

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

Jakob M. Barkman 1824-75: Father of Steinbach

by Delbert F. Plett

Family background.

Jakob M. Barkman was born in Rückenau, Molotschna Colony, South Russia, to his parents Martin J. Barkman (1796-1872) and Katharina Regier (1800-66). His father was the son of Jakob Bergmann (1756-ca.1819) and Katharina Wiens (Note One). Henry Schapansky has written that the information on Jakob Bergmann is speculative but that he might have been the son of Jakob Bergmann (died 1780) who in turn may have been the son of Abraham Bergmann (1708-77) listed in the 1776 census as resident in Neuedorf, Prussia: letter Nov. 28, 1992.

Katharina Regier came from "royal" lineage as Mennonites go, being the granddaughter of Bishop Peter Epp (1725-89) of Danzig, West Prussia. He was a devoted leader of his people and instrumental in organizing the emigration to Russia. He encouraged his children to emigrate.

Katharina's parents were Katharina Epp (b. 1764) and Johann "Hans" Regier (b. 1779) who settled in Krongarten, a Frisian village some 30 verst north of Ekatherinoslav or present-day Zaporozhyia (Note 2). The Regiers were one of at least four Frisian families from Krongarten and Schönwiese in the Chortitz Colony, who became associated with the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) in the Molotschna. The Frisians under Bishop Heinrich Jantzen were sympathetic to the cause of the KG and were their allies in the reform tradition during the early 1800s (Note 3).

The Epp tradition of community service was continued by Jakob's uncle Johann Regier (1802-42), Schönsee, who served as Oberschulz of the Molotschna 1833-42. Johann had a terrible drinking problem but was much loved by the people and consistently re-elected over the opposition of "Kirchliche" church leaders. Johann was also Johann Cornies' partner in instituting social reforms in the Molotschna Colony, which by 1839 had a population of 12,000. For the preceding six years the position of Oberschulz was held by Johann Klassen (1785-1841), Tiegerweide, married to Johann's sister Aganetha Regier.



House barn combination of Martin J. Barkman in Rückenau, Mol. where Jakob M. Barkman was born and raised. Here the Russian Czar visited the Barkman family in 1825 and ate a meal. It may well be that the Imperial Czar tousled the head of the one year-old Jakob and wished him well on his life's journey. According to grandson Martin B. Fast who took the picture of the Martin J. Barkman Wirtschaft on a trip to Russia in 1906, the large hayshed originally located diagonally across the rear--which only the wealthier farmers could afford--had already been torn away when the photo was taken. Photo courtesy of Martin B. Fast, Reisebericht, page 68. M.B. Fast served for many years of editor of the Rundschau.

Martin J. Barkman 1796-1872, Rückenau, Mol.

In 1812 Jakob's father Martin J. Barkman (1796-1872) was working alone on the fields with his team when a French army detachment came by and dragooned him to accompany them. The units were on their way to invade Russia and needed additional supply wagons. One night, when they were camped after having travelled for several days, a high ranking officer noticed the weeping 16 year old boy. He granted the boy's tearful entreaties to be released and allowed him to return home: Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahre."

Martin J. Barkman and brother Jakob (1794-1875) emigrated from Prussia to Russia in 1817. Family tradition holds that they left their homeland to escape military service during the ravages and devastation caused by the invasion of Napoleon. By day they hid under grain stooks

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and by night they travelled as best as they could. Their mother treated them with a glass of buttermilk before they started on their long arduous trek and wished them a happy journey: P.J.B. Reimer, *Genealogy of Jakob Barkman*, page 2.

In Russia the brothers Barkman settled in Rückenau, Mol. Martin J. B. was a tailor by trade. Upon his arrival he worked as a labourer until his marriage to Katharina Regier on August 5, 1819. The brothers soon acquired their own farms and are listed in the 1835 census as the owners of Wirtschaft 11 and 17, respectively.

M. J. B. joined the KG shortly after his arrival; possibly because his wife's aunt Maria Epp (1760-1806) had been married to founder Klaas Reimer.

Both Martin and Jakob J. Barkman served for many years as village Schulz or mayor in Rückenau, Mol. In 1845 Jakob J. Barkman was admonished by KG Bishop Abr. Friesen, Ohrloff, regarding accounting irregularities in connection with the office and for a time both brothers were under the ban. The insinuation was that they had made too much money too

fast. Both men remained loyal to the KG, a sign that they were able to deal with the admonition "as men" and make things right.

Visit by Imperial Czar, 1825.

Martin J. Barkman was honoured by a visit from His Imperial Majesty the Russian Czar (possibly Alexander I) who ate a meal in the Barkman home in Rückenau. The Russian Czar Alexander I visited the Molotschna Colony in 1825. Martin J. Barkman was probably honoured with the Imperial visit because he was village Schulz at the time.

Considerable information about the Barkman clan is found in the "journal" of son-in-law Peter I. Fast, who bought the Barkman Wirtschaft after Martin's death in 1872. It was in the Martin J. Barkman home in Rückenau that Jakob M. Barkman was born and raised to adulthood. He was baptised upon the solemn confession of his faith on May 2, 1842.

Jakob M. Barkman (1824-75), Waldheim, Mol.

On February 13 and again on March 13, 1849, the marriage banns of Jakob M. Barkman and Elisabeth Giesbrecht (1830-58) were proclaimed after the worship service in Tiege, Mol. Elisabeth was the daughter of Jakob Giesbrecht, owner of Wirtschaft 17 in Muntau in 1835: see article on the KG Giesbrechts elsewhere in this issue.

After the wedding Jakob Barkman acquired a "Half" Wirtschaft in Waldheim. Also resident in Waldheim was first cousin Jakob K. Barkman (1820-1902), a wealthy merchant. The KG fellowship in Waldheim included: Isaac Friesen, step-son of KG minister Klaas Friesen (1793-1870) of Rosenort; Jakob Loewen (1820-1901), son of KG deacon Isaac Loewen (1787-1873) of Lindenau; and his brother-in-law Peter H. Penner, son of Peter Penner (1816-84) of Margenau.

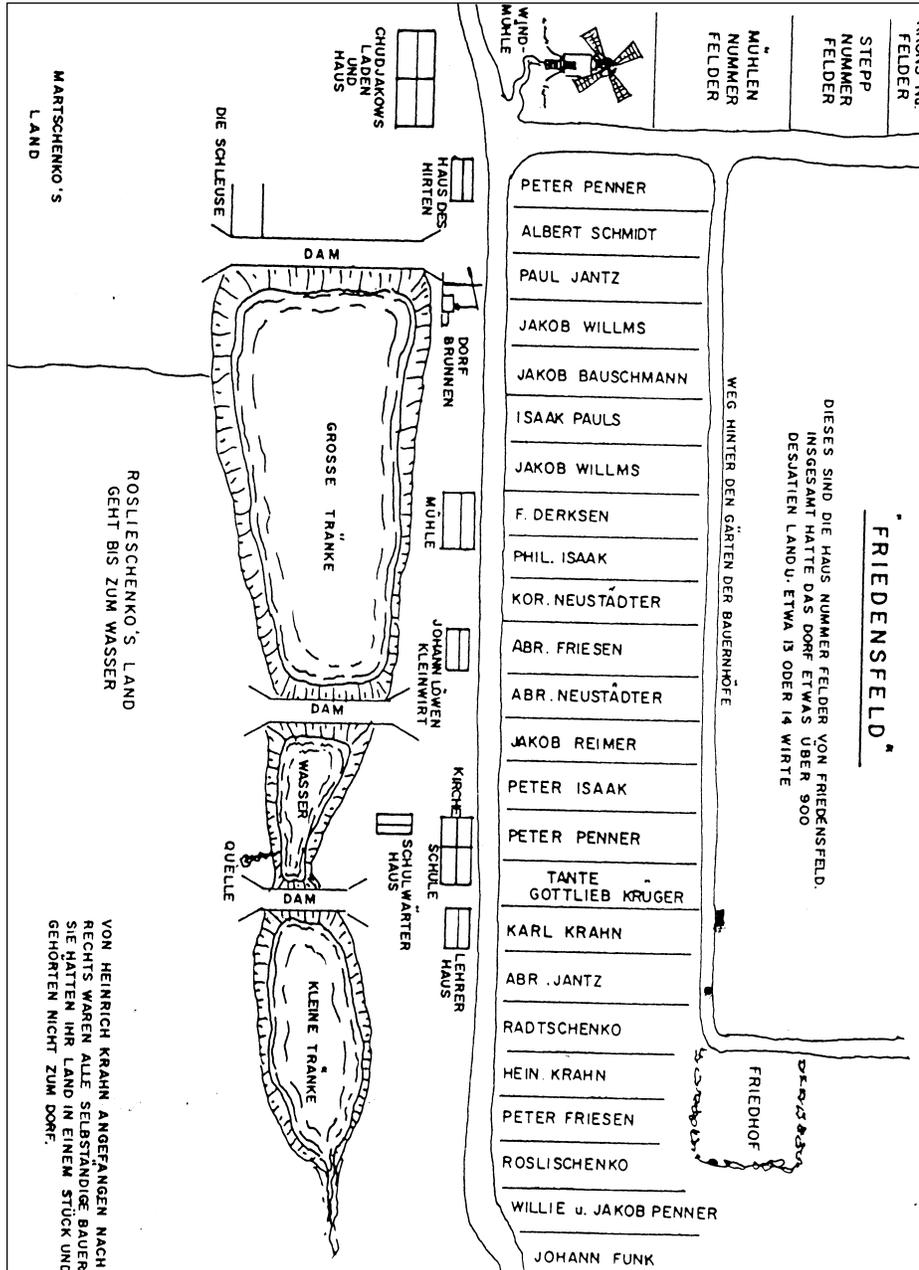
Elisabeth Giesbrecht Barkman died in childbirth on March 21, 1858, and was buried in Waldheim on the 25th. Her death left Jakob with five youngsters.

On June 1, 1858, Jakob M. Barkman and the widow Warkentin attended worship services together in Neukirch. On June 5, 1858, Jakob married for the second time to the widow Peter Warkentin, nee Katharina Thiessen (1829-89), daughter of Jakob Thiessen and Anna Enns owners of Wirtschaft 20 in Neukirch, Mol. They were married by Rev. Abraham F. Friesen of Neukirch after a worship service held in Paulsheim. Katharina Thiessen had been baptised upon the solemn confession of her faith on May 4, 1847.

Jakob M. Barkman was respected within his community and on February 13, 1861, he received 8 votes in a deacon election held in Neukirch. The family enjoyed travelling and visiting. On January 20, 1863, brother-in-law Peter I. Fast reported that he went to Rückenau and that "Jakob Barkmans from Waldheim were there too."

Friedensfeld, Borosenko, 1867.

In 1867 the family moved to the new settle-



Map of Friedensfeld 1919

Caption: Map by Heinrich Krahn, courtesy of Olga Rempel, *Einer Von Vielen: Die Lebensgeschichte von Prediger Aron P. Toews (Wpg, Man., 1979), page 37. Olga Rempel was the daughter of minister Aron P. Toews, the school teacher in Friedensfeld in 1920. Two of Toews' sisters had been raped by Machno bandits in Nikopol shortly prior. Olga Rempel tells how the Machno bandits came to Friedensfeld on Christmas Day while the villagers were assembled in church. The armed bandits stormed into the church screaming for the singing to stop. Toews went to the front and announced that the congregation should remain calm as "they were in the house of God and under His protection." After an incident where a shot was fired, the bandits collected a sum of money and left the worshippers in peace.*

ment at Friedensfeld in the Borosenko area, northwest of Nikopol, where the KG had purchased 5400 acres: see map in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, page 4. The Russian name of the village was *Miropol*. Although it had only one row of Wirtschafte, Friedensfeld was quite a large village. School was held in the "Kleine Stube" in the home of teacher Peter L. Dueck (A. D. Penner's grandfather). It was not really part of the Borosenko Colony but was often referred to as such.

In spite of its name as a "field of peace" the Friedensfeld settlement suffered from religious strife. Although a KG settlement, in a "spirit of trust" they had allowed three families from a

separatist pietist Mennonite denomination to settle in the village as they were related to the others.

However the insurgents soon took advantage of the situation endeavouring to break-up families by enticing people to leave the KG. In a letter of Oct. 28, 1870, neighbour Isaac L. Plett described how the separatist pietists came to the death bed of Mrs Peter L. Dueck and eventually filled her with fear and terror questioning her salvation whereby "Satan so cunningly circles to see who he can ensnare": *Plett Picture Book*, 41.

It was obvious that a man of resolute faith and firm conviction was required as a leader in

such troubled and sorrowful times. Symbolically for the proselytizers their own congregation in Friedensfeld was torn for decades by bitter internal strife and disputation (What goes around comes around). In modern times of course such people would be reported to the police and thrown in jail for abusing and terrorizing a person on their deathbed in this manner.

Jakob M. Barkman, Waisenmaun, 1870.

Jakob M. Barkman was the Waisenvorsteher of the KG Waisenamt, the estate and orphans office of the denomination. The date of his appointment is not known but on April 24, 1870, Abraham F. Reimer, Steinbach, Borosenko, wrote that "Jakob Barkman, Friedensfeld, the Waisenvorsteher, was here." This position involved settling estates and managing the trust funds of widows and orphans.

On April 24, 1870, Barkman was in Steinbach, Bor. to pick up Dietrich S. Friesen, who was boarding at the Abraham F. Reimer home, to take him along "to Nikolaithal to the Theilung". A "Theilung" was a meeting chaired by the Waisenman and attended by the beneficiaries, the "Goutman" (Trustee) of the widow and the "Vormünder" (Children's Advocate) for the children, where the assets of the deceased were divided among the widow and children and the estate settled by way of contract.

Obviously Barkman was a man who had the respect and confidence of his community. As far as is known, Barkman was the first person to hold this office in the KG Waisenamt. The position was created sometime after the denomination started moving out of the Molotschna during the early 1860s. Those of the denomination who remained in the Molotschna continued under the jurisdiction of the Molotschna Colony Waisenamt.

Life in Friedensfeld, 1870-72 .

On April 20, 1870, Jakob Penners (1797-1870) from Alexanderwohl, were visiting at the home of A. F. Reimers, Steinbach, Bor. Later that day Penners went to Friedensfeld to visit the Jakob M. B. family and Reimer came along "and stayed over night at Barkmans."

Jakob M. B. had an interest in the writings of the faith. On August 20, 1871, he ordered a "large" *Martyr Spiegel* (Martyrs' Mirror) for 9 ruble. This was part of a major shipment of devotional books which KG Bishop Peter P. Toews ordered from John F. Funk, Elkhart, Indiana.

On September 21, 1871, brother-in-law Peter I. Fast came to the Borosenko area to visit. He reported "When we got to Annafeld we went to Cornelius Goossens, who is J. Barkman's Katerina. Here we received very good accommodations. We even stayed for dinner." The next day the Fast visited at Peter Toews' in Rosenfeld and then went "10 versts to Neuanlage to Johann Koops." These were his wife's cousins. "The night we spent with Jakob Barkmans, my wife's brother, in Friedensfeld."

The next day the Koops and Toews' joined them at the Jakob Barkman home and continued their visiting, a custom called "noe



Photo One: Friedensfeld. View from the north end of the "drank", looking south. The "drank" was a body of water created by damming up the river, a common practice in the region. The former Mennonite flour mill is located by the bushes to the left on the picture. Since 1919 another street has been built up along the southeast side of both the lower and upper "drank". The photograph is taken from the northwest corner of the village approximately where the well was located on the 1919 map.



Photo Two: Friedensfeld: A close-up view of the Mennonite mill in Friedensfeld. View to the northwest. Photos of Friedensfeld, Russia, by D. Plett, April 11, 1996.

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spatzier'e". For night the Fasts "went along with Koops to Marienfeld, and ...walked to Peter Friesens, my aunt. They were glad for our visit, but too bad the uncle was not home. Barkman and Friesen had gone to Odessa to settle their last debts on the land they had bought. For dinner we went to Friedensfeld again, to Barkmans'."

On January 23, 1872, Jakob received 16 votes at a deacon election held in Rosenfeld, Borosenko, only slightly less than the winning candidate, Abraham Loewen who had 23. On December 25, 1872, Jakob ordered a *Spiegel der Taufe* (Mirror of Baptism) when Bishop Peter P. Toews made another large order for devotional books from John F. Funk, Elkhart, Indiana.

Death of Martin J. Barkman, 1872.

Two days earlier, December 23, unbeknownst to Jakob, his father Martin J. Barkman died at his Wirtschaft in Rückenau, Mol. Martin J. B. was a heavy man and it had taken 4 men to handle him during his sickness. The funeral was held in December 27, 1872. The sermon was preached by Rev. Kornelius Isaac, a minister of the Ohrloff-Halbstadt Gemeinde.

An January 1, 1873 the Fasts went to Borosenko again, presumably to bring the news of father's passing. They crossed the Dneiper River on the evening of the 31st. It was thawing and so the ice was getting weak. After the exchange of some money the watchman led them across the river which was 400 steps wide.

On January 2 "in the afternoon they [the Fasts] went to Friedensfeld, to Jakob Barkmans." On January 3, Fast wrote "our mission is completed" and on the 4th after breakfast, they left on their return journey home.

On the 26th of January, Jakob M. Barkman and brother Martin made a trip to the Molotschna to be present for the sale of their father's property "which was expected to be worth more than 6,000 ruble." Fortunately for the Barkman family, the sale took place before the plummeting of property values which occurred in anticipation of the 1874 emigration.

Ministerial Election, 1873.

On January 20, 1873, Peter M. Kroeker and Jakob M. Barkman were elected as ministers of the Blumenhof KG with 76 and 62 votes, respectively. The fact that both men felt unworthy to accept the office immediately showed they were cognizant of the serious responsibility of the calling. After 2 weeks they assented and were ordained on Jan. 14, 1873. Jakob thereby became the spiritual shepherd of the villagers in Friedensfeld.

Presumably Barkman resigned as Waisenman when he was elected as minister. He was replaced in this office by Gerhard

Schellenberg (1827-1908), Rosenfeld, Bor., a former KG minister from Ohrloff, Mol. On February 4, 1873, the Blumenhof KG elected Cornelius P. Toews as its delegate to travel to North America to investigate settlement opportunities. Jakob M. Barkman received 3 votes in this election.

On Sunday, February 11, Barkman preached for the first time in Blumenhof, Bor., in the spacious new worship house which had been constructed by the KG the previous summer. On the 18th he spoke again in Friedensfeld. On Sunday April 22, Barkman spoke again in Blumenhof and "preached about peace."

On April 22 a ministerial meeting was held at Barkman's home in Friedensfeld where certain matters regarding the impending emigration were discussed. On May 3, 1873, Bishop Peter P. Toews wrote a memo to J. M. B. requesting him to make some inquiries regarding an account which involved KG member Peter Friesen of Marienfeld. On June 17, Barkman preached again in Blumenhof. On Monday, Sept 3, J. M. Barkman and Johann R. Reimer [his future son-in-law], were visiting at Abraham F. Reimers in Steinbach. They also "went to Peter Reimers."

In late September, 1873, the Jakob M. Barkmans made a trip to the Molotschna to visit. They arrived at the Peter I. Fast home in Rückenau on the 30th and stayed until October 6th.

In January, 1874, Jakob M. B. travelled to the Molotschna on a pastoral mission. Brother-in-law Fast reported that "Jan. 5, Sunday. Jakob Barkman, Friedensfeld, came to hold church services in our home. Our relatives, the Isaac Klassens, also came. It was a good sermon. I led the singing. One song says, 'Oh! That I have acknowledged so late that most appreciable love, O Lord.'" The next day, the 6th, Barkman returned to Friedensfeld, a journey of some 160 kilometres.

Sermons, 1873-74.

Sermons in the traditional Mennonite churches in Russia were usually handed down from one minister to another. The Separatist Pietist Mennonites disdained the others for this practice, insisting on extemporaneous preaching which was short on substance but had emotional appeal.

Sermons in the KG were unique in that each minister carefully prepared his own. Typically KG sermons were studied with Biblical references and quotations from the seminal writers of the faith such as Menno Simons, Dirk Philips, Peter Pieters, Jakob Denners and George Hansen.

Accordingly the sermons reveal the theology and gospel presentation of a minister. Each sermon included a biblical text, an opening prayer, the exposition of the preparatory theme, kneeling prayer, the exposition of the major

theme, closing prayer and benediction. Since the sermons would be used a number of times, contemporary references were minimal.

Two complete and two partial sermons of Jakob M. Barkman are extant (Note 4).

Christmas, 1873 - Titus 2: 11-14.

The first sermon was on the text Titus 2:11-14. The sermon was written as a Christmas message and was probably first preached at the close of 1873. The theme is that in Old Testament times God judged human kind by the law, but that out of love for humanity Jesus came to earth and that those that believe are now saved by grace. "How greatly should we rejoice over this birth? for He has not only saved us from the condemnation of the old Mosaic law, but provided that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Barkman stressed that the love of Jesus should articulate a reciprocal love on the part of believers from which would follow a life of discipleship. "Now coming to the close of another year, may every one look into the Word of God as into a mirror. Has our life been one of self-discipline, in childlike obedience to the Lord and His Word?"

He referred to Isaiah 40:5-8, "all flesh is grass", drawing the analogy that everything here on earth is perishable and "how many of our dear relatives and friends have not in this almost ended year, faded away and gone over from time into eternity. They are not with us any more to be reminded once more of this blessed message of the birth of the redeemer. They have been released from this time of suffering and are all awaiting their rewards ..."

Barkman stressed "the great love, grace and mercy" of God and how "in patience [He] in a fatherly manner holds His protective hands over us and has kept us that we can once more enjoy this remembrance of the glorious birth of Christ." He bemoaned indifference in the congregation and those "who cause us to bewail them [after their death], because of having lived so carelessly and not having sought their Saviour in time of good health."

He referred to the grace of God and summarized the essence of KG theology, "... this grace only benefits those who believe on His name, are submissive to Him in child-like obedience and, for Christ's sake, leave and deny everything that does not agree with the teachings of Christ and His Apostles, takes upon himself the cross and truly follows the example of his Master."

He warned against the diversions of life, affirming that Jesus was gathering to Him "a people as His own" to reconcile them with the just and righteous Father, by redeeming us of all unrighteousness."

Barkman concluded the sermon on a positive note quoting John 3:16 and exhorting the people "...that we may sing with Laban, 'Come

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in, thou blessed of the Lord; ... I have prepared the house, for the new born king to dwell in."

Sermon, Genesis 12:1, 1874.

The second sermon was written and presented in preparation for the emigration, probably sometime in early 1874. The text is Genesis 12:1 which sets out the call to Abraham to leave his homeland "unto a land that I will shew thee." Barkman admonished his parishioners "all that have this in common, that have been chosen out of our circle of friends...to leave our Fatherland" to follow the example of Abraham, "this man of faith. Let us follow him with singleness of heart, in Christ, in self-denial and humility."

Barkman referred also to the example of the children of Israel when they were called to leave Egypt for the promised land and how they wandered in the desert for 40 years, warning his listeners against murmuring, "that no one of us might even carry similar thoughts in his heart ... that the Lord may not be grieved with any one....I therefore beg and admonish all of you, that we might live as those that pursue peace and love in all we do."

He encouraged his listeners stating that "If we have Him in our midst and on our side, we need fear no enemy" referring to the example of how the Israelites won the victory over the Amalikitites.

Not only should they follow the example of Abraham but they should also be an example for others, making peace the way Abraham did between "his and Lot's herdsmen." He stressed the concept of servanthood quoting Matthew 20:26: "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant"; also Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

As in the previous sermon Barkman closed on a positive note, quoting the words of a song (probably from the *Gesangbuch*) referring to the sweet love and submission of a pilgrim seeking his way, "who goeth forward only, day by day, let wind and weather not delay. If you to things below still cling, and hampered art with anything, remember but - A pilgrim presses on." He focused the message of the poem with the following words, "A pilgrim looks for just one reward... The earthly does not his courage thwart."

Barkman then called the assembly to kneel in prayer encouraging them to "bring praises to our heavenly father for His goodness ... that we may enjoy His gracious guidance and protection during our journey that we are planning as well as our pilgrimage to the very end of our days."

After a lengthy praise for the blessings of God, Barkman again led the congregation to kneel in prayer, "that He may accompany us with His blessing on our forthcoming journey,..., [to pray for] all ...in authority,...for the church,... [to] keep the church and build it according to God's Word, [for] us that have already been called, that the Lord may grant strength and wisdom...also during this emigration...also [for] the members, that they may be kept in peace and love, and in true unity..."

Emigration 1874.

By spring of 1874 the emigration to America was in full force and on June 1 the first KG contingent left Russia. Jakob M. Barkman was a leader in this movement. He chose to emigrate to Manitoba instead of Jansen, Nebraska, where two of his brothers Martin and Johann, and three sisters, Katharina (Mrs. Klaas Koop), Aganetha (Mrs. Peter I. Fast), and Anna (Mrs. Franz Kroeker) settled. Two brothers Cornelius and Julius opted to remain in Russia. Another brother Peter M. Barkman joined the KMB and settled in Gnadenu, Kansas, near modern-day Hillsboro.

On July 18, 19 KG families from Annafeld and Steinbach left Nikolopol for America. The remaining families left on Sunday the 21st. Bishop Toews has written "They were under the leadership of Brother Barkman."

Jakob M.B. was a charitable person. It is recorded that he paid the travelling expenses for teacher Cornelius F. Friesen (1812-92) and his family for which he was later reimbursed by the Gemeinde: *Golden Years*, 351. Barkman also left some extracts from his farewell sermon with KG members who were remaining in Russia for another year for them to read "and then to pass them on to his beloved siblings."

A partial copy of the farewell sermon preached by Barkman is extant. In this sermon, Barkman stressed the need "to support one another in prayer... I beg you altogether to also remember me in your prayers to God...for this journey that we have undertaken...also resembles an army ... moving into the field against their enemy, and I am to place myself as captain."

After referring to his own fleshly weaknesses, Barkman concluded, "Even though I find myself very weak and imperfect ..., I do intend to be true and faithful and as one that presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus... With such a feeling and firm confidence ...we want to give ourselves over to the pure love of God, and continuously strive to be led by it more and more, [and to] commence upon this journey with God and His blessing."

Barkman closed with the following words addressed particularly to those who were staying in Russia, "In this confidence we want to take our departure from you and say, 'Farewell' to you and say with the poet, 'Let us exhort one another, to exert ourselves not to forget God's Word, that when the hour of death shall come we may through the wounds of Jesus, enter into the joys of heaven.'"

The Journey.

During the journey to America and until his death, Jakob M. Barkman wrote periodic reports to KG Bishop Peter P. Toews, who had remained in Russia with a smaller group until the following year to finalize various business matters (Note 5).

In a letter of August 9, 1874, Jakob M. Barkman provided a brief description of the journey up to Podwoloshick. He described how they had been squeezed for quarters on both the ship and train. One coach had become unusable when an axle got hot and those riding in that

coach were divided among the other cars. He closed the letter "with a kiss of love to all the brothers and sisters there": Jakob M. Barkman letter to Peter Toews, *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 27 .

By August 13 the party was in Hamburg and fellow Steinbacher Klaas B. Friesen wrote how Jakob Barkman had read a letter to his group received from the KG already in Manitoba. On the same date, Jakob M. Barkman was also writing a letter to Peter Toews in which he remonstrated how they had seen a fashionably decorated wagon and team of horses carrying a corpse. In Barkman's mind he compared this with "the lowliness of the Lord Jesus, and how He was martyred for us, and that we are merely dust and as nothing without Him. Oh that our beloved Saviour would stand by us in the future as He hath helped us in times past."

Barkman went on to refute rumours that his group had received ill treatment: they had "good quarters" in Hamburg where they "also exchanged money." Barkman's cousin-in-law Peter W. Toews of Rosenfeld and later Blumenort had written a letter complaining about poor treatment. This information was passed on to the travel authorities with the result that Mr. Spiro was sent to accompany the group to Liverpool to insure that this did not reoccur. Barkman wrote another short letter on August 19 from Liverpool.

On October 21, 1874, after a little more than a month in the new land, Barkman wrote his last report dealing with the journey. In a long and somewhat rambling letter he completed his travelogue picking up the account from Liverpool where the group embarked on the S.S. Austrian.

The voyage was marred by the fact that their interpreter and guide was also an employee of one of the bars on the ship. Since the KG did not patronize such establishments the guide was unfriendly to them. This was difficult for those who were sick. Every day after breakfast they had to go up to the foredeck of the ship while their quarters were being cleaned. Barkman described the meals as "simple but good." "However, because of nausea it eventually became loathsome and brought with it a general dissatisfaction and murmuring against these people."

Upon their arrival in Quebec "the elderly Mrs. Jakob Friesen, from Nikolaithal, ... accidentally got crushed on the ship, injuring her leg and lower body, when 5 men unawares, pushed some boxes against her, causing her to scream in pain."

In Toronto they were met by Jakob Shantz who later wrote "that brother Jakob Barkman and his group arrived in Toronto ...[on Oct. 3rd] where we met them in order to help them a little bit with the obtaining of provisions....since Barkman did not have time to report to you of the journey he asked me to write you that the same went quite well."

Arrival in Manitoba, Sept 15, 1874.

K. J. B. Reimer later wrote a description of

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the journey of the Steinbach group who arrived at the confluence of the Red and Rat Rivers on September 15, 1874. His mother, Aganetha T. Barkman, then a 12 year girl later related how "the ship's officers had lit a huge fire on shore in order to dispel the chill of the Fall air."

Jakob M. Barkman, himself, concluded his letter of October 21, 1874, with a description of their arrival at the landing site at the confluence of the Red and Rat Rivers:

"When we and the Steinbachers disembarked from the ship on the morning of the 15th of September, some of us were picked up the same day, others the next, by brethren from there [Grünfeld]. In fact they transported us with oxen, since people do not drive horses here, for one thing because they are very expensive, and a second reason is that they cannot work without grain, which is very expensive and very scarce as well. All people were received from the landing by their closest kin, and if possible, provided with shelter for the night."

"The next day it started raining again. The ground was wet and soft already from before, so that it was only with greatest difficulty that we were able to reach the home of our beloved siblings. Indeed some had to stay in the outdoors along the way, and others along the river, in all the rain and cold weather. We drove with [Rev.] Abr. Loewen's wagon. Our son Martin went to get the vehicle from there [Grünfeld]. Early the next morning he was on his way to pick us up. We made it back late that night to Grünfeld, thoroughly soaked, with family and furniture, having driven 19 miles."

"We stayed with Loewen's for the night, in a tent, partly sitting and partially lying down in our wet clothes, for they had no room. In addition to everything else, Mrs. Loewen was not well; she lay sick for 4 weeks. Since it was so rainy the next day, we stayed another day, and then went to Blumenhof [actually the village would later be called Blumenort], to Peter Toews' from Rosenfeld. We took shelter in their newly erected and somewhat spacious house. From here we went to Winnipeg and bought ourselves oxen, wagon, a plow and grass mower."

Settlement of Steinbach, Man.

The Jakob M. B. family was one of eighteen who founded Steinbach, Man. in Sept. 1874. It was September 18, when "they set their feet upon the devastated looking poplar bush." Barkman filed for a Homestead on SE 35-6-6E on October 3, 1874. However the family settled along the long street in the village, on Wirtschaft 5 approximately where Steinbach Hatchery stands today.

Son-in-law Cornelius P. Goossen settled on Wirtschaft 6 immediately to the south. Heinrich R. Brandt, who was married to the daughter of Mrs. Jakob M. Barkman from her first marriage, settled next door to the north, on Wirtschaft 4. For some time all 3 families lived together in the same semlin. However, Klaas J. B. Reimer writes that the family lived in a "Sarrei". The

Barkman family already had 2 grown sons, Johann and Jakob, so that things were considerably easier for them than for most others.

Since 7 of the 18 founding families came from the village of the same name in Borosenko, the village was called Steinbach. But the entire area to the south where many of the settlers acquired land in the early years became known as Friedensfeld in honour of Barkman's former home in Russia.

In his letter of October 15, 1874, Jakob M. Barkman described some of the conditions which faced the new settlers: "There is more than enough hay and they are still cutting more. There is enough grass, but partly frozen by the cold nights, which can go down to 36 degrees frost. It must have been down to 19 degrees since some of the hay is badly frozen. At present it is very nice during the daytime but a little frost and sometimes windy at night. I do not know any different, but they tell us that winter frosts seldom go to more than 40 degrees."

"We are fairly well at present. Our dearest little daughter Margaretha died on the 16th of this month, we could say, because of diarrhoea, from which she suffered for the entire time we have been here. Toward the last she was also somewhat sick for a while. We live with our children, the Brandts and Goossens, in a semlin. We still plan to build something for the cattle. In closing please receive hearty greetings from your beloved brother." *Jakob Barkman*

According to the KG Brandordnung or fire insurance records, Jakob M. Barkman was insured for "an earth hut [semlin] \$50.00, inventory [cattle and equipment] \$300.00, and feed and supplies \$200.00; later additions - hay shed [schoppin] \$25.00, inventory \$150.00; and a further addition, a barn \$300.00.

Jakob M. B. had a concern for education and organized a school for the village children personally taking his turn teaching in his own home during the first winter at no cost. Gerhard E. Kornelsen has written perhaps somewhat tongue-in-cheek, "that for a supply of students obligated to attend school, Barkman merely had to look to the next door neighbours and friends, which already covered half the village."

Pastoral Work.

In addition to the hurried preparation of a dwelling for the rapidly approaching winter, Jakob M. Barkman was also responsible for the spiritual well-being of the community. On October 14, 1874, shortly after arrival at their new homes, he preached a Thanksgiving sermon on the text Deuteronomy 27:6-7, "Thou shalt build an altar of the Lord Thy God ... and rejoice before the Lord thy God." The sermon "was presented to a full house of the congregation."

In the absence of Bishop Peter P. Toews, Barkman (together with senior minister Peter Baerg (1817-1901), Rev. Abraham Loewen (1833-86) of Gruenfeld, and deacon Peter Wiebe, Blumenort) had to take a leadership role in the spiritual affairs not only of his own village but also of the entire KG community of some 8 villages and 120 families (East Reserve).

J. M. B. has written that by November 22 he

had already preached 4 times: 3 Sundays in Blumenort and the fourth, "he walked to Rosenfeld, eight miles away to preach again, but he arrived a little late because of the death that morning of his 9 year old daughter Anna."

On the previous Saturday the entire ministerial met and a brotherhood meeting was also held the same day. Monies were allocated from the treasury to make various emergency loans and a worship plan was established creating a rotating system of worship services among 4 KG settlements.

In the letter of October 21, 1874, Jakob M. B. described the separation which had occurred in the KG with a group of about 30 families under delegate David Klassen opting to settle on the west side of the Red River in what became known as Rosenort:

"The Gemeinde here has now split into two different groups, which are no small distance apart from each other. As a result, it is presently problematic and time consuming to conduct our affairs with them, somewhat similar to the situation there, between you and the brethren in the Molotschna. It is especially time consuming since we travel with oxen and it is not easy to cross the river. Beyond this, I do not want to report much more about the situation, for I hope that you will have been appraised about it. Nor am I really fully informed about the matter, except that it involves D. Klassen, big Jacob Friesen and family, also both of the Kroekers, Johann Janzen, Ratzlaff, M. Warkentin, bro. Wiens and others more, altogether about 20 families."

"Of the last two groups, only young Gerh. Siemens, P. Buller, Klaas Brandt and Abr. Eidse, went over. But on September 15, Abr. Klassen, who was inclined as part of our group, all at once disembarked from the steamer onto the banks of the Red River, as they say, into an open field and also went over there."

"Now he and Peter Braun and his family have gone back to the States, to seek out something better. The Heuboden Gemeinde and also Johann Friesen are already there. The latter has since written that he is living with the Krimmer. Our brother Peter Friesen, Marienthal, has also written already from there to his wife's relatives, and asked for advice as to what would be best for them. I have not yet heard what the answer was."

"Dear brother, all this humbles and pains me deeply when I really reflect thereon! I can not tell you about it without being grieved in my heart, and have often said, they could not imagine how it would hurt you to hear about it, especially those, who know they have the most fault therein. The evil enemy has succeeded to bring about a confusion, or trouble, amongst us. May the gracious Lord, Who has everything in His hands, also bring this to a good end for all of us."

Barkman not only preached at the worship services in Steinbach but hosted them in his home as well. Heinrich Wiebe of Blumenort reported that he and 7 others had gone to Jakob Barkman's in Steinbach for worship services on Friday, New Years' day, 1875.

In a letter of January 6, 1875, J.M.B. reported

“that one of our daughters Anna died on November 22 at age 9 years and 3 months.” Notwithstanding Barkman wrote that “We cannot be sufficiently thankful to the Lord. Likewise, in general, we cannot give Him enough honour and praise for His paternal goodness and compassion. He has provided shelter and clothes ... and provisioned us with nourishment in the new land.”

Barkman also reported on difficulties in the local congregation with respect to Cornelius Fast and Cornelius Friesen, both of whom were teachers. Various ministerial and brotherhood meetings were held regarding Fast. In the meantime Fast renounced the Gemeinde. Barkman wrote “To which we answered that the concerns associated with the separation of a brother were truly heart wrenching for us, and that we partook therein because of love, and not of ourselves alone, but for his soul. ... Also ... that he should immediately take refuge in the compassion of the Heavenly Father for the repentant sinner, whereby his soul would again be renewed and ultimately all of us together would receive salvation through the abundant grace of God and the sacrifice of Christ.”

Barkman concluded the letter by reporting “that many of our brethren were presently ready to journey to the other side of the river... and if possible to restore the fellowship.”

Visit to Rosenort, Feb. 1875.

The aforementioned journey to Rosenort took place at the end of January. In a letter of February 3, 1875, Barkman reported that “This visit by us 3 ministers and Peter Wiebe accompanied by 12 brethren, has now taken place. ... We went on foot and had 3 sleighs driving along behind us.”

The group arrived in Rosenort on January 31 and a brotherhood meeting was held the next day, Sunday. Here again concerns were raised regarding several individuals “thereby testing the very strength of our faith.” Barkman reported that Abraham Klassen of Prangenau “cannot place full confidence in us nor the brethren here in him.” Another brother “Abraham Friesen, formerly of Heuboden, had already resigned ... but having been strengthened anew, is again favourably inclined.”

Another brother “Heinrich Friesen, formerly of Rosenfeld (Note Six) has announced his departure” for Jansen, Nebraska. They tried to talk him out of his plan citing the dangerous storm conditions but Friesen was adamant. At first Baerg and Barkman took the position that by leaving in this way, Friesen was resigning from the fellowship. Abr. Klassen then “made a presentation that this was an uncompassionate course ... which would sever the existing bond.”

Baerg and Barkman reluctantly accepted the position put forward by Abr. Klassen. They were also successful in their mission which was to ensure that the physical separation between the East Reserve and Scratching River (Rosenort) settlements did not turn into a spiritual separation as well.

The conclusion of Barkman’s letter to Bishop Toews highlighted the respect and love between the two leaders: “Oh, my beloved, how often

we long for your arrival and your presence.... Therefore, remember us before God in your prayers that He might help us with His Holy Spirit to remain true to His teachings and united in one mind, and that we might attain unto the throne of Christ, and finally that we might all enter unto eternal rest. Amen!”

On February 1, 1875, brother-in-law Peter I. Fast in Rückenau, Russia, wrote letters to both Jakob and Martin Barkman in America. On March 30, 1875, Jakob M. Barkman preformed the wedding ceremony for his step-daughter Helena Warkentin (1852-84) and his friend and neighbour Klaas R. Reimer.

Communion, May, 1875.

The fourth sermon by Jakob M. Barkman was a preparatory sermon for communion. The sermon was prepared after the emigration of 1874. Since the KG held their communion and baptism services once a year, usually around Pentecost, the sermon can be dated to sometime in May, 1875. The sermon was intended as an exhortation and encouragement to the settlers who were tired and exhausted after a long and difficult winter.

The sermon was based on Psalm 50: 14-15, a thanksgiving text. Barkman started the exposition of this scripture by referring to the “great love ... [with which] the Lord Jesus again comes into our hearts to enliven our never-dying souls, to nourish and strengthen us.” Accordingly the followers of Jesus should “cleanse ourselves again of all that belongs to this world and worldly things....” The important question was, “Have we cleansed ourselves according to His will for this remembrance of His death.”

Those who had failed in this, “can now through proper acknowledgement, remorse, repentance, and childlike prayer, ... come to God and again receive forgiveness of sins... through an offering of a prayerful and humble life... with a broken heart and a renewing of his covenant with God, and the reconciliation with his neighbour if he has been at odds with anyone.”

In the KG communion was referred to as “Einigkeit” or unity, and all members were expected to be at peace with their brothers and sisters in Christ and all others as well. Differences were to be burned in the fire of love, “and it may never come to mind again.” Believers must also be ready to forgive others.

Barkman described the characteristics of the love which the members of the church should have for each other. There should be “no self-will, honour seeking, self-righteousness or high-mindedness in our hearts and we shall always consider the next one higher than ourselves.... Our hearts shall be united in peace and love, so that together with David, we can say, ‘The Lord maketh me to lie down in green pastures, ... Thou preparest a table before me.... thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over’: Psalm 23:2,5.”

Barkman concluded that the Lord is “Full of mercy and grace, patient and full of great goodness.” He referred to the text, encouraging his listeners to “Call upon me in the day of trouble... Therefore my beloved ones, I beg and admonish you Let us take our refuge in the

Lord and call upon Him, as the Highest, ... for.... He will deliver us out of all trouble and cover us with His wings.”

Barkman used the recent emigration to a new land as an allegory for the soul journey, “looking for a new and better country... and leave the old walk of life that we have lived so far, and take on a new life according to God’s plan.” Worldly distractions must be put aside for otherwise “Men will be justified to say of such that they left their fatherland to come to America to find freedom for their conscience. [But] Their lives prove that it is not truth.”

He encouraged his listeners with a closing exhortation, “Yes, that we appear as children of peace, that no evil reports may go out from us, but that it can be read from the conduct of our lives, that we are God’s people and heirs of His kingdom. This, however, we can not do of our own, but we must ask God for His help to obtain it.”

Death, June 3, 1875.

The first winter was long and severe. But spring came and new hope filled the hearts of the pioneers. After first seeding a crop, the settlers determined that additional supplies were urgently needed.

According to the journal of daughter Mrs. Johann W. Reimer, nee Maria T. Barkman, “a church service [brotherhood meeting] was held on May 30, ... The brethren decided that they as a church should send some men to Winnipeg to get flour and potatoes for the needy. Three men were elected to make the trip: Jakob Barkman - the minister, Jakob K. Friesen (1822-75), and Peter K. Barkman [J.M.B.’s cousin]. The minister’s 18 year old son Jakob also joined the group on the trip.”

The group left for Winnipeg on June 2, 1875. The events of that day have been described in a number of sources not all of which correspond. Franz K. Goossen has written that on “June 2, 1875, quite a few people went to Winnipeg On their return they stayed in St. Boniface for the night. It was then that they realized that there were a number of things they had forgotten to purchase in Winnipeg. They [Barkman and Friesen] decided, consequently, to return to the city the next morning.”

In 1952 grandson Klaas J. B. Reimer wrote that the travellers from Steinbach had arrived in St. Boniface on the third day and “it was felt by members of the party that to save time several men should go on ahead and begin purchasing.” In 1964 Klaas J. B. Reimer provided a somewhat different version of the event more in accordance with Franz K. Goossen. He stated that the Steinbach group had finished their purchasing and had camped for the night on the east bank of the Red River close to where the St. Boniface Hospital stands today. J. M. B. had remembered some important supplies which had been ordered and decided to go back the next morning to purchase same. Jakob Friesen had decided to accompany him on the fateful expedition: K. J. B. Reimer, “Neunzig Jahre.”

Grandson Peter J. B. Reimer has provided

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one of the more detailed accounts describing the events as follows:

“Having made the 38 mile trip they [the group] found that the ferry was not ready to take them across from St. Boniface into the City of Winnipeg. There was a high wind and also high water. When, apparently, the ferry people were not too accommodating, Barkman and Friesen decided to ask a Mr. Lindolph [a half-breed] to take them across the river with a boat.”

“About 20 yards from the shore the high winds drove the boat on the ferry wire and the occupants seized the wire. The boat then moved away from under them and they were all suspended on the wire. Mr. Lindolph was nearest to the St. Boniface shore and so started to make his way along the wire, followed by the two other men. In the centre of the river the wire was somewhat under the water, but near the shore it rose to some height above the water.”

“Mr. Lindolph dropped from the wire near the shore, and managed in spite of heavy clothing to swim to the shore. Barkman and Friesen could not swim, so when they dropped into the water they sank and drowned. A son of Mr. McVicar heard the cry of the other people on shore and set out with a boat but could not reach them before they sank for the last time.” [It was also reported that the weight of their heavy Russian fur coats had pulled the men down.]

Poetic elegy.

In traditional Mennonite circles it was common for someone in the community to write a poem for special events such as weddings, funerals. It was common to write an elegy to commemorate prominent individuals in the community, especially in the case of sudden accidental death. An unnamed poet wrote such an elegy to commemorate the death of Jakob Barkman and his companion Jakob Friesen of Gruenfeld.

“Here follows a poem about the accident which befell Jakob Barkman and Jakob Friesen who drowned in the Red River, which occurred on June 3, 1875:”

1 Uns hat der liebe Gott auch hier,
Besucht mit Schwermuts Proben,
Ob auch in Trieben Stunden wir,
Ihm auch stets wurden Loben,
Es traf sich ein wie ich hir musz
Erzählen das im Rothen Flusz
Zwei Männer sind Ertrunken.

2 Und Zwar ein Lehrer der Gemeine,
Mit ihm ein Bruden eben,
Am Rother Flusz sie Stiegen ein,
Im Kahn sich zu begäben
Nach Winnipeg, nach einer Stadt,
Zu Reisen wer was nötig hat,
Tuht sich dahin begäben.

3 Beim groszer Sturm sie Stützen los,
Kamen bis auf die Mitte
Und sieh da war das Schüksal grosz,
Sie aus den Kahne sie Glitten,
Hielten sich am Kahn noch Fäst,
Doch es geschah das sie zuletz,

Versanken und Ertranken.

4 War Jakob Friesen von Grünfeld
Der andere ein Lehrer,
Jakob Barkman längst Angestellt,
Von der Gemeine wäre,
Dazu Beruffen, ach was Leid,
Geschahe zu derzelben Zeit,
Zwei Trauer der Gemeine

5 Die ganze Reis kein Zufall war,
In solchen Art Geschehen,
O, über grozse Merre Zwar,
Zu Schüh wir müssen gehen,
Erreichten Glücklick unsern Standt,
Sowohl zu Wasser als zu Land,
In unserm Brüder Schareh.

6 Doch hier über den Schmallen Flusz,
Thät Man ein Unglück hören,
Für ihre Famili dieses musz,
Ihr Herze tief Beschwerren,
Doch war dies doch zu andern nicht,
Drum müssen wir nach unserer Phlicht,
Uns nur im Herrn Ergäben (Note 7).

The poem was a lament for Jakob Barkman and Jakob Friesen who drowned while crossing the Red River during a storm. They had tried to cross the Red River in a boat and got to the middle where they capsized and fell into the water because of the turbulence. They held on to the boat but eventually sank and drowned.

The poet made note of the irony that the two men had travelled safely across two continents, the Black Sea, North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, using various means of transportation. Finally after they had arrived safely in Manitoba and established their homes, they drowned in the comparatively narrow Red River.

Burial.

Grandson Peter J. B. Reimer has written that, “The body of Jakob Barkman was found later the same day after Mr. Hespeler had some grappling irons made for the search.”

“[Barkman’s] eighteen-year-old [son] Jakob took the lifeless body of his dear father home to Steinbach on the ox cart. [The young boy, with the dead body of his father at his side, whose life had so suddenly been snuffed out, broke down with grief.] When they came through to the village of Blumenort, they stopped at the gate of the parents of Johann B. Toews, who came out to see the body of the dear relative [Mrs. Peter W. Toews was Jakob M.B.’s cousin].”

Daughter Maria described the sad journey of her brother Jakob with her father’s body as follows: “After the tragedy Peter K. Barkman and the dead minister’s son Jakob hired an elderly Frenchman by the name of Beauchemin, who had an ox cart, to take the dead body home. Young Jakob, with the Church’s money (which he had taken from the drowned father’s pocket) and the Frenchman with his loaded gun in the ox cart alongside the dead body, travelled all night and reached home with the sad news at six o’clock in the morning...”

According to one report, Jakob M. Barkman

was buried under his favourite tree in the backyard of his Main Street Wirtschaft in Steinbach, approximately where the Elmdale School is located today. However, historian Ernie P. Toews has concluded that Barkman was buried in the “Pioneer Cemetery” near the centre of the village. This is based on the recollections of Heinrich L. Fast who together with young Johann N. Wiebe was “herding the village cattle in the vicinity of the old cemetery that day. They left the cattle for a little while and joined the funeral procession.” The matter is clarified by Klaas J. B. Reimer who has written that “here [in the Pioneer Cemetery] is buried our grandfather [J.M.B.] but no remains of the grave are extant”: *Steinbach Post*, March 30, 1965.

The body of Jakob K. Friesen could not be retrieved despite all efforts. It came to the surface 8 days later, June 11. The corpse had deteriorated significantly during that time, and a coffin was immediately built, and the body interred.

