

Mennonite Historian



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*The old hospital of Rosental was situated in the Contentius plant nursery. Photo source: Dr. Walter Quiring and Helen Bartel, eds., *Als Ihre Zeit Erfuellt war*, p. 34.*

The Plant Nursery in Rosental, Ukraine

By John Dyck

Two of the first eight Mennonite villages established in the Ukraine were the adjoining villages of Chortitza and Rosental both founded at the point where the Chortitza River nudges its way into the mighty Dnieper River. The first community-owned plant nursery in the Mennonite settlements of Russia was started in the village of Rosental in 1801.

The village of Rosental overlooked a beautiful valley in which grew an abundance of lovely roses - hence the name Rosental, meaning valley of roses. This scenic valley had caught the eye of G.A. Potemkin, the Governor General of New Russia, some years earlier and he had begun to lay out a plantation there. In it he had planted a large number of trees, mostly cherry.

Around this garden he had dug a wide trench and on a nearby high plateau where he would have a picturesque view of the attractive gardens and the wide Dnieper River valley, he had started the foundation for a castle which he had never completed. This abandoned plantation became the site of the

Rosental Community Nursery and Experimental Farm (**Gemeinde Plantage und Pflanzschule**).

Several sources help to establish what little is known about the beginning of this nursery which played such a prominent role in improving the landscape of this entire region.

The 1848 reports to the Fuersorge Komitee in Odessa tell us that Samuel Contentius was responsible for the establishment of the nursery in 1801. They further inform us that he brought an initial supply of fruit trees and grape vines from the Crimea and ordered a variety of seeds and seedlings, having provided for a gardener to take charge of this venture. All of this was provided without cost to the Mennonite community. The reports do not indicate who paid the gardener's wages. However, Contentius did arrange for the benefiting Mennonite villages to alternate in providing voluntary help for the additional labour required to maintain these gardens.

In return, he ensured that all the residents of the 18 villages of the Chortitza settlement had access without cost to an ample supply of fruit and mulberry and shade trees. His goal was for every village resident to have his private fruit garden, and a hedge around his yard, and that field windbreaks would line the roads between villages. The mulberry trees were to be used to further the fledgling silk worm industry.

Every home was encouraged to take advantage of the selection of a wide variety of free seedlings and young plants and grafting branches which would be used to enhance the appearance of his property. Here, too, he could have the benefit of free horticultural advice from the gardener. Although the Mennonite community was extremely slow in making maximum use of these benefits, it did eventually result in changing the bald prairie to a beautifully treed landscape and Contentius did live to see the fruit of his efforts.

P.M. Friesen's **The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia** quotes Reiswitz and Wadzek as another source for this same information. Whether other writings use these original source materials or whether there are other old documents around is difficult to determine. D.H. Epp, P.M. Friesen and J.J. Hildebrand each tell a similar story of the involvement of Samuel Contentius, the starting date of 1801 and the gardener. The Johann Wall diary confirms that voluntary labour from the villages was used to meet the labour needs of the nursery.

However, there is one significant question to which none of these sources gives an answer. That question is . . . "Who was the first gardener engaged for the Rosental Nursery by Contentius?"

The later continued involvement of Contentius in this and other similar projects confirms that this was no spur-of-the-moment project but rather a well thought out plan to transform the appearance and the fruitfulness of his native land. The benefit which the Mennonite community enjoyed as a result of his visionary planning was acknowledged and recognized when the village of Konteniusfeld was named after him shortly after his death.

Since it was Lord Contentius who selected the gardener for this venture, and since this venture was to be an important phase of his

(cont'd on p. 2)

personal imaginative plan for the development of these prairies, it is highly unlikely that he would have spared any cost in finding the right person to whom he would entrust the success of this significant venture. After all this was going to be the person who would help Contentius realize the fulfillment of an important phase of his dream, his vision, for the beautification of his country. The setting does not suggest that he would carelessly choose just any available person for so crucial a job. One source suggests that he sent to Germany for this gardener.

My great, great, grandfather, Karl Jaeger (1784-1938), had been the gardener at the Rosental nursery for 37 years when he died in 1839, according to entries in a diary kept by his daughter, my great grandmother, who was born in 1807. According to this entry he would have started work at this nursery in 1802 when he was 18 years of age and continued until his death at the age of 55 years. Interestingly enough, when he died, his son Carl Jaeger Jr. (1810-1861), took up the reins of service and maintained the tradition for another 17 years, so that the chief gardener at the Rosental nursery was Karl Jaeger for a total of 54 years.

