schroeder family lived in Rosenthal till about 1810 when they moved ten kilometers southwest to the village of Kronsthal where they owned a full Wirtschaft. According to the census taken in 1814 their property consisted of the Wirtschaft (175 acres), fifteen head of cattle, fifty-three sheep, two pigs, one plough, one harrow, two wagons and two spinning wheels (Note 2). The family was comparatively very well-off.

Six children were added to their family during those years Sara, Margaretha, Abram, Sara (2nd), Anna (2nd) and Peter. The family also experienced two deaths. Johann's oldest sister Anna died before 1814 and his half sister Sara

died between 1814 and 1824. Peter the youngest child in the family was born in Kronsthal on May 21, 1828 (Note 3). In 1822 his older sister Katharina (1802-56) married Gerhard Wall (1802-71), and in 1826 Magdalena (1806-69) married Peter Funk (1805-66). Johann's father like the other men in the village had to take his turn in serving as night watchman. One night he was stabbed to death as he attempted to settle a dispute in the village beer parlour (Note 4).

During the spring of 1829 Johann was baptized by Elder Jacob Dyck I, and on Wednesday, September 18, 1829 he married Justina Schellenberg (1811-36), [daughter of Gerhard Schellenberg, a wealthy Kleine Gemeinde Vollwirt in Blumstein, Molotschna Colony.] Johann was twenty-one and Justina was nineteen. Since the Molotschna was about eighty kilometers south of Chortitza it is assumed that Johann, who like his father was a carpenter, met Justina while he was doing construction work there. [According to Dr. Glenn Penner, Johann was working for Gerhard Schellenberg at the time, and met and fell in love with his daughter.] As was customary the young couple established their own home in Rosenthal, possibly on the farmstead of his parents.

Their first child was born in 1830 and named Katharina after both of their mothers. The second child born on 1832 was named Aaron after Justina's father. Johann's first marriage came to tragic end after a mere six and one half years. Twins were born on February 2, 1836. The two babies died shortly after birth and their mother died about three months later on May 7, 1836. Justina's death left Johann alone with two small children aged five and four.

Five months later he married Maria Schellenberg (1818-59), Justina's younger sister. Johann and Maria had eight children. Four

of them died as infants, and a daughter Maria died in 1842 at age five years. Four of the children reached adulthood, Johann (1841-1919), Abram (1845-1907), Gerhard (1848-1910) and Peter (1852-1920).

By 1836 the Chortitza Colony was overpopulated and arrangements had been made to start a daughter colony a few kilometers north of Mariupol. Johann Schroeder and two of his sisters Katharina and Gerhard Wall and Magdalena (Helena) and Peter Funk were among the one hundred and forty families that volunteered to move to the new colony of Bergthal. Johann packed five wagon loads of goods and with his wife and two small children, started off on the four day journey to his new home which was located about two hundred kilometers southeast of Chortitza. Johann's homestead was on the south side of the main street in the village of Bergthal. Johann was only thirty years old, and already the owner of a full Wirtschaft, [something which less than one-third of Mennonite families in the Molotschna and the Old Colony could aspire to.]

The years in Bergthal were the most exciting in Johann's life. He was a colourful character and possessed great physical strength. Besides being a farmer and a carpenter he was by popular demand, or by self-appointment, or by any combination of the two, the chief of police, fire chief and at times social worker and marriage counsellor. When disputes or fights would erupt among the village youth it sometimes sufficed for someone to shout, "Ohm Johann kemmt" (Uncle Johann is coming).

Apparently one of Johann's sisters in Bergthal had problems with her husband. He would frequently get drunk and become abusive to his wife and children. On one occasion she came to her brother and complained of her

husband's cruelty. During his ensuing visit to his sister's home Johann assured her husband how much he loved him. The visit climaxed in Johann giving his brother-in-law a crushing embrace and the latter gasping for air, promised never to be rude to his wife again.

Johann supplemented his income from the one hundred and seventy-five acre farm by doing carpentry work. On one occasion he and his crew of men were building for a Nogaier rancher who lived on the shore of the Sea of Azov. Johann noticed that the owner had a pack of vicious dogs which were kept in a corral with a high fence around it during the day, and employed during the night to guard the sheep ranch. His enjoyment of the bizarre caused him to bet with the owner that his crew could induce the dogs to vacate the corral. At a designated moment Schroeder and crew, enveloped in Russian fur coats and caps, came crawling into the corral. At a signal from Johann, the men, howling viciously, pounced on the dogs. The terrified dogs fled from the enclosure. Schroeder won his bet, leaving the owner with the almost impossible task of renewing his dogs' courage.

For security reasons Mennonite farmers in Bergthal preferred to haul their grain to Mariupol in caravans of ten or more wagons. On one occasion Johann Schroeder and Philip Kehler were in such a group. When they arrived at the grain market, the grain-buyer for the local militia offered Mr. Kehler a satisfactory price for his load of oats. However after Mr. Kehler unloaded his oats the officer refused to pay the price he had quoted earlier. Mr. Kehler returned to the market, and told his friends what had happened.

Johann and Mr. Kehler went back to the army barracks. A soldier tried to prevent them from entering the office. Johann pushed him aside and stamped into the office where he confronted the officer. The officer tried to strike Johann with his cane, but Johann grabbed the cane and broke it in pieces, then he grabbed the officer and threw him out the door. The enraged officer now ordered his soldiers to arrest Johann and intended to lay charges against him.

In the meantime Mr. Kehler had hurried back to the market and asked the Bergthal Oberschultz, Jacob Peters, who fortunately was present during these grain selling transactions, to come to their aid. When the alarmed Oberschultz arrived at the scene he asked; "Johann, what are you doing?" to which Johann answered "Ech schauf hia." (I'm working here.) The chain and badge which Peters carried, and now displayed, indicated his legal authority. (The Oberschultz and his assistants formed the court of second instance in civil cases.) Thanks to the Oberschultz, peace and order was restored. Kehler received a fair price for his oats, and Schroeder did not have to spend the night in jail.

Johann Jr. (1841-1919) loved horses and became a skilled rider. When he was in his teens he had trained his horse to jump over a fence. On one occasion as Johann was practising his equestrian skills his younger brothers, who had been hiding behind the tile fence, frightened the horse as it was about to jump. The horse tripped and fell. The rider sustained a permanent leg injury as a result of the prank.

Johann's daughter Katharina married Jacob Rempel in 1851, and in 1852 his first grandchild Katharina was born. Johann's second wife, Maria Schellenberg, died on Friday, February 27, 1859 at the age of forty-five, after twenty-three years of marriage. Once more Johann was left with five boys Aaron 27, Johann 19, Abram 13, Gerhard 11, and Peter 7.

Consequently he hired a housekeeper, Maria Dyck. During the spring of that same year Johann decided that it was time for him to remarry. Planning to go to one of the neighbouring

villages to try his luck, Johann polished his boots and his buggy and groomed his horses. As he was about to leave he reminded his maid to take good care of the house while he was gone. At this point Maria Dyck, who had been sitting near the door and watching her boss in his preparations for the great event, asked him, "Is it necessary to drive that far when you can have what you want right in your own home? Couldn't I have that good fortune?"

Then she quoted some lines from Goethes' poetry to Johann.



Maria Dyck (1840-1900) and her two youngest sons David (1868-1900) and Heinrich (1878-1968). David Schroeder is the grandfather of Rodney Siemens the former agricultural representative in Hanover. Maria Dyck (1840-1900) married for the second time to Jakob Knelsen (1834-1919) in 1887. She is buried in the Schanzenfeld cemetery south of Winkler, Manitoba.

Willst du immer weiter schweifen?
Sieh, das Gute liegt so nah.
Lerne nur das Glück ergreifen,
Denn das Glück ist immer da.

Will you roam to distant regions?
Look, the good lies close, my dear.
Only learn to grasp your fortune,
For your fortune's always near
(Translated by Harry Loewen)

Johann was taken completely by surprise and could only say, "Do you really mean that?" Later he told his friends, "At that point my eyes were opened."

Maria Dyck was only nineteen years old. She had been born in Bergthal of February 12, 1840. She had to leave her home at an early age because her mother, Anna Peters, had married four times and her house was too full with ten children and eighteen step-children. When Johann Schroeder decided that it was time for him to remarry she faced a dilemma. She could go back to her overcrowded home, or find another place of employment. If an opportunity to marry a younger man should occur he would almost certainly be an Anwohner. Having weighed all her options she decided to marry Johann Schroeder even though he was a fifty-three year old grandfather.

However, there was a problem. Maria was not yet baptized, and in that church dominated community it was not possible to get married unless both parties were baptized members of the church. Maria was baptized by Elder Jacob Braun on Monday, June 1, 1859. Their engagement was announced on Sunday, June 14, 1859 and they were married on Sunday, June 28, 1859 in Bergthal. Johann and Maria Dyck had six children one died as an infant and five reached adulthood, Jacob (1865-1945), Diedrich (1865-1945), Maria (1866-1933), David (1868-1900) and Heinrich (1878-1968). These children were always referred to as, "The maid's children."

One Sunday afternoon Johann went off visiting and left his young wife at home with the children. In his absence Philip Kehler and Jacob Braun stopped in at the Schroeder residence. Although both men were inebriated they had very different personalities. Kehler found himself a comfortable chair and promptly fell asleep, but Braun made a real nuisance of himself. First he attempted mischief with the boys but when he discovered that they were too fast for him he directed his attention to Maria, Johann's wife. He began to chase her about the house from one room to the other.

Finally Maria told Peter her eight year old step-son, to run and tell his father. Johann came home in a hurry. He was outraged that anything like this should happen in his home. He entered his house through the back dutch door of which the lower half was closed and the upper half opened. When Johann saw what was going on he roared, "Braun," and lifted the drunk off his feet and threw him out of the house over the closed half-door. As the unfortunate fellow landed on the ground some of the buttons of his suit ripped off, but he attempted to hold things together as best he could with his hands as he raced home.

Johann Cornies as well as the Russian school inspector had from time to time suggested that Bergthal needed better qualified teachers. After much resistance to this idea the ministers consented to sent three of their young men to high school and then to the Teacher Training Institute in Chortitza. The plan was that after five or six years of training they would serve as village school teachers in Bergthal. Two of the three students chosen for this project were Peter Stoesz (1839-1908) (Note Five) from Schoenfeld and Peter Schroeder (1852-1920) from Bergthal.

When Johann Schroeder took his son Peter to Chortitza in the fall of 1868 his parting words were, "Now son, you are not strong enough to be a farmer, perhaps it will be easier for you to earn your bread as a teacher." However, when these young men had completed their training they were not given teaching positions in Bergthal. Elder Gerhard Wiebe had observed the three young men very closely and finally came to the conclusion that education had made them too proud. Peter Schroeder accepted a teaching position in the village of Hochfeld in the Schoenfeld Colony and later taught in Rosenthal where he met Maria Klassen his future wife.

In the meantime Peter's family, along with the entire Bergthal Colony were planning to emigrate to America. Maria's father made Peter promise that he would not take his daughter there. Peter Schroeder went back to Bergthal in August 1874, to take his final farewell from his family and friends. His father had contracted a contagious eye disease, trachoma, which in time left him completely blind. During this visit Peter developed a lasting interest in one of his nephews, Gerhard's alert four year old son Johann (1870-1956). Later Peter and Johann maintained a regular correspondence up to World War I (Note 6). Peter went back to Rosenthal and married Maria Klassen in 1875. He continued to teach for several years and then went into farming. He died during the typhoid epidemic after the Russian Revolution. He is buried in Rosenthal. His wife and children emigrated to Canada during the 1920s (Note 7).

The emigration from Bergthal to Manitoba commenced in the spring of 1874. Johann Schroeder, his wife Maria and their four children left Bergthal on Thursday, September 12, 1874. The twenty-three families in this group were accompanied up to Hamburg, Germany by Elder Gerhard Wiebe and Bernhard Klippenstein. The group experienced a terrible storm when they crossed the North Sea between Hamburg and Hull, England. On October 8th, their ship the Nova Scotian was ready in the Liverpool harbour for the ocean voyage.

On this particular occasion the small boat, which was to take them from shore to their ship, was equipped with a dangerous makeshift ramp. In order to get on to the small boat the passengers were obligated to walk up a ramp consisting of two planks. There were no hand-railings, and Johann, who by this time was sixty-seven years old and nearly blind, depended on his eleven year old son Jacob to guide him safely onto the boat (Note 8). Unfortunately Jacob was tired and as he admitted many years later, more interested in other activities in that busy harbour. Consequently Johann slipped from the ramp,

and pulling his son with him, plunged into the ocean. Jacob could swim and almost immediately caught hold of an iron rod that protruded from the wharf. Johann fortunately had been carrying a bag of roasted bread which now served as a buoy. When Jacob looked around for his father he saw the bag of dried bread. He grabbed for the bag and held on to it until some sailors came to their rescue. When the bag of bread was pulled out of the water, a sodden, and shaken old man was still desperately clinging onto his unorthodox life preserver (Note 9).

The Nova Scotian docked at Port Louise, Quebec on October 22, 1874. Because it was too late in the season to travel on to Manitoba, these twenty-three families stayed with Mennonite families who lived in the area of Markham and Berlin, Ontario. In the spring of 1875, they continued their journey to the East Reserve in Manitoba. Johann's family settled in the village of Tannenau which was located about seven miles west and half a mile north of Steinbach. While in the East Reserve, Heinrich, Johann's nineteenth and youngest child was born.

Johann Schroeder's married children, Katharina, Aaron, Johann Jr., Abram and Gerhard emigrated to Manitoba also. Gerhard Schroeder (1848-1910) came to Canada with the first contingent from Bergthal in 1874 and settled in the village of Eigenhof on the East Reserve. He was a competent man and knew how to succeed as a pioneer. Gerhard was one of the first settlers in the reserve to acquire a windmill. He supervised the construction of the church in Chortitz. His village was chosen as the reception site for the visit of Lot Dufferin the Governor General of Canada in 1877. He served as the Reeve of the Hanover Municipality from 1901 to 1907; see Cathy Barkman, "The Schroeder Bible," *Preservings*, No. 7, December 1995, pages 48-50.

Before long the Mennonite immigrants discovered that the East Reserve could not support all the people that had settled there. Since the West Reserve contained unoccupied land many of the immigrants from Bergthal moved there. In the Schroeder family only Gerhard remained on the East Reserve. Johann loaded his family and earthly possessions on a wagon once more and together with his friends, the Jacob Doerksen family, embarked on another weary journey. Precipitation had been abnormally high for some months and the Rat River which was usually a placid stream was now a treacherous torrent. The two families arrived at the Rat River on July 11, 1879. Jacob Doerksen was the first to attempt to cross the swollen river, however the water lifted the box off the wagon. As the box began to drift down stream, Doerksen's seventeen year old son, Peter waded into the water in an attempt to pull the wagon box to shore, but the current pulled him away too. When his older brother Jacob, who was twenty-six years old, and had a wife, and two small children, saw what was happening to his brother he made a desperate attempt to rescue him, however, both the Doerksen brothers drowned (Note 10).

The Schroeders who had just witnessed the tragedy exercised great caution and managed to cross the river safely. When they arrived on

the West Reserve Johann Schroeder, his daughter Katharina and Jacob Rempel and his oldest granddaughter Katharina and Peter Leppky settled in the village of Schoenhorst three miles north of Gretna, Manitoba.