The original plan was to bury Jakob Friesen in the graveyard in St. Boniface but this was not allowed by the Catholic Church. Consequently the body was transported back across the river and interred in the graveyard of the St. John’s Anglican Church: K.J.B. Reimer, “Neunzig Jahre”, Feb. 23, 1965. Jakob K. Friesen (originally from Ohrloff, Mol.) was the first Mennonite to be buried in Winnipeg.

Widow Katharina Barkman.

Peter J. B. Reimer concluded his report with the following lament: “How grief-stricken Mrs. Barkman was with all her children is hard to imagine. My mother Aganetha, their second youngest child, was 12 years old at the time. The youngest one, Maria, later Mrs. Johann W. Reimer, was only 10.” Daughter Aganetha later recalled how grief-stricken her mother had been when she saw and heard what had happened.

The widow Katharina Thiessen Barkman continued her husband’s letter correspondence with his brothers and other relatives in Russia. Two years after the death of her husband, the deeply distressed widow married Cornelius Loewen from Grünfeld.

Kornelius Loewen and his 2 sons then moved to Steinbach and lived with her on the Barkman Wirtschaft. In 1881 the family built a new home which was insured on July 25 for \$400.00 and increased by an additional \$100.00 the following year.

Katharina Thiessen Warkentin Barkman Loewen died on August 5, 1889. Her daughter Mrs. Heinrich R. Brandt, nee Katharina T. Warkentin, died the following day. The two women were both buried on August 7, 1889.

Testimonials.

Brother-in-law Peter I. Fast of Jansen, Neb., reported that J.M.B. “was very sincere and honest and we thought very highly of him. I think he truly meant good.” In 1915 Gerhard G. Kornelsen wrote that Jakob M. Barkman had been “largely indispensable” to the infant community of Steinbach.

Grandson Peter J. B. Reimer wrote that “The family lost a loving father and husband; the

community and church lost a strong but unselfish leader and pastor. Jakob Barkman had served his beloved church less than two-and-a-half years as a minister and shepherd but left his mark as one of our great leaders of the Kleine Gemeinde 'Small Church'.

Steinbach historian and grandson Klaas J. B. Reimer has written that "Truly he [J. M. B.] was a courageous leader of his people."

Children:

1) Daughter **Katharina G. Barkman** married the widower Cornelius P. Goossen, son of Gerhard Goossen (1811-54), school teacher of Blumstein, Mol. C. P. G. had been married for the first time to Katharina Friesen, daughter of Klaas F. Friesen, Paulsheim, Mol., uncle to Klaas B. Friesen, Wirtschaft 1, Steinbach. The Cornelius P. Goossen family lived in Friedrichtsthal, Markuslandt in 1867 from where they moved to Annafeld, Borosenko. In 1874 they emigrated to Manitoba settling on Wirtschaft 6 in Steinbach. In 1882 Cornelius P. Goossen sold half his farm keeping 80 acres. "[Cornelius] was weak and could not work very hard but they made a good living in spite of it." Goossen was known as a model farmer and even years later his fields could be recognized by how straight and neat they had been plowed: K.J.B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahre". Goossen died in 1916 at the home of his children Peter K. Esau in Winnipeg.

2) Son **Martin G. Barkman** was married to

Anna Doerksen and lived in Hochstadt (Note 9). His widow married for the second time to Gerhard E. Kornelsen, long-time Steinbach school teacher.

3) Son **Jakob G. Barkman** married to a daughter



Johann W. Reimer and Mrs. Reimer, nee Maria Thiessen Barkman. Maria was the youngest daughter of Jakob K. Barkman and only 7 years old when her father died. She maintained a valuable journal. Photo by Jakob D. Barkman, courtesy of the Barkman family.

ter of Jakob K. Friesen who had drowned in the Red River in 1875. In 1880 Jakob G. Barkman filed for a Homestead on NE 2-6-6E where Waldo Neusteadter lived a few years ago. "The Jakob G. Barkman family lived in the Friedensfeld district some 5 miles south of Steinbach." He also served as a school teacher in Steinbach from 1884 to 1888. In 1890 Jakob G. Barkman built a house on Main Street some-

what north of where "Space Age Tire" is located today. This was across the street from Klaas W. Reimer's cheese factory and store. Jakob G. B. was the father of Peter J. Barkman (1894-1996), resident of the Maplewood Manor who passed away a few months ago.

4) Son **Johann G. Barkman** was also married to a daughter of Jakob K. Friesen. He served for a quarter century as Steinbach's Schulz or mayor. He was the father of Peter F. Barkman, founder of Bethesda Hospital in Steinbach. Johann G. B. was the grandfather of L. A. Barkman, Steinbach mayor and Member of the Legislative Assembly for Manitoba during the 1960s and 1970s.

5) Son **Cornelius T. Barkman** married Maria K. Friesen, daughter of pioneer teacher Abraham R. Friesen, Lichtenau. C. T. B. was one of the early adherents of the E.M.B. Bruderthaler Church in Steinbach. He was blind and was frequently assisted by brother-in-law Johann W. R. Cornelius T. B. lived in Reichenbach.

6) Daughter **Aganetha T. Barkman** married Johann R. Reimer who served as Schulz or

mayor of Steinbach during its pioneer village period. Aganetha was a midwife, renown far and wide for her abilities: see *Preservings*, No. 6, June 1995, pages 23-24, for a biography of Aganetha by grandson Harvey Kroeker. She was the mother of K. J. B. Reimer, Steinbach Councillor and historian, and Rev. Peter J. B. Reimer.

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<u>Gen</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Marriage</u>	<u>Death</u>
3	Jakob M. Barkman	Jan 30,1824	Mar 5,1849	Jun 8,1875
m	Elisabeth Giesbrecht	1830		Mar 14,1858
4	Katharina Barkman	Jan 13,1850		Sep 18,1850
4	Katharina Barkman	Aug 4,1851	Feb 7,1871	Dec 5,1912
m	Cornelius P. Goossen	Dec 30,1839		Jan 18,1916
4	Martin G. Barkman	Nov 18,1853	Oct 24,1875	Feb 8,1896
m	Anna Doerksen	Dec 28,1854		Oct 10,1937
4	Jacob G. Barkman	Jan 23,1856	Sep 8,1878	May 23,1899
m	Maria S. Friesen	May 27,1860		May 30,1942
4	Johann G. Barkman	Mar 26,1858	Jan 6,1878	Oct 20,1937
m	Margaretha S. Friesen	Mar 24,1858		Jan 20,1946
3	Jakob Barkman	Jan 30,1824		Jun 8,1875
m	Katharina Thiessen	Dec 2,1829	Jun 5,1858	Aug 5,1888
4	Aganetha T. Barkman	Jul 5,1859		Apr 19,1860
4	Cornelius T. Barkman	Apr 27,1861	Aug 1,1886	Mar 1,1923
m	Maria Friesen	Nov 12,1869		Mar 11,1933
4	Aganetha T. Barkman	Aug 5,1863	Mar 19,1882	Mar 5,1938
m	Johann R. Reimer	Jun 3,1848		Mar 23,1918
4	Anna T. Barkman	Aug 21,1865		Nov 22,1874
4	Maria T. Barkman	Jan 11,1868	Apr 5,1891	Dec 14,1941
m	Johann W. Reimer	Jan 8,1870		Aug 3,1941

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7) Daughter **Maria T. Barkman** married Johann W. Reimer, son of pioneer merchant Klaas R. Reimer (1837-1906), of Steinbach. They were the parents of John C. Reimer, well-known Steinbach teacher, historian and founder of the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach; and "Gum Sctievel" Jake Reimer, a well-known and famous Steinbach recluse and eccentric.

Notes:

Note 1: It is interesting that the father and uncle of Jakob M. Barkman were originally registered as Bergmanns in the emigration records when they emigrated to Russia: Unruh, *Ostwanderung*, page 360. Ironically Jakob Bergmann (b. 1782), the great-grandfather of Abram P. Bergmann (1887-1971) who settled near the sand pits east of Ste. Annes in 1939, was registered in the emigration records as a Barkman: Unruh, 359.

Note 2: Henry Schapansky, letter October 10, 1992.

Note 3: In fact, Bishop Heinrich Jantzen performed the first baptismal service for the KG in 1815 with 3 baptismal candidates. Jantzen also held a communion service for the KG in Petershagen, Mol. on March 21, 1816, with 33 participants.

Note 4: Unfortunately I have not been able to locate the originals of these sermons and have relied on a summarized version of these sermons as translated by my good friend Mr. John W. Wohlgemuth (1903-89), Hadashville, Man. Klaas J. B. Reimer writes (1964) that at the time of his death 13 of Jakob M. Barkman's handwritten sermons were extant.

Note 5: These letters have been preserved by Toews' descendants and now serve as one of the best sources of information regarding Jakob M. Barkman. They were included in a collection of 74 similar letters published in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 5-76.

Note 6: Father of Isaac F. Friesen (1873-1953), later of Steinbach, Man.

Note 7: For an account of these tragic events see; Peter J.B.Reimer, *Jakob Barkman Genealogy 1825-1875*, 2-4; Peter J.B.Reimer, *The Sesquicentennial Jubilee Evangelical Mennonite Conference*, 39-41; and P.J.B.Reimer, "The Barkmans Come to Canada", *The Messenger*, 1974, September 20.

Note 8: This poem was found in a "Journal" of Gerhard Schellenberg (1854-1932): pages 33 to 34: courtesy of grandson Frank S. Fast, Kleefeld, Man.

Note 9: *Profile 1874*, 52; see Yvonne Lupky, *Doerksen The Genealogy of Gerhard and Helena Doerksen 1767-1984* (Steinbach, Manitoba, 1984), 7-33, has a listing of descendants.

Sources:

Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahre Steinbach in der Ostreserve," *Steinbach Post*, 1964-5.

Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach," *Carillon News*, 1952.

Jakob S. Friesen (1862-1931): "Drekjha Friese"

by great-granddaughter Jeannie L. Hiebert, Henderson Highway, Winnipeg.

Family background.

Jacob Schellenberg Friesen was born in the Molotschna village of Landskrone, South Russia on January 18, 1862 to Heinrich Delesky Friesen (1827-77) and Katherina Schellenberg (1824-1901). His parents were "Anwohner", (landless family) in the village. His father was a painter and dyer of cotton cloth. His parents had moved from Lichtenau to Landskrone and later to the Crimea and then to Sagradovka, Kherson Province. The family always belonged to the Kleine Gemeinde.

In the fall of 1875, the family left Russia for Canada. At the age of fourteen, Jacob and his family arrived in Ontario, Canada. The family overwintered in Ontario. Jacob worked in a mattress factory during the time in Ontario. Here he learned the English language with the help of readers and books which enabled him to teach the much needed language to his relatives and friends in later years.

Moving to Manitoba the following spring of 1877, the Friesen family settled in the village of Hochstadt, Manitoba in the East Reserve where they took to farming. On July 1, 1877 his father Heinrich D. Friesen died. It was said that the hardships of life in a new country were too much for him, and they took their toll. As Jacob was the eldest son at home, he was left with the responsibility to support his mother, Katherina Schellenberg Friesen (1824-1901) and his brothers and sisters that still lived at home. The family was left in difficult straits and the burden of being the provider fell on Jacob since his brothers, Heinrich and Gerhard were already married. Jacob did not have a love for farming.

In 1882, five years after the death of Jacob's father, his mother re-married; she became the wife of Peter Penner Sr. (1816-84). The family moved to Mr. Penners farm in Blumenort, a few miles north of the village of Steinbach. Jacob stayed on the farm with his mother and step-father for a period of three years.

Marriage and farming, 1884.

In 1884, Jacob S. Friesen married Katherina B. Toews of Blumenort on April 28, 1884. Her parents were Peter Wiebe Toews (1831-1922) and Aganetha Klassen Barkman (1828-99), a sister to Peter K. Barkman of Steinbach. On the day of their wedding, Peter Penner Sr. passed away. Thus Jakob was now a married man and his mother once again a widow.

After three years of widowhood, his mother re-married and Peter Baerg (1818-1901), the senior Kleine Gemeinde minister in Manitoba, became his step-father.

In 1887, Jacob built a new house and barn in Blumenort, Manitoba. Although Jacob had been farming before his marriage, he was more interested in machinery. His specialty was steam

engines. Jacob had developed his knowledge in this line to such an extent that he was employed as an engineer at the sawmill, as well as with threshing machines. He went out in the fall to operate steam threshing machines and he had also been in charge of engines in the flour mills at Steinbach and Winkler.

In 1888 the school board was elected in Blumenort and Jacob became the secretary. Jacob was active in many of the local community organizations.

Langdon, North Dakota.

In 1889 Jacob decided to leave the 80 acre farm in Blumenort where he had resided after his marriage and moved his family to North Dakota, USA. They took up a homestead in a small settlement of Mennonites situated 8 miles west of Langdon, North Dakota. His brother Gerhard S. Friesen also lived in this area. Jacob and Katherina, together with their two daughters, Katherina (1885-1965) and Agnes (1887-1976), managed to exist on this homestead for a period of four years when it became necessary to leave.

Jansen, Nebraska.

Because they had acquaintances in Jansen, Nebraska, the family packed up and moved once more. It was here in Jansen that Jacob set up a pump and windmill business and struggled to earn a living. However, a drought hit that part of the country, forcing him to close the business. A son Peter (1893-1983), and a daughter Anna (1895-1976) were born during the years in Jansen, Nebraska. In January 1897, Jacob sent his wife, Katherina and their four children to live with relatives in Manitoba. He followed them in April 1897.

Gruenfeld, Manitoba, 1897.

They now made their home in Gruenfeld (Kleefeld Post Office) and Jacob went to Winnipeg to take a course in cheesemaking, with the result, he followed this trade to Gruenfeld for seven years. Since the cheese factory operated only in the summer, Jacob supplemented his income by working with the threshing crew in the fall seasons. This work took him south, as far as North Dakota where Jacob operated the steam engine for his brother Gerhard. He earned as much as \$5.00 per day.

In order to earn a living in the winter months he began to repair clocks and watches and sold eyeglasses.

In 1903, the cheese factory was discontinued. After purchasing a farm at the village of Rosenfeld (east of Kleefeld) where they lived for about 3 years. Jacob purchased a quarter section near Blumstein, 4 miles southwest of Kleefeld. Since the farm at Blumstein had a large amount of bushland and had a creek crossing it

with the creek being fed by springs along its bank, the land was very suitable for mixed farming.

The family members were able to take care of the work on the farm, so Jacob paid more attention to his watch repair business. Once again he went back to cheesemaking in the cheese factory in Gruenfeld for several summers. In the winter months, the family travelled by sleigh drawn by 2 horses. They would use the sleigh and horses to go to the general store to pick up needed supplies.

Stock on the farm consisted of cows, heifers and pigs. Jacob would buy young pigs in the spring and kept them some distance from the cheese factory, where he fattened them on whey. In the fall he sold them. Katherina (1885-1965) and her brother Peter (1893-1983) would travel to Winnipeg with horse and wagon and sold the pork to a butcher shop on William Ave. They always brought a good price. The whey tank was in the ground with an opening in the top. The pigs, when bigger, would brake down the fence and manage to get over the 2 foot edge around the whey pit and fall in. They would hear the screaming in the factory and have to come and fish the pigs out. None ever drowned. Firewood was cut from the surrounding poplar bush and was sold for income.

One summer Jacob expected a good wheat crop; it was a lovely field of wheat, no weeds, which would yield a lot. When it was ready to be cut, a heavy rain and hail storm passed over and destroyed the wheat completely. Jacob often mentioned that he wanted to move to town and try to start a business. The farming relatives could not understand this and they always discoursed him.

Printing, Giroux, 1908.

In 1908, Jacob became interested in the printing trade. He purchased a small hand-fed Gordon Press in Winnipeg, and tried his hand at printing. He sold the farm in Blumstein and purchased land in Giroux. By the fall of 1910 the Friesen family moved into the new house that Jacob had built. With the small press he started printing letterhead. The neighbours were very interested and he got some printing work. The plates for the press were 8" X 12". They cut the paper with a kitchen knife.

Through his son-in-law, John I. Loewen who operated a concrete block factory in Giroux, Jacob became acquainted with four businessmen, David Langill, farmer and judge, his brother John Langill, who owned the General Store. Mr. Seymour, who owned the Butcher Shop and Mr. Lawson who was the CNR Sta-

tion Agent for Giroux. He was contracted by them to print a newspaper for the group, agreeing to pay his salary of \$100.00 a month, he would provide the paper.

Jacob went to Winnipeg and purchased a larger press, a paper cutter, type and paper in different sizes and started printing the newspaper. This weekly newspaper was named the *Giroux Advocate (Volks Bote)*. The first issue was printed on March 12, 1912. The paper was printed for one year. Eleven issues in all. To boost the circulation of the *Advocate*, one page was printed in the German language for the Mennonite community situated west of Giroux, including Steinbach. Most of his printing business was obtained from this area. Departures and arrivals at the train depot in Giroux were



Photo One: A beautiful summer scene of Steinbach Post Printery as it appeared between 1915 to 1924. It was situated on Main Street where Steinbach Dry Cleaners is located today: see Preservings, No. 8, June 96, page 19. The photograph also shows a residence in the background, probably a home on the newly opened Hanover Street. To the right can be seen the veranda of the C. T. Loewen house. Note the horse and buggy tied up at the hitching rail at the left. The photographs in this article were taken by son Peter T. Friesen. This particular photo came from the album of daughter Margaret Friesen Hiebert, the author's grandmother. Courtesy of Gertrude Friesen.

reported in the *Giroux Volks Bote*.

Jacob first rented John I. Loewen's factory office and put the printery up there, but later decided to put it all in one half of the downstairs of the newly built house. The paper was 8 pages, four of them were "Ready Print". The rest of it was set up by Jacob and his family. Some of the reading material was supplied by the four men.

Unfortunately, the company responsible for the *Advocate* ceased to exist. Pretty soon they found out they could not put up the cash every month, and they could not run the paper without money. Jacob was left high and dry with all his printing equipment. So there he was with the equipment not all paid for and out of work. Jacob started thinking, what to do now.

Then it struck him, that there was no truly independent Mennonite paper being printed. There were papers like "Die Bote" and "Die Rundschau", but they were more or less church papers. So he decided to start his own. Jacob set off for Winnipeg and purchased German type and after planning the form and size of the paper, he started off. At first it was a four page paper, 9 X 7 inches. He decided to call it *Volks Bote* ("The Peoples messenger"). He printed 500 copies of four pages each and sent them out to

500 people in Canada and the USA as sample copies and set the price at \$1.00 a year. This was a weekly paper: that was in December 1913.

Jacob was a man of faith, and was rewarded for it, as by the time the third weeks paper was ready to send out, he had 500 subscribers already. Son Peter T. Friesen sold subscriptions for the "Bote" newspaper in the surrounding rural areas and rode his bike in all kinds of weather. One winter it was so cold that his pen, in his jacket pocket, froze. The ink had frozen solid. In the first issue Jacob including a letter of introduction;

Letter of Introduction, by Jacob S. Friesen.

"This paper I am sending you is a sample copy of the "*Volks Bote*" which we plan to publish after New Year 1914. We intend it to be a link between far apart living Mennonite people, to be able to hear from each other more often. And we will be very thankful for news correspondents from all parts of Canada and USA. We have printed 500 copies and are sending them out to our people in Canada and USA. We expect to get a number of subscribers as the price for it will be only \$1.00 a year. We will try to give only the newest and respectable items. This paper will be printed only in a Christian (idea) and if we include stories they will be such as being of clean content. We will not print any romantic or such stories".

Jacob wanted the paper to be entertaining in a newsy and Christian way. This was no easy task. But Jacob's faith and the great support from his wife, who was very Christian herself, made it possible. The two oldest daughters were married by this time. The others at home, except those in school, all worked to help with the paper. Peter T. Friesen, the son, was living in Alberta at this time. Soon after, Jacob was also asked to print the "Messenger of Truth", which was a church paper of "The Church of God in Christ", of which he was a member.

This was a small eight page paper, which Jacob's wife Katherina undertook to "set". All the type setting was done by hand. This little paper was printed for many years. It was printed in German.

1914 Typhoid.

In September 1914, tragedy struck when Typhoid fever broke out in the family which afflicted Jacob and Katherina as well as two of the older daughters, bringing them all close to death. It left no one to operate the printery. The only son, Peter who had been working at the printery, was at this time employed in a print-

continued on next page



Photo Two: Family picture 1917. Left to right: Gertrude, Elisabeth, Peter, Anna, Maria. Jakob and Katharina Friesen seated in front. The family photograph was taken in the back yard of the Printery. From the album of daughter Margaret Friesen Hiebert and courtesy of Gertrude Friesen.

continued from previous page

ery in Calgary, Alberta. With the help of a special nurse, the stricken members of the Friesen family gradually regained their health. In the mean-time, Peter was summoned urgently to come home where he found the printery completely idle. With the help of friends, Peter did his best and carried on until his father was back to work again.

It was at this time when Jacob decided to publish his own weekly newspaper. Not only was the paper not being printed, but there were doctors and nurses to pay for. That was \$300.00 each. The good English neighbours got together with the doctor and nurse and made a plan for the family. The doctor and nurse both decided to settle for half the first mentioned price and Mr. Steele, who was the Reeve in that municipality, offered to pay them and let the family work off the debt with printing the voters list, etc.

Not only did the neighbours help out with money, but they also brought tempting foods and much needed goods. While the family was sick they had to have an ounce of Gin a day each, and the hotel manager supplied that for free. He was a Frenchman by the name of Rongeau.

Steinbach Post, 1915.

In the spring of 1915, the Steinbach business people saw how Jacob's printing business was progressing. They asked Jacob if he would be willing to move the printery to Steinbach. After thinking this over, Jacob sold the property in Giroux and bought a place in Steinbach on Main Street from George D. Goossen, Lot # 9, next to C.T. Loewens.

The front half was taken for the printery and the back half and upstairs for living quarters. This was a very wise move. The Steinbach business gave them much more work in printing and

advertising. This is what the paper needed, as subscriptions did not pay for running a paper.

Now it seemed the name of the paper "*Der Volks Bote*" was not suitable any more, and so the name was changed. The most fitting name was "*Die Steinbach Post*" and so the name was changed effective June 9, 1915.

The paper became known as the "first and only German Mennonite weekly in Canada", and was intended as a newspaper for the family. Every issue contained an instalment of a serialized story, one that Jacob had carefully read beforehand to check its suitability. There was always a correspondence page with letters from such faraway places as Oklahoma, Ontario, Kansas, Mexico, Saskatchewan, Washington, Oregon and Alberta. Local news from the Steinbach area was printed on page four. The front page usually included a poem, an editorial on such things as the debate about district and one-room schools and news items about the immigration of Mennonites to Canada in 1923, for example. Of course the newspaper also provided an opportunity for Steinbach businesses to advertise their wares.

Son Peter T. Friesen opened a book store across Main Street, next to the Barber Shop on Lot# 31. Altogether there were five family members that were able to work in the printery. The work was difficult at times, not so much on the body as on the mind. Each page had to be set by hand, and it took quite a bit of lead type to fill a page. A proof of the page was then printed in order to check for errors. Good quality newsprint was available until 1916, when the war began to affect its supply.

Inferior paper had to be used until 1922 when better paper once again became available. The newspaper was 8 1/2 by 11 inches in size and eight pages in length.

The War Years, 1917.

Near the end of the First World War federal

legislation prohibited publishing in an "enemy alien language" such as German. In November 1917 the *Post* came under criticism for refusing to run an advertisement for the Victory Loan Bond sale. The Chief Press Censor of Canadian government tried in vain to stop the circulation of German papers.

The following June, Jacob was in trouble again but this time for printing resolutions passed at a church conference which reaffirmed the Mennonite position on nonresistance. The Censor considered these to be "most objectionable matter, which encourages opposition to practically all the war measures of the government". That storm too was weathered by Jacob, but effective October 1, 1918 the publication of virtually all papers in German was forbidden. When the next two issues of the *Post* (Oct 2 and Oct 9, 1918) still appeared in German, the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Regina, filed a protest report, objecting that, "the whole edition does not contain even one reference to the War, neither editorially nor in the news, which in itself is proof of it's pro-Germanism".

The October 15, 1918 issue came out in English, reduced in length to four pages. Jacob gave no hint of the reason for the language change in this issue and by the following week the paper was back to its usual eight pages.

On November 13, 1918 the front page headlines announced; "Peace, The World War is at an End". Five days later Jacob wrote to the Chief Censor for permission to print the *Post* in German again now that the war was over. The request was denied. It was not until January 7, 1920 that the return to German was permitted. In that issue readers finally received an official explanation from Jacob why their beloved *Post* had appeared in English during the past fourteen and a half months.

Editor Jacob S. Friesen writes;



Photo Three: Family photograph 1927. L. to r. Maria, Nick, Agatha Enns, Peter T. Friesen, Anna, Cornie, Gertrude and her husband Abram D. Friesen, and friend Katharina. Seated in front are the parents Jakob S. Friesen and Katharina Toews Friesen. The family photograph was taken in the back yard of the Printery. From the album of daughter Margaret Friesen Hiebert and courtesy of Gertrude Friesen.

To our Readers and Friends

"Now that the government of our country has again allowed us to publish our newspaper in the German Language, we greet all our readers with a happy "Gruss Gott!"

"First and foremost, we must thank all our beloved readers who, despite their difficulties in reading the English Language, regularly paid their subscriptions to the paper during this difficult time. Although we did often appeal to the good nature of our readers, we also repeatedly wrote to the Secretary of State to ask for permission to print in German. The latter was to no avail and of the former, many did not want

to donate their dollar ... At the start, many seemed to think that we printed in English out of sheer arrogance. We hope that all of our readers will help us further and with new courage by submitting good, high-quality news and by encouraging as many new, paid-up subscribers as possible...." signed "Jacob Schellenberg Friesen"

During this time the paper got all kinds of letters. Some quite interesting and funny or amusing. One went so far as to say that rather than let his children see a Mennonite paper printed in English, he would have his paper in white, as he had paid for his year's subscription. So Jacob sent this man the eight page paper in white for the remaining nine months of his one year subscription.

Jacob wrote all the news himself as long as he printed the paper. There were some that sent news in weekly, from when he was in Giroux. Peter T. moved to Winkler in 1921-22 and opened a small printing business.

Retirement, 1924.

The paper was printed until 1924, when Jacob and Katherina decided to retire and give up the printing business. They sold the business to Arnold Dyck, but kept the property and lived in retirement. Jacob went back to repairing clocks and watches again. He often remarked on how glad he was that he had been able to make something of the printing business and that he owed nothing to anybody in the financial line.

Soon after this Jacob's health began to fail, but he kept on with the watch repair, which he enjoyed. He had a few years with more leisure time and less worry.

Death 1931.

Jacob passed away at his home in Steinbach on May 16, 1931. He was laid to rest in the Steinbach Pioneer Cemetery on May 19, 1931. He died of Myocarditis (chronic), malignant tumour of the right kidney. He was ready and happy to go to his heavenly home.

The April before he died, he was looking out the big front window at the bare trees saying, "I do not expect to see those trees in leaf again. By that time I will be where the trees will be much more beautiful." And that came true as he passed away on May 16. He was 69 years old when he died.

Jakob S. Friesen's Christian faith and belief had guided him to affiliation with the Bruderthaler Church. At the same time, he retained his membership in the Holdeman Church.

The funeral was held in the Bruderthaler Church, Steinbach, on May 19, a cold and rainy day. The mourners filled the church to capacity with standing room only. Rev. Gerhard F. Giesbrecht read the scripture at the funeral service and Rev. Jakob F. Barkman conducted the graveside service. Interment took place in the Steinbach Pioneer Cemetery.

Farewell thoughts from the Editor: March 26, 1924

With this issue of the Steinbach Post I am giving up the position of editor of this newspaper I must say that it is difficult to resign from this calling, one which has been both pleasurable and painful and through which I have made so many new and beloved friends. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep and heartfelt thanks to all friends and patrons for the friendly assistance they have given us. We value this highly and will never forget it.

I was partially, although not directly, forced to give up this position because our family and thus our potential help was continually decreasing in size; therefore, we are passing on this job, which is steadily demanding more and more time and with which we can no longer successfully cope, to younger and more capable hands.

I also ask for forgiveness from those readers whom I may have offended, or otherwise hurt.

As for my future plans, I will likely return to the watch repair business which I gave up after going into the printing business.

I shall remember you often my dear readers, and ask that you remember me as well. God be with you.

Jakob S. Friesen

Sources:

1. My great-aunts Gertrude Friesen and Anna Barkman and my great-uncle Peter T. Friesen and family.
2. Henry Fast, "Jakob S. Friesen," *Preservings*, No. 2, July, 1993, page 7, and Henry Fast, "Gleaning from the 1835 census," *Preservings*, No. 5, Jan. 1995, page 11, and Henry Schapansky, "Hermann Friesen, circa 1750-1819," *Preservings*, No. 6, June 1995, page 25.
3. Warkentin, Abe, *Reflections On Our Heritage* (Steinbach, 1974).
4. Loewen, Royden, *Blumenort: A Mennonite Community in Transition* (Blumenort, 1983).
5. Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Manitoba.
6. John Dyck, editor, *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve* (Steinbach, 1994).
7. Plett, Delbert, *Pioneers and Pilgrims* (Steinbach, 1990).



Photo Four: Jakob Schellenberg Friesen (1862-1931). Photo taken in 1931 just three months before he died. From the album of daughter Margaret Friesen Hiebert and courtesy of Gertrude Friesen.

The Bergthaler Sawatskys

by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack St., New Westminster, B.C., V3L 4V5;
annotated by Delbert Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Sawatzky Origins.

It is a natural tendency of family historians to attempt to tie all persons of the same surname to a common ancestor. Very often, there is a presupposition made that persons of the same surname must have a common ancestor. The data that is available is then forced into a preconceived family structure. It is, if you will, a top-down approach. This methodology is neat, tidy and satisfying.

This approach is in and of itself almost always wrong and often leads to erroneous conclusions. An alternative in such cases is to take the given data and determine if there are any very strong reasons why the idea of a common ancestor cannot be avoided.

Having said this, I believe it to be an unavoidable conclusion that the Mennonites of West-Prussian and Russian background having the surname Sawatzky are descendants of at most one or two common ancestors of this name. The Mennonite Sawatskys can be included in that group of families who joined the Mennonites in West-Prussia at a relatively late date, after the Friesian, Flemish and South-German Mennonites had moved to West Prussia. These families were likely of mixed Polish-German descent, many having Germanic or Slavic surnames, whose ancestors had lived in the Vistula delta and valley long before the arrival of Mennonites. These families joined the Mennonites as single individuals or single families. In these cases it is most unlikely that several unrelated native-West-Prussian families with the same surname (of Catholic or Lutheran background) joined the Mennonites. The Mennonites were strict in their adherence to principles of faith and lifestyle, and rather more individuals left the Mennonite community than joined.

Surnames in this class of individuals include, according to Dr. H. Penner, Germanic names such as Fröse, Harder and Letkemann, and Slavic names such as Schapansky, Rogalsky and Dolesky. Many such families joined the Mennonites before 1700, others at a later date.

Johann Zawacky, Nobleman.

Dr. Penner feels that the Mennonite Sawatskys are descendants of a Johann Zawacky, a member of the Polish nobility, who was starost (sheriff, the king's representative) at Schwetz (Vistula valley) and Danzig in 1640. This Johann Zawacky concluded several land leases with the Mennonites of the Vistula valley. He had close ties to the city of Elbing. His descendants like other members of the minor Polish nobility moved to the Elbing territory which was not involved in the several Polish-Swedish wars of the time.

Johann Sawatzky I, Walldorf.

At any rate, two Johann Sawatskys are found

in a 1727 list of landowning Mennonites, one at Walldorf and one at Neustädterwald, both in Elbing territory. The Walldorf Johann was a minister of the Rosenort Gemeinde in 1743. In the 1776 Prussian census of West-Prussian Mennonites, we find the following Sawatskys: Peter at Klein Mausdorf, Franz at Fürstenaerweide, Daniel at Pordenau, Johann at Ellerwald-2 and Thomas at Walldorf.

The 1743 minister Johann Sawatzky married a Johanna Wiens. Of the 1776 Sawatskys, I believe that Thomas, Daniel and Peter were his sons. Franz and Johann were also probably somehow related but more information would be needed to establish a connection. What is remarkable in almost all early Sawatzky families is that the first or second oldest son was a Johann. So that it is possible in what follows that, where I have assumed that a Johann was a father, he may have been in fact a grandfather, and where I have assumed a Sawatzky to be a son of 1743 minister Johann, he may have been a son of the other Johann Sawatzky of Neustädterwald.

In this article I will focus on the Sawatskys of Bergthaler background and attempt to identify the Sawatskys listed in the Bergthaler Gemeinde books (1843) A, B & C. The reference A-195 thus refers to the family listed in the Bergthaler book A, entry 195, and so forth. I have also attempted to locate the family heads listed below with reference to the Manitoba 1881 census.

Johann Sawatzky II 1712-90, Danzig.

The oldest son of 1743 minister Johann Sawatzky was Johann b. 8.4.1712, d. 1.6.1790. He moved to Danzig city and is therefore not found in the 1776 census. His first wife was Katherina Janzen, d. 1.9.1777. After her death, he married (8.2.1778) Magdalena Penner (b. 25.3.1757, d. 2.7.1813). His widow married Johann Giesbrecht in 1792.

This Johann Sawatzky of Danzig had two children, Magdalena (b. 11.1739, d. 16.6.1800) who married a Jacob Kröker, and Johann (b. 4.4.1742, d. 24.4.1815) who married (2.11.1766) Susanna Ens (b. 6.4.1742, d. 2.5.1803). This latter Johann (1742-1815) was the Johann who immigrated to Russia in 1788 and settled at Rosenthal (B.H. Unruh lists of 1793, 1795, 1802). It seems he wore a beard (he had the soubriquet "mit dem Bart") and was a supporter of Deputy Jacob Höppner in the disputes of the early period. Around 1808, he retired to live with his daughter's family, the Johann Neufelds, at Einlage (see B.H. Unruh list of 1808 for Einlage). He had a large family and was the ancestor of many Old Colony Sawatskys.

Johann Sawatzky IV 1767-1852.

Of interest for this article is Johann Sawatzky

(b. 3.8.1767, d. 1.1852) son of Johann Sawatzky (1742-1815) who married Anna Willms (b. 1768) of Neuendorf, Russia (B.H. Unruh lists of 1793, 1795, 1802, 1808). His son Johann b. 1796 (married Helena Penner b. 1.10.1797) is most likely the father of Peter Sawatzky (b. 20.3.1822, d. 19.1.1897) listed at A-142, and also in the Reinlander Gemeinde book (309-1), who married (28.9.1843) Helena Hiebert (b. 16.4.1824, d. 26.10.1915). Peter Sawatzky (1822-97) came to Canada with the Bergthalers and settled at Chortitz, West Reserve, Manitoba, where he is found in the 1881 census.

The Helena Sawatzky (b. 1806) who married (19.9.1826) Jacob Dirksen (b. 18.3.1804, d. 29.7.1853) of Bergthal (A-30) may have been the daughter of Kornelius Sawatzky (b. 1771) of Rosenthal, Russia (B.H. Unruh lists of 1795, 1802, 1808); son of Johann Sawatzky (1742-1815).

Gerhard Sawatzky (b. 12.6.1781, d. 30.4.1842), son of Johann Sawatzky (1742-1815), was the father of Jacob Sawatzky (b. 15.4.1807, d. 16.10.1867) of Schönhorst, Russia. Jacob, in turn, was the father of Jacob Sawatzky (b. 5.8.1839, d. 1919) who moved to Bergthal and is found under A-195. This latter family left the Bergthal Colony and did not immigrate to America. It is believed they may have moved to Wiesenfeld and likely joined the Mennonite Brethren church at Wiesenfeld.

Peter Sawatzky 1760-1843, Schönwiese, Chortitza.

The largest number of Bergthaler Sawatskys are descendants of a Peter Sawatzky, whose birth date is given, both in the Bergthaler Gemeinde book, and in B.H. Unruh, as July 4, 1760. This seems to be the same Peter Sawatzky living at Schönwiese in 1794-95, whose age, listed as 30, would indicate he was born in 1763 or 1764.

Similarly, his wife Helena Penner could have been born in 1764 or 1767. It is possible there were two Peter Sawatskys who came to Russia at the same time, although this is unlikely. There is therefore considerable uncertainty regarding this family.

It is my belief that the Bergthaler information is correct, and therefore that Peter Sawatzky (b. 4.7.1760, d. 9.5.1843) was a son of Thomas Sawatzky of Walldorf, mentioned above. His wife Helena Penner (b. 12.2.1764 or 4.2.1764, d. 16.4.1801) was very likely the daughter of Martin Penner of Rosenort who came to Russia at the same time, and settled at Chortitza. The Peter Klassen listed at Schönwiese in 1794 was therefore his brother-in-law. In the Danzig church records, this Helena Penner is listed with a birth date of Feb. 12, 1764 whereas B.H. Unruh gives a birth date of Feb. 4, 1764, a difference difficult to reconcile, except if there is an error in the Unruh date. The second wife of Peter

Sawatsky was Margaretha Rempel (b. 1780, d. 28.3.1853) who appears to be the daughter of Johann Rempel of Einlage, Russia. They married 4.5.1801.

Peter Sawatsky Children:

1. **Peter Sawatsky** (b. 29.5.1785) died young;
2. **Johann Sawatsky** (b. 29.6.1788) died young;
3. **Helena Sawatsky** (b. 1.4.1790);
4. **Johann Sawatsky** (b. 28.1.1804) Bergthal B-8. His first wife was Maria Penner (b. 7.2.1810, d. 22.1.1851) and his second wife Katherina Hiebert (b. 31.8.1811), widow of Abraham Dyck. Most of Johann's children came to Canada in the 1870s and many, including Johann Sawatsky (b. 8.3.1846), settled at Hochstadt, West Reserve, where they are found in the 1881 census. [Daughter Margaretha Sawatsky (1833-1914) married Johann Rempel (1830-99), and settled in Grünfeld, E.R., in 1875. Their son Johann S. Rempel (1853-1928) of Chortitz served as Secretary-Treasurer of the R. M. of Hanover for many years: see *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, pages 43-44 and 47-48.]



Johann S. Rempel (1853-1928)

Johann S. Rempel of Chortitz (today also known as Randolph) served as school teacher, farmer, banker, chorister, and Municipal Secretary-Treasurer. He was the grandfather of Rev. Cornie Rempel, Randolph, an active historian and contributor to Preservings.

5. **Kornelius Sawatsky** (b. 3.1.1806, d. 6.3.1866) Bergthal B-10. His children include:
 - i) Kornelius (b. 3.9.1831) Bergthal C-4, Bergthal, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881;
 - ii) Peter (b. 29.4.1837) Bergthal C-6, Krongard, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881. [Married his cousin Margaretha Sawatsky, born 22.5.1842. He took over his brother-in-law Heinrich Sawatsky's Homestead, NW3-5-5E, in Krongard, E.R. Their son Peter was known as "Schlore" Sawatsky since he had a large family and all the children's shoes were neatly lined up at the door. The Peter Sawatsky family moved to Paraguay in 1927: see Linda Buhler, "Krongard and Neuhoftung," in John Dyck,

ed., *Historical Sketches*, page 161, for photo and additional information.]

iii) Johann (b. 22.10.1841) Bergthal C-23, Bergfeld, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881. [In 1883 the Johann P. Sawatsky family is listed in Alt-Bergfeld but later they moved to Krongard, Section 3-5-5E. He was known as "Jaeger" Sawatsky];

iv) Maria (b. 2.11.1846) married Peter Martens, Bergthal B-215. Peter Martens is found at Reichenbach, East Reserve, Manitoba in the 1881 census)

v) Heinrich (b.1.1.1848 or 22.12.1847) Bergthal C-39, Bergfeld, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881. [Son Jakob Sawatsky 12.13.1869-1.6.1930 married Katharina Abrams (1873-1948). The family lived in Edenthal, W.R. and moved to Mexico in 1923 where they settled in Halbstadt.]



Jakob Sawatsky (1869-1930) moved from Edenthal by Altona, Manitoba, to Mexico in 1923. He was the great-grandfather of 1996 Steinbach Olympian Michelle Sawatsky. Photo courtesy of grandson John Sawatsky, Steinbach, Manitoba.



Johann S. Klippenstein family members. Back row L to R: Sarah Klippenstein Friesen (Mrs David W. Friesen), Peter Klippenstein, Mrs. Peter Klippenstein (Lena Sawatsky), and B. J. Klippenstein. Front Row: Tina Klippenstein, Mrs. Johann Klippenstein (Katharina Klippenstein), Mrs. B. M. Friesen between her parents, and Johann S. Klippenstein. Photo courtesy of Ted Friesen, Johann & Agatha Klippenstein, page 103.

vi) Franz (b. 5.3.1851) Bergthal C-61, Krongard, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881

6. **Margaretha Sawatsky** (b.2.11.1807, d.1881) married Johann Klippenstein Bergthal A-26. [Elected deacon in Bergthal 1838, withdrew 1857, and reappointed 1864. Son Johann S. Klippenstein (1849-1923) is listed in Gnadefeld, W.R. in 1881, where daughter Sarah was born in 1882. She later married David W. Friesen (1879-1951), founder of D. W. Friesen & Sons, Printers of Altona.

7. **Peter Sawatsky** (b. 13.3.1811) Bergthal B-1 (his fourth wife Susanna nee Harder married Peter Wiebe. They are found at Edenburg, West Reserve, Manitoba, in the 1881 census). He was married four times and his children include:

i) Peter (b. 4.7.1834) Bergthal C-3, Sommerfeld, West Reserve, Manitoba, 1881;

ii) Johann (b. 9.5.1837) Bergthal C-5. His second wife Helena Kauenhowen married the widower Heinrich Klassen after Johann Sawatsky's death circa 1880. Johann Sawatsky's children Katherina, Heinrich and Bernhard are found in the Manitoba 1881 census at Neuberghthal, West Reserve, under Heinrich Klassen's name;

iii) Jacob (b. 6.2.1839) Bergthal C-9, Schönhorst, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881;

iv) Helena (b. 18.9.1840-8.7.1916) married her cousin Franz Sawatsky, Reichenbach, East Reserve, Manitoba, 1881;

v) Margaretha (b. 22.5.1842) married her cousin Peter Sawatsky, Krongard, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881;

vi) Heinrich (b. 12.3.1846) Bergthal C-25, Krongard, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881. [Filed for Homestead on NW 3-5-5E. But by 1882 moved to W.R.];

vii) Maria (b. 1.4.1848) Bergthal B-293, Schönhorst, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881;

viii) Franz (b. 24.5.1858) Reichenbach, Manitoba 1881;

ix) Abraham (b. 1.5.1859) Hochstadt, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881;

x) Gerhard (b. 7.9.1860) Schantzenberg, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881;

xi) Katherina (b. 5.7.1863) Altona, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 (with the Abraham Rempels);

xii) Bernhard (b. 18.5.1865) a foster son of Oberschulze Jacob Peters. He is found under Jacob Peter's name at Reichenbach, East Reserve, in the Manitoba 1881 census;

xiii) Anna (b. 27.3.1867) who married Peter Toews;

xiv) Thomas (b. 8.11.1868) who married Katherina Janzen, possibly living with the David Redekops, Schantzenfeld, East Reserve, Manitoba, 1881.

8. **Franz Sawatsky** (b. 19.8.1814, d. 24.12.1857) Bergthal B-6. His second wife Eliesabeth Hamm married Franz Thiessen, later of Schönau, West Reserve, Manitoba, 1881 census: see *Preservings*, June 1996, Part One, pages 32-33. Franz Sawatsky's children include:

i) Peter (b. 5.5.1837) Bergthal C-5, Grünthal, Manitoba, 1881. [Son Peter F. Sawatsky wrote his pioneer memoirs which were published in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, page 41; see also John Dyck, ed., *Working Papers*,

page 153, for a listing of this family.]

ii) Maria (b. 19.4.1840) Bergthal B-177, Gnadefeld, West Reserve, Manitoba, 1881;
 iii) Franz (b. 7.2.1842-20.2.1918) Bergthal C-15, Reichenbach, East Reserve, Manitoba, 1881. [He married his cousin Helena Sawatzky. Their son Frank S. Sawatzky (1879-1960) was a gunsmith and carpenter who lived on William Ave., Steinbach. He always had a large mustache. He was the father of Frank W. Sawatzky, founder of the F. W. Sawatzky Construction Co. of Winnipeg. Another son Peter S. Sawatzky (1885-1953) married Margaretha Broesky who was a chiropractor. They lived in East Steinbach. Daughter Maria S. Sawatzky married Martin T. Friesen and the family lived in Strassburg, E.R. Daughter Margaretha S. Sawatzky married Aron Schultz (b. 1864)];



Franz S. Sawatzky (1879-1960) was a gunsmith and carpenter who lived on William Ave., Steinbach in his later years. He was the great-grandfather to Nationally renowned poet Patrick Friesen. Photo courtesy of Margaret Friesen, Steinbach, Manitoba.

iv) Johann (b. 1843) Bergthal C-69 moved to Mountain Lake, Minn., U.S.A.;

v) Margaretha (b. 1845) Bergthal B-247, Gnadefeld, West Reserve, Manitoba, 1881;

vi) Susanna (b. 3.2.1842) Bergthal B-15, Neuanlage, West Reserve, Manitoba, 1881;

vii) Jacob (b. 5.11.1851) Bergthal C-60, Bergfeld, East Reserve, Manitoba, 1881.

9. **Thomas Sawatzky** (b.1. 12.1816) Bergthal B-5. He came to Canada and is found at Alt-Bergthal, W.R., Manitoba 1881 census. His children include:

i) Jacob (b.19.1.1846) Bergthal C-59, Alt-Bergthal, W.R., Man., 1881;

ii) Eliesabeth (b. 22.8.1849) Bergthal B-3 1 0, Alt-Bergthal, W.R., Man., 1881;

iii) Margaretha (b. 9.1.1853) who married Gerhard Dyck, Alt-Bergthal, W.R., Man., 1881;

iv) Peter (b. 6.11.1855) Alt-Bergthal, W.R., Manitoba 1881;

v) Sara (b. 20.12.1860) who married Heinrich Dyck, Alt-Bergthal, W.R., Manitoba, 1881;

10. **Jacob Sawatzky** (b. 16.12.1818) Bergthal B-3. [He operated a store in the Bergthal Colony, South Russia.] He came to Canada in 1875. [He purchased land north of Fargo, North Dakota, where he settled with his family. He kept an extensive diary.] He was married five times and his children include:

i) Sara (b. 5.12.1842, d. 1918) who married Heinrich Unger and later Heinrich Peters. She stayed in Russia;

ii) Katherina (b. 15.4.1848, d. 17.8.1867) who married Johann Unger;

iii) Helena (b. 6.8.1864) who married Johann Harder;

iv) Johann (b. 10.8.1859-1950) who married Katherina Penner. [Settled in Fargo, N. D., together with his father. In 1892 he moved to Silberfeld, W. R. where he was known as "Fargo John". He continued the diary started by his father. He was the great-grandfather of Professor John Friesen, CMBC, Winnipeg, and of Rev. Leonard Sawatzky, EMMC Church, Steinbach, Manitoba.]

Conclusion.

There were of course other Sawatzky families included in the immigrants to Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Daniel Sawatzky of Pordenau was one of the first immigrant to Russia, but he died before 1793. Some of his already married children came to Russia in 1804, including Johann (b. 1761) of Ladekopp, Molotschna.

The Peter Sawatzky who came to Russia in 1804, and settled at Schönsee, Molotschna, appears to be a son of Peter Sawatzky of Klein Maudsdorf, mentioned above. His nephew Peter came somewhat later and finally settled at Marienthal, Molotschna.

Kornelius Sawatzky (1781-1840) patriarch the Kleine Gemeinde Sawatzkys settled at Ohrloff, Molotschna, in 1805. He appears to be the nephew of Bergthaler Peter Sawatzky (1760-1843) mentioned above. [Kornelius' son Abraham Sawatzky (1807-82) lived in Jansen, Nebraska, and his widow died at the home of her brother Franz Kroeker in Steinbach in 1900. Their son Abraham K. Sawatzky (1861-1936) moved to Steinbach around 1900. Their daughter Margaretha Sawatzky (1852-1924) was married for the first time to Peter L. Friesen (1847-74), and they were the great-grandparents of Steinbach Town Councillor Dwight Reimer. Margaretha married for the third time to Steinbacher Abraham P. "Brandt" Reimer: see article elsewhere in this issue.]

The other Molotschna Sawatzkys are descendants of Johann Sawatzky of Ellerswald Trift 2, although some of these families later moved to the Old Colony.

Some interesting stories are told regarding some of the Sawatzkys. One story which cannot pass without comment concerns Johann Sawatzky (1818-1891), a son of the Gerhard Sawatzky (1781-1842) previously mentioned, and his step-son Peter Rempel. It seems that Peter Rempel felt that his step-father had cheated him of his inheritance, or so it is reported by one of his descendants. This is mentioned in Delbert Plett's work (Vol. V, page 312). This

story has intrigued me, since the Waisenamt was relatively strict and correct in the handling of inheritance issues. Perhaps the last word should belong to Peter Rempel's uncle, minister and diarist Jacob Epp. In the abridged published version of his diary (pages 146-47, 151-52), Jacob Epp described some unflattering behaviour on the part of his nephew, and casts doubt on the accuracy of the statement handed down through generations.