(to be concluded)

Donor Acknowledgements

Donations to the archives are much appreciated, and add to the strength of the program. We want to thank all our donor supporters for the past six months of 1984, those listed below and several others who wished to remain anonymous. The contributions for this period came to about \$1400.00. Our donations objective for 1984 has been set at \$3000.00.

January

Tom Mierau, Wichita, Kansas
 Jacob Goosen, Staples, Ontario
 Ronald Friesen, Winkler, Manitoba
 Alexander Rempel, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario
 Bruce Entz, Benton, Kansas
 John Rempel, Altona, Manitoba
 Peter Bergen, Winnipeg, Man.

February

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 John C. Klassen, Morden, Manitoba
 Robert Wall, Winnipeg, Manitoba
 Francis Smith, Gabriola Island, B.C.
 Eric Wiebe, Kamloops, B.C.
 Mrs. D. Calvert, Rocky Mtn. House, Alberta
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March

Peter Funk, Lucky Lake, Saskatchewan
 Erwin Hiebert, Belmont, MA.

April

Dietrich Thiessen, Clearbrook, B.C.
 Henry Hildebrand, Lowe Farm, Manitoba
 Harriet Aldridge, Billings, Montana
 John C. Klassen, Morden, Manitoba
 P.H. Wiens, Gretna, Manitoba

May

Ernest Hiebert, Gainsville, Florida
 Carl Bangs, Prairie Village, Kansas
 Alexander Malycky, Calgary, Alberta
 Joseph Mueller, Winnipeg, Manitoba
 William and Helen Kruger, Kitchener, Ontario

June

David G. Rempel, Menlo Park, California
 LaVerna Klippenstein, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Readers Write

... "Thank you for the *Mennonite Historian* of March, 1984. It brought a number of things to my mind. Notice: On page 4 in the MCI picture the first name should be John Bock, not Block . . ."

Sincerely John P. Dyck
 Springstein, Man.

Dear Friends at MHC,

The *Mennonite Historian*, Vol. X, No. 1, March, 1984 carries a picture of a Rudnerweide Mennonite Church Bible Conference in Saskatchewan. I'd like to fill you in on the date and place as I found it in my diary. The time is July 7-10, 1955. Place: Chortitz, about six miles west of Hague . . .

Lovingly in Jesus,
 Edwin Klippenstein, Hague, Sask.

... You may also be interested in knowing that I now have the Peter G. Martin letters (see MH, Vol. IV, Dec., 1978), translated in English at \$5.00 per copy. I am presently at work on the 1600 letter Jacob Mensch collection which Amos B. Hoover and I copied during November 1982 . . .

Sincerely,
 Isaac R. Horst, Mount Forest, Ontario

I want to thank all contributors to MH who have made its publication possible, and a joy to bring about. The History-Archives committee and Dennis Stoesz will be publishing the issues for the next two years. Lawrence Klippenstein.

Auf Wiedersehn!

Faces and Names Together

by June Wallman

We should have done this months ago - introduce June Wallman, that is. June has been serving as secretary-receptionist at the archives since last October. This article appearing here was first printed in the CMC Bulletin in May, and is being used with permission from the editor.

The one thing I knew for sure when I started working at the Conference of Mennonites in Canada was that I would never remember all the names of all the people in all of the offices. I was right. There are many people who are in contact and who work with the various boards and committees of the CMC. Not having been involved before with any of them directly, this also took awhile to sort out.

The area I am most involved in is the Mennonite Heritage Centre, where I am the secretary-receptionist. In this position I have the opportunity to meet and talk with many people who come in and do research, including students and staff of CMBC.

Helping people find another piece to the puzzle of their own genealogy is exciting. It can take a lot of digging through old records and documents, but the satisfaction received always makes it worthwhile. Although the total background of Mennonite history is not completely familiar to me yet, I feel as though there are several Dycks, Friesens and Reimers whose histories I know very well.

It is an interesting job, one that teaches me my own history more effectively than I ever learnt in a classroom and the daily contact makes a more lasting impression than any other method has before.

All in all, each new day is different. The names and faces are beginning to come together, and I feel as though I can distinguish the various pieces of the CMC and know the function of each.



Family Studies

A Few Reviews

Johann Klassen and Peter D. Zacharias, eds. **Klassen: A Family Heritage** Winnipeg, Man.: The Family, 1980. Hardcover, 526 pp. \$35.00.