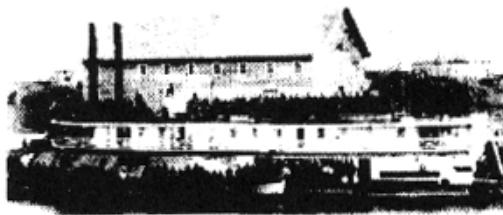
Johann Schroeder was endowed with unusual physical strength. Even in his old age his sons would from time to time ask for his assistance when they were unloading heavy tree trunks from a wagon, and he in turn would chide them for needing such help. When Johann reminisced about his manner of maintaining law and order in Bergthal during the good old days he would sum it up in these words, "It was inexpensive, fast and effective."

Johann Schroeder died at the age of 77 in his home in Schoenhorst on September 28, 1884.(Note 11) He was buried in the cemetery half a mile west of his village on Wednesday, October 1, 1884.

Endnotes:

1. Two of Isaac Schroeder's (1738-1789) sons emigrated from Prussia to Russia, Johann (1763-?) settle in Chortitza and David (1776-1834) settled in Molotschna.
2. Benjamin Unruh, *Mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16, 18, und 19 Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: Schneider, 1955), p. 262.
3. Peter Schroeder (1828-1912) married Susanna Derksen (1838-1907) in 1858. They lived in Lyubomirovka, Borisovo Colony. His grandson Peter P. Schroeder (1888-?) collected information for a Schroeder genealogy.
4. P.M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia* (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1978), p. 118.
5. See Henry Schapansky, "Family Stoesz," in *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec. 1995, pages 34-5.
6. Johann Schroeder (1870-1956) was a minister in the Chortitzer Church on the East Reserve. He is the author of a book of poems *Spuren Zum Trost*. See also Jake Doerksen, "The Reverend Johann Schroeder Chronicles," in *Preservings*, No 4, July 1994, page 3.
7. The anecdotes about Johann Schroeder's experiences in Bergthal were stories Peter Schroeder (1852-1920) told his children. His son Gerhard (1889-1980) copied them and brought them to Canada. Gerhard Schroeder is the author of the book *Miracles of Grace and Judgment*.
8. Jacob Schroeder (1863-1941) was a minister in the Sommerfelder Church. He lived in Kronsweide south of Lowe Farm, Manitoba.
9. Peter P. Epp, "Aus Meinen Erinnerungen," in *Mennonitische Rundschau*, July 4, 1934 and July 11, 1934; also in *Steinbach Post*, August 1, 1934.
10. This information comes from a family Bible owned by Mrs. Jacob Bergen, a grand-daughter of Jacob Doerksen. Some details were gained from an interview with Jacob Schroeder Jr. (1891-1971). Some details come from "Memoirs" of Abram Janzen, translated by Helen Janzen.
11. I have used the date of death as recorded in the Sommerfelder Record Book. Some sources have September 28, 1883 as his date of death.

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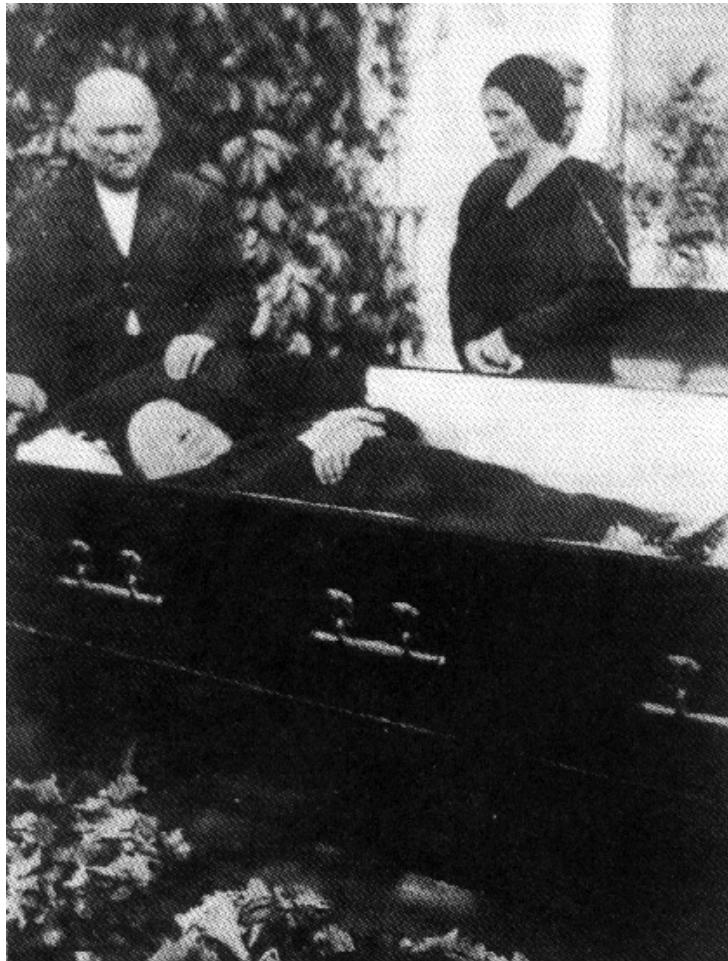
Mennonite Burial Customs - Part Two

by Linda Buhler, Box 2895, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

An interview with Bill Dyck at Loewen Funeral Chapel revealed that "traditional" Mennonite funerals are still in existence although less frequently here than on the West Reserve where someone in Winkler still constructs the old style coffins on request. These are built wider at the head end, tapered narrower towards the foot end and with a slanted bottom. The bottom half of the coffin is quite shallow so that the deceased may be viewed from the side. Up until her death in 1993, Mrs. Peter N. Giesbrecht of Kleefeld provided the Chapel with shrouds when needed. The shroud was, in fact, three separate pieces of fabric consisting of the tow sleeves and a sheet that was draped over the body and positioned behind the shoulders to keep it anchored. A black ribbon bow kept the "collar" in place as did the black ribbons on the cuffs. The sleeves were pulled up onto the arms and the ends tucked under the shroud which was folded over at the shoulder to hide the ends of the sleeves. If an old fashioned custom-made coffin was ordered, the shroud was then tacked onto the sides of the coffin from the waist down. Otherwise, it was placed around the body. Although the Loewen Funeral Chapel opened in the early 1930s, home burials continued for some years.

With the arrival of the telephone, the need for the hand-written funeral letter/invitation diminished. Many of these letters have been kept in the family and are an important source of information as they often give the cause of death (or symptoms and length of illness), and the names of the villagers to whom the letter was sent.

While some of the funeral customs differ between the different denominations of Mennonites, some have remained unchanged over the years, an example being the funeral lunch of "faspa". As well, the colour of a shroud was always white in keeping with Revelations 3:4 which states "and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy".⁽¹⁾ The methods by which they prepared the bodies were similar as they often placed coins on the eyes to keep the eyelids in place and bound the head with strips of cloth to keep the jaw closed until such time as the body had "set". Another commonplace



Coffin picture of Anna Wiebe Reimer, with husband Heinrich W. Reimer grieving by the casket. Mrs. Reimer died on September 11, 1932. Her body was prepared by the Loewen Funeral Chapel and was laid to rest in a purchased casket. The family belonged to the Kleine Gemeinde. Note that Anna was buried wearing a black "haube". She was the daughter of teacher Jakob Wiebe (1835-1914) of Alt-Bergfeld and the "haube" was probably a recognition and commemoration of her Chortitzer background as the wearing of a "haube" was not a Kleine Gemeinde practice. Photo courtesy of Adeline Kroeker. Photo by Jacob D. Barkman, Steinbach.

practice was putting the body in a hole dug outside or in an outer building in order to keep it cooler. One custom that the Kleine Gemeinde and the Chortitzer had in common was perhaps not related to funerals but ties in with burials. This was the interment of dismembered limbs in the village (or church) cemetery.

It would seem that funeral wreaths were not originally used by the 1870s migrations but were introduced by those arriving in the 1920s. Mrs. Elfrieda Neufeld recalled that a member of the bereaved family (possibly an adult sibling of the deceased) would weave a wreath to be placed on the newly closed grave by the presiding minister. In summer, pliable leafy branches from a

deciduous tree were used and in winter, evergreen boughs. A black ribbon was attached to the wreath and only one wreath was made and placed on the grave. According to Mrs. Anna (Jacob) Kroeker of Steinbach who arrived in Canada after World War II, funeral wreaths in Russia were made from the "Lebensbaum" (Arborvitae) which, translated, means "tree of life" and somewhat resembles our junipers. Sometimes these wreaths were placed on top of the coffin before the grave was closed.

The custom of sending floral arrangements to the bereaved family was unheard of in the Mennonite circles. When the wife of businessman Heinrich W. Reimer of Steinbach (see *Preservings*, Dec. 1995, p.44) died in 1932, floral arrangements were sent by Winnipeg businessmen by train to Giroux, and from there, they were brought by livery to town. Almost an entire room was filled with flowers which was previously unheard of since Steinbach did not even have a florist at this time. The flowers, however, could not be brought to the Kleine Gemeinde Church for the funeral as they were not in keeping with a simple funeral.

The pictures that were brought over from Russia with the 1920s and later migrations show the myrtle vine placed around and on the body in the coffin. Myrtle, a traditional Mennonite houseplant in Russia, was used for both weddings and funerals as it symbolized love.

Having interviewed various people from the 1920s and also from the post W.W. II migration, it has been difficult to determine which groups used shrouds as there was often no consistency within villages in a Colony.

Although the majority of people I spoke to from the Kleine Gemeinde (E.M.C.) do not remember shrouds ever having been used in their congregations, an entry dated October 31, 1893 in the Johann L. Dueck diary (2) states that he was already dressed in his "sterb kleid" (burial gown). We have no means of determining if this referred to a shroud but it does confirm that a special garment was used for this purpose. A more recent incident in the Kleine Gemeinde Church was when Mrs. Katherine (Henry R.)

Dueck of Kleefeld died in February 1921 and was buried wearing a shroud that was tacked onto the coffin edge.

My most senior contact for the Holdeman Church was Mr. Peter J. Barkman of Steinbach who was born in 1894. He did not recall shrouds ever having been used in the Holdeman Church. Their coffins were often fabric covered and were built with higher sides so that viewing was only visible from the top of the coffin. A number of other people from the Greenland area remembered these as well, seemingly when people had died of an infectious disease. (According to another source (3) only a few of these coffins had been used in the Chortitzer Church in the Steinbach area because they had been too much work to construct.) The coffins constructed and used in the Holdeman congregation also differed from those made in the Chortitzer villages in that the Holdeman coffins had handles and a two-piece lid allowing the viewing of only the upper half of the body.

Family photos were customarily taken around the open coffin of a loved one and these pictures provide important information from the earlier years. But because the Kleine Gemeinde and Holdeman were officially against taking of photographs, the pictures that are still around are usually from the Chortitzer Church (and from the 1920s migration).

The interviews that follow provide more detailed information as it pertains to specific Mennonites group and areas.

CORRECTION: The last paragraph on page 52 of "Mennonite Burial Customs", Part I (December 1995 issue) inadvertently stated that for men, a blue bow tied at the neck. This should read "a black bow".

Endnotes:

1. Jacob G. Guenter, "Early traditional Menno-



Funeral picture of two children who died in the 1920s in the Crimea. The little boy had died prior to his sister and was exhumed for this photograph. Note the use of the myrtle vine around the bodies and how the coffins were built according to the size of the deceased. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Abrahams.

nite Funeral," in *Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve 1895-1995* (Hepburn, Saskatchewan), 1995), page 634.

2. John L. Dueck diary is presently in the care of Henry Fast, Steinbach.
3. Source: Mrs. Anne (John) Friesen, Steinbach.

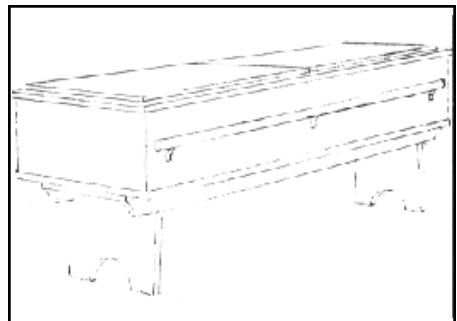
Interview with Mrs. Betty Petkau:

Mrs. Petkau was born in the Cuauhtemoc Colony (Old Colony) in Mexico and later moved with her family to the Quellenkolonie (Kleine Gemeinde) when she was eleven years old. Her mother died while they lived in Cuauhtemoc and she described the funeral as follows: Her mother was buried wearing a white funeral shroud and a white haube, specially made for the funeral by a woman in the colony. The unpainted coffin was padded with a layer of straw and then covered in heavy white cotton which was tacked onto the top edge of the coffin. The foot end was narrower in width and shallower in depth in comparison to the head end. The lid was slightly domed and was not hinged to the lower section at all but was attached by way of screws after the final viewing at the committal service. The funeral was held at their home as was the custom. Someone in the village went around to the neighbours on the morning of the funeral to pick up their benches and tables to bring to the deceased's home.

A full dinner meal consisting of fruit moos, borscht and beef was supplied to funeral guests before the funeral. (A beef was usually slaughtered for this occasion by someone in the village although it was supplied by the deceased's family.) The day prior to the funeral, women met at the deceased's home to mix a big batch of dough which was then cut into pieces and distributed between themselves for baking into buns and "Kringle" (twisted bun dough) at their own homes; these were then brought back the same night so that they were ready for the funeral faspa the next day. In the Sommerfelder Church only a funeral faspa was served, not a noon meal as well. Among the Sommerfelder and the Old Colony, the school building was used for funerals if there was insufficient room in the home.

The Old Colony Mexican Mennonites had not used any adornment at all on the coffin or on the shroud but the Sommerfelder in the nearby Santa Clara Colony did use black ribbons on the white shrouds for adults and blue or pink for young children and sometimes placed greenery (vines) around the body of a young child. The Sommerfelder sometimes extended the fabric lining of the coffin over the edge to form a fringe. Both the Sommerfelder in the Santa Clara Colony and the Kleine Gemeinde in the Quellenkolonie sometimes took photos of the family gathered around the coffin but this as not always done.

In the Quellenkolonie in later years (1950s and 60s) when homes had telephones, five long rings on the party line would mean that everyone should pick up the receiver. This most often meant a recent death and the need for everyone to make ice in the freezer which someone then went around to pick up the following day. "Undertaking" services were provided by



Pencil sketch of coffin on a bench, courtesy of George Wiebe. Typical of coffins built in the Greenland area just prior to 1920, the glass inset was hidden underneath upper portion of lid. Sketch drawn by Rennie Wiebe.

someone in the village who used an outbuilding for the purpose, thus needing all available ice to keep the body chilled. After the body was washed, rubbing alcohol was poured down the throat and stopped with a supply of cotton balls in an attempt to preserve the body a little longer. Mrs. Petkau mentioned that she had heard of a glass-paneled coffin lid being used if someone had died of an infectious disease.