It is surprising how many Canadians of Mennonite descent have a Sawatzky in their family tree. This author is also a descendant of at least one Sawatzky, namely Peter Sawatzky (1760-1843).

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Coming in Next Issue

Coming in the June 1997 issue No.10: an article by Henry Schapansky regarding the Bergthaler-Chortitzer Kehler families. Henry Schapansky is currently the world's leading expert on the Prussian Mennonite Gemeindebücher.

Coming in Next Issue

Coming in the June 1997 issue No.10: an article by Henry Schapansky about the family background of Waisenman Cornelius T. Friesen (1860-1929), Osterwick, Manitoba: see article by Katharine Wiebe in *Preservings*, no. 8, June 1996, pages 36-40. Henry Schapansky is currently the world's leading expert on the Prussian Mennonite Gemeindebücher.

Judge Jacob Wiebe Fast (1899-1980)

by daughter Audrey Fast Toews, Box 991, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

Ancestry.

Who was Jake Fast? Where and how did he fit into our community?

He was born to Gerhard and Helena (Wiebe) Fast on September 27th, 1899.

His paternal grandmother was Maria Fast (1851-1937) from Nikolaithal, Russia who married Gerhard Fast. Maria's father was Heinrich Fast, one of the first to settle in Steinbach, Manitoba in 1874. Maria was a sister to Henry L. Fast, the patriarch of the "Kleefeld Fast's".

Maria, however, together with her first husband, Gerhard Fast, immigrated to the USA where he passed away leaving her with six small children. She soon remarried to Isaac Harms (1811-91) of Jansen, Nebraska, who was almost 40 years her senior. Together with her second husband she moved to Manitoba to be closer to her relatives.

Here Gerhard Fast (1877-1904), the second oldest of Maria's six children, found his wife, Helena Wiebe, daughter of Jacob P. Wiebe, the school teacher in Alt-Bergfeld: see *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, pages 10-11.

The young couple began life together in a small farming area called Oak Bush, between Landmark and Isle de Chenes. A short time later



Photo Two:
Gerhard Fast, (1877-1904), son of Gerhard Fast and Maria Fast, Picture taken approx. 1895.



Photo One:

Maria Fast with first husband, Gerhard Fast. Children: Heinrich born 1874, married Maria Weiland, moved to Paraguay; Gerhard born 1877 married Helena Wiebe, lived in Steinbach; Maria born 1876, married Nick Brandt lived in Steinbach; Sarah born 1879, spinster, lived in Kleefeld; Helena born 1880 married Jacob Klassen (son of Diedrich Klassen, Maria's third husband) lived in Bergthal, northwest of Steinbach; Cornelius born 1882 married Amelia Poerch lived in Brunkhill, had 6 children, daughter-in-law Mrs. Walter Fast lives in Winnipeg. Information for photo identification is courtesy of Mrs. Betty Janzen (husband John), 9 Roselawn Bay, Niverville. She is the granddaughter of Heinrich Fast and Maria Weiland. She has an aunt, Sarah Fehr, daughter of Heinrich Fast living in the senior's units in Grunthal. Sarah has a daughter Mary, Mrs. Jake Wall living in Edmonton and a son Henry Fehr living in Niverville. Her son George Fast lives in Edmonton. Maria Fast married for the second time to Isaac Harms (1811-91) of Jansen, Nebraska, for the third time to Diedrich Klassen, Manitoba; and for the fourth time to Jakob T. Barkman (1848-1935).

they homesteaded on a farm "two miles south of Steinbach on the Friedensfeld Road", SW24-6-6E. In 1904 Gerhard Fast died as the result of a tree cutting accident east of La Broquerie. He was only 28 years old and left his young wife with three small children and a fourth on the way.

Early Years.

Jacob, who had been named after his maternal grandfather, was five years old at the time of his father's death. He was the second child, having an older sister, Maria, and a younger brother George, and shortly after, another brother, Diedrich. His mother, unable to look after a farm with a family of small children, moved into Steinbach where three of her older sisters had married local business men. One of these was Anna, Mrs. Heinrich W. Reimer, the owner of the H. W. Reimer and Sons Store. Another sister had married his brother, Jacob W. Reimer, also a well-to-do merchant in Steinbach. A third sister, Judith, was married to C.T. Kroeker.

At this time, Jacob's Aunt Maria (Fast), Mrs. Nick Brandt, offered to adopt him to help alleviate the situation. His mother, remembering her own childhood struggles of living with relatives

because her mother had died, resolved to keep her children with her if at all possible. She refused the offer, a decision that was often remarked upon in later years as a very positive and courageous effort on her part.

The family was poor, bologna was a rare treat and syrup usually the only topping for bread. In later years I found that my father had an aversion to both these commodities.

To earn a living, Helena began taking in boarders. One of these was Gerhard Schellenberg (1885-1917), whom she eventually married. Together the family moved onto a farm half a mile west of the cemetery along what is now known as MacKenzie Road, where son Henry W. Schellenberg later lived. Two more sons, Henry and Peter, were born to this union.

The Fast children found living with a step-father very difficult and Maria, the oldest and only daughter, went to live with relatives. The marriage lasted only eight years when Gerhard died after developing tuberculosis. By this time Jacob was working for his uncle at the H. W. Reimer store, driving a team of horses to the train station at Giroux to pick up supplies.

Education.

Jacob and his siblings attended school in



Photo Three:

The Jakob Fast family. Adults L - R: Maria (Mrs. Klaas R. Barkman), George Fast, Mrs. Peter R. Reimer, nee Helena Wiebe (mother of Maria, George, and Jacob), Jake Fast and Anna (Mrs. Jakob W. Fast). Children: Peter W. Schellenberg, Arnold Barkman, Mrs. George Loewen, nee Helen Barkman; Mrs. Peter R. Reimer is holding her grandson Bill Fast, son of George, and granddaughter Gladys, daughter of Jakob Fast; and Mrs Jake Fast, nee Anna R. Barkman, holding her nephew Edwin Barkman. Picture was taken by Katherine Fast, wife of George, in Roland, Manitoba where he was working at the time in approx. 1924 - 25.

Steinbach. He must have enjoyed school; learning came easily, and reading was something he would enjoy the rest of his life. His "Wish Book" written at about age 12, shows that his handwriting was meticulous. He noted, in this book many years later, that this was the "thesis for his doctorate". He said that he liked drawing and had at one point been accused by the teacher of tracing a picture because it was so well done. School lasted approximately six years, graduating, he said, when he knew as much as the teacher. His education, however, lasted for the rest of his life. Jacob loved to travel and was always abreast of current events. Newspapers, magazines, books and a radio were a constant in our home. Living in an age when great strides were being made in both transportation, communication and electrical appliances, he took every advantage possible: cars, airplanes, refrigeration, electricity, telephones, radio and television.

Marriage.

Maria, Jacob's older sister, had married Klaas R. Barkman, son of the local miller, Peter T. Barkman. It was a natural thing for Jacob to spend time in their home and this is where he got to know Anna Barkman, a sister to Klaas. Jacob and Anna were married on June 14th,

1923, in the Kleingemeinde church in Steinbach, where they had both been baptized and received into membership.

In 1919, Jacob's mother also married. Her third husband was a widower, Peter R. Reimer



Photo Six: "Judge" J. W. Fast, 1972. Photo by nephew L. Peter Barkman.



Photo Five: Family picture of Jake and Anne Fast with their two older children, Jim and Gladys.

(1870-1946), whose first marriage had been to the widow Peter L. Dueck, a number of years his senior. This resulted in some interesting relationships. One of them being that Helena now had a "daughter" a year older than she. (This "daughter" was the mother of A. D. Penner.) Peter also brought another "son" into the marriage, being Peter D. Brandt who was actually the grandson of Peter R. Reimer's first wife and whose parents had both died leaving him an orphan. He was the same age as Helena's young sons. [Peter D. Brandt was the grandfather of Steinbach Olympian Michelle Sawatzky.]

Life as a Miller.

Peter T. Barkman had already taken his two sons-in-law into the flour mill business with him in Steinbach and he now decided to help his son and son-in-law to become established as well. They bought a flour mill in Foam Lake, Saskatchewan and this is where the two families moved in 1923. Jacob earned his papers as a stationary engineer and had the job of running the steam engines in the mill. After about eight years he had a chance to sell his share in the business and he took this opportunity to move back to Steinbach. Klaas was to follow shortly when he was able to sell his share; it took another 19 years.

Telephone Business.

Upon returning to Steinbach, Jake, as he was known to all his acquaintances, was able to purchase the local telephone exchange, situated where the present MTS building is on Main Street. A small room at the front of the house was the telephone office. Across the hall from this, in a larger room was Jake's office. From here he ran his business and met with his friends. Because he was free to come and go as he pleased and because he owned a car, he was one of the volunteers who supplied Edith, Mrs. Neil P. Wiebe, with transportation to her teaching job in Clearspring.

The telephone operators I remember best were Mary, now Mrs. Neil Friesen and her sister Martha Barkman. Another sister, Mathilda, Mrs. Jac. Q. Friesen, had also worked for him. Two other sisters, from the P.S. Rempel family, were Myrtle, Mrs. P. J. Reimer, and Annie, Mrs. Jackie Peters.

Because it kept perfect time, Jake's pocket watch always hung on the switchboard. At precisely 12 a.m., 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. each day, it was the telephone operator's duty to activate the siren that stood at the corner of Reimer and Main to let people know the time of day. Three blasts in quick succession on the siren signalled a fire.

Jake's part in the telephone business was to sell and fix telephones and to install new lines for customers. Our back yard held a pile of telephone poles and both my Dad and my older brother were adept at climbing poles. I remember as a little girl begging my Dad to build me a swing. I had in mind a lawn swing, but that same afternoon, after having played at the neighbour's for a while, I came home to find the tallest swing I had ever seen, made with two telephone poles.

Justice of the Peace.

Shortly after returning to Steinbach, he also took on the position of local Justice of the Peace. This did not go unnoticed by the church fathers. They took the verse in the Bible that says "Do not judge" very literally and when Jake refused to let the position go, he was excommunicated from the church. This made him a rather bitter man toward the church. Anne also, in his support, no longer attended church. She had, as a young girl attended the Sunday School in the Bruderthaler church (now the EMB), and this is where she sent her children. Jake and Anne had four children, Gladys, Jim, Raymond and Audrey.

Airplanes.

The telephone business did well, Jake had the time and the money to travel, he had a nice house, a new car, and even more noteworthy perhaps, a new airplane.

Together with partner, Art Reimer, he had purchased an airplane built by Bill Wiebe and Frank W. Sawatzky at the J.R. Friesen garage, two doors down from the Fast residence. He was among Manitoba's first pilots and enjoyed "barnstorming". He told of how, when they were not allowed to sell rides, they got around the problem by selling sticks of gum for the price of a ride and then giving people a "free" ride. Several men in our community have over the years told me that they got their first airplane ride with my Dad. I am told that I had my first ride and perhaps only one with my Dad, at age two. When World War II was declared in 1939, all private planes were grounded and so the plane was sold.

Travel.

Many of the pictures in the old family album show Jake travelling with local business men such as Nick Brandt, P.K. Penner, J.R. Friesen and others. One of the events was the World Fair in New York City in 1939; other pictures show them visiting power dams; another trip was by boat to Norway House. In approximately 1944, he and brother-in-law Jacob R. Barkman, took a train to Prince Rupert B.C., to visit their young sons, Jim and Gordon, who had found jobs there in the ship-building industry.

Music.

Music was one of the arts Jake enjoyed the most. The story is told that his father, Gerhard Fast, would pull his harmonica out of his pocket and play for his family on their two mile ride home from church on a Sunday morning. I never saw my father play a musical instrument, but we always had a piano in the house and Saturday afternoon opera on the radio was a must in our home. In later years, "The Messiah" became one of his favourites. The violin was his favourite instrument to listen to and he admired vocal talent. He spoke of enjoying "harmonizing in four part" with friends such as brother-in-law Jacob S. Rempel and others.

Retirement.

Jacob did well in the telephone business and

in 1943, at the age of 43, he felt he was ready for retirement. His wife Anna had inherited a few acres of land at the edge of town and this is where he built a new house and did some market gardening. However, inflation after the war soon took care of the savings and he found he had to go back to work. He still had his Justice-of-the-Peace work, which depended on speeders, "moonshiners", and poachers being caught and appearing before him. His court cases were usually held in his private office which again was a part of the house with a private entrance. RCMP and Game Wardens were often also his friends.

A request that came up every so often would happen late in the evening; a young couple would drive up and ask Mr. Fast to marry them. Apparently this was one of the duties of the Justice of the Peace in the US, but did not extend across the border into Canada. A smart remark around our home at the time was that the only person our father had ever married, was our mother.

Sports and Recreation.

Another past time at this time was duck and goose hunting and fishing. The unplucked birds and unscaled, unfileted fish were always brought home for Anne to take care of at her request. She didn't want any of the fish to go to waste and wanted the feathers for pillows.

Jake was part of the group that introduced curling to Steinbach, having taken part in the sport during his years in Foam Lake. For years he was the "ice maker" and caretaker at the local rink as well as being the skip of his own team during the winter months.

In the spring and summer he went to work for his brother-in-law Klaas. The Barkmans had moved back to Steinbach and Klaas, together with his sons, had begun a Plumbing & Heating business that soon began moving toward concrete septic tanks, then concrete steps and wrought iron railings. Jake became an expert at making the railings.

A Difficult Time.

For a time he also did some bookkeeping for one of the small local businesses and all the time the work of JP was there as a sideline. This position lasted for over 40 years and Jake was 70 years old. The head of the department in Winnipeg kept telling him to hang in there, they were working on getting JP's a pension. There were rumours that the position would be given to someone else and again he was assured that the job was his. By this time the court room had moved into the local town office. A magistrate would come out from Winnipeg to see the bigger cases in the morning and Jacob would see his highway traffic act cases in the afternoon. It had become a habit to drop in during the morning hours to see what his slate looked like.

One morning he walked in and asked his usual question and the answer was "I'm sorry there are none, you are no longer the JP."

He was devastated. He had been assured so often to "hang in there, we're working on getting you a pension" and that the job would not be given to someone else. Now it was gone with-

out a word from the Winnipeg head office and another man had taken his place.

Not only had he lost the position that was still giving him a sense of worth, but his wife was in the hospital dying of cancer. It was an extremely difficult time for him. Anne passed away in October of 1970 at the age of 68. Jacob was 71.

He had taken up golfing some years earlier and this is where he now spent much of his time. It was also at this time that a minister of the "Kleine Gemeinde", now the EMC church, came to spend time with him golfing and having lunch. With his help, Jake was finally able to forgive the past and renew his life.

Second Marriage.

His oldest daughter, Gladys, married to Wm. Peters was living in Truro, Nova Scotia and he took the opportunity to go to visit her. While there, he met a lovely Scottish widow who was not only willing to marry him, but to move to Steinbach. Jake and Ola were married in 1973. Both enjoyed playing table games, reading and travelling and were involved with the founding of the New Horizons group in Steinbach.

Jake passed away of lung cancer in 1980 at the age of 80. Jake and Anne's children are: Gladys and husband Wm. Peters of Truro, Nova Scotia; Jim and wife Doma of Oak Bank, Manitoba; Ray and wife Joan of Bolton, Ontario; and Audrey and husband Ernest S. Toews of Steinbach, Manitoba.

Johann R. Dueck, Steinbach merchant

History is sometimes triumphalist and the people who deserve credit are the last to be acknowledged: Johann R. Dueck (1860-1901) is one of these individuals. In 1882 he married Margaretha, daughter of Steinbach's wealthiest farmer Franz Kroeker.

The couple set up a substantial farming operation just to the north of his in-laws, approximately where MCC Self-Help store is located today. By 1900 he was farming 400 acres of land, 110 acres cultivated. His stable included 7 horses, 14 cows, pigs and sheep, approximately double that of the average Russian Mennonite Vollwirt.

Johann also operated one of the pioneer general stores in Steinbach, which was built onto the northwest side of the house. He also found time to serve as a Vorsänger or chorister in the Kleine Gemeinde church located across the street. The store was closed when Johann died in 1900 of a haemorrhage. His great-grandsons Reg and Gary Reimer continue the merchant tradition to this day, owning "Reimer Farm Supplies".

Margaretha Kroeker Dueck (1863-1918) continued the farming operation in the village. In 1909 she married Isaac W. Loewen (1845-1926) a wealthy farmer from Rosenort. At this time she purchased the Tomensons farm in Clearspring where the Clearsprings Mall is located today and where they farmed in a big way. Margaretha died in 1918 while milking cows.

Maria and Jakob

A story about Jakob W. Fast and his sister Maria; as told to granddaughter Audrey Toews, Box 991, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, by her aunt Maria Fast Barkman.

Mommy said they could go to the field with Daddy, and Maria was so excited. She lived in a small house near the village of Steinbach with her Mommy, Daddy, and two little brothers. Their names were Jacob and George.

Of course in the Low German language spoken in their home, their names were pronounced "Yoacup" and "Yeat". Maria was "Marieche" which meant "little Maria" because she was only six years old. Instead of saying Mommy and Daddy, they most likely said "Mam" and "Pap" or perhaps "Mamme" and "Pappe".

It was a warm late summer day and Daddy was busy making hay for the animals to eat in the winter when he would be away cutting wood. Every day he went to the field just outside the village with his team of horses to work. Today Maria and four year old Jacob could hardly wait while Daddy hitched the horses to the wagon. Then he lifted them up to sit in the box behind him while he sat on the seat and told the horses to "giddup".

Bump, bump, bump they went down the trail while the horses clop clopped along. It didn't take long at all before they arrived at the edge of the field closest to home where Daddy had left the mower. It was a big mower and needed the horses to pull it.

Maria and Jacob stayed in the wagon while the horses were moved from the wagon to the mower. They didn't want to get in the way because those horses looked pretty big and Jacob knew they could run very fast.

His Daddy had given him a ride that he wasn't about to forget. They were in the wagon coming home one day and just before they got there, Daddy really pushed the horses to go fast so that they came roaring into the yard. Now, that was excitement!

Staying in the wagon now was a much safer place to be while Daddy made the horses back up to the mower.

Finally it was their turn. They were so lucky to have such a big strong Daddy who could just lift them up and put them right where he wanted them to be, and this time he wanted them where he could put his strong arms around them and still hold the reins when he told the horses to "giddup".

Daddy drove slowly and carefully all around the field. The sun was very warm and even though the mower made a lot of noise, they could hear things buzzing in the grass. Every once in a while a meadowlark would sing "Fritz-Franz-tyielte-zup".

Grasshoppers were bouncing around everywhere and one even landed on Jacob. He didn't mind, this was so much fun and the freshly cut grass smelled so good. Gophers were everywhere too; poking their heads out of their holes and then quickly ducking back down when the horses came near. Every once in a while they would see one stand up very tall and straight, then they'd hear him whistle a warning to his friends, which of course sent all the little gophers running for cover.

Soon, however, the sun and the soft summer breeze and all those buzzing things made their little heads begin to nod. They were tired. The shade under the wagon looked very inviting. It would be a good place for the children to cool off, drink some water, maybe eat some "reischtje" and cheese Mommy had packed for them. Maria and Jacob could have a picnic while Daddy made another trip around the field.

Maria was a good girl, and liked looking after her brothers. She and Jacob watched as Daddy drove away. This was fun, or was it? Daddy was moving farther and farther away and the mosquitoes were biting and something didn't feel right. It was so quiet; she wished Daddy were coming closer instead of moving farther away. Oh how she wished Mommy were here. She was afraid and Daddy couldn't hear her. She began to cry and that started Jacob crying too. She just had to go home to find Mommy. She took Jacob's hand and pulled him along with her.

Daddy was at the far end of the field when the mower started giving him problems. He knew how to fix it and it didn't take very long, but he was becoming a little concerned about his children. Little Maria would be worried and so he hurried to get the mower going again.

As he drew closer to the wagon, he could see them moving about underneath; but wait a minute, that didn't look like children. It looked like..... Oh no, a bear!

A big black bear was under the wagon! Where were his children? The horses snorted, they could smell the bear and the noise and perhaps the smell of the horses, alerted the bear so that it ran away.

Daddy had only one thought in his mind, he had to find his children. Could they have gone home? He wasted no time and when he burst through the door at home a few minutes later and saw Maria and Jacob safe and sound, he could only hug them again and again. He had never been so glad to see his children.

Memories of Peter A. Vogt and Economy Store

by Roy Vogt, Winnipeg, Manitoba, minister, author and Professor of Economics, University of Manitoba.

Background.

For a period of about forty years, from the late 1930s to the late 1970s, my father, Peter A. Vogt, operated a store on the south end of Steinbach's Main Street. In order to appeal to the budget-minded citizens of the town he named his little operation "Economy Store." It featured groceries as well as a wide array of household items, ranging from nails to patent medicines to kerosene. Customers could engage in "one-stop shopping" long before that term became fashionable.

Peter Vogt was in his late thirties by the time he opened this modestly successful business venture. The route to Steinbach had been long and difficult. He was born in the Mennonite village of Schoenwiese in southern Russia (now Ukraine) in 1900. Although his father operated a small village store - to supplement his unpaid service as the leading minister of the local church Peter never dreamed of going into the grocery business. He hoped instead to study law at a nearby Russian university.

Unfortunately, just as he was graduating from high school, a bitter and prolonged civil war broke out in Russia. This war pitted communist sympathizers against non-communists. Peter was conscripted into the anti-communist army and lived through some harrowing experiences. After the communist triumph he and most members of his family decided to emigrate to Canada. He arrived at the Giroux railway station near Steinbach with his widowed mother and several siblings on August 20, 1923. They were welcomed by a number of Mennonite farm families from the Steinbach area and proceeded immediately to help these farmers to harvest that year's crop: see Roy Vogt, "When Hanover Opened its Heart," in *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec 1995, pages 6-7.

Steinbach, 1923.

None of the Vogts, however, had any farm experience and as soon as the harvest was over they looked for other jobs in the vicinity of Steinbach. Peter was fortunate to obtain a position as sales clerk in one of Steinbach's oldest stores, K. Reimer and Sons. The previous owner of this store, Jacob W. Reimer, son of Klaas R. Reimer, one of the town's founders, had died a few years earlier in the 1918 flu epidemic and the store was now run by his widow Susan Reimer (Wiebe) and a few of her children.

One of these children, a daughter named Susan, seems to have attracted Peter's attention quite quickly. Their marriage in the First Mennonite Church of Winnipeg October, 1925, was widely reported in the Mennonite press as possibly the first marriage between a "Kanadier" (a descendant of those Mennonites who came to Canada in the 1870s) and a "Russlaender" (those Mennonites who had just arrived from Russia). For her own reasons Susan had never joined the church of her parents, the Kleine

Gemeinde, and shortly before her marriage she joined the church of her husband-to-be, which consisted almost entirely of recent immigrants from Russia.

The newly married couple tried with great difficulty to establish themselves in business. It was too late, Peter felt, to undertake the long program of language studies that would be required to pursue a professional career. He wasn't particularly drawn to a life in business, but his experience at K. Reimer and Sons and the example of several older brothers eventually encouraged him to seek his fortune there. The fortune was very slow in coming. For a few months he bought into the printing business which his brother-in-law Arnold Dyck had purchased from Jacob S. Friesen. However, he soon concluded that this business had little potential and withdrew from the partnership. Years later Arnold Dyck sold the business to G.S. Derksen, whose sons eventually made it into the thriving business that it is today.

Vogt Brothers Store.

In the early 1930s Peter Vogt joined his brothers John and Abram in a grocery business which was housed in the former Blatz store across from the Steinbach Flour Mills on Main St. While the brothers got along quite well, their business philosophies did not mesh. By now each of them had several children and they all saw the grocery store as a convenient way of feeding their families during very depressed times.

Their approach to the use of the store's inventory, however, was quite different. Abram and John felt that because they were all family, and trusted each other, there was no need to keep rigorous account of the items they took from the store for their family use. Peter trusted his brothers but insisted that all inflows and outflows from a business had to be recorded in detail regardless of whether a cash payment was involved (even years later when on his own, with the store doing well, every item used by the family, whether a package of chewing gum or an ice cream cone, had to be recorded exactly in a separate account book).

For a while the brothers tried to accommodate their different practices by, in effect, creating two businesses under one roof. Peter recorded his sales on his own cash register while John and Abram handled their business on a separate register.

Economy Store.

However, this soon proved unworkable and Peter moved out. Next he built a small store across Main Street, close to the larger P.B. Reimer store (which was known as "Butcher Reimers"), a very successful venture out of which Reimer Express indirectly arose). After a few years he gave this up, and for a year pondered just what he should do.

Then in 1938 his brother-in-law, Peter Penner, decided to sell a store that he had built in the center of town on the east side of Main St. A deal was worked out between the brothers. John and Abram bought Peter Penner's store, and named it Vogt Brothers, while Peter moved into the store which he had formerly shared with them and which they now vacated. This was the beginning of Economy Store.

A few years after Peter and Susan purchased this store they built their house on to the back of it. Like the house-barns that farmers used to build, this house-store meant that family members never had to venture outside on the way to work. This not only provided protection against bad weather but made it easier for them to spell each other off in the store during lunch and dinner hours. It also enabled Peter to dart back and forth from store to living room on Saturdays in order to catch favourite portions of that afternoon's Metropolitan Opera broadcast.

The war years, so tragic in other respects, greatly improved Steinbach's business climate. Money was again flowing freely, and the thin, aluminum, egg-shaped "Vogt" coins, which Peter, like many other business people, had created during the last years of the depression, could now be retired. Even we younger children could sense that things were getting better. When I was born in the mid 1930s no pictures of the new baby were taken, not because of my looks, as mother later assured me, but simply because they couldn't afford a camera or film. When the last two boys arrived in the 1940s plenty of pictures could be taken, there were frequent outings in a new car, and almost every summer a truckload of fine sand would arrive, creating a mountain of sand in our sand box which stimulated both the constructive and destructive instincts of half a dozen children for hours at a time.

Ruslaender Social Life.

Our father took little part in town activities, but he created a satisfying world for himself in the home as well as in the store. Home life was enriched by the energetic presence of his more vivacious wife, by six rambunctious boys, by two young women--a niece and a sister-in-law who were informally adopted by the family--and by a wide circle of Ruslaender and Kanadier acquaintances. The Ruslaender gatherings on Sunday afternoons were punctuated by servings of wine and sherry and were generally more boisterous than the Kanadier gatherings.

However, as I recall, most of mother's Kleine Gemeinde relatives did not mind an occasional drink. After all, many of them regularly used patent medicines like Alpenkrauter whose alcohol content rivalled that of the most potent wines.

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They were also quite capable of matching wits with their Russlaender neighbours. Once when some Russlaender were making fun of an aspect of Steinbach life which they considered primitive compared to what they had had in Russia, my mother retorted, "Laugh all you want. The fact is that I grew up in a home in Steinbach which had running water. Now I'm married to one of you with your advanced ideas and I'm still waiting for the conditions that I knew as a child." With that kind of repartee in the home one didn't need television to be entertained.

Home life might not have featured the most modern plumbing but it was enhanced by many other conveniences. Our father's interest in music resulted in the early purchase of a gramophone on which he played his classical records and around which we children gathered with our friends to hear Wilf Carter, the Sons of the Pioneers, and the like. When, years later, most of the records were sold at auction, it was amusing to see that our cowboy collection fetched higher prices than his classical collection. There was always a piano in the home, which father played self-taught and for which we all took lessons. Somewhere in my mind I can still hear him vigorously playing and singing the wonderful tunes of Victor Herbert and Franz Lehár.

Store Operations.

The store was another world. Here Peter Vogt was commander and entertainer. Here he taught the family to work even when, as in the slow months of January and February, there was little work to be done. The store officially opened at 8:00 a.m., but punctuality meant that it actually had to be open ten minutes earlier. On weekdays it officially closed at 6:15 p.m., but to accommodate workers on their way home it stayed open till 6:25. Saturday was a 14 hour day, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Because of the late closing on Saturday the weekly bath in preparation for Sunday had to be taken Friday evening. The aromatic benefits of such a bath were surely destroyed by Saturday's work, but we had little time to reflect on such ironies.

The store was more wide than deep, with the entrance in the middle. Upon entering the store, customers would usually proceed directly to the service desk at the back to place their

orders. Until the late 1940s, when self-service was introduced, the inside walls of the store were ringed by storage and service counters. After taking an order the clerk would fill it from these counters or from reserves in the back sheds. A large order might take half an hour or more to fill. During that time the customer, who until

needed to be purchased. Arnold Dyck drew much of his inspiration for the characters Koop and Buhr from persons gathered in this corner of the store.

Peter Vogt loved to banter back and forth with these people, which he did fluently in Ukrainian and German as well as quite passably in French. Though many of his customers were poor and depended on credit accounts to carry them from one harvest to another, they managed to smile at life and to laugh at themselves and at each other. They also paid their bills. Nothing gave our father more pleasure than the frequent appearances of David Kehler. On the coldest winter day, face covered in frost from the four-mile sleigh ride into town, this man would burst into the store, pause for a moment at the door, and then shout with great gusto: "Schoen!" ("Beautiful!"). Few dared complain about the weather after that.

Winnipeg Day.

The store also opened doors to a broader world. Every Thursday Susan Vogt would take charge of the store and her husband would drive to Winnipeg to purchase goods wholesale. He obviously relished this day and undoubtedly went even when business didn't strictly demand it. He would return home around 6:00 p.m. with his truck fully loaded, and it was one of our more pleasurable tasks to help him unload and see all

the things he had bought. He frequently bought magazines and newspapers for all of us to read, as well as the Soviet paper Pravda which, despite its communist propaganda, kept him in touch with his homeland. One day a year I was allowed to skip school and accompany my father on his Thursday excursion. Next to Christmas and July 1 it was the day I most looked forward to. We would visit at least a dozen wholesalers in what is now called Winnipeg's Exchange District [known in those days as the "Jud'a Moiek"]

Many of them had Jewish owners, which I recall because of the unique way they treated me. When the owner spotted me with my father he would come to me with the biggest smile, lift me up on the counter (when I was smaller), and exclaim as proudly as if were his own son, "You have a wonderful boy Mr. Vogt. He will make you happy all the days of your life." With that he would pull a candy from his pocket, place it in my hand, and repeat again what a wonderful lad I was.



Photo One: Peter Vogt and Susan Reimer Vogt, 1925. Photo courtesy of Roy Vogt, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

the mid 1940s was usually a male, would either proceed downtown for additional shopping or would sit down on one of about half a dozen chairs in a corner by the front windows.

Steinbach Sub-culture.

This was the store's social center and the core of Peter Vogt's social world. Here the German, Ukrainian, French, and Mennonite farmers who frequented the store would share their experiences and ideas, sometimes lingering for most of a day, long after their orders had been prepared. Some would purchase a loaf of bread and a ring of garlic sausage and eat lunch there. Both physically and mentally this social world operated on the fringes of Steinbach society. However, a few town folk were regularly drawn to it because of its strange brew of earthy humour and wisdom. I can still see Henry Wieler ambling toward our store from his home on Barkman Avenue almost daily, having persuaded his wife, who was quite aware of his real intentions, that once again something



Photo Two: Economy Store owned by Peter A. Vogt, circa 1938. The store was originally founded by Andreas Blatz (1885-1969) and was situated where Doerksen Printers is located today. Photo courtesy of A Vogt Family History, page 120.

What a lift that gave to my spirit! Mennonite communities are not famous for boosting the egos of their children; at least they weren't in my youth.

In my teens my father would allow me to wander around Winnipeg for a few hours during our Thursday excursion. I would invariably end up at one of the movie matinees in the Capitol or Metropolitan theatres. He sometimes went too, and we enjoyed discussing the movie later. In Steinbach he would often "screen" the weekend movie at the local theatre on Thursday evenings, informing us on Friday morning whether we could see the movie that evening. He seldom said no.

Pan-Germanism.

Despite the gradual success of the store and the interesting life in home and store, disappointments and conflicts could not be avoided. All of his life Peter regretted the fact that the upheavals in Russia had thwarted his dreams of a professional career. He once held a can of peaches in his hands and said to one of his sons, "This is what my life has become: a can of peaches."

His life was, of course, much more than that, but the peach example revealed an underlying disappointment. He also felt cut off from a larger cultural world. He made several trips to New York, and later to Minneapolis, to take in the Metropolitan Opera, but even these experiences, combined with frequent evening excursions to cultural events in Winnipeg and his substantial record collection, did not satisfy his hunger for good music.

His strong attachment to German culture in particular once created serious difficulties for him. During the late 1930s and early 1940s he frequently tuned in to radio broadcasts from Germany via short wave. One of the hired clerks in the store was aware of this, and when he later joined the Canadian army he reported Peter Vogt to the RCMP as a Nazi sympathizer. Together with about a dozen other like-minded persons

from Steinbach, Peter had to appear before a judge in St. Anne. This judge apparently acquitted all of them, partly because, like many French Canadians, he did not support Canada's participation in the war.

I later discussed this event with my father, as well as his feelings toward Germany at the time. He said that he had listened to German broadcasts because he was interested in German life and because he felt that during a war one is largely fed propaganda by one's own media. He admitted that for a time he thought Hitler was a good leader.

However, because he was averse to joining patriotic groups of any kind he had never participated in the Nazi gatherings that were held in River Bend Park in Winnipeg and elsewhere before the war. After the war he lost much of his previous admiration for Germany, not only because of the way the Germans had conducted the war but because of unfortunate experiences that he had with some German emigrants to Canada.

I recall in particular how angry he was after sharing a hospital room for a week with a patient who had recently come from Germany. "He was incredibly arrogant," my father commented. "Although he had lost everything, he thought that he was still superior to others simply because he was German." My father never lost his love for German culture and for his numerous German friends but, as he said himself, most of his romantic notions had been dispelled. He always retained a deep respect for Anglo Saxon culture.

One of my earliest childhood memories is of being taken to see King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother, on their 1939 visit to Winnipeg. My father proudly held me aloft on his shoulders to give me a better glimpse of the King and Queen as they passed by on Broadway. Father especially appreciated English courtesy and respect. He thought it quite remarkable that no Englishman ever made fun of his English.

Store Expansion.

Toward the end of the 1940s the store underwent significant change. Greater prosperity and specialization freed farm wives from some of their chores. This trend, combined with an increased use of the automobile, enabled women to do more of the shopping in town. Unlike their male counterparts, who were more interested in machinery than in groceries and had been quite content to leave their orders with store clerks, these women shoppers wanted to see and compare the goods they planned to buy. Self-service, with goods prominently displayed and available for direct pickup, was the logical outcome of this development.

Peter Vogt adjusted quite quickly to these changes. The store entrance was moved to the corner where the social centre had been, and the cash register was placed there so everyone had to funnel by it. The operation was undoubtedly more efficient, but people no longer had time for long visits and, indeed, there was no longer a place for them. Peter felt increased pressure to enlarge and improve his operation.

Since many of his customers were farmers he had never sold fresh meat. There was now a growing demand for such services, which he resisted. He had always had only one or two hired clerks in addition to his wife and children and he didn't want to make life more complex by hiring a butcher. He took a few of his sons into the store one evening and said: "If I want to keep up with the competition I will have to enlarge the business. This will mean, however, that I will have less time for my evening music and our swimming trips to the sandpit in summer. If I don't enlarge, our income won't grow, and quite possibly will come down."

He then asked what he should do. We recommended that he not enlarge, and whether he listened to us or had already made up his mind (the latter is more likely), that is what he chose.

Later he lamented that the market system with all its virtues was sometimes too strict a taskmaster. He had always cherished his free weekday evenings. However, as more and more stores opened on Friday evening, and then on Thursday, he felt compelled to do the same. He wished that the town council would prevent this from happening, but found that the spirit of free enterprise had fully captured its deliberations.

Though the world of commerce had brought him considerable pleasure, and material success, he felt to the end that the enjoyment of family life, and the life of the mind and the spirit, should take precedence over mere commercial interests.

Prologue:

Peter A. Vogt passed away March 12, 1989. Susan Reimer Vogt died March 26, 1986. They were survived by six sons: Ernest who served as head of the Department of Actuarial Mathematics at the University of Manitoba; Erich, Professor of Physics, University of British Columbia; Arthur, well-loved figure around Steinbach's Main Street - lottery ticket vendor; Roy, Professor of Economics, University of Manitoba; Peter, plastic surgeon, Minneapolis; and John cab driver, Winnipeg.

Kornelius Siemens (b. 1819), Schönfeld

by Helen Dyck, Box 20,192, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2T1 (7704)

Kornelius Siemens, Schönfeld.

My great-grandfather Kornelius Siemens was born on March 20, 1819 in Russia (B-1843 A 183). He lived in the Berghthal Colony and was baptized in 1840. He married Katherina Hamm and had seven children with her some of whom died in infancy. Katharina died on May 26, 1860. Kornelius married Agatha Dyck who was my great-grandmother. They were married on July 29, 1860. Six more children were born, one of whom was my grandfather Johann D. Siemens.

The Kornelius Siemens family came to Canada in 1874 and settled in the village of Schönfeld, several miles east of modern-day Kleefeld: see John Dyck, "Schönfeld" in *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve*, pages 197-200. Kornelius Siemens filed for a Homestead on the SW 23-6-5E on November 4, 1874. According to insurance and tax records he was only a moderately successful farmer.

His second wife died on August 2, 1875. He was left with small children again. They had been married for fourteen years.

Kornelius Siemens married for the third time to the widow Johann Penner, nee Margaretha Wall. She was a widow who had children from her first husband. They were married on August 27, 1876. They had two more children together but both died.

Dissolution of Schönfeld, 1885.

The following section is quoted from John Dyck's article "Schönfeld," published in *Historical Sketches* (Steinbach, 1994), page 200.

"In spring of 1885 Cornelius Siemens wanted to farm his own homestead as compared



Photo One: Johann D. Siemens (1871-1956) and his wife Katharina Penner (1877-1968).



Photo Two: Johann D. Siemens family on their farm in Rosengard, SE24-6-5E. Although this property was immediately to the east of Section 23-6-5E where the village of Schönfeld was located, it was considered to be part of the village of Rosengard in the pioneer days. Left to right: Elisabeth (1911-92), Mrs. Jakob Dueck; Katharina (1902-28), Mrs. Isaak Doerksen; Maria (1897-1986), Mrs. D. D. Ginter; mother Helena Siemens (1877-1968); son Heinrich (b. 1915) in front, married Olga Wiebe; Helena (b. 1913), Mrs. Isaak Doerksen; father Johann D. Siemens (1871-1956); son Kornelius Siemens (1899-1918), son Peter (1904-79), married Susanna Froese; Johann (1908-83), married Katarina Unrau. Photo and identification courtesy of Helen Ginter Dyck.

to the shared strip farming which was practised by the villagers. To avoid any tensions that this might cause they went to the municipal council of the Rural Municipality of Hanover for approval and for a decision on how to make an equitable settlement. At a meeting of the council on April 17, 1885 it was agreed that, in order to avoid undue hardship for any villagers, Kornelius Siemens would allow his land to be used by the village community for one more year from the date of that meeting (Note One). At the end of that period he was to have full entitlement to his property."

"The buildings belonging to the Heinrich Dycks were to remain on Siemens' quarter Section and as long as either spouse was alive they were to have full use of the house and the accompanying farmyard. The buildings belonging to Derk Reimer could stay on Siemens' land for a two year period and should remain for the use of Derk Reimer together with the accompanying farmyard during that period. At the end of the two year period Siemens was given authority to require Reimer to remove the buildings."

"This indicates that at least part of the village was on the quarter Section owned by Kornelius Siemens and that that portion of the village which was located on his land was dissolved in spring of 1885 (Note Two). [As of 1994] One of the original buildings of the vil-

lage is still situated on the south half of Section twenty-three township six range five east (Note Three)."

Death of Kornelius Siemens.

After the death of Margaretha, I do not know when, he lived with my grandparents for a few years before he died.

My Uncle once related to me that Kornelius Siemens is buried in the Groening cemetery on land which is now owned by Les Schroeder, East 1/2 NW 14-6-5E.

Johann D. Siemens, 1871-1956.

My grandfather, Johann D. Siemens, was born September 28, 1871 in Russia and came to Canada as a small boy with his parents. He married to Katherina Penner on June 25, 1896. She was born November 7, 1877, in the village of Burwalde. As a child of 5 to 6 years of age, she came to live with the elder Franz Kroekers of Steinbach, where she stayed until she was 18 years old.

After their marriage they lived with his parents for awhile in Schönfeld. Then they moved to Niverville where they did not stay long. From there they moved to a farm in Schönthal. After five years they bought a farm in Rosengard with a lot of bush and stones which he worked hard to clear for planting.

Grandfather did a lot of walking. He was

always taking cattle to Winnipeg, just him and the dog. My mom said that dog was so smart, when grandpa said to him he wanted to go, then he came and put his feet on grandfather's lap so he could put his shoes on. Grandfather had made a pair for the dog so he would not get sore feet. It took him about three days and he got \$15.00 for it.

Then in 1927 they wanted to move to Paraguay, so he sold his farm and moved to a farm in Friedensfeld. On October 11, 1927 they went to Carey, Manitoba, from where they took the train. It departed from Carey at 5 p.m. That was the last time my mom had seen her parents and one sister that died there. The sister died May 18, 1928.

Grandfather died July 20, 1956, he was 84 years. Grandmother died February 14, 1968, she was 90 years. They had been married for over 60 years. Grandfather always wanted to come back but could not afford it. Most of the others all came back. One sister came to Manitoba but went back to Paraguay and died there on April 8, 1992. Now there is one sister left and one brother. The brother lives in B.C. and the sister in Winnipeg. Those two are all that is left from a family of fourteen children.

Maria Siemens (1897-1986).

My mother Maria Siemens (daughter of Johann D. Siemens) married D. D. Ginter (1900-83). They lived in Rosengard. My father

Diedrich D. Ginter frequently wrote in the *Steinbach Post* under "Hochrücken Neuigkeiten" (Note Four).

Notes:

Note One: Council minutes of the Rural Municipality of Hanover in the archival collection at the municipal office in Steinbach. Copies at the office of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society.

Note Two: John Dyck, "Schönfeld" in *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve*, pages 197-200.

Note Three: Section 23-6-5E, except for the Northeast Quarter is currently owned by David G. Plett of Rockrose Dairy Ltd.

Note Four: see *Steinbach Post*, Feb. 29, 1956.

The Hochfeld Schultzs

by Cathy Friesen Barkman, Box 3284, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

Introduction.

Many of us have ancestors who have no great claim to fame. There are no remembered accounts about their distinguished leadership abilities, vast contributions to the business world or their devout participation in the church community. To many, the Schultzs may have seemed like ordinary people, however, those of us who descend from this family name, are eager to record memories and place them in our scrap-books.

My own Schultz ancestor tree is as follows: David Schultz (1806-38), father of Aron Schultz (1834-1924), father of Johann Schultz (1861-1946), father of Agatha Schultz (1898-1971), mother of Diedrich Schultz Friesen, father of Cathy Friesen Barkman. You will see as you read on that much of what I have collected is from my own lineage.

David Schulz (1806-34).

To date I have traced our Schultz family back to David Schultz (1806-34) (BGB A84). It is not known who his parents were. There is a David Schultz listed in the Benjamin Unruh book who is from Kronsweide, Chortitza. I have no proof, however, that David Schultz is descended from this family.

David's wife, Elizabeth Kehler came from the village of Einlage located just three miles southwest of Kronsweide. They were married on August 26, 1826. She was born in 1808 to Michael Kehler (born 1779) and Elizabeth (born 1784), originally from the Neustadterwald area in Prussia and later from Schönhorst and Einlage, Russia.

David Schultz (1806-34) died in 1834.

Elisabeth Kehler Schultz (b. 1808)

Elizabeth Kehler Schultz remarried to Bernhard Kauenhowen (1786-1841), the son of Abraham Kauenhowen (1745-1802) and Maria Loewen (1757-1830) (BGB A82). They were married in early 1841 and Bernhard died March 28th of the same year. Once again Elizabeth was

a widow. She may have had the added responsibility of clothing and feeding some of Bernhard's eight children.

After Bernhard's death Elizabeth married for a third time to Gerhard Penner (1828-1860) (BGB B36). Gerhard appears to be the son of Johann Penner and Helena Dyck. This family left the Bergthal Gemeinde for the Catholic Church, probably almost unheard of in that day. This is as far as I am able to follow the story of Elizabeth, nee Kehler. To my knowledge, she never came to North America. Her death date is unknown.

David Schultz Children:

David Schultz and Elizabeth Kehler Schultz had three children:

(1) **Elisabeth Schultz** (b. 1828) married widower Abraham Dyck (b. 1816), 12 years her senior (BGB B28). Elizabeth became a mother to 3 children from Abraham's previous marriage, one of whom was Maria Dyck, mother to Abraham P. Martens (1875-1968) later of Grunthal: see *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part 2, pages 27-30. It appears that Abraham and Elizabeth Dyck were among the relatively few Bergthaler families that decided to remain in Russia.

(2) **Aron Schultz** (1834-1922) married Maria Harder (1839-1909), daughter of Peter Harder (1816-63) and Susanna Hoepfner (1818 Russia) (BGB B168). Her maternal grandparents were Jacob Hoepfner (1792-1857) and Maria Isaak (1791-1850) from Niederchortitza and later the Bergthal Colony. Jacob Hoepfner was the nephew of Jacob Hoepfner, the delegate to Russia for the Prussian Mennonites in 1788.

(3) **David Schultz** (1837-78) married Helena Reimer, widow of Jacob Froese (BGB B262). Son David was born on March 9, 1868 in the village of Schönthal, Bergthal Colony. In 1876 the Schultz family came to Canada with children Elizabeth, David, the twins Aron and Maria, and Anganetha as well as the children Froese of Helena's first marriage: Helena (b.

1858), Katharina (b.1860) and Jacob (b. 1861). According to the "Brot Schult Registers" (*Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part 2, page 41-2) the David Schultz family settled in the village of Rosenthal, East Reserve.

On July 24, 1879, one year after David's death, Helena married Heinrich Hiebert (1816-84). They are listed in the 1882/1883 East Reserve Village Seelenliste as living in Reichenbach/Vollwerk, today Mitchell.

Son David Schultz (1868-97) married Helena Martens (1872-1940). They lived in Schönthal, West Reserve, Manitoba, and were members of the Sommerfelder Church. Their son David Schultz (1897-1976) served as Bishop of the Bergthaler Church of Manitoba from 1925.

Aron Schultz (1834-1924).

I am a descendant of the Aron and Maria (Harder) Schultz line. The Aron Schultzs arrived in Quebec on July 1, 1875 on the S.S. Moravian. They are listed in the 1881 Federal Census for the Manitoba East Reserve as living in Hochfeld where Aron was a farmer. Aron is listed as being 47, his wife Maria 42, and children Johann 20, Aron 17, Peter 19, David 11, Jacob 1, Elizabeth 15, Susanna 8 and Maria 4. By 1891 the Census lists only two children, Suzanne age 19 and Maria age 14, living with Aron and Maria.

The Aron Schultz homestead was located on SW 25-7-5E. The East Reserve Bergthal Fire Insurance Records from 1874-1885 show that Aron Schultz of Hochfeld had insured his house, furniture, wagon, plow, and barn and that on December 24, 1881 he increased the amount for his house.

Aron and Maria Schultz had ten children - seven lived to adulthood and three died in childhood. The dates regarding various events such as birth, baptism and death dates, are taken out of church records. They may vary in comparison to family journals or other church records.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

Peter was the first child born to Aron and Maria Schultz. He was born July 7, 1859 and died in Russia on December 11, 1863 at the age of 4.

Johann Schultz 1861-1946.

Johann, who was my great grandfather, was born in Russia on May 7, 1861. At the age of 14 he made the journey from Russia to Canada with his parents. At the time, he was old enough to help build the family homestead in Hochfeld on the East Reserve. He made a decision to join the Chortitzer Church and was baptized on May 29, 1882. On November 27, 1883 he married Helena Friesen who was born on September 3, 1864 to Rev. Heinrich Friesen (1842-1921) and Agatha Hiebert (1843-1916).

The Heinrich Friesen family arrived in Quebec on July 27, 1874, a year before the Aron Schultzs. Helena was 10 years old at the time. She was baptized May 14, 1883. Shortly after they were married, Johann and Helena moved to Bärwalde (Bristol) area on the East Reserve where their older children were born. Verbal reports indicate that they lived on SE8-6-6E. Later they farmed in Reinland (from Hwy. 311 and Hwy. 59 corner, 1 1/2 miles north on east side of #59).

Helena's sister, Agatha, married Peter Harder and they also farmed beside the 59 Highway, just south of Johann Schultzs. All of Johann and Helena's children were born on the East Reserve in Manitoba. They had nine children: Heinrich - born November 9, 1884, Aron - born August 6, 1886, Helena - born January 9, 1888, Johann - born July 29, 1889, Peter - born March 27, 1891, Jacob - born March 14, 1893, Maria - born February 10, 1896, Agatha - born January 7, 1898, David - born January 13, 1901 and died December 7, 1901 and Elisabeth - born April 25, 1904.

Herbert, Sask., 1904.

The Johann Schultz family later moved to the Herbert area in Saskatchewan, settling north east of Main Centre. Rev. Heinrich Friesen writes in his journal that on June 10, 1904 they had a farewell for Johann Schultz. On June 22, 1904 he says, "Johann Schultz left at 10:00 (am) from Niverville to Herbert". Johann and Helena Schultz homesteaded the NW 36-19-10 in the Herbert area in 1904 where they built a house-barn. The children went to the Lobethal School which was organized in 1905. Johann Schultz was one of the original three trustees on the school board. Johann and Helena operated a grain farm and owned oxen and other animals. The Johann Schultzs were known to be very friendly people. Helena was a fragile woman. She still managed to keep a clean house and made the best of what they had. Johann and Helena entertained and were always willing to share whatever they had a meal times. They housed other families who moved to Saskatchewan until their own homes were ready. A neighbour remembers that Johann Schultz had a white horse (which was rare) and a buggy.