Peter D. Zacharias, ed. **Ens. A Family Heritage** Winnipeg, Man.: The Family, 1983. Hardcover, 349 pp. \$25.00. *Reviewed by Elizabeth Peters, Winnipeg Man.*

When the late Johann Klassen published **Klassen. A Family Heritage** three years ago, he gave to the public one of the best productions of its type in Mennonite circles. The title does not reveal the fact that the scope of over 500 pages encompass much more than the family story. Klassen was concerned not only about his family, which he did cherish a great deal, but also about the story of his people.

When set in the broad context of its Russian background and the more recent Canadian experience the Klassen book becomes a veritable work of art. Klassen was ably assisted also by the editor, Peter Zacharias in careful research, well-worded prose (both in English and German) and a sensitive portrayal of the story as a whole. It is a well-bound book, with color photography adding a great deal to its readability and flavor as a total portrait of the family experience.

It was the good fortune of Johann Klassen to see the fruit of his labor for the Klassen side of his research, and he had hoped, during his lifetime, to provide a similar book on his mother's side of the family. It was not to be, however, and so the family commissioned Zacharias to help complete the Ens book as well. It appeared in print in 1982, also ably assembled and well-presented to the reading public. The sensitivity and careful work of the earlier volume are conspicuous here as well. It was also the editor's task to actually fill in some of the gaps left in the earlier research.

An easily understood numbering system makes it possible for the reader to discover rather easily the family ties of the extended genealogy which the Ens family study involved. Photos beginning with the ancestor Gerhard Ens of Einlage and Neuendorf, enhance the account significantly. Again one finds much more than a "tree". Indeed, most meaningful stories that make the lives of family members come alive even for readers now.

Both books are aptly designed as gifts, and will be interesting not only to immediate relatives but to other friends of the family as well. An earlier, much higher price for the Klassen book has now been reduced to

\$35.00, while the Ens book is offered for \$25.00. Persons buying both together receive an addition discount of \$10.00 to make it \$50.00 for both. Books may be ordered from Peter Zacharias, Box 65 Gretna, Manitoba, R0G 0V0. *Adapted from an original review which appeared in Der Bote Dec. 14, 1983, p. 8.*

Solomon L. Loewen **History and Genealogy of the Jacob Loewen Family**. Hillsboro, Kansas, 1983. Hdc. 208 pp., \$25.00 (US). *Reviewed by Royden Loewen, Blumenort, Manitoba.*

Twenty-three years ago Dr. Solomon Loewen of Hillsboro, Kansas published the genealogy of Deacon Isaak Loewen (1787-1873). The book, which listed over 2900 families, has since found its way into many EMC homes in Manitoba. The reason for this is simply that the majority of Isaak Loewen's children were Kleine Gemeinde settlers in Manitoba. Now at the age of 85 Solomon Loewen has published once again. Jacob Loewen was the grandson to Deacon Isaak Loewen, the common forbear of EMC Loewens.

Although the book is about an American family belonging to the Mennonite Brethren church, it will be of interest to Loewen relatives in Canada for several reasons. First, the book is well written and put together, serving as a model for other families contemplating writing a family history. Secondly, the book offers some valuable history on Deacon Isaak Loewen and his wife Margaretha Wiens. The book also has an interesting chapter on the origin of the Loewen name. Thirdly, the book vividly captures the spirit of the 1874 immigration and the col-

ourful pioneer years of the Manitoba settlement in Marion County, Kansas and as such makes for an evening of interesting reading.

The book also allows the reader to make fascinating comparisons between those Loewens who chose the Kleine Gemeinde as their church and Canada as their home and those Loewens who joined the Mennonite Brethren church and settled in the United States. There appears to be a marked difference in the degree to which the Canadian and American Loewens have been assimilating into the receiving society. The book offers a short biographical sketch of each adult of the extended Jacob Loewen family up to publication date.

Solomon Loewen, the author, was born in 1898 near Hillsboro, Kansas. For fifty years he taught biological science at Sterling College and Tabor College both in Kansas. Dr. Loewen is an active member of the Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Church as well as the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia.

The book is bound in a hard cover and contains many interesting photos. It may be purchased via mail from Solomon Loewen, 201 East A Street, Hillsboro KS 67063 for \$30.00 plus \$1.80 for mailing. *Slightly revised from the original review in the EMC Messenger of Mar. 9, 1984.*

NOTICE

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society has recently organized a Genealogical Committee to co-ordinate Mennonite genealogical work in the province. Write to Delbert Plett, Steinbach, Man., R0A 2A0 for further information.



A residence of a Mennonite family in Manitoba. Can anyone identify the owners and more precise location? Please send information to genealogist Ben Doell, Box 5368, St. 3, Edmonton, Alberta, T5P 4C9.