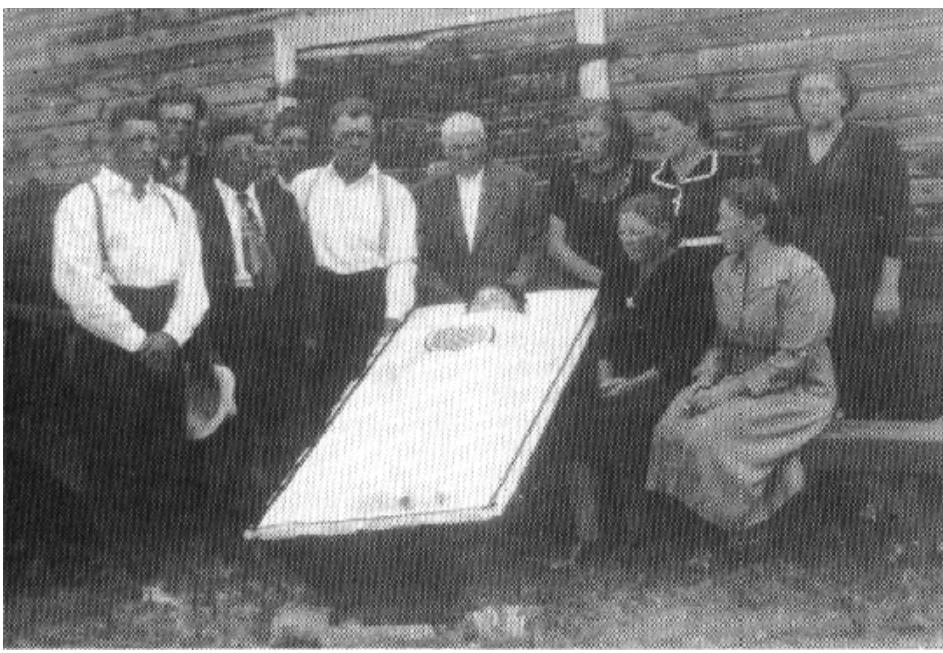
Interview with Mrs. Anna Fast:

Mrs. Anna Fast (nee Olfert) grew up in the village of Reinfeld near Wymark, Saskatchewan and attended the Old Colony Church there. Having accompanied her mother when she was called upon to prepare and dress bodies for funerals, Mrs. Fast was familiar with the different aspects of funeral procedures and became the third generation in the family to provide this service to the community.

For the most part, coffins used in the Old Colony Church were left unpainted. The family of the deceased paid for or provided the wood for the coffin which someone in the village then made. The typical coffin was constructed wider at the head end and becoming narrower at the foot end with the height tapering towards the foot end as well. The domed lid had two or three wooden dowels on each side that fit into corresponding holes in the bottom section in order to keep the lid from sliding off. This was the only means by which the two sections were kept together, even for burial. A layer of sawdust, shavings or straw was placed on the bottom of the coffin as padding.

The body was washed immediately after death and dressed in a chemise style shirt (which women typically wore as undergarments). Often these would already have been sewn by the deceased for this occasion. Simply constructed in a nightshirt style, it had a round neckline with a deep slit down the centre with a ribbon tie. Dressed in this shirt, the body was placed on planks or table in the coolest place possible with a sheet draped over it from neck down. It was in this state that close friends and neighbours viewed the body in the home.

The body was dressed in a shroud the day before, or sometimes the morning of the funeral. White muslin covered the body from shoulders to feet (this was placed over the chemise). Three vertical slits were made into the top section of



Coffin picture of Margaretha Martens (nee Funk) of Edenthal (Grunthal area) who died on August 19, 1952 at the age of 64. Her body was prepared at home and was dressed in a shroud, "haube", and stockings. The stockings are visible because the shroud was not tacked onto the coffin edge. The coffin was made locally as well. Photo courtesy of Mr. Ed Bergen.

fabric - one in the centre where the fabric was folded over to form a collar, and one slit by each armhole so that the hands could be folded and placed over the sheet (shroud). Two pleats were folded into the fabric that hung over each shoulder, the fabric being tucked over and behind the shoulders and neck. Fabric was folded over the arms to resemble sleeves and tucked into these the vertical armhole slits. There were no sewn seams at all. The sides of the fabric, from shoulder down, were nailed to the edge of the coffin. The pleats from each shoulder continued to the foot end where they too were nailed onto the edge.

The Old Colony Church did not use any black ribbon at all to adorn shroud or coffin; however, women did wear their traditional black "haube" (head covering). A straight piece of fabric from the coffin lining was sometimes extended over the outer edge of the coffin as a trim. The Sommerfelder did this as well but used eyelet fabric or cut the fabric into fringes. Being more progressive, the Sommerfelder also used black ribbons around cuffs and neckline of the shroud as well as the coffin edge, whereas the Old Colony used only white ribbon. Small children were buried wearing the same type of shroud but babies wore white bonnets.

The church building was used only if the house was too small to accommodate the funeral guests. It was customary for someone to go around the area with horsedrawn haywagon and collect everyone's chairs and benches to be used for the funeral. A big noonday meal was prepared for the funeral guests but the funeral "faspa" served after the committal service traditionally consisted of buns, sugar cubes, and coffee. On occasion, the neighbouring ladies would come and ready the house for the funeral

by cleaning it and making large quantities of food if it was thought that the housekeeping or cooking was not up to standard. This was viewed by some as insulting and caused some bitter feelings.

A funeral letter/invitation would have been sent around earlier and only those listed on the letter were invited to the funeral. The day following the funeral, a "no-begrafnis" (after-funeral) was held, again at the home of the deceased. People would come mid-morning and stay for the prepared noon meal and would visit, sing hymns and provide emotional support. The bereaved family again provided the food, after which the guests would leave for their respective homes.

People were buried facing east except those who had been excommunicated or had committed suicide, these were buried facing west.

Interview with Mr. George R. Wiebe, Greenland:

Mr. Wiebe's earliest recollections of funerals are of the flu epidemic in 1918 when he was a young lad of 8 years. He remembers these funerals in the Greenland Church of God in Christ (Holdeman) as being different in the way that the coffins used at that time were constructed with a glass panel in the lid so that viewing could take place through the rectangular or large oval inset. The coffin was only slightly narrower at the foot end and the depth was the same at both ends. The lid was somewhat tiered and was covered in black or dark grey fabric as was the coffin base. Coffins were covered with white fabric for small infants. The inside of the coffin was lined with white and had a padded bottom consisting of shavings or sawdust. As is customary now, only half of the body was open to viewing as the lid was in two sections with the glass inset being underneath the upper portion.

Mr. Wiebe sometimes helped Minister John M. Penner construct coffins in Greenland during the early 30s but some of these did not have the glass insets although Rev. Penner had made them with the glass panels the decade before. When Mr. Wiebe's mother passed away in 1924, a coffin was purchased at the lumber yard in Steinbach, however it did not have a glass panel and was finished only on the outside and was then padded and lined by the family before being used.

To the best of his knowledge, shrouds were never used in the Holdeman church. People were buried wearing their Sunday clothes. A pre-funeral was held in the home of the deceased but the funeral itself was held in the church with a faspa following the service. The faspa usually consisted of coffee, zwieback, sugar cubes and maybe cheese and was served at the church as well. No handwritten funeral invitation was circulated and the funeral was open to anyone wishing to attend. Usually only close family attended the pre-funeral services at the home during which time a few songs would be sung and the minister would have a short message and prayer.

MLA commends Menno Simons

FLON Flon MLA Gerard Jennissen praised both Menno Simons and his spiritual descendants in the Legislature late last month.

Jennissen, speaking in Dutch, noted the 500th anniversary of Simons' birth is being celebrated this year.

His major work — *Dat Fundament des Christelyken Leev* (The Foundation of Christian Teaching) — "is still very significant for our world, and although Mennonites were at first persecuted by both the Crown and church in Holland, their spirituality and peace-loving principles were soon recognized, and they contributed

enormously to the golden age of Holland in the 17th century," the New Democrat MLA said.

There is a higher percentage of Mennonites living in Manitoba than in any other jurisdiction in the world, he continued.

"To us, that is a source of great pride and bodes well for Manitoba's future. On the anniversary year, I salute the spiritual descendants of Menno Simons who live not only in Altona, Steinbach, Gretna, Winkler, Morden and East and North Kildonan, but all over this province, this country, this world."

The Mennonite Central Committee, formed just over 75 years

ago to feed the hungry in Russia, has become one of the most efficient and effective church-connected service and aid agencies in the world, Jennissen added.

"It deserves our total support...Serving God by helping others is the Mennonite way. The light Menno Simons kindled for us 500 years ago shines now as bright as ever."

Jennissen further urged members of the Legislature to support the MCC relief sale and auction to be held at The Forks in Winnipeg June 15 and 16.

Friesen Cemetery, Strassberg

by grandson John K. Friesen, Niverville, Manitoba

Many stories of history and hardship lies covered on SW5-7-4E better known as the "Friesen Cemetery".

It was 2 Aug. 1874 that the S.S. Sarmation of the Allen Line arrived in Quebec from Liverpool. The passenger list includes the following: "Aaron Friesen...Age 26, labourer. Anna (Loeppky) Friesen...Age 24, wife. Katharina Friesen...Age 4, daughter. That same year they arrived at their destination the junction of the Red and Rat rivers on a paddlewheel steamer.

The Aaron Friesens settled approximately 8 miles southeast of this landing place in what was planned to be the village of Strassberg. It was only in September of 1882 that he applied for and was granted homestead rights to the land situated on SW5-7-4E where they spent the rest of their lives: see map of the area in *Preservings*, no. 7, Dec 1995, page 4. The first few years were difficult but their confidence in God gave provisions for survival. By hard work and persistence they established themselves and made a modest living for their family.

Their family consisted of 6 sons and 2 daughters of whom 1 son died in infancy. In later life they fostered, but never formally adopted, Liese Schult who had been left motherless at the age of 3 years. She later married Ben Dyck, a preacher at Sommerfeld.

I have no personal memories of my grandparents. Both died before I was born. My father John L. Friesen told me stories which I want to cherish in my heart as long as I live. e.g. Grandfather acquiring a considerable reputation as a horse breeder. And, Grandmother saying that God made her youngest son, John, grow taller and stronger than any of her other children so he could more easily carry and take care of her as she was confined to a wheelchair the last 12 years of her life due to arthritis.

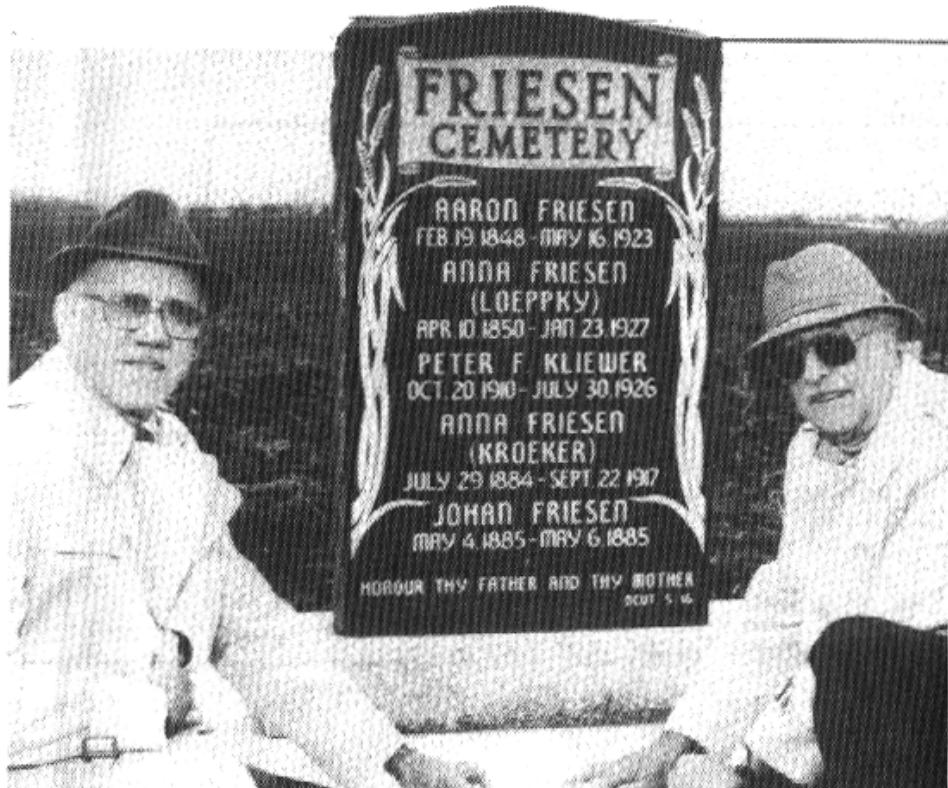
It seems almost as a necessity that for many years pioneer Mennonite families created private cemeteries in their gardens. One of these is the "Friesen Cemetery". In an area of 15 square miles just south and east of Niverville there are at least 12 or more such private cemeteries or burial plots, many of them unmarked and unattended. The reason being deserted homesteads combined into large land holdings.

It was in 1985 that the descendants of Aaron S. and Anna Friesen resolved this fate should not befall their family plot on the old farmstead of their grandparents, a site that could trace its roots to the autumn of 1874 when the first Mennonite settlers came to live in what was known as the East Reserve.

A decision was made to mark the site on SW5-7-4E in the Tourond area south of Niverville. The committee comprising of Ernie A. Friesen, Jake Kliewer and Henry Kliewer of Steinbach, Erdman P. Friesen and John K. Friesen of Niverville are grandsons of the pioneers Aaron S. and Anna Friesen. An appeal to



Aaron S. Friesen (1848-1923) and Anna Loeppky Friesen (1850-1927) photographed at their farm site around the turn of the century.



Grandsons: John K. Friesen (left), Niverville, and Ernie Friesen (right), former mayor of Steinbach, inspect the memorial cairn in 1985. Photo courtesy of Carillon News, Oct. 23, 1985.

other family members for funds, a lot of hard work by the self-appointed committee and friendly help and encouragement from the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society brought the project to completion. A memorial stone

inscribed with the names of 10 family members known to have been buried there has been erected to mark the site of their last resting place.

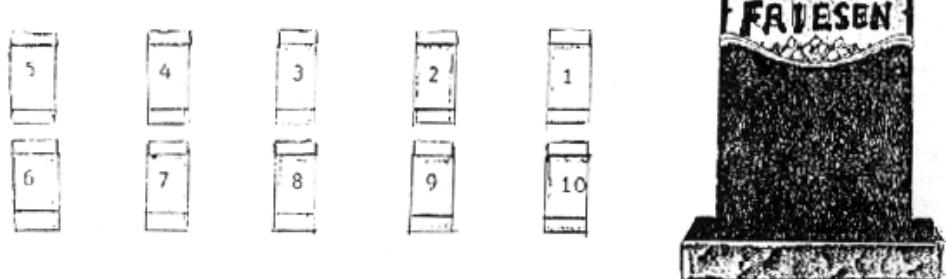
To celebrate this occasion nearly 100 members and friends of the extended family of Aaron

S. and Anna Friesen attended a service of dedication on 6 October 1985 at the Golden Friendship Centre in Niverville. John K. Friesen acted as Master of Ceremonies. Ernie A. Friesen gave the devotional. Delbert Plett, President of M.M.H.S. brought greetings from the society. Members of the third generation gave short outlines of each of the children of this pioneer couple; Katharina (Mrs. Cornelius C. Toews) 1870-1946, Jacob 1876-1951, Abraham 1879-1952, Anna (Mrs. Cornelius B. Kliewer) 1881-1942, Aaron 1886-1971, Henry 1889-1965, and John 1894-1959. Dr. Rhinehart F. Friesen presented a biography of Aaron S. and Anna Friesen including notes of more distant forbears.

A bounteous Faspa, without which no such gathering of Mennonites would be complete, provided an opportunity for fellowship and strengthening of family ties. The day ended with a cavalcade driving out to SW5-7-4E, the original homestead, to inspect and photograph the memorial.

Acknowledgment is gratefully made to my cousins Dr. Rhinehart Friesen, Winnipeg and Ernie Friesen, Steinbach from whom I have received data and other information over the past many years about our pioneer grandparents. It was most helpful for me in writing this article. by grandson John K. Friesen

Burials in Friesen Cemetery			
	Name	Birth	Death
1	Aron Friesen	Feb 19,1848	May 16,1923
2	Anna Friesen (Loeppky)	April 10,1850	Jan 23,1927
3	Peter F. Kliewer	Oct 20,1910	July 30,1926
4	Anna Friesen (Kroeker)	Jul 29,1884	Sep 22,1917
5	Katharina Toews (Friesen)	May 20,1870	April 13,1946
6	C. C. Toews	April 1,1867	April 28,1928
7	Lena F. Toews	Feb 7,1911	May 14,1914
8	Cornelius F. Toews	Mar 10,1893	July 7,1893
9	Eva Loeppky (Glockman)	Sep 26,1803	June 16,1888
10	Johann Friesen	May 4,1885	May 6,1885



Friesen Cemetery Layout

Doerksen Cemetery, Reinland

by great-grandson Randy Kehler, Box 20,737, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2T2

History of the cemetery.