Johann was remembered by a niece as hav-

ing a healthy appetite. Even when he expressed that he wasn't hungry any more he still managed to find room for pie. Johann was also a carpenter. I inherited a writing desk that he built for their home. The Johann Schultz family attended the Lobethal Sommerfelder Church, which is still standing, where Johann was a minister for many years. Johann retired from the farm in his fifties as being a minister was a busy job. Ministers were expected to service several churches at one time, conduct funerals, weddings, and visit schools.

Johann was an educated man who could read and write. There are several articles in the *Rundschau* written by Johann Schulz. His address is given as Lobethal, Sask. The articles



Photo Two: Three generations of Schultzs'. Standing in the back is Aron Schultz (1834-1924). Seated are Aron's children Johann and Helena (Friesen) Schulz. The little girl standing in the middle is Johann and Helena's daughter, Agatha, who eventually married Abraham A. Friesen. Abraham and Agatha were my grandparents. The picture is taken in the early 1900s just before Johann and Helena Schultz moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan. Photo courtesy of Cathy Barkman.

contain news regarding the family. The May 23, 1907 issue inquires about Johann's cousin Abraham Dueck who stayed in Russia. Johann explained that his father and Dueck's mother were siblings. It is likely that this is the same Abraham Dyck, born September 10, 1860, mentioned earlier in this article. An article in the March 4, 1908 issue reported that Johann's wife (Helena) and two of their grandchildren are not well. In the May 20, 1908 issue Johann writes that "my brother David Schulz and family came (to Lobethal) on 29th of April with possessions, luck and good health". He also reported that his wife is still sick and before long they will drive to Herbert and ask the advice of a doctor.

One of Johann and Helena's grandsons, Heinrich S. Friesen (1925-96), remembered spending some weekends with the Johann

Schultzs. He would walk there after school on Friday and stay till Sunday. Grandmother would cook the bush rabbits that Henry trapped, skinned and cleaned. They were very tasty. After attending church with his grandparents, he would go home with his parents, Abram and Agatha (Schultz) Friesen. Henry remembered that at the least sign of a cold Grandmother would run for the peppermint drops. She would put a sugar lump in a teaspoon, saturate it with drops and make Henry take it. He never liked peppermints after that. By the time Henry was about 12 years old grandfather Johann Schultz was almost blind. He used a big magnifying glass to see.

Johann was blind the last ten years of his life. My dad and Heinrich's younger brother, Diedrich S. Friesen, remembered spending time during the week at his Grandparents, the Johann Schultzs'. This was before he was old enough to go to school. The grandchildren took turns helping out at the grandparents home because Grandpa was blind. Johann Schultz managed to get around with the aid of washlines and his cane. Washlines were strung from the house to the wood shed, barn and outdoor biffy. Grandpa Schultz would hook his cane over the lines and make his way around the yard. He also knew his way around the house and would find his way to the cupboard. Then he would treat the grandchildren to dried fruit which took the place of candy.

Johann Schultz passed away on July 9, 1946 reaching 85 years of age. He was predeceased by his wife Helena who died March 19th, 1945. They are both buried in the Sommerfeld Cemetery north of Gouldtown, Saskatchewan.

Johann and Helena's daughter Agatha (1898-1971) married my grandfather, Abraham A. Friesen (1894-1987), who was a son of Johann and Maria (Abrams) Friesen, in Main Centre, Sask. The Abram Friesens moved to back to Manitoba with their own family in the 1945. Their son Diedrich (Dick), who is my father, remembers the family spending 3 years at Arden, Manitoba before moving on to farm SW17-6-6e south of Steinbach. They attended the Chortitzer Church in Rosengart, where my "grosspappa!" continued to be a songster for many more years.

Other Children:

Aron Schultz, the third child of Aron and Maria Schultz, was born January 11, 1864. On September 30, 1886 he married Margaretha Sawatzky who was born April 10, 1868 to Franz Sawatzky (1842-1918) and Helena Sawatzky (1840-1916). In the 1891 Federal Census Aron, Margaretha and their daughters, Helena age 2 and Maria age 1 are listed as living with Margaretha's parents who lived in Reichenbach at the time of the 1881 census. Aron and Margaretha had 13 children. The 1907 Chortitzer Church records that the first three died before the age of six.

Peter Schultz was born January 1, 1868. He married Anna Banman on October 22, 1889. Anna was born May 18, 1869. She was the daughter of Kornelius Banman (1839-1892) and Anna Gerbrandt (1840-1922). In the 1891 East

and West Reserve Federal Census Peter and Anna are listed with their 6 month old son Cornelius. According to the church records, Peter and Anna had nine children, two of which died before reaching the age of two. In the early 1900s Peter and Anna moved to Main Centre, Saskatchewan.

Elisabeth Schultz was born on March 30, 1866. On July 27, 1884 she married Jacob, the son of Gerhard Kehler (1825 -1902) and Susanna Kaethler (1828-94), born March 11, 1863. Jacob and Elisabeth lived on SE6-7-6E, a 1/2 mile east of Hochfeld. Later they moved to Ebenfeld. He was a colourful personality known as "Berliner" Kehler. They had thirteen children, two of which died in childhood and eleven who lived to marry and raise families of their own. Jacob died June 11, 1923 of stomach cancer. Elisabeth moved in with her daughter, Mrs. Peter J. B. Reimer. Before she passed away she also lived with her daughter, Mrs. Heinrich Wieler for a short time. Elisabeth died on February 10, 1943.

David Schultz was born on March 31, 1870. He married Helena Kehler on November 15, 1890. Helena was born March 1, 1869. Helena appears to be Helena Kehler listed in the Bergthal Gemeinde Buch with Jacob Kehler (born 1833) and Helena Friesen (born 1840). Her parents lived on the West Reserve in Manitoba. David and Helena had seven children which included a set of twins. Helena died on September 4, 1899 two months after the birth of their daughter Susanna (1899-1900). David married Elisabeth Wiebe on November 26, 1899. The 1887 Chortitzer church records 5 more children born to David through this union. This family moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan.

Susanna Schultz was born on July 16, 1872. On November 28, 1893 she married Johann Banman, born March 28, 1866 to Kornelius Banman (1839-92) and Anna Gerbrandt (1840-1922). The household of Johann and Susanna was one that must have endured many hardships. The 1907 Chortitzer Church records that nine children were born to them, seven of which died before they reached the age of fourteen years. Johann died on October 5, 1908 of typhoid contracted from his brother Franz (1863-1908). This left Susanna with two young children. Susanna became the wife of Dietrich P. Harder (1870-1930) on September 22, 1910. This was a second marriage for both of them. Dietrich brought to their marriage five children from his first wife, Margaretha Wiebe (1902-27). Dietrich and Susanna had one child, Susanna, born June 1, 1912, who later became Mrs. Abraham Enns of Blumengart.

Maria Schultz was born in Russia on January 28, 1874 and died in Manitoba on October

6, 1875.

A second daughter named **Maria Schultz** was born March 6, 1877. On November 16, 1897 she married David Friesen who was born November 16, 1871 to Rev. Heinrich Friesen (1842-1921) and Agata Hiebert (1843-1916). David died on December 28, 1926. David and Maria took in three foster children, Elisabeth Froese, Helena Stoesz and Heinrich Stoesz. They never had any children of their own. After David died



Photo One: The 4 sons of Aron and Maria (Harder) Schulz. Left to right: Johann (sitting), Peter, David and Aron (sitting). Photo courtesy of Cathy Barkman.

Maria became the fourth wife of Jacob P. Enns (December 22, 1881 - December 17, 1957).

Aron and Maria's last child was **Jacob Schultz** born Feb. 3, 1880. He died March 3, 1880.

The children of Aron and Maria (Harder) Schultz did not all choose the same fork in the road. Three of their children, Johann, Peter and David and their families moved to Herbert, Sask. and became active in the Sommerfelder Church. Aron, Elisabeth, Susanna and Maria with their families remained with the Chortitzer Church on the East Reserve.

The wife of Aron Schultz, Maria nee Harder, died Jan. 2, 1900. After the death of his wife, Aron Schultz was cared for by his youngest daughter's family, the Rev. David Friesens. Gerhard Kehler's report on Hochfeld in the June 24, 1904 issue of the *Rundschau* states that "Aron Schultz is still living in the village. He has been a widower for four years and lives with his youngest daughter and is in good health."

Recollections.

Miss Mary Enns of Steinbach has a few recollections of Aron Schultz. Jacob Enns (1881

1957), Miss Enns' father, took Aron's daughter Maria as his fourth wife. Miss Enns says Aron Schultz was an average size man. She remembers Mr. Schultz sitting on the couch at the home of her uncle David Friesens, visiting with her and other small children whom he always took an interest in. He kept a cube of sugar in his vest pocket for his coffee. He would take the sugar cube, split it into two and use 1/2 in a cup of coffee. Miss Enns' stepmother, Maria (Schultz) Enns, told her that Aron Schultz had a sore finger for many years. She would make a cover out of leather and cloth to protect it.

Aron eventually succumbed to ailments which befell the elderly. Mrs. Susanna Enns of Steinbach, a granddaughter, remembered that Aron was walking through the bush one day and suddenly went blind. He had to call for help to find his way back home. Aron Schultz was blind the last 11 years of his life being plagued with cataracts. He was cared for by family and friends of the Hochfeld community.

Rev. Heinrich Friesen makes a journal entry for July 14, 1918: "Sun. cloudy and little wind. Otherwise pleasant and warm with an east wind. I was in Chortitz in church in the morning and afternoon at David Friesens to look after old Aron Schultz while the others went to a wedding at Jacob Kehlers."

Aron Schultz passed away on Saturday, March 22, 1924. He was 89 years old. The funeral service was held at the home of David Friesen at 1:00 pm on

March 26, 1924. Miss Enns (a young girl then) remembered going to see him laid out for burial in the house. She did not attend the funeral as in those days children were not allowed to go to funerals. Aron and Maria Schultz are both buried in the Hochfeld Cemetery.

Most people will have viewed the Schultzs as just your average Mennonite family with no long list of accomplishments added to their names. However, to me the Schultzs were a courageous people. Their descendants travelled from Prussia, to Russia and over the Atlantic Ocean to North America. They were able to guide and provide for their families through hardships and times of prosperity. For some, the Schultzs may have seemed insignificant but to me they were an irreplaceable piece of a large puzzle. Without those pieces the puzzle wouldn't have looked the same.

Sources:

John Dyck, editor, *Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch* (Steinbach, 1993), 439 pages, contains ship lists, 1881 census, and the genealogy of all Bergthaler, Chortitzer and Sommerfelder descendants, usually back to the late 18th century.

Aganetha Block Vogt (1857-1930)

by Frieda Neufeld, Box 295, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, a granddaughter.

Background.

Aganetha Block Vogt's ancestors came from Muntau, Prussia some 100 km south of Danzig. Her forefathers came from a line of tailors, carpenters, millers and ministers. Her grandfather Peter Block C. 1797 was the only member of the Solomon Block family to immigrate to Russia in 1819 and settle in the Mennonite village of Kronsgarten where he married Maria Bartel, daughter of a local minister; see *Preservings*, No. 4, July 1994, pages 11-12, and No. 6, June 1995, page 24, for additional information on the Bartel family.

There was an intriguing mystery surrounding the young maiden's mother Aganetha Quiring, also formerly from Prussia. Family oral history has it that she was possibly a gypsy, a speculation prompted by her unusual but very beautiful features, a dark complexion, dark eyes and hair, prominent forehead and full lips. Seeing some of these strong facial features pop up time and again in subsequent generations seems to validate this belief.

Aganetha Block Vogt.

So it was from this union, her grandparents, that moulded our Aganetha of 1857 to 1930. This genetic line, plus the economic and cultural era that she was thrown into, tempered by a strict Mennonite upbringing, shaped the character and personality of this energetic, strict and somewhat domineering woman.

Aganetha was of strong temperament who was not easily swayed but could dispense order to all her children, particularly her three oldest daughters long after they were grown up. Yes, it was said, she even foiled two of her older daughters' marriages for she did not sanction their choice of mates. It was her sons that she encouraged towards education professions and careers. It was the more gentle and tolerant personality of her husband Andreas Vogt (1854-1914) whom she married in 1879 that later permitted her older daughters to also pursue professional careers.

Who dared rock some of these rigid family rules that Aganetha enforced on her growing family? "It could not be done!" said neighbours and friends. But when in 1913 her first daughter-in-law Maria married her oldest son Andreas things happened. This Maria, a governess in a prominent mill owners home, had broadened her education in Berlin some years ago and was appalled by the common soup tureen that graced the family table into which all members alternately and simultaneously dipped, instead of individual bowls, that she then in her quiet unassuming manner changed the household to a more refined way of table etiquette. She even introduced individual bowls as well as serviettes held in place in individual napkin rings. The teenage children followed suit with approving prankish gleam in their eyes. No waves were made.



Photo One: Aganetha Block Vogt with some of her grandchildren in Steinbach: Otto Dyck, Hugo (Paul) Penner, Else Dyck, Sydney Dyck, Grandmother Vogt, Andrew Penner, Andrew Vogt, Loiuise Vogt (sitting), Leonard Penner (standing, rear), Ed and John Vogt. Photo courtesy of A Vogt Family History, page 49. John Vogt is currently a councillor of the Town of Steinbach.

Aganetha showed a strong aptitude for business which stood her in good stead when she had to dispose of family assets in preparation for the 1923 emigration. She and her husband raised ten children. She was widowed at 57, her youngest then 14. Together with her oldest daughter, she managed the dry goods store. Her husband had been an ordained, but unpaid minister of the Mennonite church. All her children were privileged to obtain a profession. Most of them chose the teaching profession, one became a nurse and her two youngest sons chose the business world.

Aganetha kept strict account of family finances then and later in Canada as well as keep a terse diary of life in Steinbach. Together with seven grown children and their families (two adult sons died before they were 35) she immigrated to Canada in 1923. This indeed took courage. What would the future hold? How would this unknown land of Canada receive them? She had faith in her God. They would make it.

Emigration.

She and her family trekked through Russia via cattle train, embarked at Libau then on a well weathered battleship the "Bruton", via Kiel Canal to Southampton, England. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean on same, Aganetha being one of the few that did not succumb to seasickness. The family arrived in Quebec City August 17, 1923, then continued via CPR rail to Winnipeg. Here they were met by the Hanover welcoming committee where they were dispersed to different homes. Aganetha, her oldest daughter Maria an R.N. and her youngest son Peter found a welcome home at the C.P. Reimers just north of Steinbach: see "When Hanover opened its doors," *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec. 1995, pages 6-7.

After a short stay there, they set up own household, Aganetha living mostly with daughter Maria and later her daughter Helena, the

Penners where she lived her declining years content and happy.

Retirement.

Aganetha mellowed in her later years, but her inquisitive nature never left her. She loved "her Steinbach" and was often heard to say on her return from little rides out of town "Steinbach leevit (dear) Steinbach".

Grandchildren reminiscing about her life remember her in different ways, but most all remember her as strict, quick to give commands, expecting immediate response, a bit shy with smiles but still loving and warm.

One granddaughter relates the story of how Aganetha, some family adults and children took a ride out to Piney near the American boundary. Coming to the Piney fire watch tower the family decided to eat their picnic lunch. A high tower like that is viewed in different ways by different people. Some sit under its shade and rest, others have the desire to climb. So it was this time, Grandma Aganetha then in her early seventies and wearing long black skirts wanted to climb. So did several of the children. A preserved family photo taken by camera shows Aganetha triumphantly looking on those down below from the height of approximately the roof of a one story building. It showed the oldest generation and the youngest generation on a climb, while the between generation sat and rested.

Yes, Aganetha integrated better, language and all in these few years than was believed possible. She was content and happy with most of her family around her. Canada had received them well and she thanked God for his leading and care.

She remained a strong and vital force within the family to the end. She passed away in Steinbach on September 4, 1930 at the age of 73 and is buried in the local Pioneer Cemetery. The family will remember her fondly for her courage and faith.

Challenges of Peter R. Dueck, 1862-1919

by Dr. Royden K. Loewen, Steinbach, Manitoba, Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg,
based on a paper presented at a history symposium of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference,
held at the Steinbach Bible College, Manitoba, March 13, 1987.

Introduction: Challenges.

Who was Peter R. Dueck? We may know from oral tradition that he was the Aeltester of the East Reserve Kleine Gemeinde for almost 18 years, from 1901 to 1919, and that he lived in Steinbach.

This knowledge would naturally lead us to local and church history books where we might hope to obtain additional information. We would assume that the leader of Steinbach's largest church in a period of Steinbach's greatest change would figure prominently in such works. If we have we will be disappointed, for, in one such book we find but one direct reference to Aeltester Dueck and in another, a church history, we find Dueck referred to less than his contemporaries, merchant Klaas R. Reimer and schoolteacher Gerhard E. Kornelsen.

Why is this? The reason, I think, lies in the work ascribed to Dueck. While business leaders are described as enthusiastic, ingenious, hard working and indomitable, Peter Dueck is described as a man who "frowned on business," looked "sternly askance" at cars, opposed public schools and warned young people to stay away from the city.

What excitement, what ingenuity, what challenge was there in such a work? What significance could there be for such a leader? Little, indeed, if we look at history only through the eyes of the winners, the men who ushered in modern society.

A glance at the church and the community through the eyes of Aeltester Peter R. Dueck can offer another view. It is the view of a man who took up the challenge of building a visible body of believers where God and not people would be supreme, where humility and love and not arrogance and self centredness would be the distinguishing mark of members, where a radical separation of worldly and godly values would inform each moment of work and social interaction. It will be the view of a man who was extremely active, one who had a well thought through plan of action, one who confidently took up the challenge of leading a church along a difficult path in a rapidly changing society.

Youth.

What were the challenges which Peter Dueck faced? No doubt, there were many he faced as a young 12 year boy who settled in Gruenfeld with his parents in 1875. Although his boyhood is perhaps inconsequential to his work in later years, there is one story of his youth which is indicative of the way in which Peter Dueck carried out the duties of his church office.

The story is told that as a young man, Peter Dueck often travelled alone to Winnipeg to sell farm produce and perhaps purchase dry goods.

Whatever the case, on his return on one such a journey, he encountered a severe blizzard. Not knowing in which direction to go and yet knowing that movement was necessary to keep from freezing in the minus 30 degree Remar temperature, he walked his team of horses in circles till dawn when the storm let up. Here is an example of clearheadedness, resolve and ultimate aim which characterized his leadership in later years.



Photo One: Mrs. Peter R. Dueck (1871-1951), nee Sarah Plett Kroeker, remained a widow all her life. Photo courtesy of Mrs. Dietrich L. Reimer and Plett Picture Book, page 37.

Family.

His first major challenge as an adult, no doubt, was that of being a family man; one who was to make a very adequate living from farming. In 1888, at the age of 26, he left Kleefeld and the home of his parents, Jacob L. and Maria Dueck and came to Steinbach. Here he joined hands with Sarah P. Kroeker, the 17 year old daughter of the well-to-do village farmers, Franz and Margaretha Kroeker. Across the road from Sarah's parents the young couple began farming and establishing their family. Three years after their wedding they cultivated 59 acres, owned 2 horses and milked 3 cows and had a baby daughter, Margaretha Jr.

In 1912 they moved to a farm a mile south of town to make room for the new Kleine Gemeinde church. In time, their farm included a large dairy and a section of prime agricultural land. Here they raised their family of ten, four boys and six girls. The youngest sons, Cornelius and Jacob, remember the fond days of working the land with their father, of putting extra oats into the feeding bags of poor visitors, of shipping grain to La Broquerie, and of dealing with

their Friedensfeld Lutheran neighbours.

His children remember him as a gentle, mild mannered and generous man, a powerful testimony to a first rate family man.

Gemeinde leadership.

Then there was the challenge of running the church. It is interesting to note that in the 1901 Aeltester election on the East Reserve Peter Dueck was the youngest of the candidates. At age 38 he was fifteen years younger than the other ministers, who were mostly in their 50s, and 25 to 30 years younger than the Aeltesten Kroeker of Morris and Friesen of Nebraska. Why this young man who had been a minister for only a year was to be elected with a 60% majority we do not know. He was, it is true, from a line of ministers. But, still he was fully aware of his relative youth. In his first year of office he invited Jacob Kroeker to baptize the youth because as he says "I felt too unworthy and incapable for it."

Other than this, there is every sign of a confident leader, energetically who picked up the challenge of leading the church. His three fellow ministers and two senior Aeltesten frequently gave help and assistance. Few trips to confront an erring member, or assist an ailing Aeltester in Rosenort were made without either Kornelius Plett, Peter Reimer or Peter Loewen present.

For 12 years his closest and dearest friends seemed to be these five fellow churchmen. Then in the short span of four years between 1914 to 1917, during the heart of World War I, the school question and the agony of the automobile, four of these men died and another moved to Kansas. A new generation of ministers were elected

continued on next page



Photo Two: Peter R. Dueck residence SE 26-6-6E, as it looked in 1924, view to the northwest. Standing in the garden are: Anna (Mrs. Ben U. Kornelsen), Elisabeth (Mrs. John B. Reimer and later Mrs. Peter A. Unger) and Katharine (Mrs. Henry D. Friesen). Mrs. Franz Kroeker lived on this yard for the last years of her life in a house situated behind or to the north of the Peter R. Dueck residence: see "Grandmother's clock, 1819," in Preservings, June 1996, No.8, Part 2, page 60. Photo courtesy of Rev. and Mrs. Jakob P. Dueck and Plett Picture Book, page 38.

without delay and Aeltester Dueck continued his work without a break.

Being the Aeltester required much from Peter Dueck. The hours he spent away from home travelling to conduct services and brotherhood meetings in Blumenort and Kleefeld, the days spent helping out in Rosenort when their Aeltester ailed or they faced a church dilemma, the lengthy trips to Kansas to keep a splitting church together, and other trips to visit Kleine Gemeinde homesteaders in Saskatchewan speak of a man with boundless energy and great dedication.

So, too, do the statistics of the East Reserve church during his 17 and a half years in office; 269 baptisms, 61 funerals for members, not to count those of the many child deaths, 37 resignations and excommunications. Despite these last statistics Aeltester Dueck was to see his Gemeinde almost double in size, from 208 to 387 members, during his term in office.

Pastoring.

The challenge of being a church administrator was small perhaps when compared to that of being its teacher and pastor. The forty some sermons which constitute the repertoire of Peter R. Dueck's teaching material reflect the challenge of convincing a people that their purpose for being in this world is to prepare for the next.

A Christmas advent sermon preached in Blumenort just two weeks before his death in 1919 indicates that for Peter R. Dueck such a preparation must come through a life of discipleship. This comprised a life of yielding to God and to fellow Christians, of living a life of love and fear of God, of following the Lord Jesus in

a life of simplicity and peace, of hungering for God's gracious provision of salvation, of increasing the spiritual life which God had begun through Christ, of producing the fruits of repentance, and of allowing one to be refined and purified through tests of death and sickness.

A careless, presumptuous, confident life, in Dueck's understanding of the scripture, was not indicative of a soul longing for God's grace and to a person who did not long for grace, God could not give salvation. This was the central message in his sermons. These he delivered once or twice a month, depending whether or not there was a religious holiday or a communion service. He also preached at the bimonthly or monthly brotherhood meetings, and in the annual series of spiritual renewal meetings held each spring before baptism.

And this was the message the ministerial sought to instill in its members through the purchase of books written by seventeenth century Anabaptist authors, Tielmann van Braght, George Hansen and Pieter Pieters. For example, \$129.30 for Pieters' devotional books was collected in 1902.

Discipleship.

There were other challenges. There were the competing churches who offered an easier, more joyful brand of Christianity. There was the difficult time of the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic when Peter R. Dueck, although handicapped by an ailing heart, preached and comforted and buried the dead. Until his sudden death of a heart attack on January 7, 1919 no challenge which touched on his vision of "Nachfolgi Christi" was too great for this Aeltester to take on.

Epitaph.

Peter R. Dueck may not have been the architect of modern day Steinbach or the present day EMC. He was, however, an envisioned, loving, determined leader who gave himself to his people and to the work of God. And, most importantly, he passed on the faith.

Ten years after Dueck's sudden death one of his friends wrote about him: "In the course of his service he passed through many trials, but his teachings and admonitions have brought much fruit, even in our day, for many of the members who live today came to repentance and conversion through his teaching."

What an epitaph!



Photo Three: Sons Jakob P. Dueck and Cornelius P. Dueck on the Peter R. Dueck yard in 1926. View from the garden to the northeast. Photo courtesy of Rev. Cornelius P. Dueck and Plett Picture Book, page 38.

Peter Kehler (1836-76), Blumengard

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

Peter Kehler was born July 11, 1836, the eldest child of Gerhard and Agatha Kehler (BGB A50). In the summer of 1856 he married Anganetha Groenung. Together they had 3 children, Helena, Gerhard and Johann. On June 14, 1870, Anganetha, his wife of 4 years passed away and in August of the same year, Peter married Margaretha Krahn. From this marriage two children were born, Peter in 1871 and Bernhard in 1872.

In the summer of 1874, they began preparing for the move to Canada along with all the other families from the Bergthal Colony. The Kehler family at this time was living in the village of Schönfeld.

With hopes and dreams of a better life, they boarded the steam ship Nova Scotian and set out for America. Unknown to them were the harsh conditions of the 5 week journey that lay ahead: they were unaware of the sometimes violent storms on the Atlantic ocean and the sea sickness associated with such a voyage. The twenty-three families that left in September of 1874, endured the worst storm of the entire immigration. The details of this voyage were docu-



Photo One: The farm of Peter Kehler (b. 1871) located near Niverville NE18-7-4E, ca. 1915. L-R Peter K. Kehler, son Johann N. Kehler and neighbour Peter K. Friesen (father of Mrs. Eugene Derksen). Note the ornamental detail on the roof of the house.



Photo Two: Gerhard G. Kehler (b. 1859) and Helena (Leoppky) Kehler.



Photo Three: Early 1908. Johann G. Kehler (1864-1929) and Helena (Harder) Kehler (1864-1909). Children in front: Margaretha (b. 1903) between parents and Abraham (b. 1905) sitting in father's lap. Boys in rear: L. to r. Gerhard (1898-1923), Cornelius (1902-1919) and Bernhardt (1899-1919). The boys in the back all died of typhoid fever.

mented in a book by Klaas Peters, *The Bergthaler Mennonites*.

Despite the many anxious moments of the voyage, their ship arrived safely in Quebec on October twenty-second. It had been the intention of these families to spend the winter in Ontario with fellow Germans, where they worked to earn their keep until spring. Records seem to indicate that Peter Kehler and his family were among those who stayed in Ontario over the winter. The following spring saw these families preparing to make the journey by steam ship and by rail, to join their Brethren in Manitoba.

Upon his arrival on the East Reserve, he learned of the death of his mother who had been



Photo Four: Bernhard K. Kehler (b. 1872) and Anna (Friesen) Kehler and son George F. Kehler (later CHSM) ca 1922.



Photo five: Peter K. Kehler (b. 1871) and Helena (Neufeld) Kehler. These are my great-grandparents.

sick for the latter part of the journey. His parents had made the trip to Manitoba earlier in 1874, as did most of his brothers and sisters who were already settled there.

Scarce few written documents remain of those first years that follow the movement of each family. It can not be clearly determined where Peter Kehler first lived after his arrival in Manitoba. The homestead records indicate that in 1876 he resided in the village of Blumengard. It also indicates that they had never built a home in the village or on the homestead. One then has to assume that they took up residence with friends or family.

On June 6, 1876, Peter Kehler passed away

leaving behind a widow and five children.

After his death, his widow registered the NE34-7-6E, as a homestead while continuing to live in the village. A patent was granted to her for having broken six acres of land and having cropped it the years 1877-1880. Her only livestock consisted of one cow.

In 1880, Margaretha Kehler married Abraham Wiebe of Ebenfeld (Lichtenau): see *Preservings*, No. 5, Jan 1995, pages 6-7, for a photo of Margaretha Kehler Wiebe and her second family. According to oral tradition, her step-children from her former husband were not accepted by Mr. Wiebe. The three children were then given up to adoptive families: Gerhard was taken in by his uncle Gerhard Kehler who lived in Bergthal, and Johann went to live with his uncle Cornelius Groening in Schönfeld. It is not known who took in stepdaughter Helena. Margaretha's two children Peter and Bernhard made the move to Ebenfeld with her, however, Mr. Wiebe never really accepted them as his own.

The previous are a few excerpts from the soon to be published Kehler Book Included will also be a genealogy of 3000 descendants of Peter Kehler and a family history compiled from many letters and interviews.

Descendants.

Three of Peter K. Kehler's (b. 1871) children died within 13 days of each other in the 1900 diphtheria epidemic. The surviving 3 children were my grandfather Johann Kehler (1900-72), son Peter and daughter Margaretha. Peter's daughter Helena was married to Neil Friesen and they owned the Pines Restaurant in Niverville, and daughter Betty Kehler married Andy Hiebert and lived in Ile des Chenes: see *Niverville History*, pages 130-36. Daughter Margaretha married Johann L. Friesen (1894-1959) who served as President of Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Co., Steinbach, grandfather of Tim the current manager.

The 4 surviving children of Bernhard K. Kehler (1872-1929) are Abraham, George and Peter F. Kehler and daughter Ida, Mrs. Neil Kliewer. Ida's son Brian was a car dealer in Steinbach who was killed in a plane crash in Dryden, Ontario. Peter F. Kehler was well-known as the owner of Peter's Inn in Steinbach.

Helena G. Kehler, oldest daughter of Peter Kehler (1836-76) married Gerhard Falk and moved to Hochstadt, West Reserve. Her husband and family later moved to Mexico.

Gerhard G. Kehler (b. 1859) took over his wife's Wirtschaft SE34-7-5E. In 1948 his family moved to Paraguay. Johann G. Kehler (1864-1929) moved to Horndean area in the mid-1880s. Later he moved to Blumenhof, Saskatchewan.

Order your copy of the **Peter Kehler (1836-76) Family Book**. Numerous treasured pictures will be published as well as biographies of the earlier generations. This excellent family book is a private edition and only preordered copies will be printed.

To order contact Randy Kehler, Box 20,737, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2T2

Peter T. Barkman (1861-1936)

by Cathy Friesen Barkman, Box 3284, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2A0

Introduction.

A speech that Peter Toews Barkman gave on the 60th Anniversary of the 1874 immigration of Mennonites to Manitoba is published in several books and provides excellent reading. This article is filled with experiences of Peter T. Barkman when he came to Canada and began his business in Steinbach. As I reflect on the article and all I have uncovered, I wonder what it might be that I could add to this already valuable account of the Peter T. Barkman family.

Peter T. Barkman was born on February 10, 1861, in Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia to Peter K. Barkman and Anna Toews: see article elsewhere in this newsletter. During the 1860s the family moved to Rosenfeld, Borosenko.

Emigration, 1874.

In 1874 the Peter K. Barkman family, including young Peter, joined many other Mennonites who immigrated to North America. In Liverpool they embarked on the S. S. Austrian No. 65, landing in Quebec on August 31, 1874. The ship records list the family as: "Peter Barkman 48 labourer, Anna 46 wife; Peter 12 labourer; Johann 10 child, Anna 20 spinster, Angh 14 spinster." Peter and his playmates had fun comparing sights, experiences and dreams for the future--provided they were not too seasick.

In Fargo/Moorhead, Minnesota, the Barkman family took a small steam riverboat up the Red River to the Rat River junction where son Jacob met them. Peter K. Barkman settled his family in Steinbach, Manitoba. Here they built a sod house dug into the ground. For the cold winter of 1875 Peter and his family kept warm in the sod house talking about their dreams and planning for the future.

Peter T. Barkman was an aggressive young man from an early age. At 15 he took on the job of cutting and hauling timber 13 miles away from Steinbach for William Hespeler. His parents will have watched him go with some reservation, as along with some others, he would be gone for two days and a night.

The Milling Business, 1893.

His father built the first steam driven flour mill in Steinbach in 1880. Peter T. Barkman became an efficient miller for his father. In 1892 a fire destroyed the mill. A new mill was constructed in August 1893.

Peter T. Barkman owned a 1/4 share in the new mill. He took an active roll in the mill until 1896 when he became severely afflicted with rheumatism. He then started a Massey Harris

implement business. In 1918 Peter T. Barkman purchased the flour mill together with his son Klaas R. Barkman and son-in-laws Jacob S. Rempel and Benjamin P. Janz. The name of the business was changed to "P.T. Barkman & Sons".

What a traumatic experience it must have been for Peter T. Barkman and his family when



Photo One: Peter T. Barkman and his wife Katharina (middle) pose with Peter's brother, Jacob T. Barkman (1848-1935), on the left and Katharina's brother, Frank Reimer, on the right.

in October of 1920 the mill burnt down for a second time. In 1921 a new mill was constructed.

Marriage, 1883

When Peter was 22 years of age he married 17 year old Katharina, born July 15, 1866 to Klaas R. Reimer (1837-1906) and Katharina Willms (1836-1875) of Steinbach, Borosenko. In 1874 the Klaas R. Reimer family immigrated to Steinbach, Manitoba, where Klaas quickly became one of the wealthiest men in southern Manitoba.

Peter T. Barkman and Katharina Reimer were married on July 1, 1883 at the Kleine Gemeinde worship house in Steinbach, Manitoba. They were both baptized on the same day. Early in their marriage they lived at Steinbach in a house on Main Street right beside Peter T. Barkman's implement dealership located where Brookdale Mall is today.

Prairie Rose Farm.

Behind the house was an older home with cedar shingles for the roof and whitewashed shingles on the sides. This house was eventually moved to the family farm located 1/2 mile west of McKenzie Road and Brandt Road (P.T.H.12-Barkman Concrete). The first building on the family farm was a barn. Over top of

the door to the barn was a sign "Prairie Rose Farm".

Sometime, after the barn was finished, Peter T. Barkman built a large two storey home. In front of the house was a huge slab of cement with the initials "P.T.B." and out the side door to the north was another slab with the year 1919 printed in it. The main floor was divided into four equal rooms. Upon entering the front door of the house, there was a staircase going to the second floor which contained four bedrooms. The farmyard consisted of the old home, the new home, a large barn with a big hay shed and a hog barn.

Foster Children.

Peter and Katharina Barkman were generous and kind-hearted. In the spring of 1922 they decided to adopt two Schmidtke children, Julianna age 13 and Edmund age 9, children of Adolf and Rosella (Mueller) Schmidtke. They committed themselves to providing a good home, as well as education and proper training for them. Julia married Jacob D. Friesen in 1931 and currently resides in Fernwood Place, Steinbach. Edmund married Lillian Hazelwood in 1939.

Recollections.

The grandchildren have all kinds of recollections of Peter T. and Katharina Barkman. Mrs. Katherine (Janz) Rieger and Mrs. Anne (Janz) Kreutzer, both of Fernwood Place in Steinbach, are the children of eldest child Katharina, Mrs. Ben P. Janz. They both have fond memories of their grandparents. Peter T. Barkman was a very tall, slim man. He was very agile and energetic. On his way home from work, he would take a run, grab onto the top of a fence post and jump over it instead of going through the gate. This kind of behaviour was frowned upon by more conservative members of the community as pious married men were to walk and not run from place to place.

Peter T. Barkmans lived on Main Street in Steinbach until 1919. Peter T. Barkman owned all the land directly behind his Massey Harris Equipment Dealership all the way back to the family farm. It was a time when places like the Mennonite Brethren Church, Steinbach Public Library, Fernwood Place, Steinbach Junior High, Barkman Concrete, and much of the land in between was seeded into oats, barley and wheat fields in the spring and large stacks of straw in the fall.

Grandpa often had business to do in the city and would take the horse and wagon to Winnipeg. Mrs. Rieger said her mother, Katharina, had a chance to travel with her dad



Photo Two: Peter T. Barkman family possibly taken on wedding day of Jacob and Anna Fast in 1923: Back row L - R Klaas R. Barkman and wife Maria (Fast) Barkman; Elizabeth and husband Jacob S. Rempel; Katherine and husband Benjamin P. Janz, Helen (Wiebe) and husband Jacob R. Barkman; Centre row: Peter T. Barkman and wife Katherina (Reimer) Barkman; Front row L - R John R. and wife Elizabeth (Friesen) Barkman; Anna and husband Jacob W. Fast. Missing from picture Henry R. Barkman. Picture taken on south side of Peter T. Barkman residence, 1/2 mile west of # 12 Hwy on Mckenzie Rd. (North side) SW 34-6-6E. The house was moved from the site only a few years ago, the barn burned down 40 years ago. Photo courtesy of granddaughter Audrey Toews, Steinbach, Manitoba.

on one such occasion. They stopped in Lorette to break up the drive and stayed for night at the home of a French family whom her father knew. They did their errands in Winnipeg, remembering to pick up the items ordered from other people in the community, and returned home.

Mrs. Rieger said that Grandpa was interested in people and places beyond the boundaries of the East Reserve. He took a train from Giroux and went to the World Fair in Chicago. The grandchildren enjoyed the viewmaster and pictures that he brought home so everyone could share his experiences.

In 1919 the Peter T. Barkman family moved on to the family farm. Grandpa had a buggy and horse--a beautiful brown race horse that stepped high while pulling the buggy. Grandpa would come to Steinbach to deliver a jar of pluma moos or soup to a sick person in the community. Mrs. Kreutzer remembered a time when she was invited to go along. They would drive down Main Street in the buggy and as she clung to the rail on the side of the seat, Grandpa would race over a dip in the road making her stomach flutter. Grandpa also owned a handsome pair of Clydesdales which he kept at the farm. As a girl Mrs. Kreutzer would follow Grandpa Barkman, running to keep up, while he went into the field to take some heads of wheat, rub

them between his fingers, and chew on the kernels of grain.

Grandpa enjoyed owning and driving a car. Whenever he drove past a place with a Menno-nite name, he stopped to see who the people were only to find out that he was related to many of them. Some would say Grandpa was an "enthusiastic" driver. The Janz family would watch Grandpa swing around the corner on the way to their place on "two wheels" wondering if he would make it. While Grandpa enjoyed traveling, Grandma's delicate health kept her at home. Sometime after J. R. Friesen began selling cars, Peter T. Barkman also sold "Overland" cars.

Katharina Reimer Barkman.

Mrs. Rieger and Mrs. Kreutzer recall that Grandma, Katharina Reimer Barkman, was a small fragile woman who looked tired at an early age. She was known to have had very bad migraines. On the outside she was a quiet and pious woman. However, she had enough spunk to keep up with her husband, Peter T. Barkman, and was not afraid to stand up to him. Mrs. Rieger recalled an occasion when Grandpa had decided on an amount to donate to the hospital and Grandma had no difficulty convincing him to give more.

Grandpa looked after Grandma with tender

loving care. They had eight children and everyone was expected to do their share. Some children helped in the house and others put together machinery in the shop. Once the children had married and were no longer living at home, Grandpa hired a maid to help Grandma run the household. Peter T. Barkmans had an endless amount of company. Grandpa liked to bring home people for meals--farmers, customers, friends and relatives--anyone who passed through.

Grandma had to work hard making sure the house was in order and the larder stocked with cookies, schnetki, pluma moos and soup. As children, Mrs. Rieger and Mrs. Kreutzer were allowed to go into their grandparent's bedroom and help themselves to prunes, raisins, figs and apricots which were stored in boxes in the closet and under the bed. Grandma loved pretty dishes and had enough to set a full table.

She also took the liberty of inviting people into the home for meals. If she saw a needy family from the community walk by the house she would call them in for a faspa and send them home with an entire bolt of fabric. When Grandpa and Grandma went visiting they would take along socks and mittens that Grandma had

continued on next page

continued from previous page

knit and bolts of material to give to people who needed them. The Peter T. Barkmans were willing to share their material goods with those less fortunate.

The Peter T. Barkman's moved out of town to the family farm in 1919. They received less company once they were out of the main stream of the business community. Grandpa and Grandma had a good relationship and were quite well suited to each other. During their retirement years they enjoyed each others company. Mrs. Rieger can picture Grandpa holding up long skeins of home spun wool so Grandma could roll it up into balls.

They would spend time together singing from the *Gesangbuch*, the Kleine Gemeinde Church Hymnal. Grandma was a good singer with a high, clear voice. They loved and welcomed visits from their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. At Christmas time, Grandpa would pick up the Janz family in his long sleigh which had enough horse blankets to keep them warm on the journey to Grandma's house. A meal of ham, fried potatoes, pluma moos and cookies would be shared. The grandchildren would receive five ... ten cents and a handkerchief at Christmas for reciting their verses.

A Childhood Experience.

Mintie Barkman Toews Braun, a daughter to Jacob R. Barkman, remembered her grandpa, Peter T. Barkman, as aggressive by nature with a gift for thriftiness. She said he was a "colourful" man. He could also tell a good joke. Grandpa did not shirk his responsibilities in raising the younger generation. Mintie remembered one particular time when she visited her grandma and grandpa over the school lunch hour and noticed a nickel on the windowsill.

She knew she shouldn't take it but on second thought yielded to temptation. After taking the nickel she ran to Peter B. Reimer's store to buy four butterscotch candies. Upon entering the store Mr. Reimer broke the news that her grandpa had already phoned to say that the nickel belonged to him. In the meantime,



Photo Three: Peter T. and Katharina (Reimer) in their retirement years.

grandpa Barkman had also called her dad and when she got home her father, Jacob R. Barkman, "administered the last rites" (a spanking). Grandma Barkman came to Mintie's defense, saying in German to her husband, "You should not have left that nickel there for anybody's temptation." She felt Peter had left it there for the purpose of catching someone in the act of being tempted.

Mintie also remembered a time when the Peter T. Barkmans lived in the big house with her parents on the family farm. Grandma, Mrs. P.T. liked to knit. She kept her brothers' families supplied with socks, mitts and whatever else they needed. While Grandma knitted, Grandpa might be outside looking after the sheep. Mintie remembered that P.T. Barkman had a very loud voice. He could be heard from inside the house yelling at the sheep and Grandma would say in German as she knitted, "well I guess the weather is going to change as Grandpa is so loud again." When Mintie Barkman married her first hus-



Photo Four: A picture of a page out of one of Peter T. Barkman's ledger accounts. It is the account of his own son, Jacob R. Barkman.

band, William P. Toews (1914-68), she received a plate, spoon, fork, knife and a plant stand from her grandmother as a wedding gift.

Interestingly enough, Peter T. Barkman took on the tradition of acknowledging a namesake. His grandson, Peter, son of Jakob R. Barkman, received a full new Sunday suit whenever he had outgrown a previous one, because he was grandpa Barkman's namesake. Mintie Braun remembered that while Peter wore his new suit, the rest of them had to wear home made and made over clothes, which was the order of the day.

Many of the grandchildren remember that Peter T. Barkman was known to have a bit of a temper. When he was mad he would go to an area which is now Friesen Machine Shop, and throw a tool into the field. He was sorry afterwards because he'd have to spend time in the fields looking for the tool.

Community activities.

History books record that Peter T. Barkman was a progressive man. The first telephone service in Steinbach was installed in 1905 between the residences of Peter T. Barkman and his parents, the Peter K. Barkman's.

Peter also took his responsibilities of being apart of the community seriously and was very involved in the process of surveying Steinbach's Main Street so that by 1910 each owner could have title to their own property. Klaas J. B.

Reimer has written that this was one of the crowning achievements of Mayor Johann G. Barkman and that he was "assisted by 2 other city business leaders - Peter T. Barkman and A. S. Friesen": *Reflections On Our Heritage*, page 71.

Business.

Peter T. Barkman was a successful businessman. His Massey Harris Implement business was based in a huge, two storey shed where he sold his equipment and assembled machinery and buggies. Peter T. Barkman's office was always busy with farmers coming to exchange news, buy and sell machinery, pay off debts incurred and to seek advice in their own financial situations. Peter kept the accounts of his business written neatly in large hard bound ledgers. On the top of each page was the farmer's name and the village he lived in followed by the history of his account.

One of the ledgers reported that during the years of 1901-1904, Peter T. Barkman did business with farmers from over 50 villages and had business dealings and suppliers in Winnipeg. As an equipment dealer, it seemed natural that Peter would also serve as a news carrier. Whether through the office or while on the road, messages would be sent back and forth from farmers that he was dealing with.

Little address books, which were given to Peter by various companies, held all kinds of little notes. An address book, compliments of Lindsay Brothers, Milwaukee, Wis. (agent W. G. McMahon, Winnipeg), contained scribbled notes in German such as: "from Klaas Heide, greet P. Neufeld".

The back of another book recorded expenses incurred on a trip to Alberta to visit Peter Toews - "Banff, Oct 20, 1925 - gasoline (gas) \$1.00, room at Calgary \$1.00". These note/address books acquaint us with the many people that Peter T. Barkman came into contact with. They are filled with the addresses of people such as: Frank K. Reimer, Windsor, Ont; Julius Dyck, Brandon, Man.; Mrs. Mart Reimer, Grand Forks; Rev. Joh R. Barkman, Chicago, Ill. (Peter T. Barkman's son); Mrs. A. W. Reimer, Saskatoon, Sask.; Dr. Wray, Omaha, Neb., and many more.

Peter T. Barkman believed in insurance. His income tax forms reported annual insurance fees for machinery and buildings. A document from Transport and Accident Insurance Company recorded coverage for Peter's 1931 - 6 cylinder Chevrolet Sedan from August 1935 to August 1936. It is reported that the car was fully paid for and had a value of \$995.00 when new. It was registered as being used for private purposes. Total premiums: \$15.00. Notary Johann D. Goossen was the agent who signed at the time.

K. Reimer & Sons Limited.

Peter T. Barkman also owned shares in K. Reimer & Sons Ltd. A certificate stated that on April 11, 1917, Peter was the owner of 38 shares worth \$1.00 each from the stock of K. Reimer & Sons Limited. Peter T. Barkman, Jacob W. Reimer and H. W. Reimer were involved with



Photo Five: This is a view of the south side of Main Street taken from on top of the Steinbach Flour Mills. Peter T. Barkman owned most of this land. An enormous hay stack sits where the Steinbach Public Library is now. The Benjamin P. Janz home (which was moved away about three years ago) is to the left of the hay stack on Second Street. Friesen Avenue is lined with houses in the background. This picture was taken around 1915. "Schloszkinderreich" on Mill Street is in the forefront of the picture.

the "K. Reimer & Sons" company as early as 1914. At some point, Peter was President while Jacob W. Reimer served as the Corporate Secretary.

In the fall of 1918 Peter's brother-in-law, Jacob W. Reimer, died of the Spanish flu. Mr. Barkman helped the new manager of K. Reimer and Sons, Jacob J. Reimer (oldest son of the late manager) overcome many hardships following the first World War.

Health Services.

Steinbach's health care system was a concern for Peter and Katharina. On April 1, 1919, Peter owned shares in the Steinbach's "Doctor's residence", a syndicate organized that spring. Previously the community was without a doctor because it lacked a proper residence.

Thanks to shareholders like Peter T. Barkman and others, a house was bought, repaired and painted and leased to Dr. Alexander Shilstra who occupied it and served the community. His wife, Anna, also a Medical Doctor, delivered many of the babies in Steinbach and surrounding area, including some of the P. T. Barkman's grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter T. Barkman must have believed in getting medical attention for most of their physical ailments. A "Life" certificate dated November 28th, 1916 guaranteed the cure of a particular ailment. Dr. Jolm F. Burleson, who was a specialist from Grand Rapids, Michigan, advertised being able to treat diseases non-surgically and boasted that "no chloroform, knife or cautery are used." Whether the Barkmans travelled to Michigan for these services or Dr. Burleson came to Canada to take care of their needs, is not stated.

Tax Returns.

People with sufficient incomes were required

to file an Income Tax return for the Dominion of Canada. The Income Tax form for 1917 was a simple one. Peter T. Barkman reported that he lived in Steinbach, was occupied as an implement dealer and farmer and that he is married. Income is reported as \$3,050.00 with exemptions and deductions totalling \$1,620.00.

By 1919 more detail was required for this tax form. For the year ending December 31, 1919 he writes that he has lived in Canada for 45 years and 9 months. He described his farm as being the SE 34-6-6E (where he lived), part of NW25-6-6E, part of SW35-6-6E and NE28-6-6E. At this time he is married and has two dependents Anna age 17 and Heinrich age 15 years. Gross income is reported as 477 bushels wheat sold for \$849.00 and 120 bushels of barley at \$108.00. One hog sold for \$34.00, 7 sheep for \$70.00 and one horse for \$75.00. \$115.00 was earned from the sale of hides and wool and \$157.49 from the sale of cream and milk.

Total income for the year which included income from wages, property rentals and bank interest equalled \$2,830.49. Peter reported his expenses totalling \$1,129.00 for seed purchased, binder twine, repairs to machinery, buildings and fences, fuel and oil for tractors and engines, insurance for machinery and buildings, property taxes and wages for hired help (Anton Schoen and Joseph Schoen). He cultivated 65 acres. During 1919 the livestock on his farm totalled 12 work horses, 2 beef cattle, 4 dairy cattle, 95 sheep, 7 pigs. The number sold, died or killed for own use during the year are also recorded. He writes that he owned an automobile purchased in 1915 for \$600.00, a tractor, separator, binder, seeder, mower, rake, cultivator, diskharrow and wagon.