Russo-Ukrainian Mennonite Studies

Tribute to Der Bote

We would like to pay tribute, with this issue of Russo-Ukrainian Mennonite studies, to **Der Bote** for its long-time efforts in promoting the study of Russian and Ukrainian Mennonite history. Under its first name **Immigrantenbote**, this German-language newspaper, first published in Rosthem, Saskatchewan, Canada, gave much space to the Russian Mennonite story, and has continued to do so ever since.

The published articles of **Der Bote** now form an invaluable source for researchers and historians working in this general area. Vol. 1 of **Der Bote** index has been very helpful in this regard, and the second volume, now being prepared, will hopefully be so also.

All the historical pictures found in this centre section first appeared in **Der Bote**. We want to thank the editor for making these available, and for depositing a rich collection of other such photos in the archives.

Der Bote completed sixty years of publishing earlier this year. We trust that its ongoing issues will continue to make the Russian Mennonite experience a prominent theme in its concerns, and that its readers will find that a meaningful part of the paper in the coming years. Thank you, Gerhard, very much.



*Aeltester Jacob Rempel of Gruenfeld, Ukraine in 1930, just after entering exile in Siberia. Rempel was born in April, 1883, and according to reports received from the Red Cross (1983) died on Jan. 22, 1943. For other information on his life and work see Alexander Rempel, "Rempel, Jakob, At.", **Mennonitischen Lexikon**, Vol. III pp. 470-474.*



A scene from the harvest season in Osterwick, Ukraine, in 1930. Front (l-r): Adolf Auras; Fritz Auras; Uncle Ballmann; Volodja Novenko, Russia; John Janzen, Russia; Hans Sawatsky, USA; Lena Vogt. Second row (l-r): Vera Auras; Heinrich Koop, d. 1937; Abram Peters d. Canada; John Loewen, Espelkamp. W. Germany; Heinrich Funk, d. Russia; Neta Loewen, Espelkamp. W. Germany, Sarah Klassen; Tina Rempel, nee Martins, d.; Lena Peters, nee Toews; Lena Klassen; Dietrich Rempel, Russia; Isaac Vogt (sitting on sheaf), Russia. Row three: Peter Rempel, Liese Kopeschnik, nee Janzen, Russia, standing on ladder; Abram Rempel, d. Russia; Uncle Brinsa, Russia; Drogun, Russia; Maria Rempel. Lena Dyck, d. W. Germany; Johan Klassen, d. Russia. Dietrich Martens peeking through hole in roof, d. in Russia. Photo: Courtesy of Abram Rempel. Bielefeld, W. Germany.



A baptismal class at Petershagen, Molotschna in 1929. Front row (l-r): Sara Wiens, Anna Giesbrecht, Hella Barkowski, all from Petershagen; Maria Bestvater, Ladekopp and Justina Peters, Petershagen. Second row: Neta Dueck, Deacon David Willms, Ladekopp; Aeltester Peter Nickel; Minister Gerhard Epp, Petershagen; and Lena Harder. Third row: Peter Hildebrecht, Abram Enns, Herman Giesbrecht, Johann Mierau - all from Petershagen, two Klassens from Ladekopp. Fourth row: Johann D. Martens, Petershagen; two others from Ladekopp (names not recalled). Can someone supply the missing names? Photo: Courtesy of Justina Peters, W. Germany. Date taken: June 25, 1929.

Voices from the Amur

For more than a year *Der Bote* has been published a weekly fiftieth anniversary column for the archives headed "Aus dem Archiv". The material of February 23, 1983 is reproduced below.

One day we received some very interesting and important documents from Mr. Peter Wiens of Gretna, Manitoba. With his letter to us he included three letters of his only aunt, Katherine Ewert, who had moved to the Amur region from Memrik in south Russia with her children right after World War 1. Mr. Wiens had stayed with his parents in Karpovka at the Memrik settlement. The letters of his aunt's were written to Memrik relatives during the years 1936-1937.

A few excerpts from these letters follow:

Lugavoe, Siberia

August 26, 1936

Dear Brother and sister-in-law,

I will try again to write to you. For a year we have heard nothing from you and I am often lonely for you. How sad things are going in the world! We are only two in our family and separated by such a distance! Oh, if only none of our dear ones would be lost . . . I thank God that I've been quite well . . .