My great-grandfather Johann Doerksen was born in the Bergthal Colony in Southern Russia in 1852. He was the uncle to Rev. Heinrich Doerksen (1855-1933) of Shoenthal; see *Preservings*, no. 7, Dec 1995, pages 38-39. After immigrating to Canada he married Helena Falk (b. 1860) and they made their home in the village of Hochfeld, East Reserve, a Chortitzer village located three miles west of Blumenort. Sometime between 1880 and 1890 they moved to the Blumengard area, two miles further west, where they established a farm on NW 25-7-5E.

In the fall of 1908, the family was once again preparing for yet another move. A lawyer by the name of Witla had purchased parcels of land in the Ile des Chenes area north of Niverville and was now putting these quarter sections up for sale. Although the area was usually known as "Reinland", it was referred to as "Witla" at the time, after the lawyer who developed it.

Johann Doerksen purchased one of these parcels of property, being the SW15-8-4E, where a new house and barn were built on a high ridge roughly in the middle of the quarter section. He also purchased an additional 240 acres, being the NE15-8-4E and the East half of the NW15-8-4E.

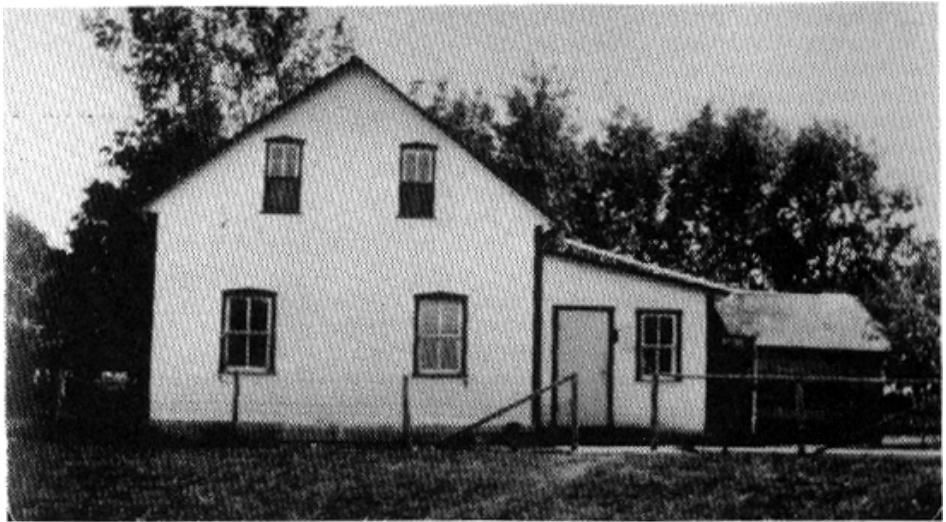
On October 16, 1908, David, youngest son of Johann Doerksen, passed away. David still

lived in the Blumengard area at the time of his death and it is interesting that he was taken to Reinland for burial. His funeral was also the start of the family graveyard. My grandfather Abram F. Doerksen (1890-1953) later recalled transporting the body of his deceased brother in a horse-drawn wagon, to the newly acquired land for burial. The cemetery plot was established in

a corner of the garden of the Johann Doerksen yard on SW15-8-4E.

Funeral Letter.

The following is a traditional Mennonite funeral letter which was circulated among family and neighbours in the Reinland area at the time of death of son Jakob Doerksen, the sec-



House of Johann and Helena Doerksen situated in the middle of SW15-8-4E. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Susan Doerksen Kehler.

ond child to be buried their. The letter is also of interest as it lists the names of residents in the Reinland community as of 1908.

"Dear friends:

"It has been the will of the Lord to take our beloved son Jakob from our midst. Even though we mourn the loss of the deceased, we still say as in the Scriptures Job 1:21, "The Lord gave him to us and the Lord has taken him from us, praised be the name of the Lord." He has achieved the age of 12 years, 6 months and 28 days.

"He was bedridden and very sick for 5 days. Today the 17th of December 12 o'clock at night was the hour that the Lord said "come home my child." We know of no better resting place for him than in the womb of the earth where he shall rest until the day when all the dead in Christ shall rise.

"We are inviting our friends and relatives to our place of residence December the 20th, twelve noon, to grieve with us and to lay him in his final resting place and afterwards to join us for a fellowship lunch. We are deeply grateful for the love which you have shown.

Sincerely yours, "Helena and Johann Doerksen"

"Witla, December 17, 1908

"The friends are asked to forward this letter in accordance with the names listed on the reverse hereof.

"Reinland. Peter Enns, Cornelius Friesen, Jakob Stoesz, Michael Pid, Cornelius Martens, widow Cornelius Stoesz, Johan Harder, Wilhelm Hiebert, Heinrich Doerksen, Jakob Peters, Jakob Kran, Jakob K. Kran, Johann Friesen, Jakob Stoesz, Peter Funk, Heinrich Penner, Gerhard Kehler, Abraham Kehler, Gerhard Kehler, Johann Kehler."

Burials.

Over the next 30 years a total of 15 Doerksen descendants would be laid to rest in the family cemetery. See chart.

Restoration of cemetery.

During the years I was growing up, I often heard my parents refer to the old Doerksen cemetery close to where my mother grew up. It had always been great-grandfather's concern that the graveyard be kept apart from the future sale of the surrounding land, keeping the cemetery intact for future generations. Eventually this land was passed on to his son John Doerksen who later sold it to Ed and Ann Harder. Prior to it being sold, however, the cemetery was registered on a separate title excluding it from the land sale in keeping with his father's wishes.

Over the years, the land changed hands many times. The house was moved away, the remainder of the buildings levelled and trees bulldozed. Today nothing remains of the beautiful farm my great-grandfather established, the graveyard being the only evidence of the life that once existed there.

In fall of 1993 we decided to stop at the old cemetery often referred to. Upon our approach we saw it had remained untouched. The entire area lay engulfed in waist-high thistle, the fence

posts had rotted away, the south side had severe wind erosion and the fence surrounding it lay flat.

It became clear to me that in this condition, the cemetery would possibly one day be plowed over and a part of the family heritage would then be lost. The restoration was subsequently undertaken by my mother, Susan Kehler and myself.

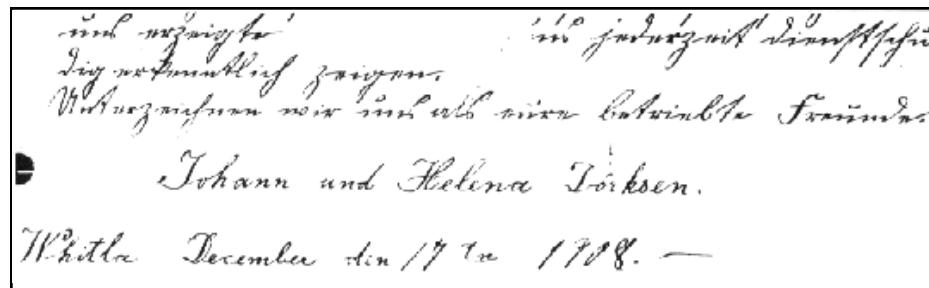
The project began in the spring of 1995 and by fall of the same year the restoration was nearly completed. We gratefully acknowledge

the help of John Doerksen and son Luke who dedicated their time and machinery to landscaping the area and to the many "Doerksen" descendants who gave donations for the materials needed to erect a new fence. I would also personally thank my mother for all her efforts in the project and for providing equipment for the maintenance of the graveyard. The final stage of restoration is scheduled for the summer of 1996.

- by Randy Kehler, Steinbach, Man.



Funeral procession on the farm of Johann and Helena Doerksen for the funeral of Susanna Doerksen (1899-1936) who died on December 28, 1936. Her coffin is being carried along the Doerksen driveway to the burial plot. View to the north. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Susan Doerksen Kehler.



Copy of the bottom quarter of the Funeral Letter, with the dateline. The name "Witla" is clearly visibly to the left.

Burials in Doerksen Cemetery

Name	Birth	Death
Parents:		
1 Johann Doerksen	Feb 24, 1852	Apr 23, 1918
2 Helena Doerksen (Falk)	Jan 27, 1860	Jul 12, 1939
Children of Johann and Helena:		
3 David Doerksen	Oct 25, 1878	Oct 16, 1908
4 Anna Doerksen	Nov 30, 1905	Dec 4, 1908
5 Jakob Doerksen	June 9, 1896	Dec 17, 1908
6 Susanna Doerksen	Oct 10, 1899	Dec 28, 1936
7 Helena Enns (Doerksen)	Feb 5, 1886	Nov 9, 1933
Mrs. Peter P. Enns		
Children of Peter P. and Helena Enns:		
8 Anna Enns	Sep 27, 1914	March 1, 1915
9 Katharina Enns	Sep 22, 1918	Oct 3, 1937
Children of David Doerksen:		
10 Anna Doerksen	Sep 4, 1906	Sep 16, 1909
11 Maria Doerksen	July 1, 1908	Jan 20, 1909
Children of Abraham F. Doerksen:		
12 Maria Doerksen (twin)	July 18, 1914	July 19, 1914
13 John Doerksen 1	May 14, 1923	May 17, 1923
14 John Doerksen 2	Oct 23, 1934	Oct 21, 1934
Son of John D. Friesen		
15 Peter Friesen	June 1, 1932	Aug 13, 1932

The Abram M. Penner House

by Katie Barkman, Box 25, Landmark, Manitoba, R0A 0X0

The oldest house in Landmark, now occupied by Aron and Linda Penner, almost fell victim to a house fire in January 1996. Quick action by son, Ivan, and the Tache Fire Department contained the fire to the addition on the north side of the house, that had evolved from a screened in porch, into a summer kitchen, and finally, into a cosy rec room.

The house was built by Mr. Abram M. Penner in 1912 and has been home to his descendants ever since. The walls could tell many stories, some glad and some sad.

Lea Giesbrecht and Linda Penner reminisced even farther back, telling of their father and father-in-law homesteading in Swalwell, Alberta. He, with three other fellows, filed for a section of land, and as the law required for them to live on it for three years, they got together and built a house right in the centre, and each had his own room on his own quarter section. Talk about ingenuity!

After marrying Agnes Giesbrecht in 1905, the Penners moved into their own house, close to the road. Son Frank (died 1995) was born there.

They moved back to Manitoba in 1908. This time three brothers, Abram, Peter and Jacob lived kitty corner to each other. Abram lived on the NW 26-8-5E. Here they built a small house where Martin and Edwin (died 1970) were born.

By 1912 they were ready and eager to upgrade their housing, so Mr. Penner ordered a car load of cedar lumber from B.C. With that, and mostly their own labour, the young family's dream house took shape. They broke up the plaster from the old house, and carried it with pails, to use as insulation for the new house.

The two story house was very solidly built, with basement walls so thick, that, when a door was chopped out, at a later date, to connect it to another basement, it proved to be a formidable task. The house still stands so solid that water spiled on the floor spreads out, but does not run to any particular spot. The slow burning cedar siding probably kept it from being burned to the ground this winter. The north wall was badly charred, but did not catch fire.

Lea remembered the interminable task of trying to keep the linoleum floors clean. With nine boys and a dirt yard of our Landmark gumbo, I can very well imagine her frustration. She also remembered the abundance of wild fruit such as: pin cherries, choke cherries, high bush cranberries, plums and saskatoons, growing right around the house, that supplied them with all the jams and jellies they needed. They used up a 50 lb. bag of flour each week, for bread, buns, and the huge cake that was baked for every Sunday. This was all done with a wood burning stove in a screened-in porch in summer and in the house in winter.

A stained glass window in the living room was a special source of pride and joy. The living area was lit with a mantle lamp, which gave

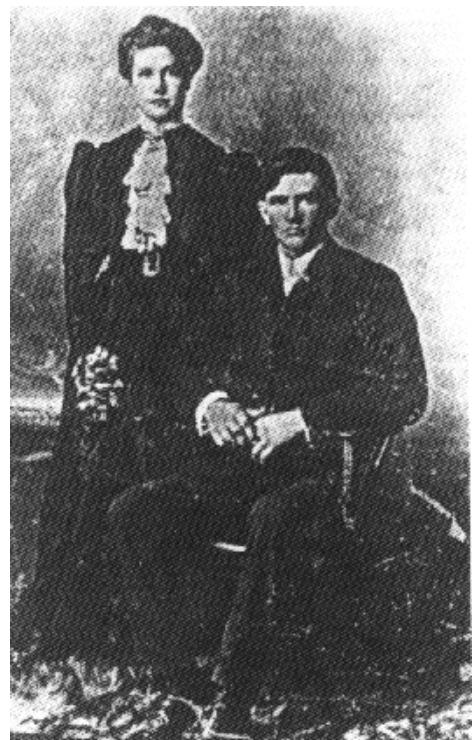
a bright light, but was rather a delicate task to handle for a young girl. It was attached to the ceiling, and had to be pulled down to light it, and then pulled back up to the ceiling. Any little jar could break the mantles. They also had to be watched so they would not burn black.

They had running water since 1929, but mostly in summer as the pipes froze in winter, and didn't thaw out till late spring.

The children pretty well had the upstairs to themselves, and Lea says a lot of history could be traced by the writing on the walls. Her thoughts wistfully went back to the time when they would kneel in prayer before retiring to their rooms upstairs. When her oldest brother married their hired girl, Lea had to give up her bigger, corner room to them, and move downstairs.

Doctors and hospitals were not easily available in those pioneer years so Mr. Penner was mid-wife when their children were born, and undertaker when son Wesley died after a bout of pneumonia in 1930. Children born in the new house were: Harvey, Wesley (died in 1930), Lea, Lincoln (died in 1987), Cornie, Agnes (died 1947), Aron, Allen (died in 1996), and Elma, the only one born in a hospital. Mrs. Penner died in 1947.

In 1948 Mr. Penner married Mrs. Elizabeth Giesbrecht at which time the house got a face



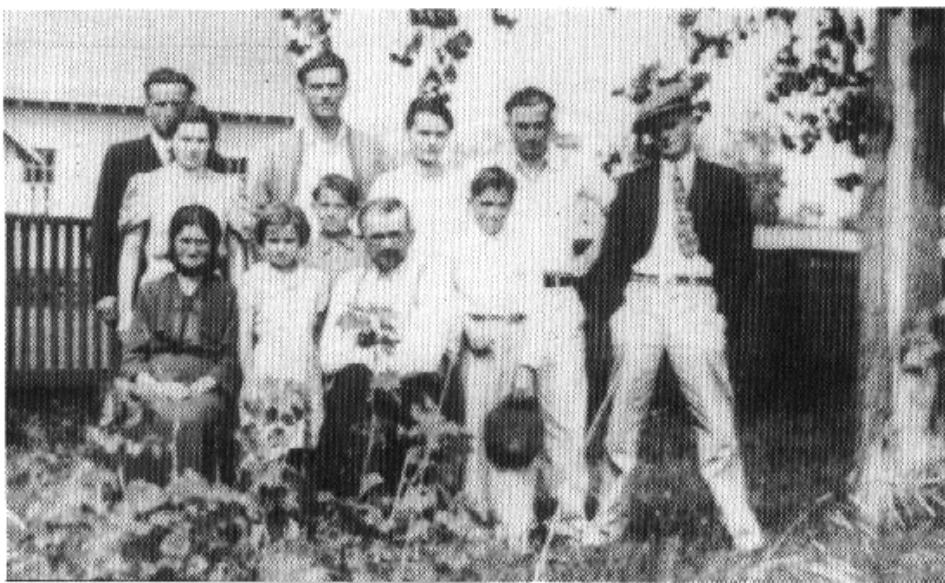
Abram M. Penner and Aganetha Giesbrecht. Wedding picture August 21, 1905. Courtesy of Lea Giesbrecht.