The Income Tax forms for the Province of Manitoba filed by Peter T. Barkman differ slightly from the Dominion of Canada forms.

In 1925 he owned 485 acres of land. He was married with 2 dependents age 12 and 16. His wife had no income at the time. During that year he sold 150 bushels of wheat for \$120.00 and 450 bushels of flax for \$1,131.00. He sold 4 cattle for \$67.00, 32 hogs for \$470.12 and 15 sheep for \$120.00. His income also included \$25.00 from the sale of hides and wool and \$254.49 from cream and milk.

In the year 1925 Isaak Warkentin, who is currently living in Fernwood Place in Steinbach, was employed by Peter for a year and paid \$240.00. David Giesbrecht and John W. Reimer were also hired for shorter periods of time.

Various documents indicate that Peter T. Barkman was not afraid to expand his real estate holdings. A Town of Transcona statement of taxes for the year 1922 requested a payment of \$2.64 for taxes on Lot 35, Block 29, listing the land valued at \$75. By 1928 that same piece of property was taxed at \$2.93 less a \$.29 rebate for a property valued of \$40. A Manitoba Certificate of Title dated July 10, 1935 showed that Peter owned another piece of property in the Town of Transcona, Lot 14 in Block 27.

Education.

Peter T. Barkman was a self educated man. He knew the importance of learning the English language in Canada. I imagine that when he arrived in Manitoba he spoke and wrote in German only. Among his papers is a letter from the inspector of taxation regarding his 1920 income tax form. Peter replied in English, with impressive penmanship, clearing up the misunderstanding regarding the number of sheep and pigs sold, wheat certificates and repairs to buildings.

Peter T. Barkman was a firm believer in a good elementary education for the children of

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Steinbach. For many years he served on the local school board as trustee. He even hired the young teacher, G.G. Kornelsen, to teach his own family the English language on winter evenings.

Some of the village families, along with Mr. Barkman, hired young Lutheran theological students from Winnipeg every year to teach English during the two summer months. These teachers boarded at the Peter T. Barkman home.

Retirement.

In preparation for retirement Peter T. Barkman's sons took over his Massey Harris Equipment Dealership in 1915. As the years went on he also handed over some of the estate business to his son Jacob R. Barkman. Peter and Katharina did considerable travelling to many parts of North America after they had retired from active duties. Katherina experienced a greater amount of illness than the average settler. However, she never shirked her duties as a hostess and was always very hospitable to her friends as well as strangers who visited their home.

In the fall of 1929 the Peter T. Barkmans moved to a house on Second Street in Steinbach. They lived there until Peter T. Barkman passed away.

Peter T. Barkman died in Steinbach on March 17, 1936 at the age of 75. He had been sick with lung cancer. One of the grandchildren remembered that his coffin lay in the summer kitchen on the family farm until burial. Peter was buried on March 21 in the Pioneer Cemetery.

A statement from the H. W. Reimer Store dated April 23, 1936 indicated that life went on for Katharina. A bill listed her purchases as 1 dish pan, \$.45; pail, \$.45; pot, \$.85, pr. shoes, \$.98; 1 3/4 yrd. ribbon, \$.44; 4 yrd cloth, \$.92; 6 oranges, \$.13; 1 pr. shoes, \$2.65; 3/4 yrd. silk, \$.75; 1 yrd. silk, \$1.45; 1 remnant silk \$.048 and 1 yrd. band, \$.10.

Mintie Barkman Toews Braun remembered that after her Grandpa died, it was her job to chauffeur Grandma to the different villages such as Blumenhof and Blumenort where she wanted to visit. After the death of her husband, Katharina Barkman moved in with her children, the Jacob S. Rempels who had added two rooms to their house. Later Katharina married for a second time to Cornelius Plett Kroeker. She died on September 15, 1940.

Conclusion.

Peter T. Barkman lived a long and prosperous life ready at each turn to embrace and meet the challenges of his time. He travelled over three continents, crossed the Atlantic ocean, wasn't afraid to drive a car or own the first telephone, learned to read and write German and English, weathered the war years, and added many other milestones throughout his lifetime, too numerous to mention. He is remembered as a good husband and provider for his family as well as a respected businessman.

People still remember Katharina Reimer Barkman's generous spirit, her willingness to



Photo Seven: Peter T. Barkman's grandchildren, Mintie and Rose Barkman, and their dolls enjoy a winter day. The sleigh sits in front of the barn of the Prairie Rose Farm established by Peter T. Barkman in 1919. The picture was taken around 1933.

serve others and her ability to rise above her frailties to be a faithful partner to her husband, good mother to her children and a friend to all in need. Peter and Katharina Barkman were a great asset to Steinbach and the surrounding communities. Their legacy lives on as their descendants continue to be active in the church, business and community, not only in Steinbach but around the world.

Peter T. Barkman Children.

The *Genealogy of Peter K. Barkman 1826-1977* book records that Peter and Katharina had eight children. Many of their descendants are still involved in Steinbach businesses and other aspects of the community.

1. Katherina, born June 13, 1889 was baptized July 26, 1908 by Bishop Peter R. Dueck. She married Benjamin P. Janz (1884-1951), son of Benjamin and Helen (Penner) Janz. Their daughter Katherine married Sebastian Rieger, whose father founded Rieger Clothing, Anna married John Kreutzer and their son Gordon is the owner of Harvest Honda. Sons Benjamin and Alvin owned shares in Steinbach Flour Mills.

2. Elisabeth Barkman (1891-1989) married to Jacob S. Rempel (1890-1947), son of Heinrich

(1855-1926). They were members of the EMB church in Steinbach. Sons Arthur and Edmar were the last owners of Steinbach Flour Mills which stood on Main Street until 1991.

3. Son Klaas R. Barkman married Maria Fast (b 1897), Along with their father, sons Arnold, Edwin and Peter founded Barkman Hardware, Barkman Plumbing and Heating and Barkman Concrete. Daughter Helen married George F. Loewen, son of C.T. Loewen, and Gary, Curt and Rodger Loewen, the current owners of C. T. Loewens "Do-it-Centre" are her sons.

4. Peter, b. 1896, died Sept. 16, 1912 at the age of 16. He passed away from a heart attack while standing in front of a mirror combing his hair.

5. Jacob R. Barkman, born Nov. 13, 1897, married Helena Wiebe (1900-1974) of Alt-Bergfeld, October 27, 1918. Helena was the daughter of school teacher Johann and Helena (Toews) Wiebe, a Chortitzer family. Jacob took over the family farm on SE 34-6-6E. Their son Levi, is my husband's father. Well-known Judge Gordon Barkman is another son.

6. John R. Barkman, born on Aug. 16, 1899 married Anna P. Friesen (1900-87) in 1920. She was the daughter of Klaas I. Friesens of Steinbach. John R. Barkman still resides in Henderson, Nebraska, where they established the Grace Children's Home. In the Home they took in boys off the streets and raised them as their own.

7. Anna (1902-70) married Jacob W. Fast (1899-1980). Their daughter Audrey, married Ernie Toews, see article elsewhere in this newsletter.

8. Son Henry R. Barkman (1904-94) married Elizabeth Funk (1904-92), daughter of Abram D. Funk (1864-1908) and Elisabeth Peters (born 1871). Henry and Elizabeth Barkman belonged to the Chortitzer Church. Henry owned a store in Chortitz (Randolph) located close to the church. When the store burned down it was rebuilt on Hwy. 52. Their daughter Mrs. Henry Funk, lives in Steinbach.



Photo Six: The grandchildren of Peter T. Barkman pose on a car believed to have been owned by him. Left to right: Levi, Peter and Mintie all children of Jacob R. and Helena (Wiebe) Barkman. This picture was taken around 1925.

Heinrich and Charlotte Fast

by Henry N. Fast, Box 367, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Ancestors.

My great-grandfather, Heinrich Fast was born on July 26, 1826, in the village of Fischau in the Molotschna colony of Southern Russia. Fischau was a small village situated in the valley along side of the Molotschna River. It was first settled in 1804 by Mennonite emigrants

Aganetha - born Feb. 2, 1833; Jacob - born Nov. 8 1835.

Some time after their marriage Heinrich and Charlotte moved to Lichtenau where their second daughter Elisabeth was born. By 1862 the family had moved to Pordenau where the school records indicate that the two oldest daughters

December 4.

"We are inviting all the below named friends, together with families, to come on the named date at 1 PM to our house to take part in this wedding celebration, which will include a small meal.

"In the hope that our wish may be mutual

Children of Heinrich and Charlotte Fast



Photo One: Maria Fast (1851-1937) was married 4 times.



Photo Two: Elisabeth L. Fast (1854-1937) and her husband Jakob S. Friesen lived in Harvey County, Kansas.



Photo Three: Cornelius L. Fast (1857-1947) moved to the Morden area in 1900.



Photo Four: Sarah L. Fast (1861-1927) married Johann F. Toews, who was a miller in Steinbach and Stuartburn. They are the grandparents of Chuck Toews, founder of Growsir Convenience Stores.



Photo Five. Heinrich L. Fast (1865-1963) was the forefather of all the Kleeefeld Fast.

who came from the areas of Danzig, Elbing and Tiegenhoff, Prussia.

Among the 22 emigrants that arrived in the summer of 1804 were Heinrich's grandparents, Wilhelm Elias Fast 32, his wife Maria nee Enz 35, and children Wilhelm 11, Maria 6, and Catherina 4 (Note One). The family was assigned to lot #22 in the village plan. At the time of the 1835 census the family farm was in the hands of son Wilhelm Wilhelm Fast, the father of Heinrich (Note Two).

It is here that Heinrich received his basic education and the farming skills necessary for that time. Since the family was large and the inheritance laws forbade division of the family farm, Heinrich would need to establish his own farm or be relegated to the ranks of the Anwohner. This, however, may not have been possible until the colony undertook to purchase large tracts of land to help ease the land situation in the Molotschna.

Heinrich Fast (1826-90)

Heinrich Fast was married on July 23 1850 to Charlotte (Maria) Loepp daughter of the Cornelius Loepps. Cornelius (July 22, 1793-Jan 10, 1869) and his wife (April 4, 1795-Oct 30, 1857) emigrated to Russia in 1839 and likely settled in the village of Halbstadt. Oral tradition indicates that the Loepps were from an evangelical Lutheran background.

Records kept by Heinrich Fast list the brothers and sisters of Charlotte: Friedrich - born Nov. 17 1815; August - born Aug. 4, 1817; Elisabeth - born April 20, 1823; Charlotte - born April 13, 1828; Heinrich - born Oct. 22, 1830;

Maria 11, and Elisabeth 8 were attending the local school. In 1864 or 65 they joined a number of Molotschna families and settled on rented land in a village which they named Nicolaital (Note Three).

Nicolaital, Cherson Province was one of at least four German speaking villages in Southern Russia which carried the same name (Note Four). Various sources refer to this particular village as being close to Gruschewka and part of Fürstenland or Grossfürstenland. Their youngest son Heinrich, my grandfather was born here. Here too Cornelius Loepp who had been staying with the Fast's for 11 years passed away.

The two oldest daughters married during their stay at Nicolaital. Elisabeth's husband was Jacob S. Friesen, son of the Johann K. Friesens also of Nicolaital, who was a brother to Jakob K. Friesen, who drowned in the Red River in 1875. This couple together with the Johann K. Friesens moved to Kansas in 1874.

Wedding Letter, 1873.

Maria married Gerhard Fast, likely the son of Gerhard Fast's also from the same village. Following is a copy of the wedding invitation of Maria and Gerhard:

"Honoured Friends:

"Our loving Lord has directed in such a way that our daughter Maria has promised her love and trust to the local youth Gerhard Fast. Their wish is to confirm this love in marriage according to Christian practice. Since both sets of parents are in agreement with our children we have arranged for the wedding next Tuesday,

we show our esteem to our worthy friends. Heinrich Fast's, Nicolaital, December 1, 1873."

"Esteemed Franz Schroeder, Johann Pankratz; Honourable Peter Enns; Honourable Jacob Bolt; Esteemed Kornelius Loewen, Heinrich Janzen; Esteemed Jacob Peters; Esteemed Klaas Wiebe; Esteemed Jacob Warkentin; Esteemed David Flammig, Jacob Friesen, Peter Friesen, Peter Klassen, Peter Adrian, Honourable Gerhard Kliewer, Bernhard Warkentin; Esteemed Peter Wall, widow Bolt, Widow Kroeker, Gerhard Fast, Johann Friesen, Johann Wiens, Heinrich Wiebe, Peter Klassen, Heinrich Kasdorf, Heinrich Klassen, Jacob Janzen."

"Please forward the letter as soon as possible to the next person on the invitation list. H.F." (Note Five).

Emigration, 1874.

In 1874 the Heinrich Fast's packed their travel chest, disposed of their other possessions and joined the great migration to North America. They travelled in the company of the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) from the village of Steinbach, Borosenko Colony and accompanied them to Steinbach, Manitoba. Their ship the S.S. Austrian docked at the Quebec harbour on August 31, 1874. From here they made their way to Moorhead, Minnesota, and took a river boat up the Red River to its junction with the Rat River.

According to a fellow traveller, Jacob M. Barkman, they got off the river boat on the

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morning of Sept. 15. Some of the party were taken to Gruenfeld the same day, others were only picked up the next day. Unfortunately rain and cold weather caused them to spend wet and crowded conditions in tents offered by their hosts in Gruenfeld. While in Gruenfeld Heinrich crafted a scythe handle from a small local oak to fit the blade that he had brought from Russia.

In Steinbach the Heinrich Fasts were assigned lot # 18 on the southeast corner of the newly established village. Here they shared a hastily erected semlin with their neighbours Franz M. Kroekers during the first winter. Also sharing the semlin were a pair of oxen which, because of the harsh winter and the poor quality of hay, did not survive. The 1875 insurance records indicate that the Fasts had registered a "schoppen" at \$12.50, inventory at \$150 and feed and sustenance at \$100.

By 1880 the Heinrich Fasts had build a house which was listed at \$200 in the insurance records. In 1882 they sold their registered land, SW35-6-6E, and village lot to their neighbours the Franz M. Kroekers, and moved out of the village to NW 26-6-6E which Heinrich purchased from the Hudson Bay Company.

Living with them at this site were Fast's daughter, Sara and her husband Johann Toews, the son of delegate Cornelius Toews. They named this new settlement Fischau in memory of the old Fast homestead in Russia. In 1886 a correspondent to the *Rundschau* reported that there are many bears in the vicinity and that neighbours H. Fasts took their captured bears to Winnipeg and sold them for \$7.

Reflections.

Presently we do not know the details of Heinrich and Charlottes' spiritual journey. Bishop Peter Toews has noted in his *Sammlung* (Blumenhof, Russia, 1874) that they were both baptized in 1847 but it is not certain that they affiliated with the KG church at that date. It is more likely that they joined at some later date, possibly during their stay at Nicolaital.

According to the personal diary of Abraham F. Reimer, Heinrich was briefly disciplined by the KG in 1880 for some involvement with the Steinbach school. Unfortunately no further details were noted in the diary.

It is interesting to note that his son-in-law, Johann Toews later writes, "Together with a number of others I opened a school in Steinbach which fully met the government regulations. As teacher we engaged Diedrich Friesen a member of the Holdeman Gemeinde. This caused great dissatisfaction and so everything had to be revoked. I personally tried to make everything right. My children had to return to the teacher from whom they left and give him a kiss of reconciliation and everything returned to the way it was." This of course is a different incident since in 1880 Johann Toews did not have school age children.

Charlotte passed away in 1887 at the age of 59 years at her home in Fischau after a 19 months illness of "wassersuch." The funeral invitation sent out by her husband required two

letters which were passed from house to house according to the accompanying invitation list and included 42 names from the villages of Steinbach, Blumenhof, Blumenort, Felsenten, Lichtenau, Chortitz, Rosenfeld and Gruenfeld.

Heinrich passed away at the home of his children, the Cornelius L. Fasts of Kleefeld (Note Six), on June 22, 1890. Oral tradition indicates that both Charlotte and Heinrich are buried on NW 26-6-6E.

Funeral Letter of Charotte Fast nee Loepf

Dear Friends;

It has pleased the Lord of the living and dead to take from my side through death my dear wife this day, Saturday, the 8th. The hour she had waited for because of her severe suffering came at 4PM. I can only say that the Lord gave her to me and also took her from me. She had suffered for a long time but especially for the last 7 weeks and 3 days. She reached the age of 59 years, 5 months and 2 weeks. We expect to have the burial on Tuesday, the 11th.

We invite the listed friends at 1 PM on the stated day. To show our love for our friends a light meal will be served. We remain your sorrowing friend
"H Fast"

This invitation begins at Steinbach--firstly to: Honourable Kornelius Kroeker; Franz Kroeker; Johann Dueck; Widow Plett; Isaac Plett; Peter Barkman Sr; Jacob Barkman; Abraham Reimer; Peter Barkman Jr; Johann Wiebe; Ab Friesen; Klaas Reimer Jr; Klaas Reimer Sr; Heinrich Reimer, J.W.Dueck; Johann Reimer; Widow Toews; Abraham Friesen; Abraham Reimer; Kornelius Loewen; Kornelius Barkman; Johann Tiessen; Heinrich Brandt;

Blumenhoff: Honourable Widow Johann Warkentin;

Blumenort: Honourable Klaas Reimer and Widow P. Penner;

The other letter, first to:

Honourable Johann Klassen; Philipp Schneider; Kornelius Toews; Johann Friesen;

Felsenten: Honourable Peter Unger;

Lichtenau: Honourable Widower G. Giesbrecht; Kornelius Loewen; Gerhard Kornelsen Jr; Gerhard Kornelsen Sr; Widower Heinrich Kornelsen;

Chortitz: Honourable Jacob Giesbrecht;

Rosenfeld: Honourable Diedrich Isaac; Jacob Bartel; Johann Esau Sr; Gerhard Schellenberg Sr; Gerhard Schellenberg Jr;

Gruenfeld: Honourable Jacob Dueck Sr; Jacob Dueck

October 8th, 1887

The Children of Heinrich and Charlotte.

1) **Maria Fast** was born in Lichtenau, Molotschna Colony in 1851. She moved with her parents to Pordenau where she also received her education. In 1871 she was baptized by Rev. Isaac Peters and received into the church. In 1873 she married Gerhard Fast from the village of Nicolaital, Cherson. The new couple came to the U. S.A. in 1874 and settled near Parker, South Dakota. In Feb. of 1885 they moved to Kansas where they lived on rented land. Here Gerhard passed away on June 2, 1877 at the

age of 33 years, 4 months. The church at this point asked Maria to sell her house and pay her debts. They also advised her to distribute their children and seek employment.

She however was able to stay at her sisters place, the Jacob S. Friesens, and was also able to keep her children with her most of the time. She later moved to Steinbach where she married widower, Isaac Harms (1811-91) of Jansen, Neb., who was 41 years older than Maria. Isaac had been a successful farmer who together with his sons farmed 640 acres in Nebraska. However if Maria had looked for financial security, this was not to be. Evidently, Isaac had divested himself of his property before his marriage and the family lived in poverty so that the church had to lend a helping hand. After being bed-ridden for 18 weeks he passed away on Sept. 4, 1891.

Two months later Maria married widower Diedrich Klassen of Bergthal, Man., who was 22 years her senior. This marriage lasted more than 28 years, till Klassen's death on June 27, 1920. After nine months of widowhood she married widower Jacob T. Barkman of Kleefeld, Man. on March 12, 1921. Here they lived for 14 years adjacent to her brother Heinrich's blacksmith shop.

Maria survived her fourth husband by nearly two years. She passed away on March 15, 1937. Four of her seven children survived her.

2) **Elisabeth L. Fast** was born on March 14, 1854 in Lichtenau. She married Jacob Friesen of Nicolaital on Jan. 1, 1874 and shortly after moved with Jacob's parents, Johann K. Friesens to Kansas. Here they were rebaptized by bishop Ab. Schellenberg and accepted into the M.B. church. Though poor when they arrived in Harvey County in 1874 they were, able by 1882, to afford a trip to Manitoba to visit the parents of Elisabeth. Jacob gives an extensive travel report of this journey in the Feb. 1, 1883 edition of the *Menonitische Rundschau*. They visited Canada once more in 1898.

On Aug. 18, 1909 Jacob passed away at the age of 55 years. Elisabeth remarried in 1911 to widower David Ediger who however died a few years later. Elisabeth died on Feb. 8, 1937 at her daughter's place in Enid, Oklahoma at the age of 82 years. She had outlived 11 of her 17 children.⁶

3) **Cornelius L. Fast** was born Dec. 31, 1857 and came with his parents to Manitoba in 1874. In his youth he hauled much wood from the nearby forest and sold it to the settlers of the West Reserve. After his marriage in 1885 to Margareta Giesbrecht, Cornelius was employed by K. W. Reimer as a teamster to haul merchandise from Winnipeg. They made their home in the small village of Kleefeld, just west of Steinbach, where also a number of their children were born.⁶

Sometime before the year 1900 the Cornelius Fasts moved to the Morden area. Here they joined the M.B. church in 1900. Cornelius passed away on July 10, 1947.

4) The youngest daughter **Sara L. Fast** was born May 21, 1861. As a young child she moved with

her parents from Pordenau to the village of Nicolaital, Fürstenland. She accompanied her parents to Steinbach, Man. in 1874. On Nov. 18, 1878 she married Johann F. Toews, son of KG delegate Cornelius P. Toews of Gruenfeld and later of Steinbach. They lived in the Steinbach area until the year 1900 when they moved to Stuartburn where Johann owned and operated a grist mill. Sara evidently had some ability as a chiropractor and was often called on to practice her God given gift.

Though the Toews had been baptised by the KG prior to their marriage they later joined the Holdeman church. Unfortunately this proved to be a bitter experience for them. Sara died on Nov. 5, 1927.

5) My grandfather, **Heinrich L. Fast**, born on Nov. 4 1865 in Nicolaital, Russia, came to

Canada as a young lad of eight years. He received most of his formal education in Steinbach, Man., with Gerhard E. Kornelson as teacher. Prior to his marriage he developed some skill as a blacksmith by sharpening plow shares for the local farmers. He continued this trade after his marriage to Maria Dueck of Gruenfeld in 1889. An old record book indicates that his father-in-law, Jacob L. Dueck (Note Five) helped him to begin a blacksmith shop in Gruenfeld which then became a life long career.

Heinrich L. Fast was also appointed post master for Kleefeld a position he held for over 50 years. When his wife died in 1900, Heinrich was left with four young children. Fortunately he soon found another wife and a mother for his children Elisabeth Schellenberg from the neighbouring village of Rosenfeld. This mar-

riage lasted for over 50 years. Heinrich L. Fast passed away on April 6, 1963.

Sources:

1. Unrau, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen*, page 339.
2. Henry Fast, "The Fast of Fischau," *Preservings*, No. 4, July 1994, pages 8-9.
3. Rev. Jacob Epp (1 820-1890) records that he officiated at the marriage of Peter Klassen and Maria S. Friesen, daughter of Johann K. Friesen on Nov. 14, 1867 in Nicolaital, Molotschna settlement
- 4 1914 *Christlicher Familienkalender*
5. Courtesy of Audrey Toews, Steinbach, Man.
6. This is not the present day Kleefeld, but a small village on Section 4-7-5E.

Johann R. Reimer (1848-1918): Steinbach Pioneer

by Dr. Al Reimer: grandson

Introduction.

History, as we know, is not an exact science. Perhaps it might be more accurately described as a fact-based species of fiction. Historical "preservings" are important, of course, even crucial if we want to know where we have come from, who we are and where we might be going. But preservings, as the word suggests, are what is left after decay and destruction, what we manage to salvage from the past and want to protect from further harm. Historical preservings are by definition incomplete, vulnerable, and often ambiguous. History begins with a set of so-called "facts"--a skeleton of facts, if you like--but everything depends on how that skeleton is fleshed out with an imaginative interpretation of the facts. And that is where the element of reconstructive fiction comes in.

The challenge in the writing of history, especially social history, is to acknowledge at the outset that the (often) accidental preservation of certain letters, diaries, personal recollections, community, church and family records, etc., gives us at best a very meagre, selective and often lop-sided picture of the historical subject under consideration. What we are left with is a hodgepodge of more-or-less verifiable facts--dates, recorded events etc., observations from biased points of view, and whatever impressions can be gleaned from what is available. The social historian tries to make the best of his restricted circumstances by creating the illusion of bringing to life a person, an event, a community, or whatever, from this welter of materials, while at the same time skilfully maneuvering around the gaps and deficiencies in the record. That makes the social historian a kind of artful dodger (sometimes, alas, an artless dodger) who, to mix my metaphor, appears on stage pulling rabbits out of a hat and doing other tricks while persuading his audience that what he is showing them is all there is--the reality of the past in all its fullness.

Background.

And so I come to the "life" of my paternal grandfather Johann Rempel Reimer, about whom I know very little beyond the scanty records and who, indeed, died years before I was born. And yet this man, his life now shrouded by time, has an imaginative reality for me which makes me want to write about him as though I had known him, to feel myself into the life and times of one of the 18 original settlers who established the village of Steinbach in 1874.

I begin with the incontrovertible facts: Johann was born in Rosenort, Molotschna, June 3, 1848, the sixth child of Elisabeth and Abraham F. Reimer (1808-92), who in turn was the oldest son of Klaas Reimer (1770-1837), revered patriarch of the Reimer clan [and well-to-do founder of the Kleine Gemeinde (KG)].

We know little about Johann's early years except that the Abraham F. Reimer family was quite poor and possessed of very little land, and that like his three older brothers, Johann, after a few years of village school, presumably, was forced to work out in order to help make ends meet. He was fortunate, however, in being able to work for his uncle, a well-to-do farmer in the Molotschna (Note One). There he learned a variety of useful farming skills, including vegetable gardening and fruit-tree planting, both of which he came to specialize in when he came to Canada. The uncle also happened to be a lover of horses, and so the boy also learned the art of horse-breeding, which again came in handy when he became a farmer himself.

That opportunity came when, shortly after his marriage to Anna Warkentin in 1869, the young couple moved to the village of Steinbach in the new settlement of Borosenko established by KG settlers in 1865. Here Johann established himself as a hardworking young farmer. We know something about this period of his life from the prosaic but valuable diary kept by his father Abraham after the parents had moved in with their children. Abraham himself, by this

time in his early sixties and semi-retired, had never been much of a farmer, hence his poverty. He was, however, fortunate in having a wife who came from a good family, was intelligent and enterprising, and helped to keep the wolf from the door by turning herself into a busy seamstress.

Abraham's interests had always leaned more to the intellectual side than the practical. He read every book he could lay his hands on and spent so many evenings observing the stars that people began referring to him as "Stargazer." Later, in Canada, he was branded with the much more derogatory nickname of "Fula" (Lazy), but he was lazy only in the sense of being impractical by nature. In reality he was an intellectually active man full of natural curiosity who in a later Mennonite world might have become a scientist or an educator of one sort or another. That "lazy" intellectual temper has, in fact, been handed down--for better or for worse--to more than one of his descendants, I would submit.

Life in Russia.

In any case, Abraham's diary refers often to Johann's activities, and gives every indication that in his early twenties he developed into a moderately successful farmer in the years immediately before emigrating to Canada. In March, 1870, for example, Johann "seeded wheat" and "helped survey land." In early April he "planted nearly all the flowers in the garden," and later that month "came home with wood." In July he cuts his wheat and "hauls barley." By August 15th he has stored his wheat in the attic, having harvested about 130 bushels from approximately twenty acres. In late August he completes his haying, having garnered eleven loads. He makes frequent trips to Nikopol, the port town on the Dnieper, to buy and sell, and attends church faithfully with the rest of his extended family. And so it went

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evenly and uneventfully for the next several years.

Unfortunately, Abraham's diary does not give us much beyond such mundane facts. We learn very little about Johann as a person, and nothing at all about his hopes and dreams and aspirations. According to later family lore, he was an ambitious farmer who became impatient with the limited opportunities in Borosenko and when the time came eagerly looked forward to doing better in Canada.

Johann's hopes must have soared when Anna gave birth to a son on August 11, 1870. The diary gives a curiously cryptic account of the birth: "At 7:30 a son arrived at Joh. Reimers, an event somewhat unusual in that she was all alone at the time, even when it came to going to the room [presumably the birthing room], as Kl. Reimer did not bring my wife home until around 8:30."

What I make of this is that poor Anna had to deliver her first baby by herself (Where was Johann? Was he there with her, or was he away somewhere?). And Elisabeth, the mother-in-law, who was the local midwife, did not get there in time to assist. Nevertheless, Abraham's entry for the next day informs us laconically that "Joh. Reimer has threshed all his wheat." But the new father must have been keenly disappointed when his first-born, Abraham, died only two weeks later.

Emigration, 1874.

Regrettably, the portion of Abraham's diary which is extant, ends abruptly on April 10, 1874, several months before the momentous emigration of the KG from Borosenko to America. One wonders if Abraham's diary would have departed from the routine in order to record the excitement, as well as the tedium of the long journey that finally ended with the arrival in the East Reserve on or about the 18th of September. Fortunately, a few family memories of that arduous but eventful journey have been preserved. Among them are a few recollections by Johann himself.

The long journey began with a train trip through Russia and Germany. A brief stop in Berlin allowed the travellers to see some of the city's sights, including the famous Tiergarten. Apparently, what impressed Johann Reimer even more than the exotic animals were the arrogant-looking German military officers he saw there. It was, after all, only a few years since the German Army had defeated the French at the Battle of Sedan, a victory which established a unified Germany as a major European power and gave a tremendous boost to the Prussian military tradition. It is interesting to note that the humble Mennonite pacifist so accurately noted the self-important military bearing that came to characterize modern Germany.

After a stormy passage across the Atlantic, during which the Johann Reimers lost their two-year-old son Abram, the Steinbach group reached Quebec. Here, at last, they were able to place their wobbly legs on solid ground again. Johann recalled how impressive he had found

the steep cliffs of the ancient Quebec Citadel. From Quebec the Steinbach group went by rail to Toronto, where they were met by a delegation of "old" Mennonites from Berlin (Kitchener). From there they went by ship to Duluth, Minnesota.

The federal government had intended to send the immigrants to Manitoba via the primitive Dawson Trail through what is now Kenora. What would have been a horrendous trek through forests and across the rocky terrain of the northern Shield was forestalled through the compassionate intervention of the "old" Mennonite leader--Jacob Schantz. Instead the group was permitted to take the longer but much easier route by steamship that took them through Duluth and then on the paddle-wheel boat International down the Red River into Manitoba. It was a two-hundred mile voyage which took two full days and ended at the confluence of the Red and its tributary the Rat near Niverville.

Grandmother Aganetha Reimer, twelve at the time, later recalled that the ship's crew had built a great bonfire at the landing site in order to warm the passengers in the raw fall air of mid-September.

Before the Johann Reimers left Russia two more children had been born to them: Elisabeth in 1871, and a second son, again named Abraham, in 1872. Little Abraham died during the crossing and was buried at sea, while three-year-old Elisabeth died on November 3rd, six weeks after the family settled in Steinbach. This double blow must have been devastating to Johann and Anna. Fortunately, they did not remain childless for long, as only two weeks after Elisabeth's death, Anna, their fourth child, came along to comfort them. Anna, who may have been the first child born in Steinbach, not only survived but lived a long and productive life. Three more daughters were born to the Reimers in the next six years.

Pioneering in Manitoba, 1874.

Johann received as his homestead Lot 10, situated almost exactly in the middle of Main Street on what is now the northeast corner of Main and Reimer (where the Loewen Chevrolet dealership stood for so many years). His older brother Klaas R., who became Steinbach's most successful merchant and business entrepreneur, and who is reputed to be the progenitor of at least half the present population of Steinbach (from three wives and almost twenty surviving children), received Lots 11 and 12 to the south of Lot 10.

The Steinbach group's late arrival in September necessitated urgent preparations for the coming winter--digging for a semlin, cutting trees for a roof and trying to do as much haying as possible. Johann and his brother-in-law Peter Toews had purchased a yoke of oxen, which they put to good use during the brief time they had before winter arrived. It turned out to be a long and bitter first winter, but the new settlers were able to do some ploughing and seeding when spring finally came. But the meagre crops and gardens were cruelly devastated by a vicious infestation of grasshoppers, apparently a continent-wide plague in the summer of 1875.

By midsummer, with almost nothing to show for their strenuous efforts, many of the settlers felt like giving up and moving elsewhere. At this point we have two rather differing accounts of crisis in the Reimer clan brought on by their desperate circumstances. Both accounts are attributed to Klaas W. Reimer, the son of Klaas R., who was in his midteens at the time. In the account passed on by my uncle K. J. B. Reimer in a series of articles in *Die Post* in 1965, the Reimer clan met in Steinbach in the summer of 1875 to consider moving to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and starting all over again. At the very least the winters would be milder there.

After the majority of those present had spoken up in favour of moving immediately, Elisabeth F. Reimer, wife of Abraham F., the highly respected matriarch of the clan (see Royden Loewen's excellent article on her in *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec., 1995, pages 2-9), who had listened patiently to the lengthy deliberations, rose to her feet and eloquently reminded her family of the sacrifices they had made in order to settle in this wild and desolate country, of what it had cost them all to sever family ties to come here. She pleaded that they hold out for at least another winter and summer--after all the government had promised to send aid. The family listened and decided to stay.

In the other account, given by Klaas W. Reimer himself many years later at the 60th anniversary celebrations in Steinbach, the crisis occurred in 1876, "when it appeared that grasshoppers would destroy the crops for the second successive year" (Loewen, p.9). Again, the intention of some of the Reimers was to relocate--this time to Nebraska. And once more it was the matriarchal Elisabeth who made a dramatic plea for them to stay: "... we do not want to leave. Instead we want to remain faithful...in our calling and not become discouraged. I have faith in God that He will bless us and that we will have our bread" (Ibid.).

Whether, in fact, there was one crisis or two, or whether the two accounts differ simply because of faulty memory, is not really the point. What matters is that both accounts splendidly reflect the indomitable spirit of Elisabeth F. Reimer, indeed an admirable woman. How different the history of the enterprising Reimer clan might have been had she not spoken up when she did. In any case, the Reimers and most of the other pioneer families stayed put and toughed out those early years and in five or six years the Steinbach settlement was on its feet and doing nicely.

On March 11, 1875, Johann R. Reimer filed for a Homestead on NW36-6-6E. KG insurance records show that Johann R. Reimer built a substantial barn in 1875 insured on November 28 for \$150.00. On December 18 this was increased by \$250.00 probably for a house. By 1883 Johann had 3 1/2 horses, 5 cows, 9 yearlings and calves, a fairly complete line of farm machinery, and was seeding close to 40 acres a year. In 1884 a new home was built and insured for \$500.00, for total insurance coverage of \$850.00. By 1884 Johann's total tax assessment was up to 909 from 672 the year before.

For the years 1879 to 1884 we again have a



Johann B. Reimer



Jakob B. Reimer



Klaas J. B. Reimer



Abram J. B. Reimer



Peter J. B. Reimer

Photo One: Sons of Johann R. Reimer: Johann B. Reimer (1889-1962), farmer, deacon and Bible authority; Jakob B. Reimer (1894-1920), farmer; Klaas J. B. Reimer (1897-1961), farmer, historian and Town Councillor; Abram J. B. Reimer (1899-1936) and Peter J. B. Reimer (1902-88), teacher, minister and writer. Photo courtesy of Steinbach Post, March 30, 1965.

diary kept by Johann's father Abraham to draw upon. Abraham and his wife Elisabeth, now in their seventies and more or less retired, had settled in Blumenort, a few miles from Steinbach, Abraham went to Steinbach frequently and his sons Klaas and Johann and their families often visited their parents. Abraham faithfully records Johann's farming activities and, sociable soul that he was, notes family visits, and records with minute fidelity the daily experiences, events and happenings of the community: "Mrs. Penner had a bowel movement"; "Today I made in the smithy a sole for J. Reimer's shoe"; "P. Reimer finished J. Reimer's sleeping bench", etc.

Death of Anna.

Although Johann was getting off to a good start as a farmer, those early years must have been especially burdensome. He and Anna had lost their two children at the outset, but had been blessed with four more in the meantime. And then, with all the brutally hard work beginning to pay off, he unexpectedly lost his wife on August 10, 1880. Abraham's diary entry is characteristically matter-of-fact: [Mrs. Reimer] was very sick for seven hours and died at five a.m."

Remarriage.

At 32 he was left a widower with four daughters ranging in age from six down to one. So he was forced to do what Mennonite householders in his situation usually did: he hired a girl to keep house for him. She was Aganetha Barkman, the daughter of Jacob M. Barkman, who had been the minister and leader of the group settling in Steinbach. Barkman had drowned in the Red River on a shopping trip to Winnipeg in the spring of 1875, a tragic loss not only for the family but for the whole struggling community.

Not yet eighteen, Aganetha took charge of Johann's household and so impressed him that after waiting a decent interval he proposed marriage. She accepted, but the wedding was delayed because of a protracted crisis within the KG church during the winter of 1881-82. John Holdemann, along with his assistant Mark Seiler, had been invited to come and hold re-

vival meetings in the KG church that winter. The result was a spiritual upheaval within the church that saw almost half of the approximately 1000 KG people in southern Manitoba, as well as three of the four ministers, leave to join the new Church of God in Christ, Mennonite.

In retrospect, Aganetha admitted that she was not sorry for the delay, as it allowed her a little more time to mature before taking on what she knew would be heavy family responsibilities. Still only eighteen, she was baptized in Steinbach on Feb. 27, 1882, by Aeltester Abraham L. Friesen, who had come from Nebraska to investigate the church crisis, and on Sunday, March 19, Aganetha was joined in marriage to the 34-year-old widower Johann Reimer.

The young wife now had three stepdaughters to care for (Anna, the oldest, had been adopted by relatives shortly after the death of her mother and apparently stayed with them until she grew up). Over the years Aganetha bore ten children of her own, five boys and five girls all so carefully spaced at two and three-year intervals that this sensible pattern may not have been entirely accidental. At least that was the opinion of my father Peter J.B. Reimer, the youngest son of this union, who became well-known in the Mennonite community as a teacher, minister and writer.

The other sons were John, Jacob, Klaas and Abram, and the daughters were Aganetha, Margaretha, Maria, Susanna and Sara, the youngest child. All ten children survived to adulthood, although three--Margaretha, Maria and Jacob--died as unmarried young adults, and a fourth, Abram, died in his mid-thirties married but childless (except for an adopted daughter). His widow married Rev. Jacob Epp and became the mother of Jake Epp, Steinbach's most famous political son.

Aganetha Barkman Reimer (1863-1938).

My grandmother Aganetha Reimer deserves special mention as a remarkable person in her own right. She was of strong and independent character, but also hard-working, loving and devoted, and my grandfather was indeed fortunate to find her. Since her story has already

been ably told by my cousin Harvey Kroeker in *Preservings*, No. 6, June, 1995, pages 23-24, I restrict myself here to a brief summary of her career as a midwife and undertaker and add a few personal memories. Incidentally, it seems entirely fitting to me that in pioneer times the local midwife usually served also as an unofficial, behind-the-scenes undertaker. Who would understand better than a midwife that the squirming, squalling new human emerging so eagerly from the womb must someday end in the marble dignity of the dead, all cares, woes and fleeting joys gone forever.

In 1892, having already borne five children of her own but still a vigorous thirty, Aganetha volunteered, along with two other young women [Mrs. Jakob B. Toews, Gruenfeld and Mrs. Peter B. Toews, Blumenort], to take a church-sponsored, six-week course in midwifery from Justina Neufeld of Mountain Lake, who had been a professional midwife back in Russia (Note Two). For the next 35 years Aganetha attended births and prepared the dead for burial with unflagging energy, dedication and deep compassion. With her little black medical bag she went out in all weathers, summer and winter, to Mennonite and non-Mennonite homes alike, and not only delivered the baby but often stayed a day or more to look after the mother and baby, cooking, washing the diapers, if need be, and doing other necessary chores. All for a dollar, sometimes two, depending on the degree of gratitude felt by the new father, I suppose. Altogether, she delivered close to 700 babies, and according to her own records, in all that time she lost only one mother.

But that was only the public side of my amazing grandmother. After her husband's death, she also ran the family farm almost singlehandedly. As a boy, I followed her around like a devoted dog as she did the chores in and around the barn. She said very little but there was a strength and serenity about her that even a child could sense. Her element was her farm and her faith was to be--to be as simply and unaffectedly as the wind and rain and sun.

To look at her face was to look at features

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carved in granite but illuminated from within by a Christian faith as uncomplicated as it was enduring. Her simple dignity and compassionate nature were as real and visible as the man-sized calluses on her work-forged hands. She remained healthy and active until the day she died at 74, in 1938, and when the end came it came like a clean, swift stroke of the axe she loved to use. She split a cord of wood in the afternoon, ate a good dinner and died peacefully that night.

Market Gardening.

Grandfather Johann was a good farmer with a special interest in market gardening. In addition to the fine orchards he planted on both sides of the house-barn on the ten-acre Fiastad, he developed a highly productive market garden on the four-acre Kotstad on the west side of Main Street. The garden became a staple part of the family farm economy. According to my father, Johann sold most of his vegetables and fruit in Winnipeg, taking his produce there on a light spring wagon drawn by a team of fast horses. One year he is said to have made 17 such trips. He had a business card made up in English which read: "Johann R. Reimer Dealer in Garden Products." The English card is a good indication that he was aiming primarily at a Winnipeg market. In 1912 he sold about a third of his garden to the local school board, land which became the west end of Reimer Avenue. Up until then there had only been a narrow road leading to the cemetery (now Pioneer cemetery). The following year the four-room public school which eventually became Kornelsen school and is now the site of the Town Office was built off Reimer Avenue to the south on land which had been owned by Klaas R. Reimer.

That Johann was becoming more and more successful as a farmer is confirmed by the village Assessment Rolls over the years. In 1896, for example, he owned a total of 440 acres, of which 100 was under cultivation. By 1906 his land holdings had increased to 640 acres, of which 200 were being cultivated.

Village Mayor, 1880.

Johann R. Reimer also took his share of community leadership. On January 8, 1880, Abraham writes that "J. Reimer was made mayor [Schulz] for this year." A village record book for 1880-81 gives a detailed record of his term in office and there is reason to think he served a second term in later years, sometime between 1895 and 1910 (Note Three). Son Klaas J. B. Reimer remembered that at times his father came home from "Schultebut" [Council Meeting] somewhat depressed because Johann Wiebe, who occupied homestead Lot 14. and who had a reputation for being somewhat course tongued, had once again expressed his views too drastically.

Accident.

Sometime in the 1890s, Johann suffered an accident that nearly cost him his life. Cutting

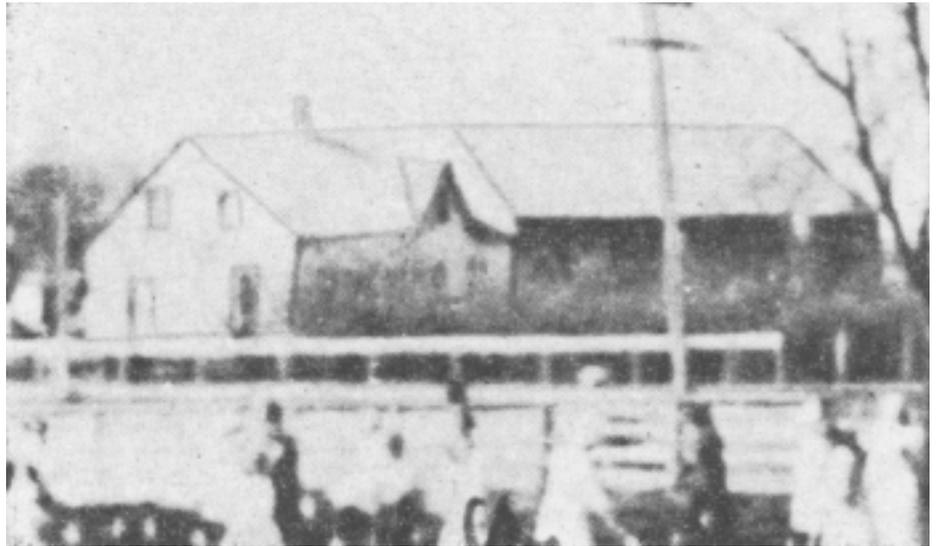


Photo Two: Housebarn of Johann R. Reimer which stood where Steinbach Towne Square is located today until 1916. The house was probably built in 1884 when it was first insured for \$500.00 with the Kleine Gemeinde Mutual Insurance and the barn a few years earlier. Photo courtesy of Steinbach Post, March 30, 1965.

hay with a rather unruly team of horses, he stopped to remove a fallen tree interfering with the cutting bar of his mower. The horses spooked, Johann fell onto the cutting bar and was dragged across the meadow until the horses ran over a small haystack. There he managed to free himself and crawled painfully to neighbour Abram Wiebe's place [in Lichtenau] a mile away. It took him six weeks to recover.

The Automobile.

Johann R. Reimer's first trip on an automobile took place in about 1905. Johann's "old friend Mr. Ashdown, who by the way had come to Winnipeg in 1873 and established a tinsmithing business, invited him for a ride in his new auto-buggy": Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches" pages 11.

Moving to the farm.

By 1916 the Johann R. Reimers were the only family of the 18 Steinbach pioneer families to remain on their original farmstead. In the fall of that year they sold their farmstead on Main Street to C.T. Loewen and moved onto a new homestead at the eastern end of their farm a mile east of the village, NW36-6-6E where son Klaas J. B. Reimer later lived. In 1917 their barn was moved from the village to the new site. The house was moved 1 1/2 mile west of Steinbach.

The move marked the informal end of the pioneer period of Steinbach after 42 years: see Ernie P. Toews, "Steinbach Main Street 1930: Part One," in *Preservings*, No. 8, Part Two, June, 1996, pages 15-21.

Johann R. Reimer was not to enjoy his new farm for very long. By 1918 his health was broken and he succumbed on March 24th at 69 to the consumption that seemed to run in the family. Like most of the other original Steinbach pioneers he found a final resting place in the cemetery that had originally been part of his No.10 homestead.

Conclusion,

I would dearly love to flesh out my grandfather's character and personality more fully, but he remains a somewhat shadowy personal figure only occasionally lit up by the comments and observations of those who knew him. I know that my father cherished him for having remained essentially an idealist through all the vicissitudes of his life, a man of solid integrity and honesty and above reproach in his dealings with others.

Apparently, Johann himself liked to say that having been born in 1848, a year of revolution and social upheaval in Europe, had left him with a restless and unstable character, but there is no evidence of this at all in his life. It is more likely that his comment reflected the wry sense of humour he was known for. My father recalled that when the popular teacher G. G. Kornelsen tried--unsuccessfully--to establish a Sunday School on Sunday afternoons, Johann drily informed him that he would be better off to spend the Sunday afternoons resting after teaching hard all week.

And he kept that dry sense of irony until the very end. When he was weighed for the last time his once sturdy body had wasted away to a pitiful 101 lbs. As he stepped off the scale he is supposed to have said: "Na, jo, dann ess hundat enn cent nu ut" (the familiar Low German expression "Hundat enn cent ess ut" can be roughly translated as meaning, "Well, that's it, that's the ballgame, the end").

That touch of gallows humour is a kind of touchstone for me as to what sort of man grandfather Johann Reimer was. After a lifetime of hard work, with the ups and downs our ancestors were routinely subjected to in the primitive--by our standards--conditions in which they were forced to live, Johann's grim little joke shows me that he had retained a true sense of proportion even as he sloped gently towards the grave.

Life had not defeated him, it had only exhausted his body. His simple piety would have

remained intact, but he was no pious fool babbling frightened pleas for mercy as the end drew near. He was, after all, a man who followed the KG tradition of living his faith in humble discipleship, rather than merely professing it endlessly to God and the world. Such a man is a worthy ancestor, a grandfather to revere and to celebrate in memory, vague and incomplete though the historical record on him may be.

Endnotes:

Note One: In his 1965 *Reimer Familienbuch*, page 256-8, biography of Johann R. Reimer, son Klaas has written that Johann R. Reimer worked for his uncle Jakob Rempel. However, this is problematic as contemporary family genealogies do not list an uncle Jakob. It could have been either uncle Gerhard Rempel of Mariawohl, a well-to-farmer Vollwirt who later moved to Nebraska, or Bernhard Rempel of Lichtenau and later Alexanderwohl, a builder by profession who stayed in Russia.

Note Two: Justina Neufeld (1828-1905) was the daughter of "Dr." David Loewen of Alexanderwohl. Her first marriage was to Isaak Bergen and her second marriage in 1875 was to Gerhard Neufeld who served as the first Aeltester of the Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. After the death of her father in 1865 she became famous in the Molotschna Colony as the "Dr. Bergensche." In 1878 the family emigrated to Mountain Lake where she served as a pioneer Doctor. She is said to have delivered more than 11,000 babies during her career.

Note Three: Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahren," Jan. 19, 1965.

Sources.

Abraham F. Reimer, "Journal," 1870-74 and 1879-84.

Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahren," *Steinbach Post*, 1964-65.

Johann R. Reimer, "Daily Journal for 1883." Account book and family record, in the possession of the writer.

renewal ad

An Oak tree, by D. Plett.