Silberfeld

March 14, 1937

. . . I received your letter of October 2 on November 8. For three weeks I could not write because the river Suesu is so wide near the city of Blagoveshchensk, and it takes so long before it is frozen over . . . I am now reading the book *Messenger of the Dawn*. What an important book it is! Everything seems to agree with it since the final judg-

ment seems not to be far away. Let's all try to meet over yonder . . . In my last letter I asked you whether you knew how long Grandpa was in Germany. I don't know how long, but Cornelius died nine months after his exile. I copied down the funeral message, also one about baptism by Onkel Is. Peters, as well as poems by Bernhard Harder. His book is an important one to read . . .

Blumenort

May 31, 1937

. . . things are going well here. No one steals at all. The doors are left open at night. We could never do that at Memrik . . .

Maybe these letters will encourage someone to write the complete story of the Mennonites in the Amur region. Such documents as these help to know the circumstances of their lives at that time.

Anyone who is keeping old letters which might get lost or destroyed, is invited to send them to the Heritage Centre archives for permanent preservation. We appreciate the forethought of Mr. Wiens who has seen fit to help us gather materials which should be placed in archives as quickly as possible.

COMING SOON!

An English translation of *Einer von Vielen*, entitled *Siberian Diary of Aron P. Toews*, with a biography by Olga Rempel. The publisher is CMBC Publications, and the book will sell for \$10.95. It should be available in early fall. Order from **CMBC Publications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Man. Canada, R3P 0M4.**

FOR SALE

Karl Stumpp. **The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763 to 1862.**

With a set of maps, published by American Historical Society of Germans from Russia. 1978. Hardcover, 1018 pp. \$30.00 plus postage. Write to the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd. Winnipeg, Man. R3P 0M4.

A.H. Unruh. **Die Geschichte der Mennoniten Brueder Gemeinde.** Winnipeg, Man. 1954.

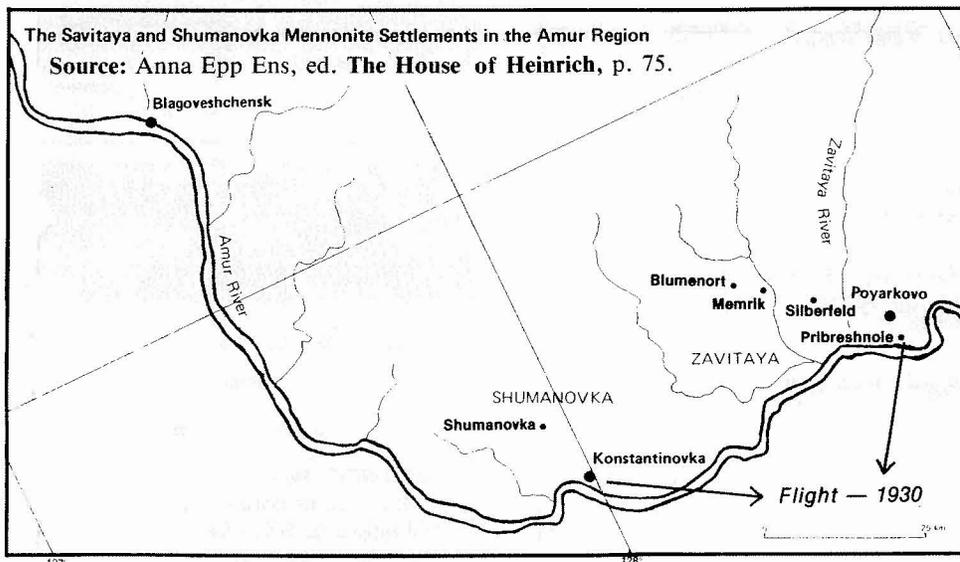
Hardcover, 847 pp., \$10.00 plus postage.



The James Urry Lectures

A recent special guest in Waterloo and Winnipeg communities was anthropologist Dr. James Urry of the Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand. He had been invited to present a paper at the Russian Studies conference held at Waterloo on May 9-10, and then took time (on May 12) to deliver several lectures at the Mennonite Heritage Centre as well. His major topic dealt with the question of wealth among Russian Mennonites but he spoke also on the interesting theme of several Mennonite migrations to Australia which were hoped for, but did not happen.

Dr. Urry spent several months in Winnipeg in 1974 while he was completing research for his doctoral dissertation on Russian Mennonites. It was entitled *The Closed and the Open. Social and Religious Change Amongst Mennonites in Russia, 1789-1889*. (1978). At that time he laid much emphasis on interviewing persons who had come from Russia, and still encourages people to pursue this method of research wherever possible. He has published several papers on Russian Mennonites and is planning to rewrite the dissertation for publication as a book.