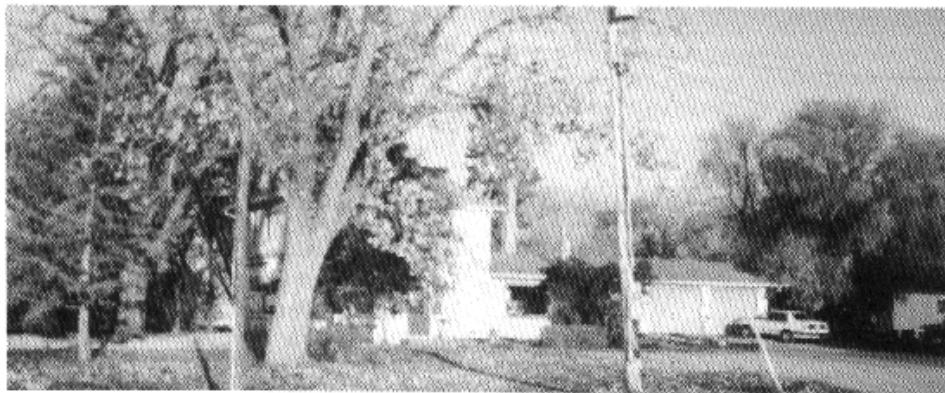
Abram M. Penner house and yard, view to the west. The big cattle barn was built 1938 and the workshop in 1939. Courtesy of Lea Giesbrecht.



Abram M. Penner house and yard, view to the north.



Abram M. Penner family June 26, 1938. Front row - left to right: Mrs. Aganetha Penner, Elma, Aron, Abram M. Penner, Alan; second row: Edwin, Neta, Harvey, Lea, Lincoln and Cornie. Son Frank is missing. Photo courtesy of Lea Giesbrecht.



Abram M. Penner house as it looked in 1995. View to the northwest.

lift, renovations and additions. Hardwood floors were put in throughout, which Linda Penner said she had enjoyed immensely all these years that she has lived there.

Mr. Penner passed away in 1953, and in 1956 the present owners, son Aron and Linda Penner moved into the family place, and so the next generation took over. Four sons, Ron, Dean, Abe and Ivan, and one daughter, Gail, have enjoyed growing up in the old family house and yard, where they had lots of room to play and work. Three sons, Keith, Byron and Johnny were killed in a car-train accident, which also left the Penners in critical condition. After a courageous battle and months spent in the hospital, they recuperated, and even though somewhat handicapped, they have made a good life for their family.

Because of the cedar construction and the solid condition of the house, and for nostalgic reasons, the Penners plan to keep the house and restore it at a later date.

About the author: Katie Barkman is a home-maker and the mother of 11 children and a grandmother 22 times. Her husband and sons operate "Barkman Gravel" in Landmark, Manitoba. She has written the Landmark News for the Carillon News of Steinbach for 16 years.

Cornelius P. Friesen - Irrgarten

by Delbert F. Plett

Blumenort teacher **Cornelius P. Friesen** was born in 1844, son of Klaas Friesen (1793-1870), a Wirtschaft owner and Kleine Gemeinde (KG) minister in Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia. Klaas was the youngest son of Abraham von Riesen (1756-1810) of Ohrloff. Cornelius' mother was Karolina Plett, a sister to Cornelius S. Plett, from whom are descended the Manitoba Pletts, and after whom he was named.

Cornelius P. Friesen was interested in history and the world around him. As a young man of twenty he gathered various poems and historical writings in a journal as did other intellectuals at the time. The collection included a poetic eulogy for his uncle Johann Isaac of Schoenau as well as a poem composed by "C. R." (possibly KG founder Klaas Reimer) which he copied on February 8, 1866, while still resident in Rosenort.

In 1869 Cornelius P. Friesen married Agatha T. Klassen, daughter of Martin Klassen (1823-

ca.1888) and Elisabeth Toews (1821-1854) of Paulsheim, Mol. and later Annafeld, Borosenko. Agatha was the niece of KG Elder Peter P. Toews. On the Plett side, Cornelius was a cousin to Steinbach pioneer Cornelius P. Goossen, Grunfelders - Elder Peter P. Toews, delegate Cornelius P. Toews, Prediger and teacher Abraham P. Isaac, and Rosenort teacher Heinrich P. Enns, as well as Johann P. Harder (1811-1875), Aeltester of the Ohrloff-Halbstadt Gemeinde in the Molotschna from 1860-75.

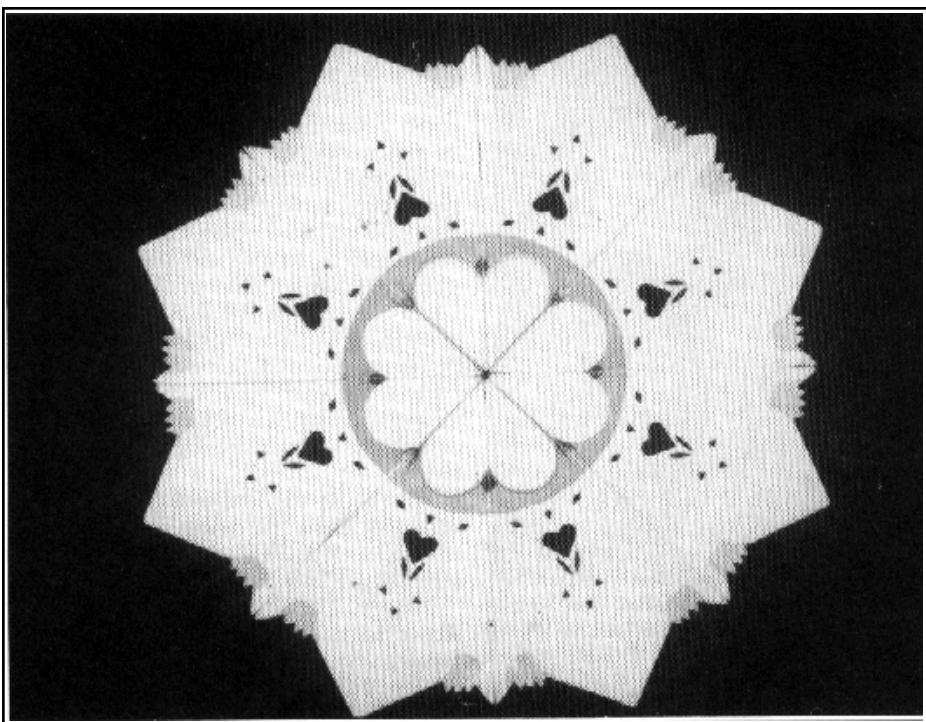
Agatha and Cornelius made their home in the village of Blumenhoff, Borosenko, northwest of Nikopol. Cornelius was a carpenter making furniture and other small articles. The family emigrated from Russia in 1874. They were with the first Mennonite immigrants who stepped ashore at the confluence of Rat and Red Rivers on August 1.

They settled in Blumenort, Manitoba. Their first house was a semlin, a pit dug into the

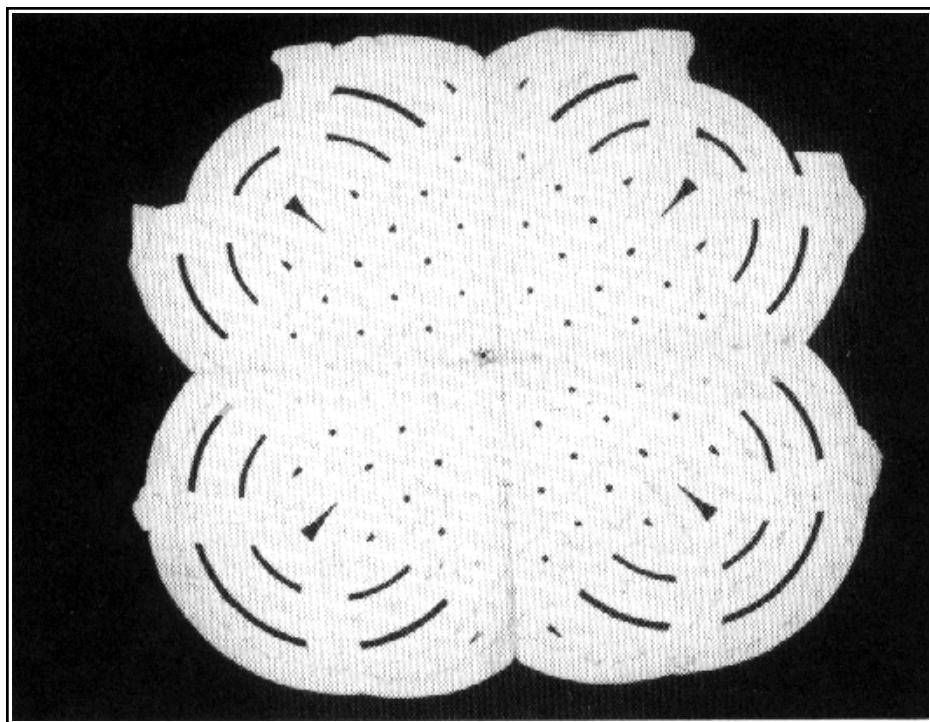
ground with a straw roof. Since he had a good education Cornelius served as a school teacher. School during the first year was held in Heinrich F. Reimer's semlin which was partitioned off as a classroom and a wooden floor installed.

Cornelius is described as "a capable 30-year-old man who kept a well-stocked library, knew carpentry and some medicine. His wage for the first year was a flat \$50.00 plus oats, hay and firewood. After being hired, Friesen quickly went to work fashioning crude benches and tables for the school. . . . Here 20 students assembled at the beginning of November, 1874, to put in 86 1/2 days of class time until the last day of school on April 30."

A booklet No. 8 of writing exercises or Schönschreiben is still extant from the first year. It is noteworthy that the writing assignments were about ancient and medieval church history and in effect also served as history lessons. Four of the items dated December 10th, 12th,



Partially completed paper cutout about 16 inches in diameter. The work demonstrates how teacher Cornelius P. Friesen showed his students how to use geometrical principles and patterns to design their pieces of artwork. The colouring is also incomplete, but the colours already used were saffron in the middle surrounding the hearts, and gold-yellow on the crown-like leaves decorating the circumference.



Irrgarten prepared by Cornelius P. Friesen. The "Irrgarten" is about 16 inches in diameter. The wording of the puzzle is very similar to that of the Jakob Doerksen "Irrgarten" featured in the December, 1995, issue of Preservings, page 47.

21rst and 27th, 1874, were written by Abram P. Reimer (1862-1933), ("Brandt'e Reima" who later moved to Garden City, Ks); and one item dated December 1, 1876, by brother Klaas P. Reimer (1864-1937), who later married Cornelius' daughter Anna. Six additional

samples of Schönschrieben from 1874 were published in 1983.

The next year, 1875, Cornelius and Agatha built a better house of logs with a straw roof. It was eighteen by forty feet in size. The KG teachers in the East Reserve immediately established

a system of teacher's conferences and mutual school inspections in which Cornelius actively took part. On April 13, 1876, for example, his colleague Abraham R. Friesen recorded that school examinations were held in Blumenhof and that teacher Cornelius Friesen from Blumenort had been present, as well as Elder Peter Toews, several ministers and other senior members of the KG. School was held in private homes until 1880 when a separate building was erected to be used as a school and church. A few years later this facility was mentioned by the Provincial School Inspector as being the only Mennonite school in Manitoba to have two blackboards.

Cornelius was a deeply religious individual. At the time of the schism of 1882, when one-half of the KG went with Aeltester Peter P. Toews to join with Johann Holdeman, Cornelius "gave his impression of the division by quoting Psalm 30:31, Matthew 7:24-27, and I Corinthians 3:4, each of which emphasizes the idea of steadfastness and a firm spiritual foundation." These scriptures were noted on the title page of Cornelius's handwritten copy of the sermon which Nebraska Elder Abram L. Friesen preached when he came to Manitoba to help his brethren.

A one page "Ink Practice Sheet" dated October 22, 1882, which is still extant, reveals that Cornelius had a firm and decisive handwriting. The sheet lists the name of the twelve sons of the patriarch Jakob with each name forming the beginning of a line in a poem. It illustrates the pedagogical techniques which he used to gain the interest of his students.

Another document still extant is a handwritten booklet about grammar entitled "Worte ohne Zusammenhang. Orthographie Allgemeine Regeln der Deutschen Rechtschreiben," 14 pages. Another handwritten booklet containing



Mrs. Klaas P. Reimer, nee Anna K. Friesen, visiting at the home of her son John F. Reimer at Fowler, Kansas, 1946. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Penner.



Elizabeth Penner displays an "Irrgarten" and an uncompleted paper cutout prepared by her grandfather Cornelius P. Friesen (1985). Elizabeth and her husband Peter K. Penner were the founders of the "Penner International" trucking firm of Steinbach.



Son Martin K. Friesen (1881-1976) circa 1903. Son of Cornelius P. Friesen. He was my grandfather.

a poem of some 35 verses also illustrates the teaching philosophy of the time. The various verses each deal with a segment of the Old Testament story. e.g. Verse 5, "Der Turm zu Babel," Verse 6, "Abraham's Beruf," Verse 7, "Abraham's Glaube," etc.

Cornelius taught in Blumenort from 1874 until 1890. Granddaughter Elizabeth Penner recalled that sometime around 1890 Cornelius attended school in Gretna to take a teacher upgrading course thereby becoming entitled to a higher salary. After missing one year Cornelius taught again in Blumenort from 1891-1894.

Although he was a full farmer (Vollwirt) owning a quarter of land, SW 27-7-6E, Cornelius was not remembered as a successful farmer. Assessment records in 1883 show his assets as follows: house \$150.00, furniture

\$150.00, 1 horse, 2 cows, 2 yearlings, 1 calf, 2 pigs, 3 sheep, and a plow \$15.00. With a total assessment of \$325.00 he was one of the poorer farmers in the village. By 1889 the situation had improved with Cornelius P. Friesen moving more into the middle level assessment.

Daughter Anna had a close relationship with her father whom she adored. She spent many hours by candlelight copying various of the writings which he collected. Since the family was poor she had to work out as a maid and if she was mistreated or overworked it was usually her father she appealed to and not her mother.

Cornelius was artistic by nature and was known for his *Fraktur* cutouts. Granddaughter Elizabeth Penner still has in her possession an "Irrgarten" made by Cornelius. The "Irrgarten" was an artistic form of paper cutout which had the lines of a poem or puzzle incorporated into the design. The poem or puzzle in the "Irrgarten" was usually of a didactic or devotional nature and was often used for teaching purposes.

Historian Royden Loewen writes that "Cornelius P. Friesen emphasized *Schoenschriften* very much. He had each student make his own book of writings. Friesen, himself an artist, would prepare covers for the student's booklets by drawing *Frakturen*, a complex of circles and curls, which in their whole constituted a picture."