When Johann R. Reimer (1848-1918) settled in Steinbach he found an old oak tree on the banks of the Steinbach creek where it crossed his Wirtschaft. It was a full and beautiful tree even in 1874. Klaas J. B. Reimer has written that "the old pioneers are all gone, but the old oak lives on [1965]. Its dark green leaves are so beautiful and each summer have provided a joy to humanity."

Johann R. Reimer (1848-1918) is the ancestor of Reg and Gary Reimer of Reimer Farm Supplies, Rev. Harvey Kroeker, novelist Douglas Reimer, Sid Reimer of MDS, historian Henry Fast, Art Friesen of Brookdale Pontiac, writer Elsie Kliewer and Elvin Fast, formerly of Fairway Ford, and many others.

Material Culture

Funerals in Steinbach 1923-37

**“Funerals in Steinbach 1923-1937: From the Photo Album of Jakob D. Barkman (1886-1971), Steinbach Photographer”
compiled and annotated by Delbert F. Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba.**

When Peter T. Friesen (1893-1983) moved to Winkler in 1921, Jakob D. Barkman became the most prominent photographer in Steinbach: see *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec 1995, page 50. The first photographer in Steinbach was Peter H. Guenther (1866-1949), however, his photography is not available at this time. Peter T. Toews, a.k.a. “Central Toews” was another prominent photographer in Steinbach during the 1920s. See *Carillon News*, Aug. 16, 1995.

Jakob D. Barkman was raised by Peter T. Barkman, his future wife’s uncle. For many years Jakob worked in the flour mill and lived across Main Street at the Barkman Avenue intersection. He was an avid photographer and his work provides a critical view of the Steinbach of the 1920s and 30s. Many of his photographs were preserved by son Walter who inherited Jakob’s love of photography. For many years Walter operated the Town’s only photography studio “Walt’s Studio.

One of the unique treasures of the Jakob D. Barkman photograph collection is a album of funeral pictures taken in Steinbach between the years 1923 and 1937. These photographs provide a unique look at burial customs in Steinbach during this period. They also form an interesting prologue to the two articles on “Mennonite Burial Customs” by Linda Buhler published in *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec 1995, pages 51-52 and No. 8, June 1996, Part Two, pages 48-50.

By way of explanation it is noted that the members of Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, or Holdemans are they are usually known, were the most progressive East Reserve group after their establishment in Manitoba in 1882 and thereafter in terms of adoption of North American culture, language, religion, etc. Johannes Holdeman had incorporated certain teachings of American Revivalism into his theology. Thus it was no accident, for example, that Holdemans filled many of the teaching positions created by the abolition of Christian private schools in the Hanover Steinbach area in 1916. Various individuals from this congregation, or their family members as in the case of Peter T. Friesen, were among the earliest photographers in the East Reserve.

However, in 1897 the Bruderthaler Church (today known as the E.M.B.) was formed in Steinbach also based largely on the theology of American Revivalism and German Separatist Pietism. For the members of this congregation, the decision to join such a church thereby became a vehicle for what they perceived to be a move into the main stream of North American social and religious life. By the 1920s the Bruderthaler had surpassed the members of the Holdeman Church in terms of acculturation and assimilation.

These observations held true also in the area of photography. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the earliest funeral pictures taken by

Jakob D. Barkman, were of members of the Bruderthaler congregation and also some of Ruszländer families who immigrated to the



Photo One: Edwin B. Rempel, son of Jakob S. Rempel (1890-1947) and Elisabeth R. Barkman (1891-1989), died Oct. 13, 1923. Standing around the coffin are, left to right: son Art held by his father Jakob S. Rempel, daughter Alvina, and son Peter held by his mother, Elisabeth Barkman Rempel. The Rempels were part owners of the Steinbach Flour Mills and lived at the corner of Main Street and Lumber Avenue, where Klassen Financial Services is located today. The Jakob S. Rempel family were members of the Bruderthal Church (EMB). In the background, Main Street as it appeared in 1923: K. Reimer & Sons at the far left, Campbell Law Office, Radkes Shoe Repair, and the residence of Klaas I. Friesen at the right. The Klaas I. Friesen house was standing exactly where the house attached to the rear of the former Vogt’s IGA (Tony’s Shoe Repair) was later located. According to Leona Reimer, granddaughter of “Schmet” Toews, the builder of the Klaas I. Friesen house, the original structure is still standing and is incorporated into the living quarters behind the former IGA store. The building to the right of the shoe repair shop is presently unidentified. An old barn stood behind the unidentified building during the 1930s. The Campbell Law Office and the building itself were later relocated to the west side of Main Street onto the Jakob S. Rempel property about where the 3 trees to the left of the photograph are standing and where Pizza Place is located today. In the 1940s, the Gerhard W. Reimer shoe repair shop stood in this same location. Identification of Main Street buildings for this article is courtesy of Ernie P. Toews, Steinbach, Manitoba.



Photo Two: Funeral of Peter B. Reimer baby John who died May 24, 1924. Standing around the coffin, son Frank (founder of Reimer Express), Otto, Katharina, the mother Mrs. Peter B. Reimer, nee Katharina Friesen, Father Peter B. Reimer, son Werner, Anna (later Mrs. Cornelius Giesbrecht); the little girl standing to the left of coffin is Amanda. The Peter B. Reimer family belonged to the Bruderthaler. The photo is taken on the east side of the Peter B. Reimer residence of Mill Street originally built by her father Johann I. “Malla” Friesen, view towards the east onto the buildings along Main Street visible in the background. The building at the left of photograph was the original Johann I. Friesen house where daughter Amanda was born. The rear of the buildings on Main Street are visible in the background. Right to left: A barn standing parallel to Main Street built in 1881 later used as a warehouse, the Abraham R. Penner house, sheds used by the P.B. Reimer store for storage, and the Peter “fire” Funk residence at the left.



Photo Three: Pallbearers with baby John's coffin. Again the photo is taken on the east side of the Peter B. Reimer residence on Mill Street originally built by her father Johann I. "Malla" Friesen. The camera is facing towards the east with the buildings along Main Street visible in the background. At the right is a west view of the flour mill and to the left are the lumber piles of "Steinbach Lumber Yards" originally a division of "Reimer Barkman Friesen."

Steinbach area in 1923.

The Kleine Gemeinde (KG) established its prohibition of photography at a policy session of 1899 on the grounds that Christians were to "have no false idols." This was followed by the election in 1901 of Bishop Peter R. Dueck of Steinbach, a very orthodox leader. As a result few pictures were taken of its members prior to say 1930, and those that were taken were often of poor quality as the older people felt uncomfortable posing for pictures. In any case, KG elders certainly deemed funeral pictures to be in extremely bad taste, a view shared by many people in the modern day.

The first KG "coffin" photographs may well be those taken by Jakob D. Barkman for the funeral of Mrs. Heinrich W. Reimer in 1932. Oddly enough there are some excellent pictures of Kleine Gemeinde people from around the turn of the century and prior.

The Bergthaler/Chortitzer had excellent pictures going back as early as the 1880s and 90s. This reflects the fact that the Bergthaler group was formed as a daughter colony of Chortitza and not by way of schism, so that the group continued to express the cultural mores of the mother colony. A review of history books of other North American communities indicates that photographs from 1900 and earlier are rare everywhere.

Jakob D. Barkman's "coffin" pictures taken of people during what are possibly among their most vulnerable moments, provide a unique photographic record of Steinbach. These photographs tell many stories: of death, of grieving, of religious and social mores, and last, but far from least, some vivid contemporary landscapes.



Photo Four: Heinrich Rempel Senior died March 3, 1926. Heinrich R. Rempel (1855-1926) came to Canada in 1883 and settled in Grünfeld Kleefeld). He was a school teacher for 33 years. Later they bought a farm south of Steinbach NW 10-6-6-E from Klaas Reimer. He was a charter member of the Brüderthaler Church. The family moved to Steinbach in 1911. He was a frequent correspondent to the Steinbach Post and other periodicals: see Preservings, No. 8, June 1996, pages 45-46.



Photo Five. Funeral photograph labelled only as "Balzer" girl, presumably a Russländer family. Her funeral would have taken place sometime around October of 1927. The photo illustrates the cultural differences which had developed between the Mennonites who came to Manitoba in 1874 and those who fled Russia after the Soviet takeover. The photograph is taken at the Pioneer Cemetery on Reimer West, view to the north. The picture provides a view of what the northwest corner of Steinbach looked like in the 1920s. The buildings in the background are situated along Friesen Ave. The house at the left is the home of Jakob S. Rempel, and to the right can be seen the rear of the buildings along Main Street, probably the J.R. Friesen garage and rear of the K.R. Friesen house and an older barn.



Photo Six: Another photo taken from the Pioneer Cemetery. The picture is taken of the head stone for the first wife of Peter W. Toews, nee Anna Broesky who died February 4, 1901. Three of the family's children are also buried in this plot. This is the only family plot in the Pioneer Cemetery which is fenced in with a chain link. Peter W. Toews, known as "Schmet" or blacksmith Toews, was a successful Steinbach blacksmith and businessman who became quite wealthy. He was a member of the Holdeman church and moved to Linden, Alberta, in 1905. His autobiography was published in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 137-155. Again a clear view to the northwest of the graveyard. The buildings in the background are situated along Friesen Ave. The barn and other buildings to the left belonged to John E. Friesen, known as "Cream" or Schmaunt Friesen. Hidden in the trees in the rear is the new house built by Abraham S. Friesen in 1910. In the centre is the rear of Notary Public John D. Goossen's home, now owned by Mary Anne and Royden Loewen. At the right is the home of Klaas F. Brandt, or Nick Brandt as he was commonly known, the uncle of Jack Brandt of Brandt Construction. Goossen had acquired the property from his father-in-law, Abraham S. Friesen, one of the original 1874 pioneers.



Photo Nine: Funeral for John E. Friesen (1885-1934) who died May 2, 1934. He was known as "Cream" Friesen because he worked for Crescent Creamery, Winnipeg, running their cream collection operation for the Steinbach area. He was married to Barbara Sobering, daughter of Heinrich Sobering (1863-1943). After his death, she was a widow for many years, but in 1952 she married for the second time to the widower Jakob M. Penner of Greenland. The family belonged to the Holdeman Church. Standing left to right: Son Art Friesen holding youngest brother Tim, widow Barbara Friesen, nee Sobering, daughter Helen and husband John P. Wiebe, later owner of the Creamery, and sons Henry and Andrew. John and Helen Wiebe were later killed in a car accident in Ste. Anne in 1954. They were the parents of the well-known late Bob Wiebe from the Steinbach Post Office. The photograph is taken from the Friesen residence on Friesen Avenue, view to the east toward Main Street. Photo identification is courtesy of Ben J. Sobering, Steinbach.

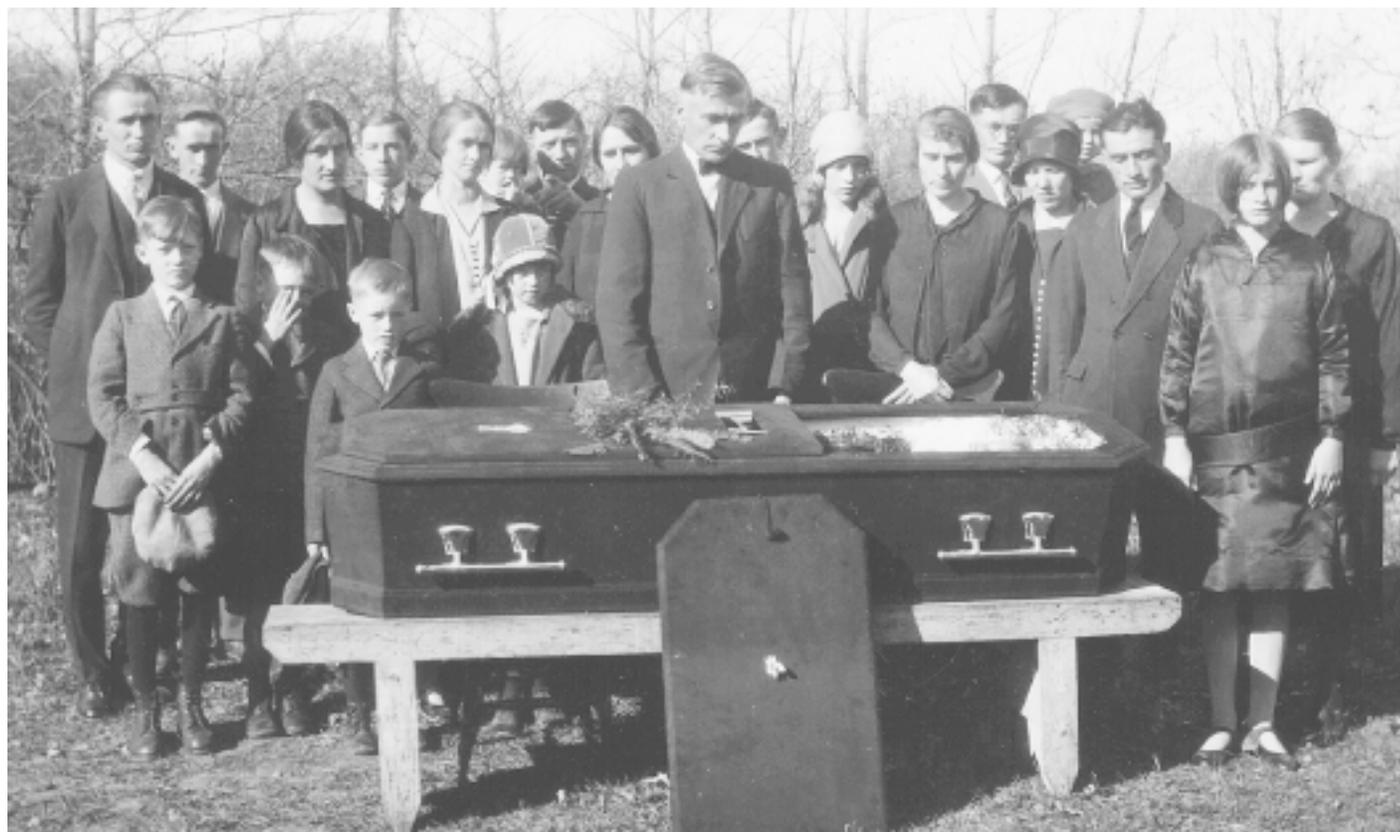


Photo Seven: The Isaac F. Friesen family mourning the death of their mother, Anna Quiring Friesen, who died October 18, 1927. Left to right: Rear: Abe Q. Friesen, John Q. Friesen, Anna Q. Friesen, Peter Q. Friesen, Mrs. Peter S. Rempel, nee Elisabeth Q. Friesen, Peter S. Rempel holding daughter _____, Mrs. Gus Reimer, nee Maria Q. Friesen, Isaac F. Friesen, Rosie Kliewer, Mrs. Klaas B. Reimer, nee Helen Q. Friesen, Jonas Q. Friesen holding son Bert, Mrs. Jonas Q. Friesen, nee Caroline, Isaac Q. Friesen, Mrs. Vernon Barkman, nee Rebecca Friesen, Mrs. Isaac Q. Friesen, nee Margaret. Front: Orlando, Peter, Arnold and Annie F. Rempel, children of Peter S. Rempel, Annie Peters. Photo identification courtesy of Ray Rempel. Isaac F. Friesen was the great-grandson of Abraham Friesen (1782-1849) of Ohrloff, Mol., renowned second Bishop of the KG.



Photo Ten: Another photo of Johann E. Friesen in coffin taken on his yard on Friesen Avenue. View to the east from the west end of Friesen Ave. The homes in the background l. to r. are: Sebastian Rieger house, hidden in the trees is the John D. Goossen house, Rev. Henry A. Brandt, formerly Abraham S. Friesen house, and at the far right, the Heinrich Funk house (later Ben Fast); he was the uncle to Mrs. Alvin Fast, nee Della Funk.



Photo Eleven: Coffin photo labelled only as "Tante Dueckman" who was buried October 29, 1929. The family was of Rusländler origin and differences in cultural practices, in terms of dress, adornment of coffin, etc., are evident. Mrs. Dueckman was the mother Mrs. John Wittenberg. Her husband was a Mennonite Brethren minister; Bible school founder and teacher.



Photo Eight: Funeral for Mrs. H. D. Warkentin, nee Maria Friesen, who died March 11, 1933. She was born in 1869 and was married for the first time to Cornelius T. Barkman of Reichenbach, one of the founders of the Brüderthaler Church in Steinbach. She was the daughter of Abraham R. Friesen (1846-84), pioneer school teacher and diarist of Lichtenau, Molotschna, and later Lichtenau, Manitoba.

Grieving family with coffin left to right: Children standing immediately behind coffin: Winnie B. Unger, Mary B. Unger, Victor B. Unger, Sylvester Friesen, Gordon Friesen and Matilda Friesen. Back row: Mr. H. D. Warkentin, Bill Barkman, George Barkman, Cornie B. Unger, David B. Unger, Mrs. Annie Barkman standing behind David, Cornelius K. Barkman standing to right of Annie, and Ben B. Unger in front of C. F. B., Mrs. Agatha Giesbrecht sister of decedent, Ben B. Unger standing in front of her, John K. F. Barkman (1906-39), brother Abraham K. Friesen, standing in front of A. K. F. is Elisabeth B. Unger Mrs. Fred Friesen, in front of Elisabeth is Evelyn Barkman daughter of C.F.B., Mr. Isaac F. Friesen, Mrs. Isaac F. Friesen nee Agatha F. Barkman, Abram K. Barkman, Mrs. C. W. Unger nee Maria K. Barkman, Eva Barkman Mrs. A.K.B., Cornelius W. Unger.



Photo Thirteen: Peter T. Barkman, one of the 1874 Steinbach pioneers and a leading businessman and entrepreneur in his day, died March 17, 1936. Standing beside the coffin is his sister Aganetha, Mrs. Abraham W. Reimer. Both of these siblings were always Kleine Gemeinde.



Photo Fourteen: Jakob B. Koop a large scale farmer in Neuanlage (today Twincreek) died on February 25, 1937. He was a cousin to Peter T. Barkman. He was a large scale farmer and a life long member of the Kleine Gemeinde. He was the grandfather of Peter S. Koop, currently of Fernwood, and Jake Koop of C. T. Loewens.



Photo Fifteen: Photograph identified only as "Our Mother." Presumably this is Anna Doerksen Barkman Kornelsen who died Oct. 10, 1937.

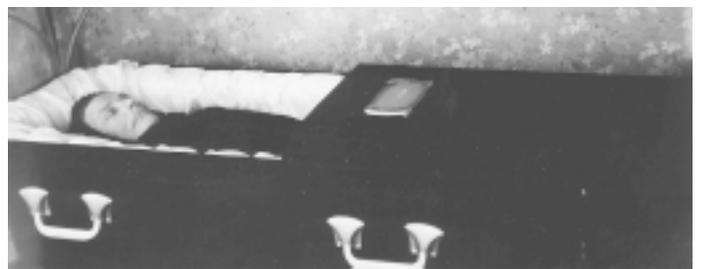


Photo Sixteen: Mrs. Cornelius P. Kroeker, nee (1866-1938), nee Katharina R. Toews.

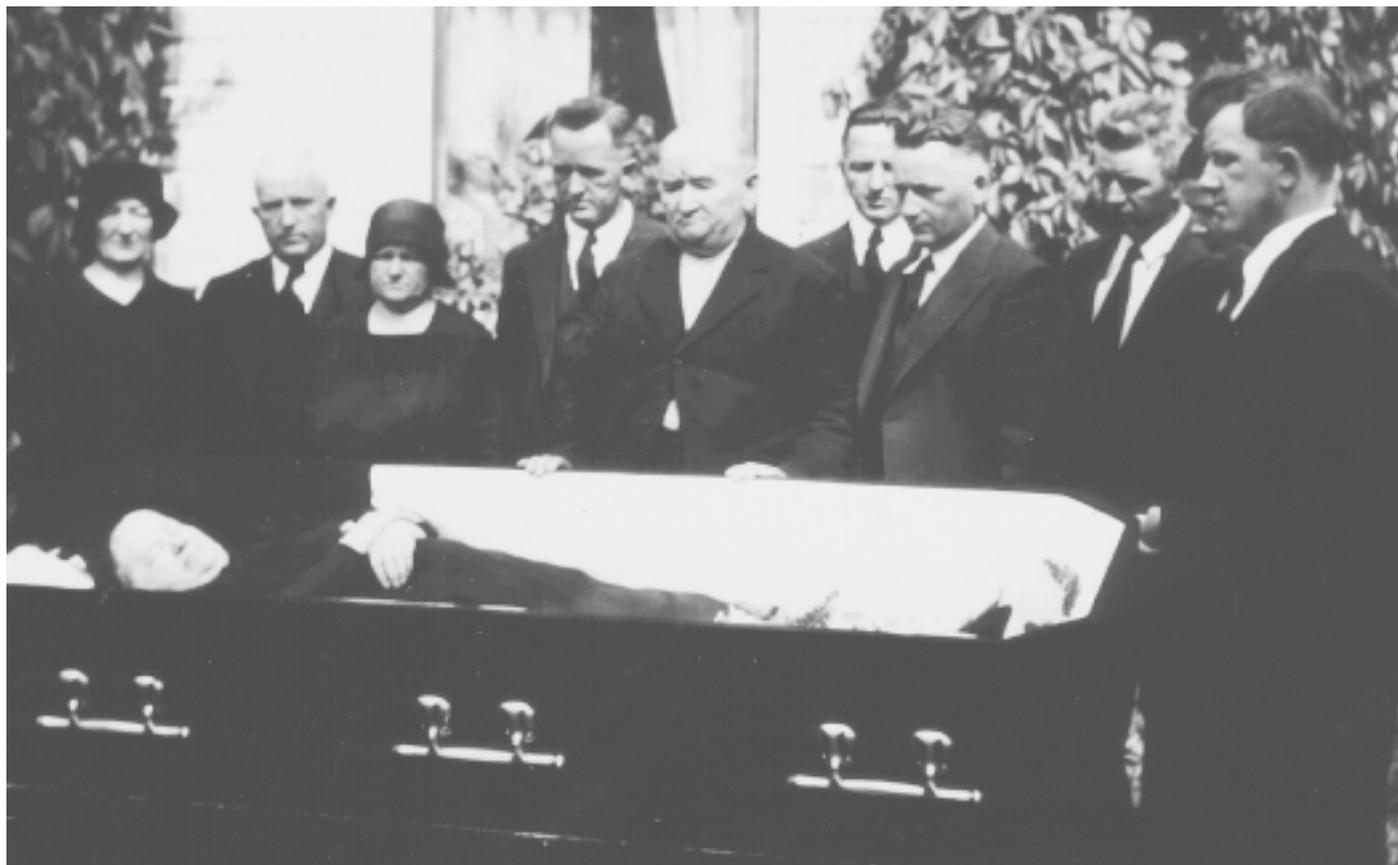


Photo Twelve: Funeral for Mrs. Heinrich W. Reimer, nee Anna Wiebe from Alt-Bergfeld, E.R. who died Sept. 11, 1932: see article by Linda Buhler, Preservings, No. 8, June 1996, Part Two, page 48. Heinrich W. Reimer was undoubtedly one of the most important men in southeastern Manitoba in his time. Standing around the coffin: l. to r. Anna H. W. R., Henry H. W. R., Katharina, Mrs. John F. Giesbrecht, Jakob H. W. R., Mr. Heinrich W. Reimer; Klaas H. W. R., John H. W. R., Peter H. W. R. and Bernhard H. W. R. Partially hidden between Peter and Ben is Margaret, Mrs. Heinrich T. Kroeker. Photo identification by Wes Reimer; former mayor of Steinbach. Heinrich W. Reimer was the wealthiest man in Steinbach from 1900-1930. He was always Kleine Gemeinde.

Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908)

by Delbert F. Plett, Steinbach

Certainly one of the most prestigious residents of Steinbach was Cornelius Plett Toews of Fischau, Mol. (later he had a Wirtschaft in Hierschau) who served as one of the 12 Mennonite delegates sent to America to scout out the land in 1873. Some of his letters to his brother Bishop Peter Toews back in Russia have been preserved and published in *Storm and Triumph*, pages 293-305.

Cornelius served as leader of the first group of Mennonite settlers to arrive in Manitoba (65 families Kleine Gemeinde) in 1874 representing the Blumenhof Gemeinde. A difference arose with the other delegate David Klassen, representing the Heuboden Gemeinde, who led 30 families to settle in Rosenort.

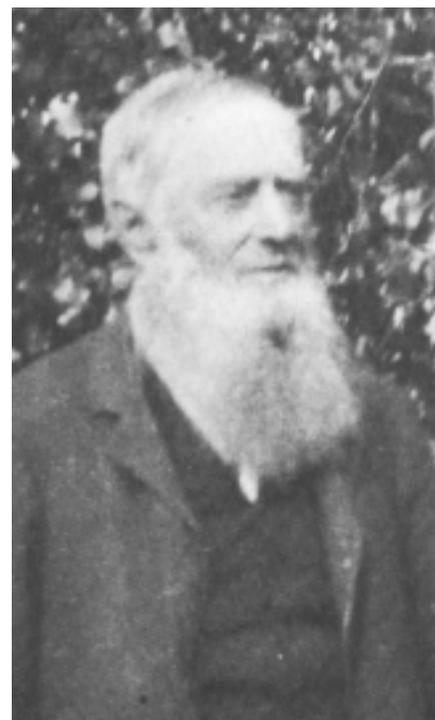
Cornelius Toews settled in Gruenfeld (later Kleefeld). Some of his letters to his brother Peter have recently been published: *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 5-76. In 1876 Cornelius P. Toews built the first windmill in southeastern Manitoba. His house and barn were destroyed by fire on Dec. 16, 1876, resulting in an insurance payout of \$668.33. Unfortunately the fire also destroyed his writings and books.

In 1885 he purchased the SW 26-6-6E south of the present day Southlands subdivision in Steinbach where he established a fine farmyard. (For a photo of his expansive house and yard see 75 *Gedenkfeyer*, page 34.)

Oldest son Johann F. Toews was married to Sarah, daughter of Heinrich Fast who owned the adjoining NW26-6-6E. The settlement was called Fischau from where the Fast and Toews' had originated in the old country. In 1898/9 Cornelius P. Toews moved to Greenland where he passed away in 1908.

In 1911 his widow nee Anna Bartel moved to Needles, B.C., with 5 of her children and their families. Later she together with Peter H. "Post" Wiebes, Martin M. Penners and Peter B. "Grote" Toews, returned to Manitoba.

Grandchildren of Cornelius P. Toews include long-time teacher Cornelius L. Toews (1891-1982); Peter "Central" Toews; Mrs. John K. Schellenberg, Mrs. George D. Penner, and all the Martin M. Penner children. Other well-known descendants include the late Dennis Guenther, Manager Steinbach Credit Union, the late Chuck Toews, founder of GrowSir Stores and Hanover Doors, and Ralph Penner, former Deputy Fire Chief for Steinbach.



Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908) in 1906. Photo courtesy of Reflections, page 14.

Chortitzer Cemeteries 1874-1996

by Jake Klassen, Box 73, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

Introduction.

The following are the names and locations of Chortitzer cemeteries established in the Hanover area in 1874 and later, as compiled by the Cemetery Committee of the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, 479 Hanover Street, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0. For the purposes of this article, "registered" cemeteries are those with a separate title, generally registered in the names of "The trustees of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church of Steinbach, Manitoba."

Other cemeteries or unregistered cemeteries are located on lands where the title is held by private individuals. Readers should note that all of these cemeteries, whether registered with a separate title or not, are on file with the appropriate government agencies and that the sanctity of those buried in these graveyards is protected by law.

Registered Cemeteries:

1. Chortitz (Randolph) NW 3-7-5E;
2. Weidenfeld NW 24-4-5E;
3. Grunthal Town;
4. Rosengard SE 18-6-6E;
5. Niverville Town;
6. Mitchell SE 6-6-7E;
7. Silberfeld SE 33-7-5E;
8. Burwalde NE 32-5-6E;
9. Kronsthal (Hildebrand) NE 30-7-5E;
10. Osterwick South SW 25-7-4E;
11. Osterwick North SE 36-7-4E;
12. Felsenton (Unger) NW 23-6-6E;
13. Abram D. Wiebe Farm SW 33-6-6E*;
14. Blumengard SE 35-7-5E;
15. Vollwerk NW 31-6-6E. This cemetery is taken over by the Peters Family.
16. Rheinland or Doerksen SE 15-8-4E: see Randy Kehler article, *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part Two, pages 52-53.
17. Jakob S. Hiebert farm NW 18-7-4E.

Chortitzer Name.

Did you know that the name Chortitza originated from the Island of Chortitza in the Dneiper River, Ukraine, formerly Imperial Russia? In ancient times, the Viking traders from the North country travelled south along the Dneiper River on their way to trade with the ancient Greeks. The Island of Chortitza with its beautiful woods and green meadows was always a natural stopping point.

The Island itself received its name from the traders who stopped to give thanks to God, known as "Chortz" in the ancient tongue, for safe passage over the dangerous rapids near the island. Thus the island came to be known as Chortitza or "thanks be to God": see *Preservings*, No. 6, June 1995, page 25, for a more detailed story.



Photo One: The CMC Church graveyard at Rosengard, SW 18-6-6E, south of Mitchell.



Photo Three: The Alt-Barkfeld cemetery NE 7-5-5E, southwest of Grunthal.



Photo Two: The Rheinland cemetery on SE 15-8-4 East north of Niverville in the R. M. of Tache.



Photo Five: Hochfeld cemetery SW 30-7-5E, west of Blumenort.



Photo Four: The Bergthal cemetery NW 18-6-7E, northwest of Mitchell.

Unregistered Cemeteries:

1. Schanzenberg or Imigration Sheds SW 20-7-4E*;
2. Bergthall NW 18-7-6E monument;
3. Hochfeld SW 30-7-6E;
4. Blumengard NW 26-7-5E (no markers)*;
5. Goertzen SW 16-7-5E*;
6. Krause Sec. 4-8-4E;
7. Former John Loewen Farm NE 20-7-5E (1 marker);
8. Schönwiese, along driveway SE 9-7-5E (2 markers)*;
9. Eigenhoff SE 2-7-5E*;
10. Old Barkfield NE 7-5-5E (monument);
11. Kronsgard Sec. 2-5-5E (monument);
12. Schönsee Sec. 34-5-5E;
13. Sawatzky Sec. 3-5-5E;
14. Friesen SW 5-7-4E: see John K. Friesen article in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part Two, pages 51-52;
15. Hiebert SW 19-7-4E;
16. Bergthall SW 24-7-5E (cultivated)*;
17. Giesbrecht NE 7-7-6E (cultivated)*;
18. Rempel NE 16-7-6E (no markers);
19. New Barkfield SE 20-4-6E;
20. Abram Loepky farm SE 18-7-4E;
21. John J. Neufeld farm NE16-7-4E;
22. Peter Blatz farm SW 36-6-5E;
23. Les Schroeder farm NW 14-6-5E;
24. Schönfeld SW 23-6-5E;
25. North Kronsthal Sec. 31-7-5E;
26. South Kronsthal NW 19-7-5E;
27. Reinfeld Sec. 17-7-5E;
28. Family Plot NE 3-6-5E*;
29. Individual gravesite R.M. of Tache Section 15-8-4E*;
30. Individual gravesite R.M. of Tache Section 22-8-4E*;
31. Family plot NE 10-8-4E*;
32. Family plot Section 21-8-4E*;
33. Family plot Section 12-8-5E*.

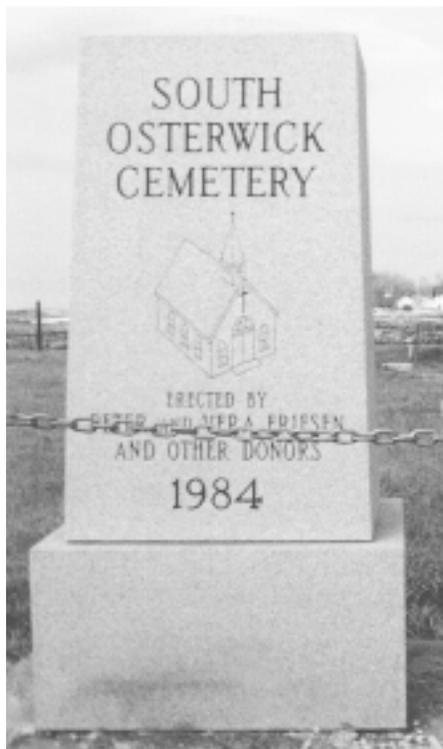


Photo Seven: South Osterwick Cemetery, SW 25-7-4E west of New Bothwell.

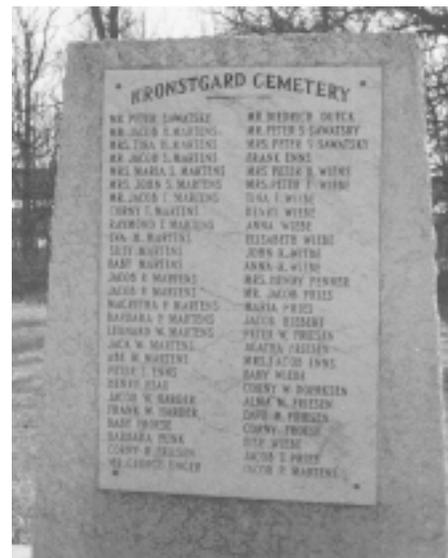


Photo Six: Kronsgard cemetery near Grunthal, Section 2-5-5E.

Request for Information.

Readers who have information regarding the history and/or burials in any of the cemeteries listed or who have information on additional Chortitzer cemeteries which are not listed are asked to call Mr. Jacob Klassen (346-0625) Box 73, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, of the Cemetery Committee of the Chortitzer Churches.

* Additional information such as names and dates are needed especially for these cemeteries.

Jakob S. Hiebert Cemetery, NW 18-7-4E

report submitted by Peter Hiebert, Nanaimo, B. C.

Introduction.

The “Hiebert Family Cemetery” is located on NW 18-7-4E southeast of Niverville, where the family patriarch Jakob Hiebert (1833-1906) homesteaded in 1875. The homestead application for NW 18-7-4E was filed on May 20, 1880.

The area where the cemetery was located was known as Schantzenburg in honour of Jakob Schantz who had assisted the Russian Mennonites in their great emigration of 1874-6. The emigration shelters built by Schantz were located on the northwest corner of Section 20-7-4E.

Title to the Jakob S. Hiebert cemetery plot is now registered in the name of the “Hiebert Heritage Cemetery Inc. In a report to the annual general meeting on June 14, 1995, chairperson Andy Hiebert, noted that “the Hiebert Heritage Cemetery is the only cemetery in the Rural Municipality of Hanover registered as a private family cemetery.”

The following persons contributed to the preparation and completion of the cairn, grave site and grounds: Daycore Drilling, Patrick Hiebert, Henry Kehler, Lorne and Delphne Doerksen, Peter and Yolande



Photo One: Andy Hiebert with the original gravestone for Jakob and Katharina Hiebert. Photo courtesy of Wes Keating, Carillon News, Steinbach, August 30, 1995.

Hiebert and Andy and Betty Hiebert.

Dedication Service Sep. 3, 1995,

A dedication service for the Hiebert Family Cemetery was held on Sep. 3, 1995. The event was organized by Andy Hiebert, Ile des Chenes, Manitoba. Jona Leppky acted as the Master of Ceremonies and Professor Bernie Wiebe, University of Winnipeg, made the closing prayer. The following historical review was presented by Andy Hiebert at the unveiling ceremony.

Historical Presentation by Andy Hiebert.

We have come together today, so many people joined by blood. As I look over the crowd, I can not help but feel like a small part of something much bigger, something that stretches back over 120 years.

That is why we are here today - to look back and honour the history that Grandfather and Grandmother Hiebert gave us and continues to give us. We inherited from our ancestors more than blue eyes or, thank heavens, a tendency to keep our hair. We inherit part of ourselves. They give us gifts that come into play when we need them or when we are ready.

Family Gifts.

What gifts have Grandmother and Grandfather Hiebert given us? They have given us courage. We have shared stories and we have seen documents that detail their journey from Russia. By all accounts, they left a reasonably comfortable life in Mother Russia. They chose, however, to come to Manitoba, an unknown, undeveloped land in the Red River Valley in far away Canada. Imagine the discussions, the weighing back and forth of pros and cons, the anxious nights - the feeling of stepping on the boat. My definition of courage includes the strength that gets us through every day, through all our decisions and Grandmother and Grandfather had great courage.

They have given us a gift of determination. They broke virgin sod with horse and ox. The horse and ox didn't always cooperate. My dad, Peter H. Hiebert, told me a story about him and his brother David. They were busy plowing with a horse, who always obeyed commands, and an ox who tended to be on the independent side. They were going along quite well but the boys were 8 or 10 years old and it took all their strength to keep the horse and ox and plow in line. As the day got warmer, the ox decided that he wanted to wander over to the nearby slough to have a drink of water and cool off his feet - and so he did, pulling the horse, Dad and David into the water: but the furrow was straight!

They gave us a gift of invention - building their home and outbuildings from what they could buy or barter or find. If you could not find it you made it and if you could not

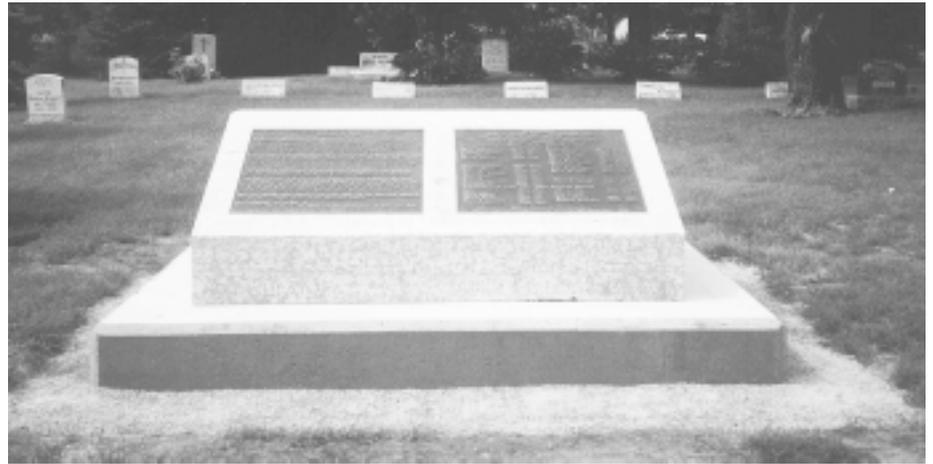


Photo Two: The commemorative cairn at the Hiebert Family Cemetery which was dedicated on Sept. 3, 1995. Photo courtesy of Peter Hiebert.

make it, you made do with something else. They trudged through the woods, looking for fuel to keep body and soul warm in the dead of a Manitoba winter. Wood for fuel was often scarce so they often burned a combination of straw and cow dung - and without the benefit of air fresheners!!!

Katharina Hiebert, frontier midwife.

They have given us a thirst for knowledge and a desire to help others. Those of us who are in anyway connected with the health field will feel a strong empathy with Grandmother Hiebert. She was renowned as a midwife and healer. She was also known as a very modest woman who, unfortunately, did not write down her adventures for us to share. We can only rely on family stories, like the ones I heard from my father-in-law, Peter Kehler.

The farm that Dad grew up on was across from Grandmother and Grandfather Hieberts.

He told me how his sister had a blemish on her cheek and went to see Grandma. Grandma sent her home and wept because there was nothing she could do. There was blood poisoning in the cheek and the child would die. She died a few days later.

Dad told me that there were many times that he watched an anxious father gallop up the driveway. The next sight was Grandmother roaring down the road in her buggy, sitting in the middle of the seat to balance it out, urging her greys to move faster. The soon-to-be father was left to fend for himself.

Shot-gun accident.

They have given us a glue of practicality, of making the best of the situation at hand. Many of you know that grandfather Hiebert was miss-

continued on next page



Photo Three: Jakob Hiebert (1833-1906) and second wife nee Katharina F. Hiebert (1855-1916) with son Johann, circa 1896. Photo courtesy of Hiebert Heritage, page 188.

continued from previous page

ing a couple of fingers but may not know how it happened. Like many settlers, Grandfather could not pass up the opportunity to nab a spring goose. One year, he patiently crawled up to a flock of geese - probably not more than 250 yards from where we were standing right now. Using a muzzle loader, he fired at the geese but the gun misfired. The geese now flew up in the air and, getting up off his knees, Grandfather stood there, watching them go. He casually placed his hand on top of the gun barrel. BOOM - part of his finger blew away.

Grandfather went to Grandmother and asked her to amputate it. He brought her a chisel to do it. Grandmother said she could not hold the chisel and hit it at the same time. So Grandfather held the chisel while grandmother brought the hammer down with all her strength--a clean wound that healed nicely.

I guess grandfather also gave us a gift of sometimes being a little impatient too. My dad and his brother David were pounding posts for a fence, with Dad holding the post to keep it straight and David using the sledgehammer. Grandfather did not quite like the angle and put his hand on the top of the post. saying 'Whoa.'" Too late - David was well into his swing and - BANG - the finger was flattened, flat as a german pancake. Out came the chisel - another clean wound. Grandfather must have learned his lesson as he kept the rest of his fingers.

Family history: The Hiebert Book.

The stories we get from our families and pass down to our children is a way of making our past come alive. It is a gift we give future generations - we are telling them "This is what happened. This is where you came from". The Oak Bluff reunion in 1991 was a marvellous opportunity for sharing memories and oral history.

For our written history, we have to acknowledge the encouragement of Aunt Ann Klippenstein and the initiative of Regina Neufeld in launching the Hiebert Book. A tremendous amount of work went into that book, which provides a written history for us to refer to time and again.

The history book of the family of Jakob Hiebert (1833-1906) and Katharina Hiebert (1855-1916) was published in 1993: Regina Neufeld, editor, *Hiebert Heritage 1833-1993* (Steinbach, 1993), 208 pages.

Hiebert Heritage Cemetery.

We are very fortunate that we can stand on this piece of land, here on the NW 18-7-4E and know that this is where it began for the Hiebert clan in Canada. The property is still in the hands of someone from our family. Look around you - you are looking at the same land that Grandmother and Grandfather Hiebert saw when they came to Canada in 1875.

Being able to point to a place and say, "That's where it started" is very special. This plot is 80 feet wide and runs 480 feet to the road. It is the generous gift of Betty Wiebe - a gift to the Hiebert family descendants that we can all enjoy. I would like thank Betty not only for her

Burials in the Hiebert Cemetery

	17		
	Great-Granddaughter Margaret Rose Daughter of Jacob & Lizzie Hiebert Born 6 Oct. 1943 Died 2 Mar. 1944		
11	16	8	19
Daughter-In-Law Maria Wife of Peter Hiebert Born 12 July 1891 Died 20 July 1937	Grandson Erdman son of Erdman & Maria Penner Born 1904 Died 1909	Son Johann Hiebert Born 2 Nov. 1894 Died 1901	Great-Granddaughter Vera Helen Reimer Born 18 Aug. 1934 Died 16 Sept. 1988
9	15	7	
Son David Hiebert Born 15 Jan. 1883 Died 8 Aug. 1946	Grandson Johan N. Son of John & Helen Doerksen Born 13 May 1913 Died 7 Dec. 1915	Son Komelius Hiebert Born 15 Apr. 1899 Died 10 Oct. 1899	
10	14	6	
Daughter-In-Law Margaret Wife of David Hiebert Born 11 Mar. 1887 Died 28 Mar. 1954	Grandson Jacob Son of Peter & Maria Hiebert Born 9 June 1924 Died 10 June 1924	Daughter Aganatha Hiebert Born 4 Sept. 1891 Died 6 July 1895	
	2	5	
	Kathrina Hiebert Born 28 May 1855 Died 28 July 1916	Son Johann Hiebert Born 1 Jan. 1869 Died 18 Aug. 1889	
	1	4	
	Jacob Hiebert Born 22 Oct. 1833 Died 7 June 1906	Son Jacob Hiebert Born 1 Oct. 1863 Died 7 Apr. 1889	
12	13	3	18
Allan Abram Wiebe Husband of Granddaughter Born 3 Jan. 1923 Died 27 Sept. 1986	Granddaughter Elma Daughter of John & Helena Doerksen Born 23 Nov. 1922 Died 9 Sept. 1942	Son Bernhard Hiebert Born 6 Oct. 1866 Died 8 July 1935	Daughter-In-Law Susanna Wife of Ben Hiebert Born 1865 Died 1944

generous donation but also her for the care she has given to the cemetery over the years. I also would like to thank her family for their support. (APPLAUSE)

Clear title to this plot is held for the Hieberts in the name of the Hiebert Heritage Cemetery Inc. The cairn which we are unveiling is the result of the very unstinting support of Pete and Yolande Hiebert and Lorne and Delphne Doerksen. Without their help and support, we would not be unveiling the cairn and the plates which adorn it.

Today we honour Grandfather Jacob and Grandmother Katherine Hiebert. This cairn will stand as a touchstone for our family - the place where our family was literally born in this country. Cherish it for yourself, your children and your children's children. Visit it often and make it part of your family memories. This is not only a place where we celebrate our past - but a

place where we celebrate our future.

I would like to call on Peter Hiebert and Lorne Doerksen to unveil the memorial stone.

The report for *Preservings* was submitted by Peter Hiebert, Nanaimo, B. C. There were also earlier reports regarding the Hiebert Heritage Cemetery: Wes Keating, "Family history is catalyst for memorial stone project," in the *Carillon News*, Steinbach, August 30, 1995; and Barbara Schewchuk, "Cemetery holds roots," in *Crow Wing Warrior*, Morris, Saturday, August 26, 1995, page 12.

Road Naming: "C.S.Plett Road"

Road Naming: C. S. Plett Road.

On June 26, 1996, Council of the Rural Municipality of Hanover passed a resolution that "the municipal road north of sections 23 to 24-7-5E and 19 to 24-7-6E be named "C.S. Plett Road". The resolution was moved by local Councillor Norman F. Plett, himself a landowner along the road in question, and seconded by Alvin Toews, Councillor for New Bothwell.

The effect of the resolution is that the Municipal Road 1 mile south of Blumenort, running 6 miles west of P.T.H. 12 and 2 miles east will be named "C.S.Plett Road". The resolution has also been matched by the Council of the Rural Municipality of Ste. Anne which extends "C.S. Plett Road" an additional 2 miles further east, a total of 10 miles. The resolution was moved by local Ste. Anne Councillor Harvey R. Plett.

In speaking in support of the motion

Councillor Norman Plett mentioned that most of the land on both sides of the road in question is still owned by the descendants of C.S. Plett. Councillor Plett also noted that Heritage Preservation must not merely be generic but must recognize and commemorate "our particular history and heritage".

The naming of "C.S. Plett Road" is significant as it is the first Municipal Road named in honour of one of the original 1874/5 pioneers in the Hanover Steinbach area. In a few instances, families have been recognized by naming a road after a family name but not a specific historical personage.

The following article explains the significance of Cornelius S. Plett (1820-1900) to the settlement of southeastern Manitoba. It is a summary of a more complete biography written by Delbert Plett for a forthcoming history of the "Plett Family."

Biography of Cornelius S. Plett 1820-1900

Childhood and marriage.

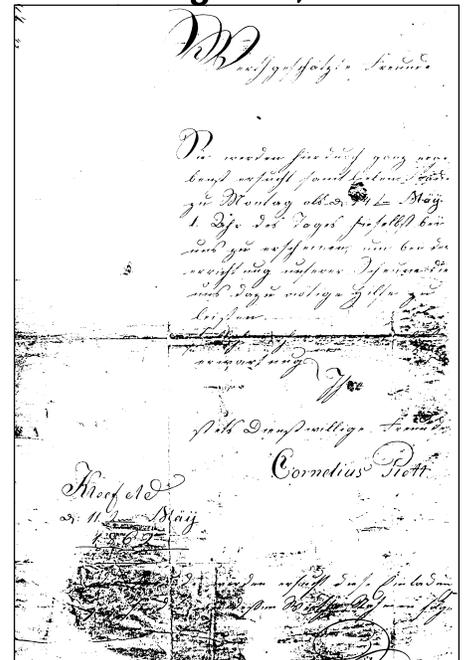
Cornelius S. Plett was born in Danzig, West Prussia, today Gdansk, Poland, on October 28, 1820. He was the son of Johann Plett (1765-1833) whose father, also a Johann Plett, was a wealthy farmer in the village of Fürstenwerder, Prussia. Cornelius' mother was a Lutheran widow, Esther Merkers, nee Smit.

In 1828 Cornelius came to Russia together with his parents and four sisters and the family settled on a Wirtschaft in Sparrau, Molotschna. The family came to be associated with the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) church.

Cornelius was baptised in 1840 and the next

continued on next page

Bahrung Letter, 1862



Invitation by Cornelius S. Plett inviting his friends and neighbours to a barn raising or "Bahrung." It reads: "Worthy and precious friends: Your assistance is hereby requested for Monday, the 14th of May, 1862, at 1 p.m. to appear at our place in order to provide us with the necessary assistance for the erection of our hay barn. Your always willing friend, "Cornelius Plett" Kleefeld, May 11, 1862. The friends are requested to pass this invitation along to the landowners (Wirthen) whose names follow..." The invitation lists 32 of the 40 landowners in Kleefeld, including brothers-in-law Jakob Friesen and Johann Loewen and future son-in-law Franz M. Kroeker, later a Steinbach pioneer. It is interesting that fellow Kleine Gemeinder Klaas R. Reimer and Abraham R. Reimer, who were Anwohner, but up-and-coming blacksmiths and manufacturers, were not invited. Another Kleine Gemeinder in Kleefeld conspicuous by his absence is Wirtschaft owner Abraham M. Friesen who was married to Plett's niece. Copy of Bahrung letter courtesy of Rev. Jake P. Friesen, Blumenort, Manitoba. It appears that the document was passed down via the Abraham L. Plett family to his daughter Gertrude, Mrs. John E. Friesen, Blumenort.