The Christian Heritage Library

This is just a reminder that we are continuing in our God-given enterprise of collecting and preserving for a memorial, old published and written material, relating to our heritage in the Lord Jesus. We search for originals, of Puritan and Evangelical books of the "Reformation" kind, from early days up to the present.

Our library has some 3000 entries to date, some very old, and also reprints, and contemporary writings. We can fix torn and shabby books. All the old books on our shelves are in first-class shape. Among our Mennonite books we have many handwritten sermons of our preachers of a century ago. The Lord is truly the Promoter,

and also the Provider of this unique endeavour, which is dedicated to be for HIS GLORY! Please come and see us at 184-7th Street, Winkler, Man. Canada.

David and Trudy Schellenberg

Information Wanted

Genealogical information from Family Bibles on the names Goertz-Goertz, Kerber-Kerwer, Bartel Balzer or any other Montau-Gruppe families prior to 1840.

Travellers: If you are going to Poland, look for the Catholic church records of Wielki-Lubien (Gross Lubin), pow. Swiecie (Kreis Schwetz), near Graudens, prior to 1800, and have them copied for filmed if possible.

Adalbert Goertz, 12934 Buchanan Trail E., Waynesboro, Pa. 17268.

Assistant Researcher Reports

by Ingrid Janssen

Since May 22, I have held the position of research assistant for three professors - John Friesen, Waldemar Janzen, and Harry Huebner - at Canadian Mennonite Bible College. The materials and microfilm-reader are located in the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

During my first four weeks here, I have been working for John Friesen. I have been involved in indexing microfilms of nineteenth century correspondence between the Prussian Government and the Prussian Mennonites. To index the microfilms, I am to record the topics of the letters, the parties to whom they are addressed, the parties by whom they are written, as well as the dates of the letters.

Although this task sounds straightforward, I have found the work to be quite challenging, as most of the letters are handwritten in the Gothic script - a script with which I was unfamiliar before I began indexing the films. Thus, with a copy of the Gothic alphabet at hand, I began the task of deciphering the letters. With time, the script became more and more familiar, making it much easier to discern the topic of the letters.

I have also found that as a result of indexing this microfilms, I have learned a few things about eighteenth and nineteenth-century Prussian Mennonite history. I discovered that the Mennonites, even in Prussia, encountered opposition. Complaints arose from the Evangelical and Catholic churches concerning the Mennonites' exemption from military service. Then, in 1789 an edict restricting Mennonite immigration to Prussia, as well as forbidding Mennonites to acquire further land was issued by Fredrick William II, the king of Prussia.

So far, I have found my position as research assistant to be quite enjoyable and anticipate further satisfaction as I move on to other areas of study with the other professors.

FOR SALE

Daniel Hoch. *Justification. Disclosure of the Persecution Against Daniel Hoch, Preacher of the Mennonite Church in Upper Canada.* First published and printed by J.H. Oberholzer in 1853. \$3.00.

Mrs. Cleon Martin, compiler. *Pilgrims and Strangers. A Story of the Mennonites.* 1982. 113 pp., \$5.50 postpaid.

Order the first title from: Isaac Horst, Book Room, RR2, Mount Forest, Ont. N0G 2L0, and the second from Mrs. Cleon R. Martin, RR5, Mount Forest, Ont. N0G 2L0.



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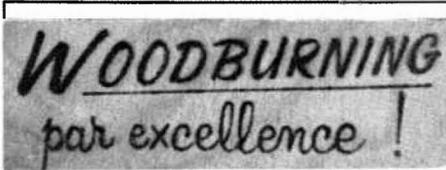
Menno Epp. *The Pastor's Exit, The Dynamics of Involuntary Termination.* Pb., 130 pp., \$8.00 (6.00 U.S.).

David Schroeder. *Anleitung zum Bibelstudium.* A German translation of *Learning to Study the Bible.* Pb., 112 pp., \$5.00. (3.75 U.S.).

Esther Wiebe and Urie A. Bender. *That They May Be One. A Cantata for Mixed Choir, Soloists, and Narrator.* Pb., 52 pp., \$5.75 (4.50 U.S.).

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Book reviews (cont'd from p. 8)

many, Austria, Liechtenstein, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Italy. Each section offers a brief history, with information on noteworthy places to visit, particularly on customs and regulations, etc., excellent maps (one of the country and others of cities, like Strasbourg, France, or regions such as Black Forest, Germany, or Emmental in Switzerland), and a number of helpful photos.