Cornelius was concerned in keeping up with developments in the teaching field and in 1893 he, together with three other KG teachers--Heinrich Rempel, Franz K. Goossen and Gerhard E. Kornelsen, drove to Gretna to attend an "upgrading course." Cornelius also continued to be actively involved in the KG teacher's conferences. According to a record of these conferences for 1895 Cornelius acted as a "senior" teacher or teacher examiner, as he signed or initialled the minutes for four of the meetings held in that year.

Son Martin K. Friesen has written that, "In later years [1898] when their children were grown up, they built a new house which had a full basement constructed with fieldstones. He [Cornelius] knew how to work with lime and prepared his own lime with his own kiln using limestone." Sons Cornelius, Martin and Klaas were still at home at this time and helped their father by bringing the logs out of the bush and then helping to build the house. Cornelius P. Friesen worked hard to build this house and over-exerted himself which apparently contributed to his early death a few years later. Grandson Ben F. Reimer has a photo of this house but was unable to make it available for this article.

Cornelius was an intelligent man who had a good library which would have included the works of Menno Simons (the three volume edition co-published by his father and uncles Peter and Abraham in 1833), Dirk Philips, George Hansen, Peter Pieters, a *Martyr's Mirror*, and probably Jakob Denners. Cornelius collected handwritten copies of many writings by the Elders and leaders of the KG including two ser-

mons written by his father Klaas. One of these was written in 1863 on a text from Luke 18:9-14. This sermon was translated and published in 1993. Another sermon was written on December 30, 1845, and was transcribed by Cornelius' daughter Anna on May 20, 1900.

One of Cornelius' journals which is still extant includes the famous treatise *Faith and Reason* by KG theologian Heinrich Balzer of Tiege, Molotschna. Another undated journal which Anna copied includes letters by Peter P. Isaac, Rev. Peter Baerg and Klaas Reimer, and several poems of farewell from Russia, and poems by distant cousin Bernhard Harder and KG theologian Heinrich Balzer, and an epic poem about the Prussian Aeltester Cornelius Regehr. A journal dated April 11, 1870, includes a poem by Heinrich Balzer about the death of KG founder Klaas Reimer as well as another poem about the death of KG deacon Heinrich Wiebe. Another small hand-sewn booklet contains a biography of Aeltester Cornelius Regehr and the poem about Aeltester Regehr already referred to.

Cornelius taught in the village of Blumenhof from 1895 until his death. He was remembered as a good teacher. Cornelius was a colourful story teller who kept his class enthralled with his anecdotes. He taught some English in his classes which attracted unfavourable attention from the church.

Abram P. Reimer (1882-1961), a former student, remembered that Cornelius was not a strict disciplinarian. During the time that Cornelius was teaching in Blumenhof it occurred that his twin sons Martin and Klaas, who attended school in Blumenort, had misbehaved and were punished by having to kneel on blocks for a time. This caused considerable consternation in the Friesen household as father was not used to such methods. In fairness to the Blumenort teacher it should also be mentioned that the Friesen boys were known as quite a terror in their youth, traits probably inherited from their Klassen grandfather.

It is my impression that not everyone was happy with the pedagogical techniques of Cornelius P. Friesen. His emphasis on art, church history, lack of draconian discipline and development of life skills would probably have been mocked as too "girlish" by teachers such as Heinrich Franz back in Russia who were known for their cruel punishments and military muster.

Cornelius' teaching techniques belonged to an older, gentler and more patrician time. It stands to Friesen's credit, however, that over his quarter-century teaching career his students included the founders of many of Manitoba's wealthiest businesses and farming dynasties as well as numerous outstanding church and community leaders and, of course, the pioneer matriarchs who made it all happen.

Cornelius and his half-brother Abraham M. Friesen were very close and often helped each other. In his Journal for 1889, Abraham records that on Saturday April 2, he "went to Cornelius' place and helped slaughter pigs." On November 26th he records "After dinner I helped slaughter a cow at Cor. Friesens." And again on



Blumenort young people - Sons of Cornelius P. Friesen 1904

Rear: Boy John S. Koop, Martin K. Friesen, Peter Barkman Koop and Jakob Wiebe; Middle row: Auguste Hemiger (later Mrs. P. B. Koop), Katharina Koop (later Mrs. Peter G. Barkman), Katharina A. K. Plett (later Mrs. Martin K. Friesen), Maria J. K. Plett (later Mrs. Klaas K. Friesen), and Sarah B. Koop (later Mrs. Peter F. Plett). Front row: Klaas K. Friesen and Cornelius K. Friesen. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Henry B. Peters, nee Maria P. Friesen; Plett Picture Book, page 136. Cornelius K. Friesen was the founder of Friesen Drillers of Blumenort. Klaas was the grandfather of poet Patrick Friesen. Another son Johann K. Friesen of Ekron died in 1925. Johann was the grandfather of Art Friesen, President of Brookdale Pontiac.

February 15, 1890, Abraham "helped slaughter two pigs for Cornelius." A granddaughter recalls that the two brothers enjoyed studying the Bible together and "one week Abraham would go to Cornelius' house where they would sit and study and the next week Cornelius would go to

Abraham's place where they would have Bible study together." Abraham was the father of Klaas I. Friesen, see article elsewhere in this issue, part one.

Cornelius was only sick for a short time before he died on August 8, 1899. His cousin,

Bishop Peter P. Toews recorded that Cornelius died of inflammation of the intestines. Son Cornelius K. Friesen nursed his father during his sickness because the mother was sickly. The funeral was held according to the old custom, "No preaching and only a few songs were sung. Hans von Steen was quoted." This was indicative of the orthodox Mennonite teachings which were highly treasured by the Friesen family.

Cornelius' extensive library was later lost when fire destroyed the home of his son Klaas K. Friesen in 1920. In 1981 Elisabeth Penner recalled that her grandfather was resembled the most by her son Cornelius. She also recalled that he was to have had good posture and that he walked very upright much like his son Martin.

Descendants: Aganetha, Mrs. Cornelius P. Janzen; Anna, Mrs. Klaas P. Reimer; Margaretha, Mrs. Klaas W. Reimer; sons Cornelius K., Johann K., Martin K. and Klaas K. Friesen.

Interviews with grandchildren Mrs. Gertrude Plett, nee Friesen, Abram P. Friesen, Ed. G. Friesen, Mrs. Elizabeth Penner, nee Reimer, Henry F. Reimer, Ben F. Reimer, Mrs. Agatha Plett, nee Friesen and Mrs. Maria Peters, nee Friesen, and historian Henry N. Fast, Steinbach.

References:

Royden K. Loewen, *Blumenort*, 37, 45, 68, 101, 157 and 274.

Von Riesen - Friesen Genealogy, pages 165-204.

Abraham M. Friesen, Journal, 1889-90.

The Golden Years, Chapter on Education, pp. 120-144.

Anna Friesen Reimer Collection, courtesy of Mrs. Peter K. Penner, nee Elizabeth F. Reimer, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Heinrich R. Reimer's "Schrievedesch"

by Doris Penner, Landmark, Manitoba, a granddaughter

Introduction.

My grandfather's writing desk stands in my living room. It is almost 100 years old--and looks every bit its age. Some of the varnish and variegated brown finish underneath has scraped off in places and one door doesn't close properly. But it is the most valuable piece of furniture I have in my house--not because it is "antique" but because it seems to embody everything Grandfather was and stood for.

My grandfather, Heinrich R. Reimer, was a prominent church leader on the East Reserve, a pastor, minister and teacher in Prairie Rose (now Landmark), a writer and a farmer.

The desk stood in the Grosse Stube ("big room" or living room) of the square white three-story family house on what is now Landmark's

Main Street. The three shelves behind glass doors were filled with Bibles, study books, biographies and papers. Below this is a cover that folds back to become a writing desk with little compartments for envelopes, stamps, pens and ink.

This is where Grandfather felt most comfortable and at peace with himself--in spite of the fact that there undoubtedly was constant noise from various activities the family of 13 was involved in.

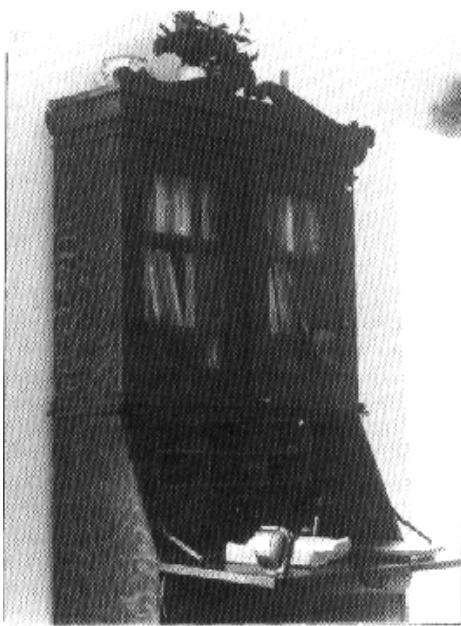
Even as a young lad, Grandfather had planned to study and his father (Abraham R. Reimer) had predicted that he would be a teacher some day.

At the desk he prepared his lessons for his grades one to eight students, first in High Ger-

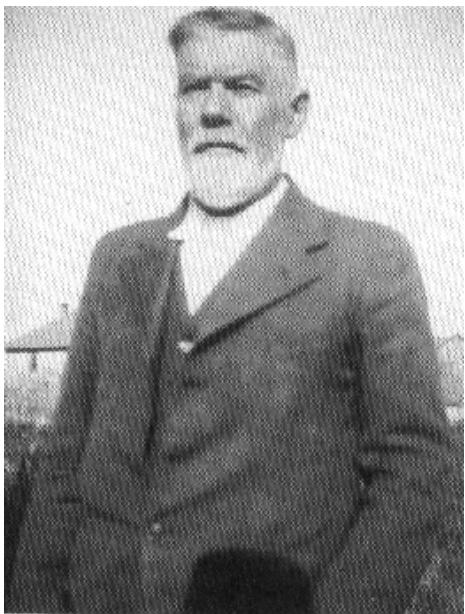
man, then later in English; this is where he wrote his sermons as well as articles for the *Christlicher Familienfreund* (church conference paper); this is where he read his Bible and the biographies and teachings of Menno Simons and Martin Luther, and this is where he wrote his journal and letters, keeping up an active correspondence with friends and relatives in Kansas and his children working or studying away from home.

Moved to Prairie Rose

Grandfather moved to Prairie Rose from the Clearsprings area in 1919 for the purpose of organizing into a settlement the families who moved north from older villages of the East Reserve and pasturing the Kleine Gemeinde



Desk of my Grandfather—Heinrich R. Reimer. Photo courtesy of Doris Penner.



Heinrich Reimer at age 45 years just after he had moved to Prairie Rose. My grandfather's desk—almost 100 years old—is the most valuable piece of furniture I have. Photo courtesy of Doris Penner.

Church there.

He had married Helena Dueck in 1896 in the Blumenort Kleine Gemeinde Church as a young man of 20 and he continued to farm as his father had done. However, it is obvious Grandfather was not a farmer at heart, yet how was he to provide for a wife and children?

Later, upon reflecting on the years shortly after his marriage, he wrote in his journal: "Courageous though we were, we were to be tested. Because it was so dry, all the soil seemed to

turn into worms, as in Egypt the mosquitoes (grasshoppers?), devouring everything, that is, the grain. And thus the Lord led me into the classroom...Man proposes, God disposes. That I see clearly today..."

Teaching Career.

It was likely with a sense of relief that he was able to turn at least part of his time to books. During his first year of teaching, he received an interim certificate through school inspector Heinrich Ewert after a two to three hour exam at the Gretna Normal School.

In all, he taught for 26 years--four years in Neuanlage (the third Kleine Gemeinde village located one mile southwest of Blumenort), fifteen years in Blumenort and six years in Prairie Rose. All six of his daughters and his seven sons attended school with their father as teacher (the youngest only a few months so the record would not be broken).

Church Leadership.

In 1916, Grandfather was appointed as deacon in the Blumenort Church and two years later as a minister. When he assumed the leadership of the Prairie Rose Church, his work load increased. While during the first years, morning worship services rotated from one church to another in the East Reserve and he didn't have to preach every Sunday, he was on the circuit which meant time on the road. Later he prepared weekly sermons in addition to officiating at hundreds of weddings and funerals. Then there was the visitation work to the families in the church who were scattered over eighteen square miles.

Just one example of his many-faceted ministry can be seen from an incident that took place in 1930. In November of this year a typhoid epidemic touched some families in the Prairie Rose area. The most severely hit was the David K. Plett family, who finally all took ill except Mrs. Plett and the youngest daughter. The church became a hospital as seven members of the Plett family were put to bed there.

Almost daily for four weeks Grandfather visited the patients speaking words of encouragement and, along with others, took care of their needs. In a single night David Plett and one daughter, Tina, died. Later Aaron Unger, a hired man, also died and a nurse, Margaret Fast, barely survived.

Grandfather is remembered as a strong and trusted church leader whose influence on Blumenort remained strong even after he relocated to Prairie Rose. He is also remembered as a man open to new ways of doing things. For example, he was one of the first Kleine Gemeinde ministers who preached without reading his sermons which made them easier to follow.

The work of the ministry was done without financial enumeration so the farm, especially the dairy, was the main source of income. By the time Grandfather moved to Prairie Rose, many of the children were old enough to do the milking and haying. During a time of reflection, Grandfather writes: "My dear wife, Mama, and our children have been home alone a great

deal. And they didn't simply keep the home; they often helped out in the barn and with other outside work, even though we often had a hired man."

In the 1940s, two of Grandfather's sons, Ben D. Reimer and Frank D. Reimer, as well as Abram P. Unger in 1951 joined him in the ministry of the church which eased his workload. In 1955 Frank Reimer became the lead pastor.

Journal

In 1942, Grandfather began a much more systematic journal than he had kept to this point. It was not a daily record, but it does set down events of daily life in the home such as visits from friends or family, and how seeding and harvesting was proceeding. He comments on church matters and births and deaths in the community.

There are many noteworthy happenings but often they receive only a line each: "Albert Wohlgemuth was killed by lightning last fall during harvest. Many young men have to go to prison if they refuse to do military service. Abe Unruh is among them, too. The church has been divided into four districts. Our first grandchild, Ellen Plett, has married." (Recorded on New Year's Day, 1943)

But Grandfather also took note of the "smaller" things in life as this entry of Nov. 23, 1944 demonstrates: "It seemed like summer with several degrees warmth so that the dandelions also turned toward the sun opening their flowers, glad to be able to greet it that way once more before winter comes."

In my mind's eye I can see my grandfather sitting at his desk pen in hand, gazing out the window at the dandelions and musing about their tenacity.

The next minute his head is bent over the writing paper, and with his Bible open at Galatians, he is jotting down notes for his next sermon on law and grace.

* * * *

Sources:

The information for this article is taken from: extensive interviews with my mother, Katherine Penner, one of two remaining children of Heinrich R. Reimer; *Love God and Your Neighbour Too*, a document compiled by Lawrence Klippenstein based on a collection of writings by Grandfather (note: excerpts from his dairy have been translated from the High German); *Blumenort: A Mennonite Community in Transition* (2nd Edition) by Royden Loewen.

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The Old Oak Table

by Mary Ann Loewen, Steinbach, Manitoba

I like old furniture. We live in an old house, and old furniture fits comfortably into this house. Both the aesthetic beauty and the meaningful significance, historical or nostalgic, of a particular piece of furniture, is of interest to me. Our dining room table is a case in point.

When my husband and I were married, we acquired (for a small sum of money) my family's old solid-oak dining room table. We used it in its less-than-illustrious state for a few years, and then finally decided, in 1988, that it was time for a refinishing job. My husband's brother, Mark, offered to do this for us and the finished product was truly lovely.