Helena Eidses' Medical Bag

by Lori Scharfenburg, Box 10, Group 1, R.R. 1, Morris, Manitoba, R0G 1K0

[A biography of Helena Klassen Eidse (1861-1938) by Lori Scharfenberg was published in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, pages 51-54.]

Helena's medical bag is still extant. It was made of well-worn brown leather. It has two metal clasps that fasten at the top and feature a special locking device to keep young children out and medicines and instruments in. At the time it was given to my mother, Tina (Eidse) Loewen, it still contained various medicine bottles including pills for fever and a liquid given to women so that they would not haemorrhage, ties for the umbilical cords, a soft white cotton cloth cut to be a sling, several steel instruments for bladder problems, and a needle and thread.

Helena Eidse often had to improvise with material at hand and sewed her own bandages since Band-Aids were not available. They were made from cotton cloth cut into strips, pre-sewn to wrap around certain fingers and they had tails that you tied around the rest of your hand. She not only used medicines on other but also was the community salesperson for rubbing alcohol, Wonder oil, Lydia E. Pinkham's Tonic (for women), and all the German imports such as *Schlachwasser*, *Alpenkreuter* and *Magensterker*.

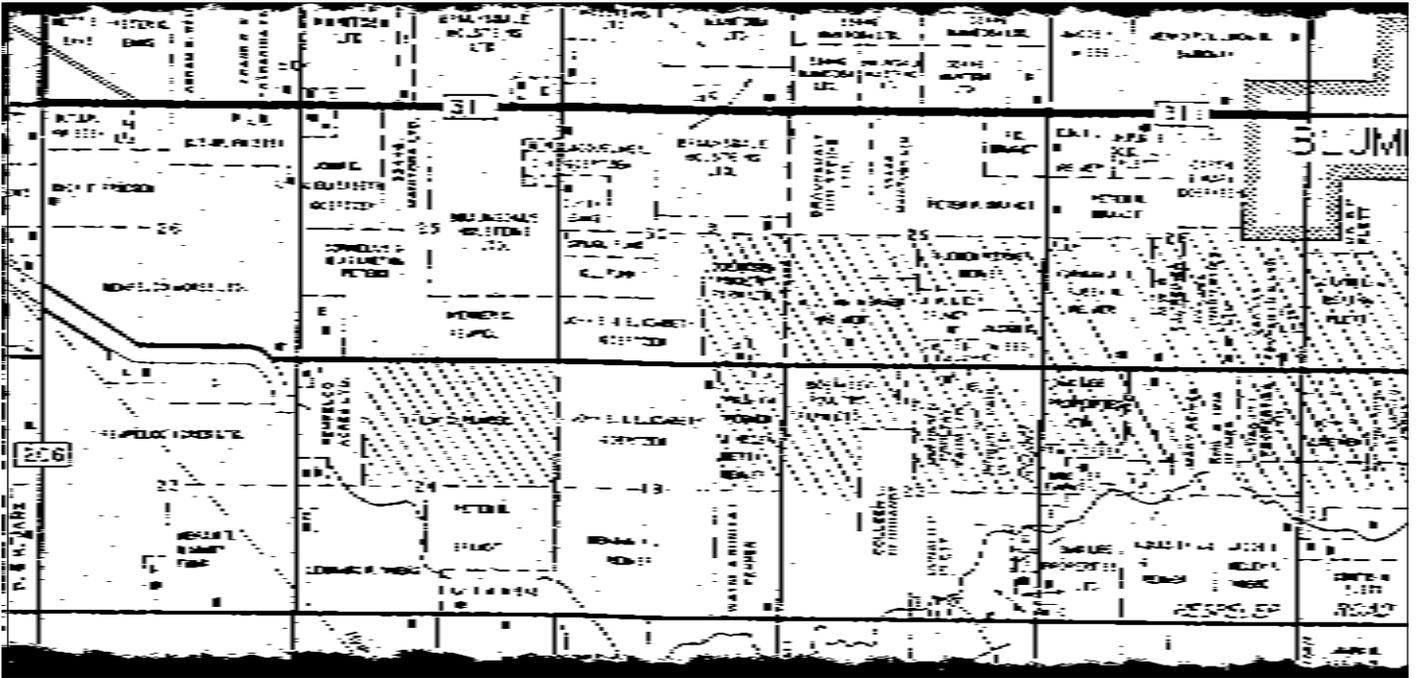
Most of the community knew about and used Mrs. Eidse's imported fever pills which were actually quinine tablets in both children's and adult's doses. Typically her bag would contain a thermometer, two scissors (1 to cut the umbilical cord), sulphur powder, sterile olive oil, a large bottle of rubbing alcohol, small pieces of wood for finger-splints, Castoria (a colic remedy for children),



Helena Eidses' Medical Bag

Home-made Cotton Balls, Vicks Rub, Red Lineament, Rawleighs or Watkins lotion, Antipain oil, a jar of Goose-grease and the fever pills.

The sterile olive oil was used to grease the birth passage to make delivery easier. Splinters were removed by applying warm tar, while boils were treated with a flaxseed poultice and beargrease and then lanced. A unique, highly effective treatment for tonsillitis was to form a paper cone, drop some sulphur into it and blow it directly onto the sore tonsils. She would use *Zipplesie* (Aloe Vera) on burns. If people were in severe pain Helena would use her *Schnall* which was a pricking device that served as a nerve stimulant to ease pain. It was a form of acupuncture. Both new medicines and old remedies were used in combination to heal the hurts of those that lived in the early 1900s.



Land ownership map, 1996, showing parcels owned by descendants of C. S. Plett. Courtesy of Norman F. Plett, Blumenort, Man.

continued from previous page

year he married Sarah Loewen, daughter of KG deacon and Vollwirt Isaak Loewen of Lindenau.

Farming in Russia.

The couple established their home in Lindenau as Anwohner and Cornelius went into business manufacturing wagon wheels. By 1854 they were able to acquire full farm of 165 acres, Wirtschaft No. 38, in the village of Kleefeld which was founded in that year.

Cornelius was appreciated by his neighbours who elected him to serve as the Schulz or mayor of the village, the second largest in the Molotschna with 40 farms. By 1862 he was able to build a large new hayshed, diagonally across the rear of his housebarn, something which only the larger farmers could afford.

Cornelius and Sarah enjoyed travelling. In 1869 they drove to the Crimea to visit the KG congregation there. They frequently visited friends and relatives in the KG settlement in Borosenko, located 30 miles northwest of

Nikopol.

With six sons at home Cornelius was motivated to increase his farm size. He leased additional crown lands so that by 1871 his wheat crop amounted to 270 acres.

In 1872 the Wirtschaft in Kleefeld was sold and the family purchased another in the village of Blumenhof, Borosenko. During this time one of their workers by the name of Heinrich Wohlgenuth, from Wolle, Poland, met and fell in love with their daughter Katharina.

Cornelius enjoyed community work and

Trip to Steinbach 1925

by Helen Wiebe Unger, Abbotsford, B. C.

I was about six years old at the time when my parents decided, for the first time, that I could go along to this wonderful town, called Steinbach. I had heard so much about this place, but had never actually been there.

The means of travelling in those days were either with horse and buggy or by what we used to call the big double-box wagon. The double-box was at least three feet deep. I remember my mom making big preparations for me to go along. She nestled me nicely by cushioning up a seat with pillows on the wagon box floor. I was not allowed to stand up because of the bad road conditions, especially around Chortitz area, etc. I need not ask questions either, because in those days children were just seen and not heard.

The seven miles from Chortitz to Steinbach seemed awfully long to me, because I could not watch the scenery from down below on the wagon floor. At long last I started hearing a lot of commotion and saw a lot of dust flying in the air as there were no

paved streets then. While entering the town of Steinbach, it went through my mind "This must be it!"

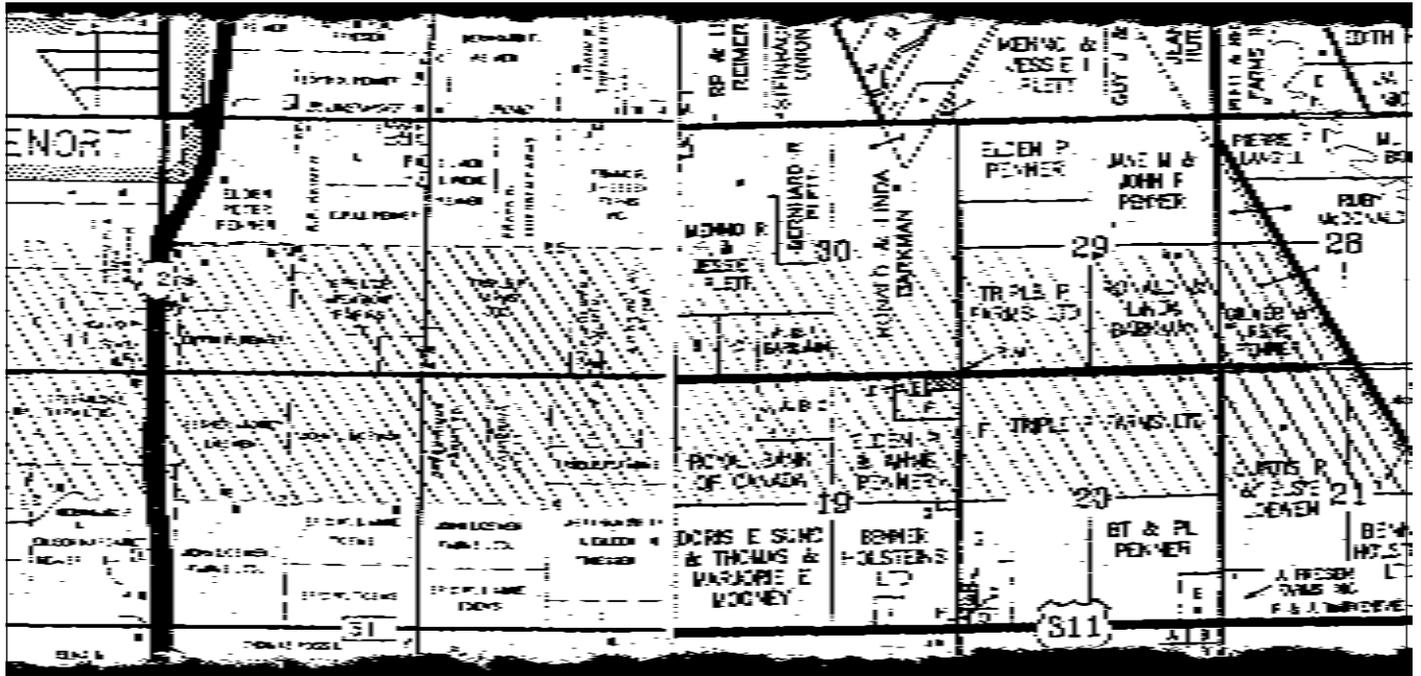
I got a great urge to get up from my nicely pillowed seat to see what Steinbach really looked like. After all, we had travelled what seemed like hours to see my beloved town of Steinbach. Here we were at last, and I was still wondering what the place looked like. But under the strict rules in those days, "Obey your parents". I dared not. I still remember quite well, how my heart was throbbing to get up to see the real Steinbach.

My dad, a man of few words was too busy with handling the horses as I presumed, and had maybe forgotten what his childhood had been like. Most likely he must have been a lot less fortunate even then we were. As we drove along Main Street, I anxiously kept on wondering what is outside this Pandora's Box I am sitting in, still on my cushions? What does this town look like? It is said that Pandora's Box contained all the human ills which when she opened the lid, escaped

into the world. But in my case, my human ills stayed in the wagon box because I had missed seeing the beloved town of Steinbach, so far.

At least I know we must have reached the Steinbach Flour Mills when my dad stopped to unload some bags of wheat he had along. And after waiting for what seemed to me like hours, he eventually came back to load a couple of bags of flour! He had brought along for each of us an apple, which I supposed was most likely to be our lunch. By this time I was already getting very hungry. I made up my mind I would eat my fill as soon as I would get home. Cafes were also unheard of in those early years.

We then started leaving my long awaited beloved Steinbach behind us, without me even getting a tiny glimpse of it, except all the clouds of dust in the air. We had often been told, that they had sidewalks made of wooden planks. And that all the customer's horses were tied onto posts in the store frontage. Also I had expected to see H.W. Reimer's well-known, big department store, just to name a few, and many others. This was all way back, seventy years ago.



again served as the village mayor. He was instrumental in having a beautiful new church and school house built in Blumenhof, Bor., and loaned the KG 300 ruble to assist in construction. He was interested in spiritual things and acquired several Anabaptist devotional books during this time.

Emigration 1875.

In 1874 when the first contingents of the KG were leaving for Manitoba and waiting for their emigration passes, Cornelius was chosen to accompany his nephew Elder Peter P. Toews to meet with General Totleben, the Czar's personal emissary. As a result of the meeting the emigration passes were issued.

However, the Pletts remained in Russia until 1875. Oral tradition holds that they harvested a bumper crop. The Pletts were joined in the emigration by 11 of Sarah's siblings and/or their families as well as the families of four of Cornelius' sisters. Much to their regret, one daughter Sarah, Mrs. Jakob J. Thielmann, remained in Russia together with her family.

In 1875 the C. S. Plett family left Russia and arrived at the confluence of the Rat and Red rivers on June 29. The next day Cornelius and brother-in-law Johann Warkentin arrived at the site of their new home on Sections 23 and 24-7-6E. This was to become the village of Blumenhof, named in honour of their place of origin in the old country. The former home of one-time Reeve John U. Loewen (also a descendant) is located more-or-less at the west end of the village.

Settlement, 1875-81.

Cornelius acquired a double farm or Wirtschaft in the village of Blumenhof. His homestead quarter was NE 24-7-6E where Wallie Doerksen lives today. (The original Crown Patent

is still on file at the Heritage Village Museum.) They were also joined here by Heinrich Wohlgenuth who had taken leave of his family in Liverpool and shortly married daughter Katharina.

Cornelius purchased two teams of oxen and a team of horses. His sons drove to Winnipeg to purchase lumber and by fall their new home was ready. It was insured for \$600.00. He was a generous man and assisted some of his neighbours with loans.

Cornelius continued to be active in community affairs. An issue came up when his nephew Bishop Peter P. Toews started preaching against the charging of interest. Cornelius objected to this with the result that a brotherhood meeting was held in Rosenfeld on July 2, 1877, where the Elder was censured.

Realizing the need for more land, Cornelius decided to acquire the three Hudson Bay quarters on Section 26-7-6E in 1881 for \$2280.00. However, Cornelius showed his independent streak when he did not put these lands under the village plan. By 1883 Cornelius together with his six sons were farming over 2000 acres and had their own threshing outfit, feed grinder, etc.

Church concerns, 1881-2.

In 1881 Elder Toews wanted to amalgamate the KG with Johann Holdeman, an American Revivalist preacher. Cornelius S. Plett and many others were concerned about this departure from the faith of the fathers. On Feb 2, 1881, C. S. Plett borrowed the "Holdeman" book from H. Reimer in Blumenort, presumably to study his teachings and to compare them with the Bible.

Cornelius S. Plett was delegated to accompany Toews to Kansas to investigate Holdeman's church and on June 8, 1881, they left for Kansas. Toews came back satisfied but Plett most definitely was not. He took a strong stand against

such a union. When his favourite son Johann L. Plett indicated he was joining Holdeman, he disinherited Johann.

When Bishop Abraham L. Friesen and an entourage of ministers came from Nebraska in February of 1882 to help reorganize the KG in Manitoba, they stayed for night at the home of C. S. Plett, an indication of the important role he played in the process. A few days later, March 7, Plett accompanied the group to Rosenort where further meetings were conducted.

Retirement, 1885.

Visiting and socializing was an important part of pioneer life. The journal of neighbour Abraham F. Reimer, Blumenort, reveals that Cornelius and Sarah hosted friends and relatives in their home on a daily basis. They also travelled occasionally going to Rosenort to visit relatives, to Winnipeg, etc.

By 1885 Cornelius and Sarah had slowed down and gave their farm over to their eldest son Cornelius L. P. and built themselves a new retirement home on his yard.

Sarah Loewen Plett was described by grandson Bishop David P. Reimer as "the likeness of Sarah in accordance with 1 Peter chapter 3. Sarah enjoyed reading and writing. Her daughter Maria later wrote "... I still miss so much... and long to return [to the time]. . . when I think of that which I had and my family...oh, how dearly I would long to sit at the writing table where Mama's books would still all be lying."

Cornelius S. Plett possessed a warm and winning nature and knew nothing about shyness. As an old retired man he enjoyed walking around the neighbourhood seeing what each and everyone was doing. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren remembered him "fondly for his warm and friendly greetings."

continued on next page

Children of C. S. and Sarah Loewen Plett.



Rev. Cornelius L. Plett (1846-1935) moved to Steinbach in 1906 and to Satanta, Kansas in 1914.



Maria L. Plett Reimer (1850-1944) married Peter R. Reimer of Blumenort, a senior minister of the Kleine Gemeinde.



Like his 2 younger brothers Abraham L. Plett (1859-1934) was a large-scale farmer in Blumenhof, 3 miles north of the Heritage Village Museum.



David L. Plett (1863-1953) was a thresherman and large scale farmer in Blumenhof.



Jakob L. Plett (1864-1931) was a thresherman and large scale farmer in Blumenhof. He was also a poet of some note.

Photos courtesy of Plett Picture Book, page vii.

continued from previous page

By 1898 Cornelius and Sarah gave themselves over to live with various of their children.

Death and burial, 1900.

In 1900 son Johann was sick and dying of typhus. During his illness he had dreams that he was again farming together with his father, just like in the old days back in Russia.

Motivated by love, C. S. Plett could not refrain from going to see his son to be reconciled. Despite the protests of his wife and children that he would also catch the deadly disease, Cornelius went to Johann's home next door and gave him the brother kiss and was reconciled, "notwithstanding his turning away in religious belief."

Johann L. Plett died on November 16, 1900. Cornelius contracted the typhus disease and died two days later of a heart attack at the home of son Jakob L. P. In honour of the love which the two men held for each other, the family wanted to bury them together even though this was not approved by the church. Johann was buried on the southwest corner of the SW25-7-6E, which he owned at the time, and where his daughter Sarah had been buried a month previous. A day after his funeral, a grave was dug beside him and Cornelius was buried side by side with his son.

This was the start of the second Blumenhof cemetery which was restored by great-grandson Bernhard P. Doerksen and others in 1992. This cemetery was used actively until 1918 when another cemetery was started a mile further west on the SE 27-7-6E just to the west of P.T.H. 12 where the Blumenort Kleingemeinde church was located from 1918 to 1951.

Legacy.

Although he had been retired for 15 years Cornelius left an estate of \$2168.50, a substantial sum for 1900. Sarah died in 1903 and was buried in the old Blumenort cemetery on NW 22-7-6E on the hill just west of where great-grandson David P. Loewen's turkey farm is today.

And thus the final chapter in the lives of Cornelius S. Plett and Sarah Loewen Plett, two in-

dividuals who had contributed immensely to the settlement of southeastern Manitoba, came to a close. For his strict stand for the faith of the fathers, Plett deserves much credit for the survival of the KG, and later the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, in the form as we know it today.

But Sarah and Cornelius left the richest legacy of all: descendants whose numbers by now exceed 10,000. A large number still live and/or farm in the Blumenort, Ridgewood and Landmark areas. Even to this day, the land along the road where Cornelius and his son Johann lie buried for several miles in each direction, is owned by their descendants.

I wonder sometimes whether any of them ever think of the significance of that small mound of earth at the Blumenhof cemetery where Cornelius lies buried as they drive by on their vehicles. In 1995, Cornelius' third last grandchild, Mrs. Henry M. Toews, nee Minna J. K. Plett, was buried in that same cemetery.

In 1993, the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc. passed a resolution encouraging that the road passing the Blumenhof cemetery on SW 25-7-6E be named in honour of C. S. Plett, truly a pioneer figure in Manitoba's history.

Descendants.

Cornelius and Sarah had many descendants active in church leadership: son Cornelius was a minister and son Peter L. Plett, deacon. Sons-in-law Peter R. Reimer (Maria L. Plett) and Heinrich Wohlgemuth (Katharina L. Plett) were both ministers. Sons Abraham, David and Jakob L. Plett were large-scale farmers and threshermen in Blumenhof, where they raised large families. The oldest daughter Margaretha L. Plett and her husband Franz Kroeker were pioneers settlers in the village of Steinbach.

Of their grandchildren and/or spouses many were active in church leadership: Bishops--Peter R. Dueck, Steinbach, Peter P. Reimer and David P. Reimer, Blumenort; ministers--John G. Barkman, Blumenort, and Satanta, Kansas, Cornelius P. Wohlgemuth, Blumenhof; deacons--Johann R. Dueck, Steinbach, Cornelius R. Plett, Blumenort and later Mexico, Heinrich H. Enns, Blumenhof, Peter A. Plett, Landmark, Isaac D. K. Plett, Landmark.

Others such as Cornelius P. Kroeker, Steinbach, and Cornelius A. Plett, Landmark, were large-scale farmers. Another grandson Isaac B. Plett was an inventor and thresherman whose son Abraham D. Plett founded Westfield Industries in Rosenort. Grandson Heinrich E. Plett, Blumenort, founded the famous Plettenhof near Blumenort, which grew into a small industrial village in the 1930s and 40s. By 1995, Heinrich E. Plett alone had over 2,000 descendants.

Other descendants include great-grandsons Dr. Harvey Plett and Rev. Ed G. Plett, Landmark, Rev. John P. Loewen and Rev. Jac P. Friesen, Blumenort, Rev. Jakob P. Dueck and Cornelius P. Dueck, Steinbach, Rev. Frank P. Thiessen (deceased), Ridgewood, Rev. Albert P. Plett, Mexico, Dr. George Thielmann, Seattle, Washington, and Walter Thielmann, formerly Filedelfia, Paraguay, just to name a few.

Among the great-great-grandchildren there are professors, doctors and clergy too numerous to mention. Some of these descendants include: Olympian Michelle Sawatzky, Elder George P. Thiessen, Spanish Lookout, Belize, poet Patrick Friesen, Alfred Redekopp, Archivist Concord College, Winnipeg, Dr. Royden Loewen, Mennonite Chair, U. of W., Dr. Arden Thiessen, pastor Steinbach E.M.C., Ernie G. Penner, Penco Construction, Blumenort, etc.

Many of the descendants still follow the profession of farming following traditional ways and live in the Interlake of Manitoba, Belize, Mexico, Oklahoma and many places more.

Announcement:

The June, 1997, issue of *Preservings* will be our long talked about "Womens' issue". If you are interested in writing an article about some woman of historical significance to the Hanover Steinbach area, please contact the editor at 326-6454 or 474-5031 Wpg line.

Prussian Roots

by Ron and Wendy Dueck, Box 139, Kleefeld, Manitoba, R0A 0V0

Europe, Summer 1996

Ron and I arrived in Europe, Frankfurt Am Main airport, early Saturday morning July 6. Ten exciting days of our European holiday were spent in Poland, cantering around the cities of Warsaw, Krakow and Gdansk. In each city we had the very good fortune of being hosted for part of the time, by gracious and hospitable Polish families. What a difference that made. Without the help and persistence of Adam and Halina Porada, we would never have been able to experience our Prussian Mennonite roots to the extent we did.

Gdansk, formerly Danzig, Prussia.

The Poradas and their teenaged children, Aleksandra and Lukasz, proudly showed us the charming thirteenth century streets of Gdansk. We located the Gdansk Mennonite church, still a thriving congregation [A Pentecostal Church]. A member living nearby kindly showed us around.

The Porada family drove us in their comfortable passenger van, to other port cities on the Baltic Sea, Gdynia and Sopot. We were impressed with the optimism they had about their country since the political changes which followed after 1989.

They showed a keen interest when we told them about our Mennonite roots in Poland, and Adam insisted he wanted to take us personally to the countryside southeast of Gdansk, known today as the Nowy Dwor Gdanski region.

Halina was interested because she had been born in Nowy Dwor Gdanski, but had been away since her childhood. She showed us several old green beer bottles, which she kept in her china cabinet. Her grandmother had retrieved them from the attic of the old family home, and given to her. The beer had been brewed by the Stobbe brothers, Tiegenhof, and the bottles bore the date 1784, probably the date the brewery had been established. We were excited when we read Tiegenhof, because, unknown to her, that was the former Prussian name of her birthplace.

Fürstenwerder.

Friday, July 12 saw us set out with Adam, Aleksandra and Lukasz on highway E77 east, the road to Elblag (Elbing). We were equipped with map #1 of West Prussia, from Delbert Plett's *History and Events*, and an excellent Polish road map, which Adam insisted we later take home. We loved the flat Polish countryside and were so impressed with the productive fields, market gardens, orchards and wild flowers. We passed an old windmill, with nearby fields covered in bright red poppies.

After travelling about 20-25 km. we crossed a bridge over the Wcisl (Vistula) River, and exited almost immediately to the village of Zulawki, known to the Dutch Mennonites who



Photo One: Current Polish road map showing the area which used to be the "Mennonite triangle" between Gdansk (Danzig), Elblag (Elbing) and Malbork (Marienburg). Ron and Wendy Dueck started their visit to the Grosswerder from Gdansk travelling east along E 77 to Nowy Dwor Gdanski (Tiegenhof) and then turned south to Malbork. The centuries old Mennonite settlement in the Grosswerder extended another 15 kilometers further east to Elbing and the area to the south.



Photo Two: Wendy and Ron Dueck pose with the locks at Zulaki or Fürstenwerder.

first drained and settled the area, as Fürstenwerder. Ron noted some evidence of a village plan, a main street, with narrow plots extending outward. There were a number of house-barn combination dwellings still intact and in use.

Zulawki is of note today because of working locks which link the Wcisl river to a local canal, and still in regular use. Adam knew that classes of schoolchildren visited the site which

continued on next page



Photo Three: A Vorlaubhaus or Prussian-style house-barn in Fürstenwerder. There are half a dozen well preserved Mennonite Vorlaubhäuser in Fürstenwerder, several of which are still used as homes. Fürstenwerder was a very prosperous village in the olden days. According to the 1776 census there were 18 Mennonite families in the village, 12 of whom are listed as being very wealthy, meaning that they had a large Vorlaubhäus, servants, and many morgen of land. One of these families was that of Hans or Johann Plett (ca.1730-95), grandfather of Cornelius S. Plett (1820-1900), see article elsewhere in this newsletter.



Photo Four: A picture of the Mennonite Church at Niedzwiedzica or Bärwalde. View towards the north-east. The church built in 1768 served the Fürstenwerder Gemeinde. The building represents one of the tragedies of modern heritage preservation. After surviving the onslaught of the Russian Army in 1945 the building fell victim to a fire started by boys smoking in the building. In 1776 Bärwalde was the home of Peter Isaac (1732-1807), another wealthy farmer who was the forefather of all the Kleefeld and Holdeman Isaacs as well as former Steinbach mayor Helmut Pankratz and Dr. Jacob Isaac of Winnipeg. Photo courtesy of Peter J. Klassen, A Homeland for Strangers, photo plates.

continued from previous page

was held up as an excellent example of workmanship and engineering. First built by the Mennonites several hundred years ago, they were kept in good repair and completely rebuilt in the last century. We spoke to the lock keeper, who let us try our hand at operating the hydraulic mechanism. We found it worked easily, as a small fishing boat passed through.

Ladekopp.

Adam knew little more about the Mennonites, but he would stop pedestrians on the narrow dirt or cobbled roads, asking questions in Polish. We knew there were old Mennonite cemeteries in the area. We travelled south, maybe 10 km., through the village of Ostaszewo (Schöneberg), and then east following a rail line perhaps another 10 km. to Lubieszewo, known to our forbearers as Ladekopp.

We knew there had been a Mennonite church in this village. Would we find the cemetery?



Photo Five: April 18, 1996. Menno Penner and Delbert Plett with local Mennonite expert Dr. A. Rybak inspect the ruins of the burned Mennonite church at Bärwalde. View towards the northeast. Dr. Rybak has preserved the door of the church as a remembrance of one of the oldest Mennonite churches in the Werder. In fact, Dr. Rybak offered to donate the door to the Mennonite Village Museum in Steinbach. Photo by Peter Hiebert.

Following Adam's questioning of local inhabitants, we stopped the van at a quaint old wooden and brick Catholic church. We would find the first of our cemeteries in the bush and treed area behind the church. What a sight!

Here we saw large gravestones knocked down, covered in moss and surrounded by shrubs, weeds and tall grass. A sign recently placed on the church property indicated that this was indeed a former Mennonite cemetery, and its contents were not to be disturbed. How interesting to crouch among the old stones, and

be able to read so many familiar Dutch Mennonite names. We noted that some were dated as early as the 18th century. We attempted to brush dirt and growth off the stones, many which would stand up to four feet high. We were quite certain this was the site of the Ladekopp Mennonite Church. Adam noticed that the bricks in the church were old and similar to those used at Malbork Castle, some distance away, and almost certainly the same bricks which had been used to construct the Mennonite church. For all we knew it may well have been the same church.

Tiegenhof.

After a brief side trip to nearby Tuja (Tiege), we headed north to Orlowa (Orloff). Here Adam parked the van beside an old house-barn structure, still being used, as the road here was no longer passable. We walked along a field road, into a bluff of trees, going perhaps half a kilometre. From the field, we could clearly see the city of Nowy Dwor Gdanski (Tiegenhof), in the distance.

Here again, in the thick bush, we started to see large gravestones, a few upright, but most knocked down and overgrown. The locals told Adam this place had been called Orloffelder. The cemetery covered a large area. Again we brushed off, read and photographed these large and still magnificent gravestones. They were adorned with anchors, wheat sheaves and flowers. Quite a place! The walk had made us hungry, so returning to the van we ate our lunch of delicious Polish breads and sausage, watched carefully by a group of local farm kids, riding around on several ancient looking bicycles.

Feeling refreshed, Adam drove us into Nowy Dwor Gdanski, today a large community of about 10,000 people, the capital of the region of the same name. We stopped briefly near an old bridge crossing a canal, also built by Mennonites. We enjoyed the water lilies growing there. The older parts of the town were most



Photo Six: The Catholic Church at Ostaszewo (Schöneberg) built sometime in the 15th century. In 1776 Schöneberg was home to Johann Koop (b. 1739), the forefather of all the E. M. C. Koops and Julius Kroeker (1747-99), grandfather of Franz (1827-1905), one of the 1874 Steinbach pioneers.

interesting; winding streets, older homes, some with shops on the lower level, old public buildings, etc. The majority of the present-day residents live in large Soviet-styled cement apartment buildings on the outskirts of town.

Adam knew there was a regional museum in Nowy Dwor Gdanski, and located it at Ul.(St.) Kopemika 23. We bought some postcards, and a wonderful book, in Polish, about the region. Then we were introduced to the curator, who was pleased to show us the modest exhibits, only begun in the last few years and--still being developed. Some of the old photographs on exhibit clearly indicated Mennonite proprietors on places of business.

There was also a model of the former Tiegenhof Mennonite Church, torn down after the Second World War and replaced by the town's Gymnasium (High school). The curator explained to Adam, in Polish, that they were beginning a major project; the collection and restoration of Mennonite gravestones from a number of the deteriorating cemeteries, and bringing them to a small parcel of land behind the museum. This was being done to recognize, in a small way, the significance of the Mennonite founders and former inhabitants of the town.



Photo Seven: Dr. Rybak points out the grave of a German soldier executed in 1945 when he refused to obey the command of a senior officer to blow-up the five century old church in Schöneberg. A "scorched earth" policy was practised by the Wehrmacht as well as the invading Soviet Armies. The executed German soldier, who had a name of Hollandisch or Mennonite origin, is considered a hero by the local citizens and was buried in a special place of honour beside the church. His grave is carefully tended with planted flowers, wreaths, etc. Unfortunately the church was severely damaged during subsequent battles and stands as a memorial to the fierce fighting in the area, some of the most vicious in all of WWII. Photo courtesy of Anne Dyck, Winnipeg, Manitoba.



Photo Eight: Roman Catholic Church at Lubieszewo, formerly Ladekopp. The Mennonite cemetery is located directly behind the church. Photo by Ron and Wendy Dueck. For a photo of part of the Mennonite cemetery at Ladekopp, see "Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour 1995," page 11.

Back on the dusty roads, we drove north through some very small farming villages, with a few families each. Although the land looked productive, the farming methods we observed were primitive by North American standards. We saw some small tractors, but mostly donkey or horse drawn carts, and people working in small groups at back-breaking labour in the fields. Middle-aged farm women looked old. Adam explained they worked hard alongside their husbands. He told us that the Polish families in the rural areas tended to be much larger than in the urban areas.



Photo Ten: April 18, 1996. Peter Hiebert, Nanaimo, B. C. poses in front of the Thiensdorf Mennonite Church at Jezioro, formerly the village of Thiensdorf, where his Heinrichs ancestors once lived. Peter is the brother to Andy Hiebert of Ile des Chenes. This church was built in 1888 to replace a previous building which was destroyed by flooding of the Nogat River. The worship house has been used as a granary and storage building since the destruction of the Grosswerder settlement during WWII. Photo by Yvonne Hiebert, Nanaimo, B.C.

Heuboden.

We passed through Ncyganek (Tiegenhagen), and Zelichowo (Petershagen). Local people told us there were other broken down cemeteries in the bush here, but we were running out of time and did not stop. The roads would have been impassable, in any case, and there were no churches here anymore.

By now it was late afternoon, so we decided

continued on next page



Photo Nine: A Mennonite Vorlaubhaus in Lubieszew, formerly Ladekopp. A beautiful example of this type of structure. Photo by Ron and Wendy Dueck. In 1766 Ladekopp was the home of Cornelius Toews (1735-1800), a wealthy farmer, who was the great-grandfather of Bishop Peter P. Toews, leader of the Kleine Gemeinde at the time of the emigration to Manitoba in 1874.



Photo Eleven: Soviet style apartment blocks in Nowy Dwór Gdański, formerly Tiegenghof. Tiegenghof was a Mennonite village founded in 1562. It was an strategically located in the heart of the oldest Hollandisch settlement in the Werder. The Mennonite Brandordnung or mutual fire insurance originated here in the early 17th century and was the forerunner of the modern-day Red River Valley Mutual and Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Companies. The Tiegenghof region, including Petershagen and Tiegenghagen, was the heartland of the KG as over half of the “core” founding families of the denomination originated here. The proto-KG community in the Werder shared the commonality of medium to above average wealth and an intellectual conservatism still evident among the pioneers of the village of Steinbach, Manitoba, one hundred years later. The following are some of the 1776 villagers who have descendants in the Hanover Steinbach area: Tiegenghoff - Elias Fast (1747-80) great-grandfather of Steinbach pioneer Heinrich Fast (1826-90); Hans Kornelsen (1746-1828), great-grandfather of Gerhard E. Kornelsen (1857-1933), pioneer Steinbach school teacher; Isaak Loewen (1737-97) grandfather of Isaac Loewen (1787-1873) from whom are descended all the E.M.C. and Holdeman Loewens including C. T. Loewen founder of “Loewen Windows” of Steinbach; Gerth Schellenberg (1725-1802), the great-grandfather of Rev. Gerhard Schellenberg (1827-1908), see article elsewhere in this newsletter; Tiegenghagen - Abr. von Riesen (1756-1810) grandfather of Abraham F. “Fula” Reimer and Abraham M. Friesen of Blumenort and Jakob K. Friesen who drowned in the Red River in 1875; Johann Laewen (1737-97), whose granddaughter Helena Loewen (1806-79) was the grandmother of Bishop Peter R. Dueck (1862-1919) one of the most important leaders in Steinbach from 1901-1919; Abraham Klassen (1737-1819) grandfather of KG delegate David Klassen (1813-1900) of Rosenhof, Manitoba; Petershagen - Heinrich Reimer, father of Klaas Reimer (1770-1837) founder of the Kleine Gemeinde; Arend Reimer (d. 1808) whose son Heinrich (1791-1884) settled in Kleefeld, Manitoba, in 1874 and is the progenitor to the Kleefeld Duecks.

to drive to our last destination. We had been told by the curator at the museum about the restored Mennonite cemetery at Stogi (Heuboden). We travelled southwest, perhaps 20 km., stopping for ice cream cones in a small grocery store in the Polish town of Nowy Staw.

Poles have lived here for six hundred years we were told. We found Stogi, approximately another 10 km. further southwest, within sight of the famous Teutonic castle at Malbork (Marienburg). Ron took note of numerous hawks and falcons as we drove along.

Stogi (Heuboden) was a small place, but the cemetery was quite extensive. Another van, this one with a Dutch licence plate, was parked here. We were very fortunate that our visit coincided with that of Maarten J.T. Hart, one of the Dutch people who are taking responsibility to restore this place. He was showing an American friend around, and could explain what they were doing to us. They had begun their project a number of years ago, clearing the small trees and extensive overgrowth away, leaving the large, handsome oak trees.

Now, in at least half of the area covered by the cemetery, the gravestones stood upright and had been cleaned and cemented together. Having no master plan, it had been quite a task, Maarten explained. There was a lot more left to do. A simple white picket fence, had been built around the grounds, replacing an earlier wrought iron one, parts of which could still be seen. A small wooden meeting house, painted white, had also been built.

The Heuboden cemetery was a big improvement over the other places we saw. Interestingly, many of the graves had small votive candles standing on them. Maarten said these had been placed here by local inhabitants, indicating the interest and respect shown by the present day

Polish population.

Adam, Aleksatidra and Lukasz told us later they had found it interesting to be a part of this small international gathering, in an old cemetery at an out of the way place in rural Poland. They had not realized how significant the Mennonite presence had been in their country.

Marienburg Castle.

Returning to Gdansk now, on highway E75

north, we passed the magnificent, huge structure known as Malbork Castle. We had gone by train the day before, and toured this amazing seven hundred year old fortification, where quite by accident we noted some gravestones with Mennonite names. I found it fascinating to think that our pacifist forbearers had lived almost in the shadow of this imposing structure.

Before we left Gdansk, Halina Porada graciously gave us one of her treasured, porcelain-



Photo Twelve: Viewing the Mennonite cemetery at Stogi or Heuboden: l. to r.: A Dutch mason, American Solomon Yoder with back to camera, Alexandra Porada, Adam Porada (Polish), the Dutch restorer of the cemetery Maarten Hart, and Wendy Dueck. In 1776 Heuboden was the home of Jakob Matthies whose granddaughter Margaretha Matthies (1792-1843), wife of KG minister Klaas Friesen of Rosenort, was the mother of Blumenort farmer and mayor Abraham M. Friesen (1834-1908), see article elsewhere in this newsletter.



Photo Fourteen: The beautiful Marienberg Castle built by the Teutonic Knights in the 13th century. The castle is presently one of Poland's premier tourist attractions. Part of the structure has been renovated as a hotel and the members of the 3rd annual "Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour" in May of 1997 will stay at the castle for one night.

capped beer bottles from Tiegenhof, insisting that it was just as much a part of our family heritage as hers. Packed well, it survived the rest of, our back-packing trip around Europe, and now sits proudly in my china cabinet, a bit of material culture from our Prussian Mennonite roots.

Sources:

Plett and Schapansky, "Prussian Roots of the Kleine Gemeinde," in *Leaders*, pages 41-82, identify the ancestors of over 100 Kleine Gemeinde families listed on the 1808 Revision in the Molotschna Colony and subsequent emigrations records, in Russia, on the 1776 census of Mennonite families in the Grosswerder, Prussia.

Editor's Note:

Travellers to Gdansk, Poland, intending to visit their ancestral homes in the Grosswerder east of the City are advised to take with them the following book: Peter J. Klassen, *A homeland for strangers: An introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia* (Fresno, California, 1989), 95 pages. This is an excellent tour book with history and photos of Mennonite landmarks in the region and will enable the traveller to identify many significant historical sites. The tour guides in the area by and large are not familiar with the Mennonite and Hollandisch heritage and culture of the region although this is changing.

In Gdansk, Poland, formerly Danzig, Prussia, Dr. A. Rybak informed the members of the 1996 "Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour" that the Mennonite cemeteries and worship houses in the region were generally located somewhat outside of the villages perhaps because they were not the exclusive inhabitants of the village as was the case later in Southern Russia and Manitoba. Evidently the locals in the region are of the belief that the Mennonites generally laid out their cemeteries near a prominent oak or bluff of oaks, perhaps because of the enduring nature of oak and its inherent symbolism.



Photo Thirteen: Menno and Pauline Penner of Swan River, Manitoba, viewing the Mennonite cemetery at Heuboden on April 18, 1996. Unfortunately most of the centuries old Mennonite cemeteries in the Grosswerder area are sights of devastation with gravestones knocked over and missing and overgrown with brush and grass.

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Klaas K. Friesen House Fire, 1920

Introduction.

As told by daughter Mrs. Henry Peters, nee Maria P. Friesen, Steinbach, Manitoba, (born 1908), to her daughter Norma Hiebert. Klaas K. Friesen (1881-1961) was the son of Cornelius P. Friesen of Blumenort: see *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part 2, pages 55-58.

Maria's mother Maria J. K. Plett died November 28, 1918, during the influenza epidemic. This was a blow from which her father Klaas K. Friesen, never recovered.

Our home burned down Sunday, June 29, 1920, exactly on my 12th birthday. It was on a Sunday. It was an old fashioned house-barn.

The fire was started when one of my brothers played with fire and then one of them came inside and told Father. Father went and extinguished the fire or so he thought. But in the night the fire started up again and burned. (Jacob had played with matches).

It was between 11 and 12 P.M. and we were all sleeping. Father woke up with a start. It was so bright in the kitchen from the flames, as if it was day time. There was a crackling sound like rain and father closed the window because he thought it was raining.

Then he shouted, "Fire! Fire!"

Everyone jumped out of bed and ran out and father ran to the phone and called "central" and reported the fire.

I was still in bed. In the meantime the boys all ran out to my grandfather's (Jakob L. Plett) place. Grandfather had some land and farm buildings nearby where my uncles stayed while they worked the farmland.

At that time I always followed Papa wherever he went. He started to carry things out of the house and I helped him. He knew exactly what he wanted to save: wall clock, chest and sewing machine and a large commode.

Later I remember thinking how sorry I was that we hadn't taken out mother's fine china which was very old.

The boys had run back into house and laid down on the schloope bank where they had fallen asleep again. If I and Papa had not gone back into the house they would have all burned.

Papa went around the house and reached through the window and tore out the phone. I don't know why or what he was thinking as the phone was screwed down.

Then to my horror, Papa fell down writhing on the ground. Oh, No! He had one of his convulsions ("aunschtot").

I almost panicked but then I pulled and dragged him onto the yard away from the fire,



Photo One: Klaas K. Friesen (right) and friend Jakob Wiebe, 1904. Photo courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Peters, from Plett Picture Book, page 137.

so he wouldn't burn. I remember I had torn his shirt while I was pulling him.

While all this was going on, the family dog, "Watch", crawled under the porch where it was barking and howling. There was a room between the house and barn and the dog had crawled under that part. This was where Watch always slept.

I stood and cried, "Papa, get up!"

I felt all alone. Our home was burning, and father lay before me as if dead.

The dog was still under the house yowling. I was extremely frightened. For some reason I remember becoming cognizant that I had only one sock on.

Then all of a sudden aunt, Margaretha, Mrs. K. W. Reimer (father's older sister) came and she was very excited.

Minutes later "Central" Toews from Steinbach arrived with some men but they could not save the buildings.

So we moved into grandfather's house nearby.

A few days later a group of men came from Blumenort and helped us rebuild the house and barn for free. The only cost to us was the food. At this time we also added an addition to the house as well as a porch and summer kitchen. In the meantime we could live for free in my grandfather's property.

Epilogue:

One of the tragedies about the fire was that all my grandfather's (Cornelius P. Friesen's) books and papers were destroyed in the conflagration. He was a school teacher all his life and a well educated man. I think my father had these papers in his possession as he was the most interested.

Klaas R. Reimer Stories

Klaas R. Reimer (1837-1906) was the leading businessman in southeastern Manitoba for the 3 decades following the opening of his store in Steinbach in 1877. He was a legend in his own time. The following are some stories still being told about him.

Klaas R. Reimer's sense of fairness and sensitivity is illustrated by the following story: One day Klaas R. R. met one of his servants crossing the yard carrying a dipper. Klaas asked his servant, "What are you doing?" The servant replied somewhat sheepishly, "I was just in the basement of the house to get a dipper full of brandy." "Well," replied K.R.R. nodding sympathetically, "that is good that you have helped yourself to some brandy. But in the future, if you are thirsty for brandy, please go to my wife, Mrs. Reimer, and she has a special small glass appropriate for brandy." In this wise the servant was gently and politely admonished for having taken liberties in the Reimer household.

Apparently Klaas R. Reimer had two barrels in his basement, one was for wine and one for brandy. On another occasion he met one of his church brethren after worship service one Sunday. Somewhat hesitantly the gentleman in question informed Klaas that his wife was ill and inquired whether he would be able to obtain

a flask of wine for her for medical purposes. "Indeed," replied Klaas, perhaps knowing more about the man's nature than was realized. With a knowing nod he added gently, "And while you're at it, why don't you pick up a flask for yourself as well." Obviously these events occurred before the "teetotalism" of American Fundamentalism had taken effect upon Steinbach.

In another incident, one of the villagers--a religious zealot who regularly condemned all lesser mortals and particularly the members of the Kleine Gemeinde for what he regarded as their total lack of true Christianity--came to the Klaas, with a large cheese asking him to take it in trade on some merchandise. When Klaas pointed out a hole obviously made by a mouse, the zealot remonstrated, arguing that if Klaas trimmed the hole he could easily sell the cheese to some unsuspecting soul who would never know the difference. Ohm Klaas grunted as he stretched himself to his full 6 foot height and 325 pounds. "Yes, I see what you mean," he said, nodding sagely. Quietly he disappeared into a back room reappearing moments later with a nicely trimmed cheese and sold it to the customer. The zealot departed happily in the joy that for once he had outwitted the wealthy merchant.

Source: Interview with Edmar Reimer, Nov. 26, 1996.

Klaas K. Friesen later courted Cornelius Barkman's, Anna. She was the school teacher in Ekron. But her parents did not allow it as they also had a son with epileptic convulsions "aunschot" and they were worried that it would have bad results.

My Papa's mother died suddenly in 1904 while eating dinner. The night before she died she dreamed that she was crossing a small wooden path over a body of water. Then she had fallen into the water and woke up, screaming. This woke my father and his older brother Kornelius K. F. (founder of Friesen Drillers). My father later believed that this had been a sign that his mother would soon die.

Background.

Around 1900 my grandfather Jakob L. Plett acquired 240 acres on the W 1/2 31-6-7E, just on the east border of modern day Steinbach, then considered as part of the Ekron district. A house, granary and barn was built near the north limit of the south-west quarter where the Plett family, their workers and draught animals could stay when they worked on the Ekron farm which was some 5 miles from their home farm in Blumenhof.

Klaas K. Friesen and his bride Maria K. Plett moved to this farm shortly after their marriage in 1905 and eventually purchased 120 acres from her father. Before the Klaas K. Friesen family moved into their house the families of Maria's sisters Sarah, Mrs. David K. Siemens, and Katharina, Mrs. Cornelius K. Siemens, had lived there. In



Photo Two: View to the east. On the far left is the Klaas K. Friesen house which was destroyed by fire in 1920. The larger house in the middle of the picture was owned by grandfather Jakob L. Plett and family who used it as a "camp" when they were working their farmland on Section 31-6-7E, then known as Ekron. English speaking people by the name of Rehaus built the granary on the right, almost 100 years ago. The granary is still standing today on the farm yard currently owned by Harvey Toews. The Rehaus family also planted the Pine trees in front of the house. Some of the family of the original owners were buried around the yard and their bodies were later moved to the Clearspring cemetery. The earth settled down where the graves had been and these holes were later filled and levelled out by Jakob L. Plett.

addition to farming my grandfather was also a thresherman who operated a threshing outfit in the Blumenhof, Ekron and Ste. Annes districts from 1904 to 1930. He was involved in the threshing business for a total of 50 years. In addition to the homestead in Blumenhof, Jakob L. Plett also owned 240 acres of land 1 1/2 miles west of Ste.

Anne and a half section in Satanta, Kansas.

About the Author. Maria Friesen Peters is the mother of Norma Hiebert, Mrs. Floyd Hiebert, and Ray Peters, principal of the Steinbach Junior High School.

Johann G. Loepky Homestead

"The Johann G. Loepky/Leppky Homestead: A Century of Changes", by Susan Leppky,
177 Kildonan Meadow Dr., Winnipeg, R3W 1B3

The homestead at SW 6-7-4E, has housed 5 generations of Leppkys since it was built in 1875, and has been through 3 major renovations.

It was January 23, 1831 when Johann Glockman Loepky was born to Johann and Eva Lepki in Chortitza, Russia. He married Susanna Rempel Toews on September 14, 1854 and had 10 children. In 1874, his oldest daughter Helena, newly married to Franz Kehler, left for Canada. The following year (1875), Johann brought his wife and 9 remaining children to Canada on the S.S. Quebec No. 34. Johann and Susanna had one more child, in 1877, who died at the age of two.