There is little improvement to suggest for a book of this type. Gleysteen's well-known artistic skills and personal travelling interests have been aptly put to use. Hence the tastefully designed **Tourguide** is a must for anyone who is planning to travel not only this summer and anytime later on. A map of Europe might have been a useful addition so that one could more easily have a bird's eye view of the entire area. Some people might look for something on Spain and Portugal as well. Otherwise it's all there. Don't leave for Europe without the **Tourguide**, even if you take nothing else.

Armin Wiebe, **The Salvation of Yasch Siemens**, (Turnstone Press, 1984), 176 pp. pb. \$7.50.

Isaac Quiring, **Strangled Roots**, (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1982), 186 pp. pb., \$8.95. Reviewed by Di Brandt, *Winnipeg, Man.*

"Oversetting," you might say, is the official comic technique of Mennonites. It pokes fun at our bewilderment caught living between cultures, between languages. It flexes our ability to juggle the contradictory strands of our lives, and demonstrates our adeptness at manipulating the intricacies of the word. But what has traditionally been a sporadic, impulsive and generally short-lived gimmick blossoms into full-blown artistic achievement in Armin Wiebe's crazy, funny chronicle, **The Salvation of Yasch Siemens**.

This book is important because it highlights so much of our common Mennonite experience; you will read each chapter with the pleasurable shock of recognition. Large areas of our individual and communal lives, slipping unobtrusively into oblivion as we lose the trilingual texture of our heritage, are preserved here with gentle and compassionate humor. But this book is not only a translation of idiom, it accomplishes a much deeper thing. One realizes, reading this book, the extent to which body, soul and mind have been kept effectively separate in our lives through a division of language: think, for example, of *love* and the different images it evokes in High German (God's language), Flat German, as Wiebe calls it (on the field and in the barn), and English (what they make you read in school).

While this has ensured a multi-dimensional sense of reality as well as an inherent linguistic sophistication for Mennonites, it has also allowed us to camouflage conflicting values and behaviour in split more radical and permanent than Luther could have wished for with his two Kingdoms. Wiebe undercuts this division by forcing us to speak all three languages at once. The result is disconcerting, a breach of "good manners." This is what makes *Yasch Siemens* so funny, a huge extended joke.

It is also what makes it a truly Anabaptist attempt at integrating the contradictory elements of experience in one vital, committed whole (and what a relief to find this exercise an exciting and humorous one after all!) So read Yasch's lively tales of romance in the beet fields, of how to acquire Nobah Naze Needarp's land without money, of midnight pranks on the double dyke, and laughter yourself good. And feel the vibrancy of a world which is, prophetically, momentarily, "all connected up with everything."

Strangled Roots has two distinguishing features. The first is its absolute lack of clarity. The second is the title, which accurately describes the effect of Quiring's clumsy prose. It is difficult to say which is more disturbing, the sense of stunted half-perceptions struggling vainly for articulation, or the undercurrent of prejudice running through this story.

Quiring's concern is ostensibly the religious hypocrisy of a Mennonite community whose social mores permit premarital sex, but his ineptness at language obscures this conflict in stereotypical, sexist and discriminatory half-characterizations. Unlike Armin Wiebe, whose caricatures gently satirize typical behavior in order to be released from its limitations, Quiring portrays authoritarian parent-figures making arbitrary decrees, seductive young girls luring vulnerable young men to their fate, and mean-hearted brothers betraying each other, all without grace and without insight. One hopes this book does not find a sympathetic audience.

Roger P. Bartlett, **Human Capital. The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia 1762-1804**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Hdc., 358 pp., \$59.50 U.S. Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein, *Winnipeg, Man.*

Foreign settlement in Russia is not a new topic of scholarly research in the West. Bartlett's work however is one of the best studies to be published so far. Based on a very thorough examination of Russian primary sources, this study stresses a very specific aspect of the eighteenth century settlement program in New Russia: the activities of the Russian government and its apparatus.

The view, according to the author, is therefore "largely the Russian official standpoint with the viewpoint of migrants and settlers themselves receiving less space" in the treatment of the whole.

Bulgarians and Germans were among the major groups to be brought in during this period. It is possible that those who have studied the immigration of select groups have tended unconsciously to overemphasize the importance of their contributions. Bartlett is not anxious to play down the significance of foreign settler groups, but concludes, as have many Soviet authors, that in numerical terms these immigrants were of secondary importance to the settlement and assimilation of New Russia in the eighteenth century. Foreign immigrants, that is to say, were always outnumbered by the Great Russian and Ukrainian peasant settlers who moved into the southern regions to become the major groups there.