The table is simple in style. It is rectangularly - shaped with round moulded edges, it has gracefully shaped cabriole legs, and a minimum of fancy carving on its skirt.

A story comes to mind as I think about this table. It took place about 25 years ago, in the "Goossen house" at 193 Friesen Avenue in Steinbach. My parents, my siblings and I were sitting around the table for the supper meal and my father, whose temper rarely flares, was not happy with us children for some forgotten reason. The physical energy released at this time was directed at the table. The result was a bro-

ken table leg, a large wooden chunk missing from one of the beautifully shaped limbs. Part of the restoration in 1988 was having our friend, Douglas Fast, a talented woodworking artist,



The old oak dining room table.

replace this missing "chunk".

There is also some historical significance connected to this table. It came to light a year ago, when my parents told us that they had bought this very table and a matching china cabinet from the J. D. Goossen Estate when they

purchased the Goossen house in 1965. According to Mary Goossen, daughter of John D. and Elisabeth Goossen, the original owner of the house, the table and cabinet had been purchased in either 1933 or 1934 at Wilson's Furniture, at the corner of Main St. and Graham Ave. in Winnipeg. She noted that although "money didn't grow on trees in the '30s," the Goossens nonetheless bought furniture of good quality.

Along with the table and cabinet, they purchased matching chairs and an oak buffet. My parents, Wilbert and Kae Loewen, have the china cabinet in their dining room to this day. In 1969 when my parents sold the Goossen house and moved to Morris, they took with them the old oak table; later when they moved to Winnipeg they loaned the table to a family friend.

When my husband and I were married and moved to Blumenort the table came with us to the farm. In 1992 we purchased the Goossen house and the old oak table returned to its original place; a cycle of history is complete. The table now graces the very dining room that it stood in, in 1934. See also Royden Loewen, "The Goossen House, 1917-1992: 75th Anniversary," in *Perservings*, No. 1, Jan. 1993, pages 1-2.

Grandmother's Clock, 1819

by Rev. Cornelius P. Dueck, Box 20,644, Steinbach, Man., R0A 2T2

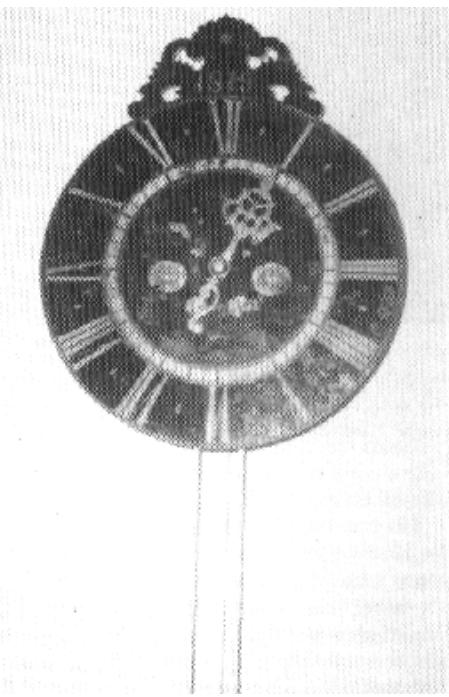
I still remember when my Grandmother Mrs. Franz Kroeker, nee Margaretha L. Plett, used to wind the clock each day. She lived in a house on the yard of my parents, Bishop and Mrs. Peter R. Dueck, located on SE26-6-6-E. Grandmother lived in a two room house with a leanto and a barn for 1 cow, a pig and some chickens with three roosters above the hog pen and a place for a number of loads of hay. The house and barn were covered with cedar shingles. Grandmother had the clock beside her bed in her house and also later after she moved into my mother's bedroom where she lived for a year before she died on December 9, 1920.

After Grandmother died, our Mother used the bedroom again. I remember her winding the clock every night, pulling the smaller weight down, until she moved to Mexico in 1948 in fall.

In 1827 my Plett great-great-grandparents, Johann Plett (1765-1833) and Esther Smit (1788-1855), emigrated from Prussia where the clock was made, to Russia, presumably bringing the clock with them. They settled on a

Wirtschaft in Sparav, Molotschna. Their granddaughter Magaretha L. Plett married Franz Kroeker (1827-1905) of Margenau and they were my grandparents. Franz Kroeker farmed on a Wirtschaft in Kleefeld, Mol. and later moved to Steinbach, Borosenko. In 1874 they emigrated to Canada where they were one of 18 families to settle in the village of Steinbach, Manitoba. They brought the clock along with them.

There are a lot of clocks made in Russia, similar to this one as I see. I had this clock repaired in 1973 by Mr. Wiens at Niverville. He put in new bearings and some shafts. Wiens said somebody must have replaced the bearings as they were not put in straight, and so they got worn badly. The clock now works fine. It needs a chain instead of the rope. The rope is as I have known it ever since my folks had it. I bought the clock at my mother's auction sale 1928, which was just between us children. I bought the clock for \$2.00 and paid \$65.00 for fixing it in 1973. The clock remains a treasured heirloom in our family.



Pull type clock made in Prussia in 1819. A treasured heirloom of the Kroeker/Dueck family. Photo courtesy of Cornelius P. Dueck, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Maria Hiebert's Sampler of 1858

by Peter Bergen, 1238 Lorette Ave., Winnipeg, R3M 1W5

According to Webster's dictionary a sampler is a decorative piece of needlework typically having letters or verses embroidered on it in various stitches as an example of skill. Instead of verses, the variation from letters in Maria Hiebert's sampler was her name, the year of its creation and figures suggestive of forms that one would find in a clip art display.

In September of 1860 Maria Hiebert married Peter Bergen and from then on her time and energies probably were mostly taken up with activities associated with raising a family.

In the 1790s the grandparents of Peter and Maria (Hiebert) Bergen, among many other Mennonite families, emigrated from West Prussia to Russia to establish there the Chortitza Colony on the west bank of the Dnieper River. Some forty years later, that is in the last half of the 1830s their parents, together with other young and ambitious families founded Bergthal Colony about 200 kilometers southeast of Chortitza.

In the summer of 1874 Peter and Maria (Hiebert) Bergen joined the migration to Canada. There they settled first in Ebenfeld village about three miles west of Steinbach. Six years later, in June of 1880 they relocated with their young growing family to the Mennonite West Reserve, together with the group that established Sommerfeld village about six miles southeast of Altona.

Unfortunately Maria (Hiebert) Bergen passed away before any of her grandchildren were born. Hence they knew nothing of her personality from experience. Besides there was no photo, although it has been said that she had dark curly hair and friendly brown eyes.

At the time of her death in November of 1891 her eight surviving children ranged from one to twenty-two years of age. In 1988 when the writer published a genealogy of Peter and Maria (Hiebert) Bergen, their descendants up to the fourth generation numbered around 1700. Among them still were some that were sometimes referred to as resembling a "typical Bergen", although in such cases the resemblance probably was just as often a "typical Hiebert".

In the third and fourth generation, of course, even the most dominant virtues and blemishes of Peter and Maria (Hiebert) Bergen already would have been interminably interwoven with character strands from many other sources.

It was a different matter with the sampler, it is still exactly as Maria Hiebert made it in 1858—close to 140 years ago.

Although our photo here is in black and white, on the actual material the colours still were quite fresh in shades of red, green and purple, on a pastel background. Exposed to daylight the pigment probably will become somewhat faded in the future. Until Catherine Bergen had it framed for display some fifteen years ago, it probably had been carefully folded and kept



Jennifer and Kathryn Bergen, fourth generation descendants of Peter & Maria (Hiebert) Bergen, display the "sampler".



Sampler made in 1858 by Maria Hiebert (1842-1891). Framed by Catherine Bergen.

in a drawer throughout most of its passing years of changing times.

Maria Hiebert embroidered the sampler in her sixteenth year and she kept it throughout her married life, presumably in memory of her youth and as an example of her skill in needlework. Also one is probably correct in assuming that the sampler was passed on in accordance with her wishes to her namesake, her second youngest daughter, Maria Bergen.

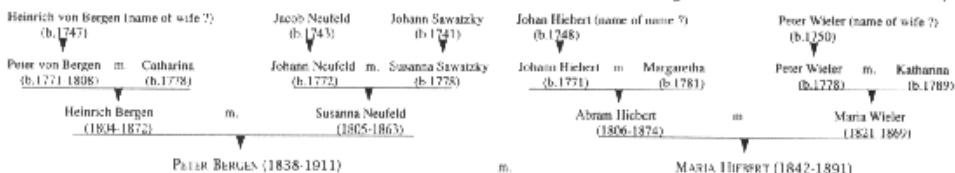
Maria Bergen's life was disrupted three times by the death of a husband, as shown by the accompanying genealogy chart. Although she also had descendants from the first and the second husband, in the early 1980s she presented the sampler to her niece, Catherine Bergen in appreciation of the latter's friendship. Perhaps it also was in the hope that as a keepsake of her mother, the sampler would eventually be re-

turned again to the relatives in Manitoba.

Catherine Bergen lived in Vancouver, B.C., which also was the home of most of Maria (Bergen) Rempel's family. As mentioned earlier, Catherine Bergen had the sampler framed and she left it for display and appreciation in the home of her sister, Maria Bergen. There it still occupies a prominent place close to the front entrance on the wall in the living room.

To the best of our knowledge the sampler is the only surviving keepsake of our grandmother on father's side of the family. By the way, Jennifer and Kathryn are daughters of Wayne and Sandra (Bouma) Bergen while Wayne is the son of Elvin and Maria (Wiebe) Bergen. Elvin, a brother of Catherine, is the youngest member of the Cornelius and Katharina (Hildebrand) Bergen family.

Ancestors and First Generation Descendents of Peter and Maria (Hiebert) Bergen (1838-1911 and 1842-1891)



1. Peter Bergen (1804-1911) m. Maria Dineck (1871-1917).
2. Sarah Bergen (1802-1916) m. Gerhard Hildebrand (1870-1946).
3. Helena Bergen (1875-1898) m. Heinrich Sawatzky (1871-1942).
4. Heinrich Bergen (1879-1943) m. Margaretha Rempel (1881-1951).
5. Abram Bergen (1882-1946) m. Katharina J. Hildebrand (1884-1970).
6. Cornelius Bergen (1883-1958) m. Katharina K. Hildebrand (1891-1985).
7. Maria Bergen (1886-1977) First marriage, Frank P. Rempel (1883-1908); Second " John P. Rempel (1885-1934); Third " William Thom (died in 1965).
8. Susanna Bergen (1890-1948) m. Alexander Crossman (1895-1984).

Abbreviation: "b." denotes year of birth and "m." stands for "married".

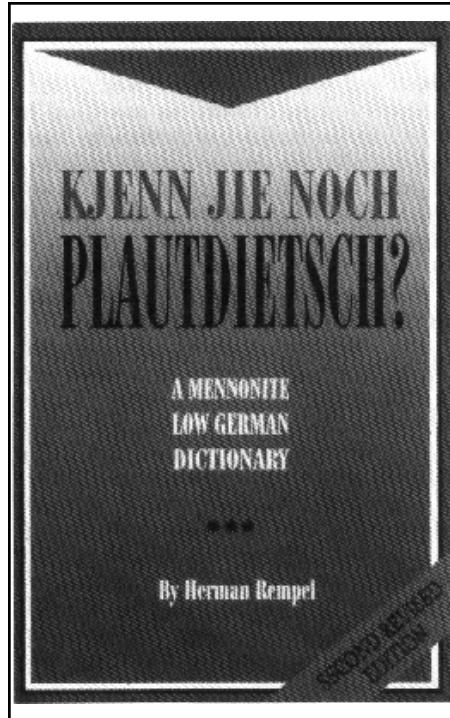
Sources, first generation, Horst Penner, 1978: Die ost und westpreussischen Mennoniten, (Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein E.V.) pp. 417-467; second and third generation, R. H. Uerdt, 1955. Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründen der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert [Einrich Schneider, Karlsruhe, Germany]; Peter & Maria (Hiebert) Bergen's family: the Bergthal and Sommerfeld Church Registers [Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, MB].

Book Reviews

Please forward review copies of books of relevance to the history and culture of the Hanover Steinbach area to the Editor, *Preservings*, o/c Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0. Phone Steinbach 1(204-326-6454) or Winnipeg 1(204-474-5037)

Rempel, Herman, *Kjenn Jie Noch Plautdietsch? A Mennonite Low German Dictionary* (Prairie View Press, Rosenort, Manitoba, R0G 1W0, 1995), 365 pages, available from the publisher and good book stores everywhere.

For all of us who write a good deal in Plautdietsch, the original Rempel dictionary was a delightful friend. With the rich variety of words he brought from everyday Mennonite Life, it could almost write a drama by itself—if only you could plug it into the computer. So the idea of setting aside the familiar and battered blue book makes me a little ‘tsiepaugijch’. It has seen men through writer’s block and has been a comfortable gift for brothers and double-cousins (are these a mostly-Menno phenomenon?) who can sit down and relive their childhood on any page .



There are good reasons, of course, to keep the blue version handy. One is the lyrical eulogy that Al Reimer penned as introduction. It lauds the unique passion with which Rempel approached the drudgery of compiling 12,000 words from scattered and not easily accessible sources; as well, it is a lavish tribute to the “astonishing power and vividness” of our Muttasproak, centred in the “concrete world of Famielje, Wirtschoft, Darp and Kjoakj.” I sense, however, a stronger optimism for our Plautdietsch in Reuben Epp’s new introduction. For Reimer, it was “a language that is on the wane.” The dictionary was needed to preserve a soon-to-be extinct relic. Reuben Epp, even though he looks back to the origins of

Plautdietsch, sees Rempel’s dictionary as harmonising our Plaut with the “Low German written among more than 7 million speakers of other dialects.”

It is possible only to make spot-checks of the changes in the new dictionary. I expect pleasant surprises. ‘Roar’ and ‘boar’ are certainly better illustrations of the sound of ‘oa’ than was ‘boa-constrictor’. An important addition is the discussion of contractions (such as ‘woat daut = woat’t’) which are universal in our daily speech. Many of the run-on entries have been converted to main entries, and are thus much easier to find. Unfortunately, not all escaped the scissors—surely we still need to use ‘grootfrat’ now and then!

Some of the new words come from Rempel’s familiar well: the streets and shopping malls and coffee shops of Jant Sied - ‘scheiwle’, for a way of walking, for instance; and which of us has not tried to be forgiven by passing the buck: Hee deed mie fetobbre! Idioms are given more definition (han on haa, growe Rad) Some bring in new realities from our own time: where did ‘Truppasch’ (smokers) come from? ‘Aids’ finds its way to the English side - I notice Herman, in good Menno tradition, is much more delicate about the words he has in Plaut than in English - daut sent ie mo blooss Englenda, though this last is not a word recognised in the dictionary. Some other words are left out - are ‘Gruft’ and ‘Trumpf’ not Plautdietsch anymore?

But the greatest influence Rempel will have on the future of written Plaut is in its orthography. In 1984, Al Reimer noted presciently that this was “the right time of history to fix and preserve the lexical form of the language...” and the first editions did that. Most significant was Rempel’s decision to use ‘kj’ as nearer to his sounding than ‘tj’. I still remember vividly the controversy that rose over this difference in the first meeting of the ‘linguistic specialists’ who had gathered at the University of Winnipeg to standardise our orthography. Their final choice was compromise: ‘Kj’ initially, ‘tj’ within the word. But now Rempel’s choice has been reinforced by Reuben Epp, who has selected ‘kj’ as more akin to other Low German dialects.

And as Caxton did for English and Luther did for High German, Rempel will probably do for Plautdietsch! In this new edition, another major deMolotschna-ing element has come in: all the ‘ts’ initials have become ‘ss’. So now I am ‘ssiepaugijch’ instead!