It was always assumed that Johann settled in the Strassburg village upon his arrival to Canada. However, after interviewing two of his granddaughters who grew up on the homestead, we now believe that Johann made the bold decision to settle on his homestead; a decision that resulted in his excommunication from the Church.



Photo One: The Johann G. Loepky house, SW 6-7-4E, built in 1878. The Leppky Homestead now owned and operated by the 4th generation. Photo courtesy of Jim Leppky, Tourond, Manitoba.

continued on next page



Photo Two: Aerial view of the Johann G. Loepky farm yard, SW 6-7-4E. Photo taken in 1987, view to the northwest. The Abr F. Loepky farm is visible in the background. The Loepky Heritage Cemetery is located on the adjacent NW 6-7-4E. Photo courtesy of Jim Leppky, Tourond, Manitoba.

continued from previous page

Around 1878, Johann G. Loepky built a three room 30 x 18 cottage (540 sq. ft.) with a lean-to on the west side serving as a kitchen and dining area. The house was set on a foundation, of stones. The outside walls were very solid, with 6 x 6 inch timbers between the studs, nailed in with long tapered square nails. All the corners and window frames were dove tail joints, making it a very sturdy building. Unfortunately the floor joists only ran up to the outside beams, causing the floors to sag badly. Also, as it was done in those times, the walls had no insulation.

Here Johann G. and Susanna raised their family. Their youngest son, Peter T. married Katherina Hiebert in 1899 and stayed on the Homestead with them, as they were getting too old to work the farm. Susanna passed away on December 23, 1900; the same year Peter and Katherina had their first child.

By 1907, the fourth child was born and Peter T. began major renovations to the small cottage. First a basement was dug 18 feet from the outside wall. Then the roof was raised to put in a half storey, which would give them four 8 x 10 bedrooms with a four foot hallway running the full 18 foot width of the house. Also, the lean-to was removed and an addition of 18 x 16, also a storey and a half, was added to the west side of the house.

In the front of this, they added a porch, with two removable walls that were taken off for the summer and put back for the winter. The main floor of the addition served as a kitchen and dining room, while upstairs was another large bedroom (18 x 16). The stairs were open to the second floor, allowing the heat to rise and therefore all the children slept in this room in winter, and later it was used a "schpatzieren schtove" (what we would now call a family room).

As Peter T.'s family started to marry, it became somewhat of a "honeymoon suite" for the young couples, who would live at home for about a year after their marriage. As well, a roofed deck was added to the full length of the

east side of the house, with a small "balcony", which could be accessed from a door at the end of the hall on the second storey.

When Peter T. had a heart attack in 1939, sons Peter and John worked the farm for their Father. Peter and John were married in a double wedding to sisters, Susan and Mary Hiebert, and both couples continued to live on the homestead. The youngest brother, Jake was only 25 when his father died in June 1946. Before his death, Peter T. requested of his family that Jacob and wife Alvina be allowed to run the farm for 3 years, at which time they could decide what they wanted to do. By 1948 Jake decided to leave the farm and son, Peter H. bought the farm, and moved back to the homestead with his wife and two young sons.

During the years, Peter H. added granaries to the farm yard, the east side porch had to be torn down in 1951 when electricity came to the area, a pressure system and bathroom were installed, and another child was born. In 1954 the kitchen was modernized with cabinets and a sink, and the summer kitchen was removed from in front of the house. In 1963 a new barn was erected. We never decided who was happier, Peter or the cows.

With the oldest two sons married and moved away on their own, allergies forced Peter to leave the farm. In 1969, leaving behind years of hard work, fond memories and lots of happiness, Peter and Susan, their daughter and youngest son moved to the city.

Pete's son, James David and wife Barbara, rented the farm in 1970 and bought it in 1975. As time went by, Jim converted the cattle barn to a hog barn, the hay shed to a machine shop and replaced the wood granaries with steel ones. He also put up a steel machine shed and an inground pool.

The original house was now over a hundred years old and the addition over 70, with the 5th generation of Loepkys/Leppky's growing up on Johann's homestead. A decision had to be made whether to tear down the place or give it another face lift. In 1989 Jim and Barb had the house lifted and a new wood basement put in

under the whole house. They reduced the four small bedrooms to 2 large ones with closets (something those bedrooms never had) and also added built in drawers.

On the main floor, they replaced the wooden ladder "stairs" to the basement with a partially open stair case, added a beautiful bay window to the living room. As well, they enlarged the bathroom and added a jetted tub, and finished the new basement to include a bedroom, large laundry room and a rec room. After all this was complete, they finished the exterior with new siding, a small deck in front of the porch and beautiful shuttered windows. Besides all the changes to the house and buildings, Jim and Barb planted hundreds of trees on the 1/4 section, and Barb grew beautiful flower gardens.

In 1995, the homestead was visited by many of the Johann G. Loepky clan, during the "Dit Sied Yand Seid Leppky/Loepky Reunion". For a photo of the original farmyard taken around 1900, see *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec. 1995, page 5.

About the author: Susan Leppky, nee Hiebert, was married to Peter H. Leppky, grandson of Johann G. Loepky (1933-1912) who built the original section of the Loepky house. Susan lives in Winnipeg.

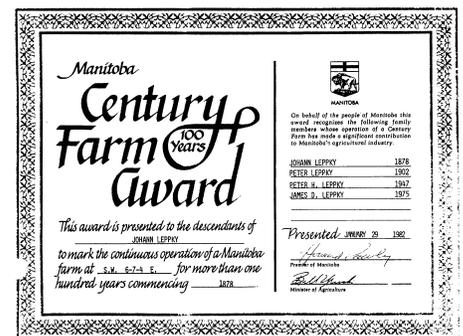


Photo Three: Century Farm Award issued on January 29, 1982, and listing the family members who farmed on SW 6-7-4E as Johann Leppky, Peter Leppky, Peter H. Leppky and James D. Leppky.

The Cornelius P. Kroeker House

By granddaughter, Katie Kroeker Barkman, Box 25, Landmark, R0A 0X0

The C. P. Kroeker House.

While sitting around the table, or talking on the telephone, reminiscing with aunts, cousins, brother and sisters, about the Cornelius P. Kroeker (1862-1942) house, some interesting stories came to our remembrance: stories we had heard about the first house, and stories we remembered about the new house, that we had often visited in our younger years. We all remembered the house as a grand old mansion. To Helen (Reimer) Schellenberg's young eyes it had seemed like a castle.

The "old" house, 1887.

In our reminiscing and by reading up on some old facts, I found the history of the old house just as fascinating, so I'll write a bit about that one first.

Of course that went too far back for any of us to remember dates or floor plan, of when it was built. [According to the Kleine Gemeinde insurance records it was built in 1887 and insured for \$600.00.]

It was home to a number of people during the time it was still standing on the Kroeker property, but after they had already built their new house. e.g. A number of new immigrants that came from Russia in the mid-1920s, found their first welcome and shelter in it. [In the pioneer days, wealthy Kleine Gemeinde farmers like Cornelius P. Kroeker would maintain a second home on their yard called a "Gjemeinte Hus" or community house, where young married couples would live for a year as they started out on their own, and where poor people or immigrants were temporarily lodged.]

My brother, Walter Kroeker, remembers it being moved off the yard in July 1928, when we were staying with our grandparents awhile, after my father, Frank T. Kroeker died. He remembers being fascinated by the huge steam engine that was used to move it. It was bought by the Vogt family, moved to Hanover St., and converted into Steinbach's first hospital. Elma (Peters) Plett remembers her tonsils taken out by Dr. Whetter in 1936, and could even point out the exact window of the room she occupied. (See picture upstairs right)

Mrs. Dan Warkentin (Sr.) was in the maternity ward downstairs at the same time, and that is where and when Mr. Alfred Warkentin was born.

A granddaughter, Marlene (Barkman) Penner, was also born there, in 1935.

When a new hospital was built in 1937, this hospital (house) was converted into a nursing home for the aged, and continued to be operated by Maria Vogt. In 1946 it was bought by a number of E.M.C. churches, and continued in this capacity till the new Rest Haven Nursing Home was built on Kroeker Ave. in 1961.

During this time two daughters, Margaret, Mrs. Isaac W. Reimer, and Katharina Kroeker, who had lived in this house as young girls, again lived in it in their old age.



Photo One: The "old" Kroeker house which was moved in 1928 and used as the Steinbach Invalid Home. According to Kleine Gemeinde insurance records the "old" house was built in 1887 at a cost of \$600.00. Photo courtesy of Reflections on our Heritage, page 226.



Photo Two: The "new" Cornelius P. Kroeker home and barn built at the corner of Kroeker and Lumber in 1905 where son C.T. Kroeker's Texaco distributorship later stood. Standing in front of the house left to right: unidentified, probably Henry T. Kroeker, Elisabeth and Cornelius A. Plett; standing in front of the barn are: Abraham T. Kroeker and Anna (Mrs. Peter H. W. Reimer).

The "new" house, 1905.

The new house, that we all remembered, was built in 1905, and was one of the elite houses in Steinbach; well built, with all modern conveniences of that time. To a little country girl it seemed very grand. Of special interest was the pump at the kitchen sink, eliminating the endless trips to the barn for water. Of course, this was not entirely fool proof, as sometimes the water in the pipes would freeze, and then they would have to resort to the more reliable water pail.

The indoors bathroom was another facility that we thought was really a "throne" room, with

its vented pail, enamel bath tub and wash stand. To top it all off you could light up the house with a flick of a switch. What class!

The house seemed huge to me, and indeed it was quite big with 14 rooms, plus basement and porches. Having a separate kitchen, dining room, living room and master bedroom downstairs, and bathroom and seven more bedrooms upstairs, and two stairways leading up to them, was something few houses had at that time.

I loved the covered front porch, where you could sit and watch the people go by. It also had

continued on next page

continued from previous page

a back porch that extended up to a balcony accessible from upstairs. It also went around to a side entrance, where you could go through a door into the dining room to your right, into the living room to your left, or straight up the stairs.

This feature really impressed me in my teen years. How neat to be able to sneak up the stairs with your visitors, rather than having to march through the living room, where everyone took note who came calling. A few cousins, myself included, mentioned how they loved the wooden sidewalk that ran along Main Street, an ideal place for skipping rope, pulling a wagon, or going for a stroll.

The house was big enough to house two families from 1929 - 1935, when the Peter T. Kroeker family moved in. They had moved in with us the first winter after my father died, to help my mother, and be a support to her. In spring they moved to Steinbach to help out on grandpa's farm.

I found it interesting that Tine (Giesbrecht) Kroeker, and Elma (Peters) Plett stayed in the house when they attended sewing classes in Steinbach, long before they married into the Kroeker family.

The house stood on the corner of Main Street and Kroeker Ave., and I think the pump house is still standing.



Photo Three: Cornelius P. Kroeker (1862-1942), 1938.

Attention Readers:

If you have not paid your 1996 or 1997 membership fee, this may be the last issue you will receive. To avoid being taken off our membership list, send your membership fee of \$10.00 to HSHS, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba Canada, R0A 2A0. Members outside of Canada should pay in U.S. fund to cover additional mailing costs.

Sermon Book of Gerhard Kliever

by Nettie Neufeld, 1410-70 Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, R3T 5S1.

Hofaker's Sermons.

It was a pleasure for me to visit the home of Ernie and Darlene (Kliever) Klassen recently to inquire about an old book (heirloom) they had in their possession. As it turned out, the book was a Sermon Book which had been purchased by Gerhard Kliever (1836-96) on January 8, 1862. The Book was printed in Stuttgart in April, 1833 and the compiler ("Verfasser") was Wilhelm Hofacker. The Table of Contents ("Uebersicht des Inhalts") listed topics on Advent, Christmas, Christian festivals, New Year, Good Friday, funerals, etc. The cost of the book had been 2 rubel and 45 kopeck.

Gerhard Kliever (1836-96).

A number of interesting stories have been related about Gerhard Kliever. He married Helena Buhr in 1861 from the Bergthal Colony. Since he came from Molotschna it had been a shock to family and friends that he would marry a woman of much lower status. The Kliever family lived on a "chutor", an estate in the country.

Gerhard and Helena emigrated to Manitoba on June 21, 1875 and arrived at Niverville on August 17, exactly a year later than Helena's parents who homesteaded at Schanzenfeld, near Niverville. They had 14 children of which only 8 grew to adulthood. Their first 9 children were born in Russia of which 4 died in infancy.

Gerhard Kliever was elected as the first reeve of the Rural Municipality of Hanover (East Reserve) and was confirmed in his office by the Provincial authorities for the year 1884. No doubt, his exposure and upbringing in the Molotschna Colony stood him in good stead at this time. Gerhard Kliever died September 10, 1896 at Niverville at the age of 60.

Peter B. Kliever (1872-1960).

The Sermon Book was passed on to son, Peter B. Kliever, (1872-1960), a farmer near Niverville. He was also seed-cleaning plant operator and was considered to be wealthy. Old pictures of their farm and house verify this. When the family moved off the farm, they ran a General Store in Niverville.

Peter B. Kliever was a devout Christian and member of the Chortitzer Church. He faithfully read this Sermon Book whenever the family could not attend church. The nearest church building was in Chortitz, Randolph today. His descendants describe Peter B. as being very kind and fond of children.

Gerhard J. P. Kliever (1898-1944).

The Sermon Book was passed on to son, George J. P. Kliever (1898-1944). George Kliever married Maria Penner in 1920 and became a teacher by profession. Thus, he was considered as somewhat of a "black sheep". He was a dedicated Christian and practised kindness, leadership and love.

He joined the EMB Church but when the



Photo One: Gerhard Kliever (1836-96) and his wife Helena Buhr (1840-1909). Gerhard Kliever was the first Reeve of the R.M. of Hanover. Photo courtesy of Nettie Neufeld, Descendants of Peter Buhr 1816-1887 (Steinbach, 1984), page 18.



Photo Two: Peter B. Kliever (1872-1960) and Mrs. Kliever; nee Anna T. Loeppky, with children George G. P. K. (1898-1944), Susan Kliever (b. 1900) and John Kliever (1902-67). Photo courtesy of Nettie Neufeld, Descendants of Peter Buhr 1816-1887 (Steinbach, 1984), page 24.

Immanuel Church was started he became part of that group. George J. P. K., throughout his adult life was active in the church with Committee meetings and occasional preaching. He died a premature death at the School Teacher-age at the age of 46 in Blumenort. Darlene K. Klassen spoke fondly and admirably of her father.

The Sermon Book was then passed on to his sister Eva Kliever who at present is 90 years old and resides in the Rest Haven in Steinbach. A few years ago the book was donated to Gerhard G.P. Kliever's daughter, Darlene Kliever Klassen whose husband Ernie served as a councillor of the La Broquerie Municipality for many years.

Peter T. Barkman's Safe

by Cathy (Friesen) Barkman - Box 3284, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2A0



Photo Four: Darlene Kliewer Klassen with the "Hofaker" Sermon book, November 1996.

Prologue.

Ernie and Darlene Klassen are unable to read the German Gothic script, and since their descendants cannot read it either, they have some concern for the future of this old Sermon Book. Even though it shows considerable wear it still remains very precious. They are considering donating it to the Archives. Archivists, please take note!



Photo Five: Book plate of the "Hofaker" Sermon book, in which Gerhard Kliewer has written, "This book belongs to Gerhard Kliewer on the chutor, January 8, 1862, cost 2 ruble, 45 Kopek silver."

How did that safe get to Steinbach? Did Peter T. Barkman (1861-1936) travel to the United States to get it or did he have it delivered? No one seems to know. I do know that the safe is huge. It measures 22" x 22", stands 32" high and is black in colour. It can be moved about as it is on large coaster wheels. My husband, who helped move it once, says it weighs about 450 lbs. It took three men equipped with a winch to retrieve it from a basement.

The front of the safe is stamped with gold print "Victor Patent" along the top. At the bottom is the company name: "The Victor Safe & Lock Co., Cincinnati, Ohio". Upon opening the heavy, thick door your attention is drawn to the dates in gold print on the back: "Patented Oct. 11, 1887" and on the line underneath "Nov. 1, 1887 - June 16, 1891". A second door opens into the safe which contains a large holding area on the right and to the left a small locked compartment, a pull out drawer and a shelf.

The safe still contains the papers received upon purchase. A certificate boasts that the Victor Safe & Lock Company is the largest fire-proof safe works in the world. An impressive professionally printed letter dated Sept. 29, 1894 verifies that the mayor of Cincinnati, Johan A. Caldwell, has at one time received a safe and is "highly pleased with its beautiful finish and excellent workmanship." Explicit lock instructions, how to use the combination and how to change the combination are provided. After reading the note "Important Notice", I can better understand why the safe is so heavy. The note explains that "the lining or filling of every fire-proof safe is composed of cement concrete". Upon writing the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce I found out that this particular safe company is no longer in existence.

What is in the safe? For most people there is nothing in the safe of value but for amateur genealogists who are curious about history, the safe contains treasured accounts and reminders of the past. The Massey Harris Equipment records that Peter T. Barkman kept give us a list of farmers and villages. They give us a picture

of the farming economy of that time period. Letters and documents help us to weave interesting factual stories about our ancestors.

Where is the Peter T. Barkman safe now?

After Peter T. Barkman's time, the safe was in the care of his son Jacob R. Barkman. I would surmise that Jacob inherited the safe partly due to the fact that he was in charge of Peter T. Barkman's estate, and, he also lived on the family farm.

Jacob R. Barkman passed the safe on to his oldest living son, Levi Barkman. After he was married, Levi did not live in the farm house but he did purchase some of the land which belonged to the family farm.

The safe was stored in the basement of the Levi Barkman home. When the

Barkman's moved from the farm to town, Levi passed the safe on to his oldest son, Ron, who is my husband. Who will this safe go next? I would suspect that if he is at all interested our eldest son will inherit the safe. Who better deserving than a great-great-grandson with the added feature of having the initials P.T. Barkman (Paul Todd Barkman).



Photo One: Peter T. Barkman safe, showing the door closed. Photo by Jim Peters, Steinbach, Man.



Photo Two: Peter T. Barkman safe, open door, showing the various ledgers and books which Peter T. Barkman stored in it. Photo by Jim Peters, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Book Reviews

Please forward review copies of books of relevance to the history and culture of the Hanover Steinbach area to the Editor, *Preservings*, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0. Phone Steinbach 1(204)-326-6454 or Winnipeg, 1(204)-474-5031.

Harvey Plett, *Seeking to be Faithful: The Story of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference*. Steinbach: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 1996. Pp. xii + 188. Available from E.M.C. Conference Offices, 440 Main Street, Box 1268, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, \$6.95 per copy.

A book like this was overdue. The most recent EMC history (P.J.B. Reimer and Abe Unger's *Sesquicentennial Jubilee*) was published 34 years ago, two years after the Conference was founded. It was, understandably, largely a history of the *Kleine Gemeinde* and could not yet adequately reflect the very significant changes that took place during the turbulent years from 1948 to 1960.

Plett seeks to understand the transition from *Gemeinde* to Conference and to show that the commitment of early KG leaders to the Bible and to their Anabaptist heritage has remained central throughout these major changes. The constraints of doing this in a slim volume (the proposed hundred pages of text became 154) and in a popular style aimed at readers that "know little about the EMC," made it a difficult task.

The first 87 pages deal with the *Kleine Gemeinde* in Russia and a further ten with the Nebraska-Kansas story, leaving only 57 for the Canadian developments. Two of the six chapters on the Canadian story deal with community establishment on the East Reserve and at Scratching River. The remaining four are the heart of this book.

The chapter on "Development of the Faith" identifies Anabaptist and later Dutch and Prussian Mennonite writings of particular influence in KG thought. The lists of topics in successive revisions of the Conference's Statement of Faith reflect the shift in issues faced at various times.

In the chapters on Education and Missions the author traces the shifting position from outright opposition or at least extreme caution to open embrace and even enthusiastic promotion. Yet he does not engender harsh criticism or curt rejection of the "conservatives" who could not so readily embrace what seemed to them features of an alien Protestant Evangelicalism. On the issue of Sunday Schools (opposed at least until the 1930s and now a focus of the Conference's ministry to children and youth) Plett recognizes the importance of "good Anabaptist material" if this ministry is not to lead the church away from its historical faith heritage.

Although, as indicated, the book devotes a relatively small portion to the actual EMC Canadian history, it does much better at helping us to understand the EMC than it does the *Kleine Gemeinde* "pre-history." Delbert Plett's six volumes of source material (and some interpretive theses) led us to hope that an insider scholar like the author would venture more of an interpretation.

The EMC leadership is to be commended for initiating this very important project. Because the idea is so good and so timely, it is regrettable that the final product shows so many signs of having been rushed:

-Factual errors or typos are embarrassingly many: the first adult rebaptism in Zurich took place January 21, 1525 (not January 25 - p. 4); it took until 1797 for the number of immigrants to Russia to reach 400 (not 1789 - p. 12); Aeltester Peter Epp died 1789 (not 1795 - p. 17); the minister referred to on p. 19 is Bartsch (not Barks); on p. 46 Jakob (not Dick) Warkentin was elder of the Lichtenau-Petershagen church; Heinrich Wiens (not Wiebe) became elder of the Margenau (not Morgenau) group, and Dirk (not Dick) Warkentin of the Lichtenau portion; ... the number of Mennonites moving to Mexico and Paraguay in the 1920s was at least 7,700 (not 600 - p. 13 1).

-Proof-reading might have caught slips like 118 Frisian families in 1793-1797 settling in Poland (instead of Russia - p.28); or identifying Cornelius Warkentin, who in 1794 helped to organize the church groups in Russia, as the one who ordained Menno Simons! (p. 29); or three different spellings of Berdiansk (pp. 64, 74, 81); or two of Neunhuben, neither correct (pp. 17, 57); or 16,000 desjatiens becoming 432,000 acres (p. 52).

-A slightly broader readers committee might have caught the total absence from the chart (p. 168) of the largest immigrant group coming to Manitoba in the 1870s, the "Old Colony;" or recommended against perpetuating the "conspiracy theory" regarding the 1873 *Privilegium* (p.78) or the loan repayment "myth" (p. 98), interpretations which more recent studies have seriously undermined.

In spite of these shortcomings, this book will serve younger and newer members of the EMC well in gaining a greater appreciation for both their current Conference and its heritage in the *Kleine Gemeinde*.

Reviewed by Adolf Ens, Professor of History at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Friesen, Rudy P. and Sergey Shmakin. *Into the Past: Buildings of the Mennonite Commonwealth* (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1996), 352 pp. Reviewed by William Schroeder.

The charter of privileges which Paul I granted the Mennonites in 1800 was on prominent display on a wall in the Vollost (administration building) in Chortitza. The heading of this charter was printed in gold and assured the Mennonites of their special privileges in perpetuity (auf ewigen Zeiten). Today, almost two hundred years after that document was signed, after two world wars, a revolution and seventy years of neglect, visitors to the former colonies

see only ruins and may be reminded of the words of Paul in Hebrews 13:14 "...here we do not have an enduring City..."

Friesen's book *Into the Past* is a compilation that has accumulated over a period of more than twenty years. Among the hundreds of Mennonites who came to see their ancestral homes were numerous individuals who were very knowledgeable about a particular home, school, church, factory, mill or cemetery.

Olga Shmakina, one of the Intourist guides who accompanied the tourists to their places of interest, recorded specific details she gained from informed visitors. One tourist for example drew her attention to the remnant of the historic church in Alexanderwohl. Conferences held there resulted in emigrations to America during the 1870s and again during the 1920s. Another tourist took her to Abram Konrad's windmill in Alexanderkrone. It is perhaps the only remaining original windmill still standing today.

Rudy Friesen was one of the tourists who came to Zaporozhye. He accompanied his aging parents in 1973 who had come to see their former homes. Fortunately Rudy, who is a professional architect, had the necessary skills to interpret what is left of the buildings in the former Mennonite colonies - crumbling walls - ruins. Later he made several more trips back to the Ukraine. He found an able assistant in Sergey Shmakin. Together they were able to identify and photograph many of the sites Olga Shmakina had discovered during her tours. This book is the result of their labour of love.

This is not just another book about Mennonites in Russia: it is different. Their book seems to bring the reader closer to a way of life, and a time and place that by now seems distant and dark. For orientation purposes the first chapter summarizes the story of the Mennonites and the second chapter describes Mennonite buildings in Russia. The remaining six chapters form the core of the book and contain hundreds of pictures covering the whole gamut of Mennonite architecture in Russia; houses, schools, churches, mills, factories, stone fences, gates and gravestones.

The book is user friendly. The print size is comfortable and the brief descriptions that go with each entry are precise and informative. The photographs are carefully selected. Closeups are frequently used to point out specific details. "Then and now" photographs are used where possible. The illustrations are supplemented with floor and wall plans as well as maps which indicate clearly where sites shown in the photographs are located.

Into the Past will provide captivating reading material while relaxing in the comforts of our homes. The book will be an invaluable handbook for the tourists who want to visit the former Mennonite settlements in the Zaporozhye area. I recommend this book to anyone who is inter-

ested in the story of the Russian Mennonites.

Reviewed by Wm. Schroeder, 434 Sutton Ave., Winnipeg, who has been a tour host for numerous heritage tours to Russia. He is the brother to John Schroeder of Assiniboine Travel who passed away September 21, 1996.

Marjorie Ann Voth, *Cornelius Wiebe 1877-1974* (Altona, Manitoba, 1996), 90 pages, available from Albert Warkentin, 160-2nd Street, Morden, Manitoba, R6M 1C6, \$60.00.

The book will be of interest to many in the Hanover Steinbach area as it recounts the history of the family of Cornelius Wiebe (1877-1974) who was born in Schönsee, a village near Grunthal, Manitoba, although the book incorrectly gives Hochstadt as the place of residence. Cornelius was the son of Cornelius Wiebe (1848-1904), a brother to Helena Wiebe Peters (1870-1952) whose memoirs were published in *Preservings*, no. 8, June 1996, Part One, page 42. Another sister Katharina Wiebe (1864-96) married Jakob Thiessen and they are the parents-in-law of the famous "Dr" Peter P. Friesen of Grunthal. Hopefully someone will now pull these strands together and compile a comprehensive history of the family of their father Cornelius Wiebe (1821-96) of Schönsee.

The Cornelius Wiebe history by Marjorie Voth is well done in terms of telling the story of this particular branch of the Wiebe family. Cornelius Wiebe (1877-1974) lived in the Horndean area and later in the Burwalde district near Winkler. Many excellent photographs and anecdotes make for a readable family history.

Book note by Delbert F. Plett

Alma Regier, Esther Isaac Wiens, Lois Reimer, editors, *History and Genealogy of John M. (1865-1965) and Margaretha (Rempel) (1872-1956) Classen* (Box 784, Meade, Kansas, 1993), 146 pages.

This book is a wire bound scrapbook style production with material from various sources. The historical introduction consists of a reprint of Henry Fast's study of the Kleine Gemeinde at Meade, Kansas, published in 1987. Margaretha Rempel was a sister to Peter F. Rempel (1875-1967) of Meade: see *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec. 1995, page 56. Much valuable material has been collected for posterity.

Book note by Delbert F. Plett

Addendum to Book Note

Unfortunately the "Johann M. Classen" book was published just before the 1835 Molotschna census became available. The census established that Jakob Classen (1792-1869), the grandfather of Johann M. Classen, whose family is listed in this book, was a brother to Peter Classen (1789-1862) whose granddaughter Margaretha Classen was the third wife of Steinbach merchant Klaas R. Reimer, and a brother to Maria Classen (wife of Abr. Classen) whose son David Classen (1813-1900) was one of the 1873 Kleine Gemeinde delegates to America.

According to the subsequent research of Henry Schapansky, the 3 siblings are the chil-

dren of David Classen (1740-1804) of Petershagen, Prussia. His father, in turn, is identified as David Classen (1700-80), listed in Fürstenwerder in 1776 of medium wealth (mm). The descendants of Johann Classen (1820-70), founder of the MB church in the Molotschna, also claim the same David Classen (1700-80) as Johann's grandfather. However, Henry Schapansky believes this claim to be incorrect.

Dirk Classen (1765-1843), another son of David Classen (1700-1780), was the grandfather of Claas Epp (1838-1913) who led the infamous trek to Central Asia in 1880.

John Kornelsen, et.al, editors, *"Great is Thy Faithfulness": Fifty Years of Rest Haven 1946-1996* (Steinbach, 1996), 102 pages, available from Rest Haven Nursing Home, 185 Woodhaven Ave., Steinbach, Man., for \$10.00.

"Great is Thy Faithfulness" Fifty Years of Rest Haven 1946-1996 was produced by the Rest Haven Nursing Home in commemoration of its 50th anniversary. A good part of this book, with over 400 pictures, relates the history of the Home, while the major section concerns present operations. Ownership of the Home, located in Steinbach, Manitoba, resides with six of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference churches in Region eight of the Conference. (At the time of the establishment of the Home it also involved the R.R.1 Morris, Manitoba church. They withdrew their participation later when they built their own Home).

The book contains nine main sections: Historical, Board and Staff, Residents, Activities, Our Friends, Indoors and Outdoors, Rest Haven Apartments, Pot Pourri and Staff and Resident Director.

The Historical section, as the name would imply, includes the account of the small beginnings of the Home in 1946. The first matron relates some of the "good" times as well as the "tough" times of those first years.

A spirit of self giving and church involvement becomes very evident as one reads of how the church rallied to needs, both material and monetary in those first years. First of all the Home had to be purchased, which came to about \$7.00 per church member. Then a levy was required to subsidize patient fees. Material goods were donated. "During the first years volunteers made their presence known and felt by bringing food to Rest Haven. They donated pork, beef, vegetables and fruit... as well as blankets, dishes cutlery, towels, soaps, bedding etc." (One sample month is given in the book).

In this book one can see who the first administrator was, as well as the six others up to the present time. Presidents or chairmen of administrative boards are pictured, 1946-1996. As well a page is devoted to former D.O.N.s.

Through the years the Home has seen many staff employed. The Historical section shows many former staff. As well it pictures residents who have once stayed at the Home.

The Home is now in its third location. It began on Hanover Street, in the early sixties moved to Kroeker Ave. and in 1984 to its present location. These moves brought added conveniences.

The first Home used stairs also for major moving. The second one already had an elevator (installed later).

The Home is a 60 bed personal care Home. It employs around 100 staff Divisions are as follows; Administrative, Nursing, Social Work, Volunteer, Activity, Chaplaincy, Housekeeping, Laundry, Maintenance, and Dietary. There is also a Hair Care Salon. The book highlights staff in all these categories with appropriate photos.

If it wasn't for the residents, of course there would be no Home. Consequently the book shows many pages picturing individual residents as well as some of their activities and daily lives.

Through the years Rest Haven has also built senior apartments. One section of the book gives an account of this endeavour. In all it now has five apartment complexes. (One of these being the former Rest Haven on Kroeker Ave., converted into apartments). The first one was built around 1965 and the latest one being Woodhaven Manor occupied in 1995.

This 104 page book concludes with a handy staff and resident directory. This feature is a handy reference for identifying both staff and residents.

This Yearbook should be of interest to all who are now or ever have been involved in this Home as staff, residents or family of either. It should give insights and a challenge to others who would like to gain an understanding of the operations of Homes like Rest Haven.

"Great is Thy Faithfulness" 50 Years of Rest Haven 1946-1996 is available for \$10.00 and may be purchased at Rest Haven, Woodhaven or Parkview apartments.

Book Review by Dave K. Schellenberg

Peter Pauls, *'Bethesda first 50 years'* (Derksen Printers, Steinbach, 1996), 99 pages, paperback, available from the author, P. O., Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

'Bethesda first 50 years' provides an open window where the reader can observe and experience the birth, growing pains and maturity of Steinbach's Bethesda Hospital. Peter Pauls, long time administrator of the facility, shares with the reader his points of interest, statistics, problems, and people that absorbed so much of his energies. Many interesting anecdotes are cited. The author's heart and soul was steeped in his work and that is evident in his story telling.

This account is an admission of an Administrator's life as being a lonely crusade of balancing budgets and figures, playing politics, hobnobbing with the 'right' people of the community to make Bethesda viable. Throughout the years there was good record keeping, preserved for the reader in this writing.

Bethesda had visionary leaders, who in spite of difficulties, forged ahead and established a Health Care facility that the community of Steinbach could be proud of. Several of the leaders are described in profiles. The annals of Bethesda are opened and here to for secret accounts are laid bare and the truth is revealed, truth surrounding dated rampant rumours, mis-

deeds and hushed dismissals. The author explains past mistakes, its victims and 'makes them right'.

Perhaps missing from the book is the 'soul' of hospital work, the life and death, triumph over disease versus succumbing to it. Unsung dedicated heroes worked long and extra hours to alleviate suffering. Only one reference is made to humanitarian/Christian care on page 6. "But if Bethesda had sometimes found itself in deep water financially, it had, on the other hand, chalked up on enviable record of kindly and considerate treatment of its patients. From inception it had functioned as a church project with a pre-dominantly Christian influence that had controlled its department."

'Life was hard. Life was good' theme threads through the book from Bethesda's raw beginnings in 1937 to the present. It is easy reading and will be of special interest to long time Steinbach residents who identify the passage of time with highlighted events, stories and pictures.

Book review by Helga Froese, Steinbach

Delbert F. Plett, *Sarah's Prairie* (Winnipeg, Windflower Publications, 1995), 349 pages. Available from Crossway Publications, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0, for \$9.95 plus \$2.00 postage.

It is not often that we find a historical writer who dares to venture into the unknown and uncertain dimension of fiction. Noted genealogist and prolific Mennonite historian, Delbert Plett, has taken this bold step with his first full-length novel, *Sarah's Prairie*.

There are risks in taking history and giving it such an abundance of flesh and blood. There's danger in getting too close to human passions and uncovering intimate situations. It is no job for a writer with a weak heart.

Some will say that this writer gets too close - that he doesn't pull away until it's too late - that he doesn't leave enough to our imaginations. Some will squirm to watch a brother watching a sister discover her womanhood. To undress public religious zealots even fictitious ones - can be disillusioning to readers who perhaps have been caught up in the momentary gusto of travelling shows themselves. But like it or not, it is part of what makes us human, and it is definitely colourful fiction.

To historians used to taking Plett seriously, there is history in this book. Lots of it. In familiar Mennonite settings and events, in between the romps into the everyday lives of the characters who populate *Sarah's Prairie*. There are the regional and worldly influences that shape their lives - forces that Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike can relate to from their own growing up. To those who enjoy the flow of a good story, the historical interruptions that Plett can't seem to resist could be seen as an irritating indulgence of the historian.

There's rich fodder here for dramatic presentations - to give them insights into both its moments of great comedy and great tragedy. We would hope that the descendants of the unforgettable Martien will now carry us into

the Mennonite story that is presently in the making.

Review by Sheila Reid, Steinbach, Manitoba

T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada 1939-1970: A People Transformed*. Volume 3 of *Mennonites in Canada* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Hardcover, pp. 563, \$29.95.

A Question of Objectivity

In his "Personal Prologue" to the third vol-



Dr. Ted Regehr, Professor of History, University of Saskatchewan.

ume of *Mennonites in Canada*, Ted Regehr writes: "This history of Mennonites in Canada from 1939 to 1970 is part of my history. It is a story of change, adaptation, and accommodation. I am a part of that story, but it is one that no two people experienced in exactly the same way."

This is to indicate that any history, no matter how serious and based on the best available sources, is never objective in the sense that there is only one correct interpretation of "what actually happened." As Regehr elaborates in his prologue, he experienced his Mennonite faith and practice in a certain way and his experiences have coloured his Mennonite story. (Interesting reading in itself, the prologue courageously discusses the author's sense of alienation as an energetic and curious boy growing up in the repressive Mennonite environment of southern Alberta in the 1950s).

This is not to say that every interpretation of Mennonite history is equally correct and valid. Numerous Mennonite histories are highly selective accounts, glorifying the past and often suppressing the more unsavoury aspects of their subject matter. A serious Mennonite history is based not only on the best available documents, it also places events,

beliefs and practices within their social, economic and religious context. It is analytical and critical in its approach.

Such is the history that Regehr has written. It is no doubt the most complete and best Canadian-Mennonite history written to date. Together with two earlier volumes written by the late Frank H. Epp, this history will remain the standard work on Mennonites in Canada until well into the twenty-first century.

Change and Transformation

The first two volumes covered a period of more than four centuries, beginning with the Anabaptists of the 16th century and ending before the outbreak of World War II. The third volume covers only thirty years, yet it records greater changes among Canadian Mennonites than those that took place among earlier Mennonites (with the possible exception of the changes that occurred during the shift from Anabaptism to Mennonitism). Thus the subtitle of Volume III, "A People Transformed," is most appropriate.

While Canadian Mennonites did not assimilate into the society around them but retained their identity, they nevertheless *transformed*, in some instances beyond recognition. With the exception of the older conservative groups (Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites) who preserved their traditional values, most Canadian Mennonites not only yielded to the pressures for change, they also accepted changes often willingly and eagerly.

Factors Contributing to Transformation

According to this history, the changes among Mennonites that had begun prior to 1939 were hastened and completed by World War II. The war catapulted Mennonites into the modern world. Mennonites left their agricultural existence and values and established businesses and industries in urban environments. Their religious and predominantly German world gave way to English in their church services and to evangelical (non-Mennonite) influences and values. Mennonites began participating more fully in political activity, some even running for political office, an action considered unthinkable a few decades earlier. Mennonites entered the arts, including music and creative writing. In 1962, for example, Rudy Wiebe wrote a successful novel in English, becoming the first Canadian-Mennonite novelist of national reputation. (*Peace Shall Destroy Many* was condemned by many Mennonite readers because of its stark depiction of the realities of a Canadian Mennonite community during World War II).

The war and the urban influence were not the only factors contributing to Mennonite change and transformation. Evangelical churches, whose confessions were similar to those of the Mennonites, became attractive to many young people. Mennonites could cooperate and in some instances identify with evangelicalism. In doing so, however, Mennonites found that some of their traditional values, like non-resistance, were undermined. For example, 4500 Mennonites enlisted voluntar-

ily in the Canadian forces compared to 7500 Mennonite men who participated in alternative, non-military, services.

Mennonite Leadership

While Mennonites historically rejected dictatorial leaders, they depended upon lay ministers for spiritual guidance. Regehr shows with many examples that some leaders during and beyond the war years were not up to the task of leading their congregations along New Testament lines and Anabaptist faith values. In fact, in the Bible institutes and churches, Anabaptism was seldom taught, and church history and ethics that were emphasized came from non-Mennonite texts. The emphasis was on evangelism and missions, with little regard for teaching the faith of Anabaptist-Mennonites.

There seemed to exist a preoccupation with church rules about such externals as dress codes and a legalistic approach to the notion of "separation from the world." Regehr is most critical of evangelists who used high-pressure conversion tactics to force their evangelical-fundamentalist understanding upon impressionable young people.

For Regehr and other young people at the time it was a real eye-opener when Harold S. Bender of Goshen College published his "Anabaptist Vision" article in which he demonstrated that Anabaptist-Christian faith included wholeness, love, reconciliation, and "following Jesus in life." This vision of what it meant to be a Mennonite helped many young Mennonites to renew their commitment to the faith of their forebears and apply their newly-understood Gospel in their contemporary situation.

Hope for the Future

In his concluding chapter, Regehr recounts the positive stirrings among the younger leading Mennonites around 1970. In one of the last issues of the *Canadian Mennonite*, edited by Frank H. Epp, articles appeared about Mennonite attitudes toward non-Mennonites, attitudes toward women, questions on violence and war, Mennonite understanding of the arts, issues concerning the Anabaptist vision and inter-Mennonite relations, and others. Some older Mennonite leaders were critical of the tone and concerns expressed in the *Canadian Mennonite* and some denounced the paper as a Communist publication.

Regehr comments positively about the "radical articles" in the *Canadian Mennonite*: "The articles manifest both a strong sense of mission or purpose and a feeling of comfort in, or accommodation to, the Canadian context in which that mission or purpose was to be realized. Mennonites in Canada were no longer aliens or strangers. They were people who believed that they had in the past, and would in the future, make a positive contribution to the country and the society in which they lived. Their lives were integrated into Canadian society, but they had not lost their unique or distinctive witness." (p. 415).

A Most Helpful Book

The writing of this book was sponsored by

the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and guided by a team of readers. While the Society and readers made helpful suggestions with regard to the book's content and emphases, the author was given complete freedom to conceive and write the book according to his insights, interpretation and methodology.

The serious reader will find the following features in this book of great value: the copious end-notes, an index, and a bibliographical essay; several tables and black and white photographs. The six appendices deal with the following: Mennonite groups in Canada, conferences and branches, membership of conferences, census figures, Mennonite periodicals and newspapers, and Mennonite urban-rural statistics.

The three volumes of *Mennonites in Canada* should be on the shelves of all Mennonite college and church libraries, and no serious student of Mennonite history should be without them. The set will make an excellent Christmas present for older and younger Mennonite readers alike.

Review by Dr. Harry Loewen, Abbotsford, B.C.

Ens, Anna, *In Search of Unity. Story of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1996), 290 pages.

For the student of Mennonite history in Manitoba or for the person interested in some of the fascinating stories that make up the fabric of the Mennonite culture in Manitoba, this book is a "must read".

Anna Ens has traced the evolution of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba (CMM) with clarity, insight, and objectivity. She describes the early beginnings of the Bergthaler conference in Manitoba, and the arrival of the Russlaender during the 1920s and their three distinct *Gemeinde*; the Schoenwieser, Whitewater, and Blumenorter. She details how these various groups eventually joined to form one conference. She uses minutes of meetings, personal letters, photographs and even conversations with individuals involved with the earlier times of the conference to document the evolution of CMM.

Ens does not shy away from describing the difficult struggles that the leaders of the various congregations and *Gemeinden* experienced in the process of achieving unity. For the most part, she remains objective in her analysis and description. The only mild deviation from this objectivity might be in her description of the life and work of J. H. Neufeld of the Schoenwieser *Gemeinde*. In reading her account of the way in which he influenced and led people and the way that he was treated, one is left with the distinct impression that Anna Ens feels strongly that he was unjustly and unfairly treated by some of his church brethren.

Her treatment of the alternative service issue is also interesting. As she describes the situation, the Bergthaler *Gemeinde*, were not in agreement with the Russlaender *Gemeinde* regarding alternative service. They felt that under no circumstances should the young men of the Mennonite communities serve the country

in any way during the war. The Russlaender, citing their experiences in Russia during World War I, argued that this type of service would actually prevent their young men from being conscripted and being involved in the front line conflict and their service in forestry, medical or agriculture work could even lessen the negative backlash from Canadian society which may have been angry with their adherence to pacifism.

The debate was vigorous and divisive but ultimately the government was not concerned about the different groups of Mennonites and their internal squabbles. Eventually, conscientious objectors were indeed involved in alternative service. Ens argues that this experience actually helped to bring unity to the conference because in the work camps, Mennonite men from the different *Gemeinde*, discussed their faith and beliefs with others of differing viewpoints and subsequently broadened their outlook because of this exposure.

That may well have been the case, but for those Mennonite men who did chose to enlist, this increased tolerance was not evident on their return. Many of these men were subjected to condemnation when they returned home and as a result, many did not return to the Mennonite Church.

Ens describes the formation and early times of the Camps program, the radio ministry, and the role of women in the conference with great insight and sensitivity. Some of the "problems" that the Conference had to deal with seem, in today's context, somewhat amusing. The debate over mixed swimming at a young couples retreat at Moose Lake, for example, would strike many today as being quaint, yet it does serve to show how things have evolved and changed over time.

An over-arching theme of this work seems to be that unity among the different components of CMM is a desirable and even necessary goal. Ens quotes J.H. Neufeld as stating: "Creative diversity and multiplicity of expression are possible within a fundamental unity. Neither attitude, passing judgment on another's liberal more generous position nor despising someone with a narrow conservative stance, contribute to the unity Christ desires." (Ens, p. 248).

In this excellent, well-written, and carefully researched historical record of the CMM, Ens has admirably conveyed her hope for, and belief in, the eventual unity of the Conference. We must agree when she says that if our foundation is none other than Jesus Christ, unity will eventually be realized.

Book Review by John H. Peters. John H. Peters is principal at Green Valley School in Grunthal and is a member of the Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach.

Robert and Dawn Penner, *Family Tree of John I. Penner 1893-1973* (Medicine Hat, Alberta, 1988), 44 pages; and Roger and Dawn Penner *The John I. Penner Family Book II 1893-1995* (Medicine Hat, 1995), 70 pages. Available from Roger and Dawn Penner, 2284 21 Avenue S.E., Medicine Hat, Alberta, T1A 3Y4,

for \$6.00 and \$10.00 respectively, plus postage.

John I. Penner (1893-1973) was an influential minister of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman), in Kleefeld. He was also a conference wide leader of the "old" school and richly deserving of these books which list his progeny and provide historical remembrances.

The first volume contains a genealogical listing as well as a biography of John I. Penner written by his second wife, nee Lottie Toews.

John I. Penner was the son of Cornelius R. Penner of Blumenort who died suddenly of a heart attack in 1899. His widowed mother moved back to Grunfeld to live on the yard of her parents Johann P. Isaacs. In 1924 John I. Penner married Margaret Toews, daughter of Cornelius F. Toews, son of 1873 delegate Cornelius P. Toews. The couple farmed in Kleefeld where John was elected as a minister in 1924.

In 1942 John I. Penner served as pastor at the C. O. camp at Seebe, Alberta. His wife died suddenly in 1942. In 1943 he married for the second time to Lottie Toews, a nurse who had served in Mexico and Steinbach. In 1944 John and Lottie travelled to Europe for M.C.C. where they assisted with relief work.

In 1950 John became editor of the German church paper, *Die Botschafter der Wahrheit*. In 1956 they went to the Mexico mission returning in 1964. John I. Penner had an interest in the history of his church and preserved documents and records. He died of cancer in 1973.

The second Volume, essentially an updated and expanded version of the first, was published in 1995. The first section includes reprints of a number of letters first published in the 1941 "Toews Family Herald" followed by a brief biography of each of the John I. Penner children together with a listing of their respective families.

The second book also contains two photographs of the original John I. Penner family home. This is somewhat unusual for a Holdeman family book as they practice the traditional Mennonite proscription regarding pictures.

The two books are enjoyable reading as they contain many anecdotes and document family events, tragedies as well as celebrations. The strong family traditions and Christian values of the Toews and Penner families are evident in the John I. Penner family books. The publishers are to be commended for a job well done as these books will pass on the legacy of a happy and spiritual home to many of their posterity.

Reviewed by D. Plett, Steinbach

Kay Friesen: *A Collection of Poetry* (Steinbach, 1996), 131 pages, \$12.95

Poetry is very personal. But because a poet notices details others do not, the poems become a reflection of the lives around her in the community, a social history in shorthand. So it is with these poems by Kay Friesen, which describe a life that began ninety years ago, and that was lived in many communities of southern Manitoba.

Her ideals reflect the view of life held by

our people. In poems such as "Twilight" and "The Whip-poor-will" we sense an intimate response to natural beauty. This is often related to the grand cycle of life, where our lives are images of nature's seasonal cycle under the care of a loving God. So, too, a simple faith in our importance to the Creator, and our duty to live as in His sight, breathes through all poems in this collection.

My favourite faith poem was "The Christmas Dawn"; the need for social commitment is well expressed in "The Handicapped Child" and "I would have Picked Flowers for Her". Events of her time are chronicled in "Gretna", "The River Rises 1950", and a full history of the radio station could be written from "What does CFAM mean to me?" "Pig Killing at the Peters' Place" provides the details that so many of us remember about that occasion, from the gathering of the families in the early hours to the real hot smoke of the oak wood as the sausages are cured.

But the strongest impulse in her poems, and the best reflection of the ideals of our community, are her poems on family. Family tradition inspired "Baking Bread". At daughter Patricia's wedding 'she is a queen'; at Joyce's wedding she remembers the girl who once trusted Dad to pay for her ice cream addiction; the poem to "Dear Shirley" dwells on the love bursting in a mother's heart when her child is in pain; Opal is like "diamonds in the dew". She blesses all the ties of family in these heartfelt poems.

My regret is that none of her work in *plaut, dietsch* was included. Few people I know have had the depth of expression in that language that Kay has shown in many poems, lyrics, and plays. Can we hope for a sequel?

Reviewed by Wilmer Penner

Di Brandt, *Jerusalem, Beloved* (Turnstone, Winnipeg, 1995), 71 pages.

Di Brandt is a Winnipeg poet who made a trip to the holy city and wrote about it in the title section of her book, *Jerusalem, Beloved*. In the very first poem she confesses her romantic view of a place whose streets are "paved with gold" and whose women dance on the rooftops. She makes it sound more like Oz than any city on earth and so I am hardly surprised by her immediate disappointment in this "war zone."

Yet despite an apparent lack of any historical knowledge of the Middle East and the complexity of its politics, the poet takes a stand anyway, offering highly emotional utterances of sympathy for the "proud and stubborn" Palestinians suffering under the evil Israelis. She seems unaware that both sides have valid claims and that both have murdered and been murdered, played victim and victimizer.

This extraordinary naivete translates into a delirious, run-on line that catches me up and leaves me slightly breathless at the end of each poem.

The other poems - on feminism, love and children - express the same idealized view of the world. Yet while I find myself often annoyed by this book, it certainly doesn't leave me cold.

Review by Cary Fagan, reprinted from the *Globe and Mail*, Nov. 11, 1995.