The coming of this new edition speaks of renaissance for our mother-tongue. Epp mentions how Rempel’s work is often quoted in the *Preussisches Wörterbuch* now being complied at the University of Kiel. Perhaps we will never go back to the golden days when, as double-cousin Stanford Penner so often reminded us, Plautdietsch dominated the north Europe of the Hanseatic League. But Herman, be assured that

there is continued interest in Plautdietsch; we honour your contribution.

Reviewed by **Wilmer Penner**, Box 1305, Steinbach, Manitoba

C.B. Loewen, *I Remember Riverside and the Regions Beyond* (Morris, Manitoba, 1995). 379 pages, paperback. Edited by daughter Lori Scharfenberg.

I Remember... is a collection of the writings of Cornie B. Loewen, missionary/preacher from Rosenort, edited by Lori Scharfenberg, a daughter. The collection is comprised mostly of shorter English prose and poetry with a few items of Low German. These selections include poems written to his life-long love, Tina, memories of the 1950 flood, accounts of mission work in Mexico, family event reminiscing, early challenges to Kleine Gemeinde practices and the Loewen family genealogy.

Throughout, the style of writing reflects C.B. Loewen’s zest for life. The difficulties encountered in driving Tina to the hospital for the birth of a baby during their time in Mexico, shuttling chickens during the flood and a tour of Israel are all recounted in vivid, energetic language. In one ten-page account, one reads about the drive through rain and muck for a baby delivery, Tina being shot at in the evening because she was thought to be a cattle rustler, a near plunge into a river because the bridge was out, and a suicide. The language is earthly, folksy, and colourful leaving one to wonder whether the editing process might even have deleted snatches some would have liked to see included.

For those who heard Cornie Loewen preach, the devotional sermons and spiritual reflections need to be read with the mental, audio image of him preaching. You need to hear the slightly rasping voice, the high energy (almost rat-a-tat-tat) presentation, the crisp enunciation of a message that begins as he moves to the pulpit and ends just as abruptly as he sits down. These and other memorable mannerisms need to run through your mind as you read the sermon material. Mentally preach it with his voice and power.

The book needs to be read by the people mentioned in the book: relatives, acquaintances, and colleagues. Never having lived in “jaunt sied” limited me somewhat in my interaction with the material that often related to individuals a generation older and families not represented in my experience. However, having grown up during the time when C.B. Loewen was active, I was aware of the events and people in his recollections.

For those of us who knew Mr. Loewen only as a public figure, much is added that before was only family or close friend informational property. Many of the gaps we might have had in our knowledge are provided in this book.

If there were a flaw in the book that might be noted, it could be that the years of ministry in the Morris church and the subsequent Low German radio ministry received limited space considering the years of ministry in these two areas. But I suppose the explanation could be that those who read the book will remember the recent years without the help of a book. Also, the book is careful to avoid documenting hurts and disappointments that are inevitable in the life of a man this active and public. This could be attributed to the Christian charity of the editor who would not want to incriminate brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The book is a very valuable addition to writings relating to the history of the Kleine Gemeinde and Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

Book review by Rev. Don Thiessen, Box 1268, Steinbach

Herman and Frieda Isaac *Family Book of Jacob W. Isaac 1879-1964* (Box 155, Kleefeld, Man.: Prairie View Press, 1993), 39 pages. Available from the authors for \$4.00.

At first glance of the booklet we notice an intricate little design on the front cover underneath the title. We begin to wonder what other embellishments we may find between the covers, and we are not disappointed. In addition to the usual genealogical tables we find narrative in prose and verse, interspersed with entertaining little cartoons that evoke some smiles. We get a report of a family reunion with a page of autographs, and also a reproduction of a handwritten holiday greeting, carefully, done more than 100 years ago by the family patriarch when he was yet attending school.

The time frame covered is confined to life in Canada, so generation one is the first one native to Canada. Nevertheless, several ancestral lines are listed that go back into the old country for four generations.

We get a glimpse of what pioneer life was like, as well as some personality traits of some of the old-timers according to different articles written by family members. The story told by this book is largely couched in Christian rhetoric, and is graced at the beginning with a bible verse that extols work. Spiritual values are upheld with: faith in God, doing good to others, and total trust in the integrity of the pioneer parents who now are given considerable praise whereas, we are told, they themselves had been rather averse to dispense too much praise of their own towards others. Good humour is provided by some imaginative story parts, and by a collection of ethnic sayings.

Book review by Ted Wiens, Kleefeld

H. Irwin Friesen and Rudy Friesen, editors, *Memories from my Life: Heinrich J. Friesen* (798 Sturgeon Road, Winnipeg, R2Y 0K9, 1995), 192 pages. Available from the editors for \$22.00 plus postage.

This week I was allowed into the life of my uncle, Onkel Hein. I read the book 'Memories from my Life', translated and compiled by his

Rempel, Herman, ed., "Johann S. Rempel & Family" 1830-1899 (Box 901, 770 Wardrop St., Morden, R0G 1J0), 215 pages. Available from the author for \$8.00 plus postage (phone 204-822-4009).

For people who are interested in who is related to whom, and to which family someone belongs, this book can be of great help. It is estimated that it lists more than five thousand descendants of Johann and Margaretha Rempel. Not even all the grandchildren have ever known one another, much less later generations. Printed in 1988 in an 11 inch by 8.5 inch format, it has two columns per page. It has few pictures. The patriarchal couple is shown (in some cases with their families). These pictures are placed at the beginning of their respective sections.

The introduction to the book has a variety of information. There is a list of contact persons; a brief index; an attempt at delineating the origin of the name Rempel; there is a translation of the forward from W. Schmiedehaus' book "Ein Feste Burg ist Unser Gott"; along with selected accounts of Mennonite History. The parents of Johann Rempel were Peter (1807-56) and Anna (Barkman 1809-44) Rempel. They were both born in the newly settled village of Chortitz in Russia. The introduction also has a translation of the "Notice of Death" of Johann S. Rempel signed by his son Johann in Chortitz where he likely passed away. He is probably buried in the Chortitz cemetery. Margaretha passed away in 1914 in Edenburg, east of Gretna and is buried there.

The book is outlined alphabetically but only for the children of Johann and Margaretha. Consequently it is somewhat time consuming to find specific information. As the author says, "For anyone interested in following the genealogy, he or she will be required to make a little effort to locate the desired information."

The book has little information on addresses. The Johann Rempels settled in Grunthal in 1875. They claimed their homestead, on NE 15-7-5E on June 23, 1876. Their sons Johann, Peter, Jacob, Franz, and son-in-law Peter Funk also claimed homesteads in the general area. Except for Johann (see *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec. 95, pages 30-31) the sons all moved west of the Red River by 1890 or 1900. The book does say that some descendants have moved to Paraguay. In the 120 years since 1875 the family has spread across Canada, U.S.A., Paraguay, England, Germany and other countries.

If Johann and Margaretha Rempel were to check on their descendants in Steinbach they would find among them Colin Kihn, the plumber, Robert Prescott Smith, the lawyer, Gordon Adamyk, probably the youngest person to graduate from the local high school who is presently working in England.

Compiling the information for this work must have taken years of dedicated effort by Herman Rempel. The book is still available in both hard cover and soft cover. Though it looks as is it should sell for \$30.00 or more, it is available for \$8.00 - hard cover - \$6.00 - soft cover, plus postage. The author is interested not to make a profit but to get the book into wider circulation.

Perhaps someone could be motivated to do a revision with more information on each individual and removing some inaccuracies.

To the author our sincere gratitude for completing this major undertaking.

Book review by Rev. Cornie Rempel, Randolph, Manitoba



Maria S. Rempel (1868-1937) and her husband Peter T. Funk 1915 with children Cornelius and Helena. The family moved to Paraguay during the 1920s. Photo courtesy of Johann S. Rempel family book, page 120. For additional information regarding this family see Linda Buhler, "Kronsgart and Neuhoffnung," in John Dyck, ed., *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve*, 165-167.

children, and entered into the story of a man I never really knew.

In a frank and unassuming manner the story is told: "I, Heinrich Jacob Friesen, was born....1901..." He recounts a happy childhood at Rudnerweide in the Mennonite colony of Molotschna, Russia with a close knit family. But trouble looms and education has to be interrupted. The defenceless Mennonites are thrust into civil war, experienced first hand by Heinrich. The 'hell' continues as he witnesses the horrors of war, becomes a fugitive and in a series of near misses and divine intervention, has his life spared.

Due to political unrest and no guarantee of peace for the future, many Mennonites plan emigration to Canada; Heinrich, wife Justina and young son among them. With them we experience the heart rending goodbyes, crowded trains, lice, sea sickness and finally freedom in their newly adopted country.

Pioneering in Manitoba is difficult in the late '20s and '30s but the resilience of the farmer that doesn't 'give up' in the face of drought and hardships is evident. Through a strong work ethic, an unfailing faith in God, Heinrich and his family prospers.

In later retirement years, the script reads like a diary. Passage of time is recorded by years, crop reports, geese flight patterns, deaths, marriages, births, trips.

The Friesen family has given the readers a unique glimpse into the life of their family through diary, genealogy, pictures and memorabilia. In all, it's a gripping story of an ordinary life in extraordinary circumstances.

Book review by Helga (Warkentin) Froese

Book notes:

Marjorie Hildebrand, *The Oak Tree: The story of the ancestors and descendants of Peter and Margaretha Wiebe 1797-1945* (Box 1420, Steinbach, Man., 1995), 85 pages. Available from the author for \$10.00 plus postage.

This book starts with a brief biographies of four sets of ancestors of Peter B. and Anna Wiebe, who came from the Berghthal Colony, Russia, and moved to Manitoba in 1874-6: They include Bernard Wiebe (1821-1897) who settled in Ebenfeld in the East Reserve in 1876 and moved on to Rosenfeld, W. Reserve, two years later, and also Kornelius Wiebe (1821-1896) who settled in the village of Schoensee near Grunthal, Manitoba, in 1874.

On the maternal side are the families of Franz Thiessen (1833-1901) (see article elsewhere in this issue) and Peter Dueck (1836-1899), both East Reserve pioneers, who had moved on to Schoenau, W. Reserve, by 1880.

The story of *The Oak Tree* focuses on the family of their children Peter B. Wiebe (1854-1924) and Anna Wiebe (1858-1935) who lived in the village of Weidenfeld, W. Reserve.

Edward Enns, *In Search of Abraham Ens (1799-)*; *Abraham Ens (1826-1913)*; *Abraham Ens (1861-1935)* (115 Oakview Ave., Winnipeg, Man., R2K OR9), 139 pages. Available from the author.

In Search of Abraham Ens tells the story of Abraham Ens, a teacher in Steinfeld who emi-

grated to Manitoba in 1893.

Brief family histories precede each genealogical section. The highlight of the book is a collection of 83 letters written by Abraham Enns (1861-1935) to friends and relatives back in Russia. These letters were published in the *Rundschau* and this family history is a good example of how these letters can be used to write and document family history.

Evelyn Gerbrandt, *Klaas B. Friesen Nov 18, 1838 - July 15, 1922* (Niverville, Man., 1992), photocopied, 26 pages, available from the compiler Box 202, Niverville, Manitoba).

Klaas B. Friesen and his wife Maria de Fehr were 1874 pioneers of the village of Steinbach, Manitoba, settling on the first Wirtschaft or farmstead from the northwest along Main Street. He was the son of Kleine Gemeinde school teacher Cornelius F. Friesen (1812-92) who settled in the nearby village of Blumenort.

The book includes a reprint of part of the autobiography of Helena Friesen Jahnke, a sister to Klaas. (For a complete copy see *Profile of the Kleine Gemeinde*, pages 209-212.) The booklet includes a compilation of the descendants of Klaas B and Maria Friesen. It is a valuable addition to the growing literature about this Friesen family. See article elsewhere in this issue. The compilation was prepared for a family reunion held on August 2, 1992.

Book notes by D. Plett

Film Review:

Migration North: Mennonites from Mexico.

Produced by Mennonite Central Committee, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1995. Produced by Bruce Hildebrand and narrated by Gladys Terichow.

Migration North was originally meant as an instrument of briefing for service workers engaged in the settlement of Mexican Mennonite immigrants in Canada. The film has become much more than that; the newspapers note that it has become a Mennonite "blockbuster" with more than 550 copies sold. The reason for this is clear; a caption on the jacket of this video promises "an orientation to the Mexican Mennonite Culture and Way of Life."

Old Colonist Mexican Mennonites, said now to number 50,000 people, have become a little-understood, but significant community within the wider Mennonite world. Like the Amish and Old Order Swiss Mennonites, the Old Colonists have defied the world, the former groups by refusing modern technology, the latter group by turning its back on the "good life" in Canada and by elevating certain technologies - most obviously rubber tires - into symbols of contestation with the "world". As such the Mexican Mennonites have solicited both the scorn and admiration from their more "compromising" cousins to the North.

There are two films here. On the one hand there is the study of Mennonites who are leaving the Old Colonist communities; thus the viewer is introduced to the array of problems within the Mexican communities. We meet more dissidents - the defrocked preacher, the fired schoolteacher, the excommunicated member, the emigrating family - who voice grievances than we do defenders of the community. Intersecting the film are commentaries by case work-

ers from the north who also outline the social problems of this community.

Thus, unlike films, for example, about other conservative Anabaptist groups - the Amish, Old Order Swiss Mennonites and Hutterites - this one does not romanticize a group for having recognized the dangers of North American affluence and individualism. Instead it prescribes solutions for the Old Colonists: Mexican Mennonites, the narrator notes at one juncture, require "new skills, new attitudes to compete in a global economy." Moreover, the viewer is told that the Old Colonists need to accept rubber tires, half ton trucks, part-time jobs, recreational facilities, and a culture of "personal choice" to solve community problems and hence stem the migration north.

My guess is that the appeal of the video is not these prescriptions, but the creative glimpse of a "way of life" intertwined in the text of the film. The cinematography, for one, is striking; there is a natural beauty to the Cuauhtemoc and Durango regions with their semiarid plateaus ringed by mountain ranges. The broad-rimmed hats and colourful dresses of the girls, the cowboy hats and overalls of the men, speak of a culture that has indeed changed over times, mixing elements of traditional Mennonite garb with Latino ways. The strong faces in the film are filled with conviction, sincerity and determination, but also with joviality and delight.

The "world view" expressed by the interviewees is moving; I Timothy 3:14 stands as the base of the community - "continue in what you have learned and firmly believed"; so, too, is the quiet trust of an unnamed Old Colonist minister who tells Terichow that this can be pursued "as long as the Loving God sustains us."

The medical practices of the untrained "doctors", the tenacious perpetuation of teaching by rote, the "crude" forms of irrigation, the old craft of cheese production, all, may be signs of a people not fully in step with a modern world. But I came away from the movie moved by the achievement of this strong people; whether we agree with their values or not, they have chosen to contest the technological excesses and the individualization of North America. And they are attempting to build their communities in a context of a severely devalued peso in which farmers must "buy expensive and sell cheap".

My hope is that MCC now sees fit to produce a work entitled, "Remaining South"; how do the Old Colonists survive in the troubled economy of Mexico and how do they articulate their "world view"? What are the thoughts of the "well-adjusted children" of land-owners, the hopes of the majority who remain, the aspirations of those who raise large families, the thoughts of the teachers who recount biblical stories to students? Given their growing numbers, their creative self-sufficiency and their prophetic voice against North American values, the Old Colonists, and all Dutch-North German Mennonites in Latin America for that matter, will command an increasing presence and influence within the wider Mennonite community. Film review by Royden K. Loewen, Steinbach, Manitoba