Even the economic contribution, although not infrequently out of proportion to the numbers of the settler groups, is not held to be a crucial factor in the overall picture. What's more, concluded Bartlett, foreigners cost the state far more than did native settlers, both in cash and administration, and the settlers were usually slower to adapt themselves to local conditions.

It would be interesting for Mennonite readers to see how Bartlett would evaluate the place of Prussian Mennonites who moved into the Russian lands during the time being studied here. In this area one must still look to the work of G.G. Pisarevski and Dr. David G. Rempel who have done considerable work on this sub-theme of the immigration movements of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Russia. As a matter of fact, Dr. Rempel, as well as Dr. James Urry, are both mentioned in the credit acknowledgements of the book.

Space here does not permit the careful analysis and comment which Bartlett's work deserves. Attention can be drawn however to the extensive footnotes and bibliography which provide inestimably rich source references on this topic. For Mennonite studies Bartlett offers a much-needed contextual framework to understand the place of Mennonite settlement in Ukraine.

The cost of the book will tend to dissuade even college libraries from making the investment, but once made, it will turn out to be money well spent.

Just arrived!

Wilhelm Pauls, **Gedichte Verschiedenen Inhalts in hoch - und plattdeutscher Sprache**. Calgary, Alberta, 1984. 52 pp., pb., \$2.50.

Order from the author at 2819 Cochrane Rd. NW., Calgary, Alberta, T2M 4J1.

Book Reviews

Jean-Michel Hornus, **It is not Lawful for me to Fight: Early Christian Attitudes Toward War, Violence and the State**. (Revised Edition), Translated by Alan Kreider and Oliver Coburn, Scottdale, PA. and Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1980. 370 pp., pb., \$16.20 (Canadian). First published in 1960 as **Evangile et Labarum: Etude sur l'attitude du christianisme primitif devant les problèmes de l'Etat, de la guerre et de la violence**. Reviewed by Paul Friesen, Saskatoon, Sask.

This monograph by Jean-Michel Hornus is an examination of early Christian attitudes to war, violence and the state. He argues that antimilitarism was the indisputable position of the pre-Constantinian church and refutes the traditional and pervasive historical doctrine concerning the church's position on war and violence according to which only a small minority of the early Christians refused military service; Christian antimilitarism was a position which appeared only very late and as a result of the influence of pagan philosophy; early Christian conscientious objection was never more than a theoretical position held by a coterie of bloodless intellectuals and eccentric theological cranks; and that the decisive reason for the Christian's refusal of military service was the idolatry of the army. Hornus, then, seeks to show that from the very beginning and throughout the first three centuries of the primitive church, its teaching was constantly and vigorously opposed to Christian participation in military service and that this position was not only based on opposition to the cult of the emperor, but even more fundamentally on the rejection of violence and respect for life.

The author provides the groundwork for his thesis by beginning with a consideration of the political, social, religious and theological milieu in which the early church formulated its position on the relationship between the Christian and temporal power; between the church and the emperor. Having established the theoretical framework in which Christians reflected on matters concerning war and the military, Hornus turns to a more concrete examination of how the church's theological perspective manifest itself in the daily life of the believer. He considers the actual behavior of Christians with regard to the state, their feelings about their earthly country, and their affirmation of the sacredness of human life; an attitude which he considers to be an essential element in the Christian's relationship to temporal power.

Hornus is under no illusion that, even though the church took an antimilitarist position, Christians did not participate in military service. His fourth chapter is an attempt to understand the Christian's justification for

participation in the military, and deals as well with the subject of soldier saints, many of whom only joined the army in the imaginations of their hagiographers. What Hornus is most concerned about here is the irresponsibility of generalizing about the attitude of the church on the basis that there were some Christians in the army and at the same time dismissing the teaching of the Fathers. Even though the church made its minimum demands of morality and refused to lower its ideal to that of accepting a believer's unfaithfulness, it could not close its eyes to the reality of Christians in the army. Until the fourth century it maintained the principle that there should be no Christians in the army, and yet began to tolerate Christian participation in the military as a lesser evil. It showed an uneasy tolerance toward those whom circumstances had forced into the bearing of arms.

Under Constantine the antimilitarism of the church withered rapidly; resulting in the militarization of the church and the sanctification of the state. Hornus discusses how this compromise was accomplished through general ethical decline and cultural accommodation, but does not adequately address such theological factors as new eschatological perspectives. He does however emphasize that a misunderstanding concerning the early Christian understanding of what it meant to be a soldier of Christ, led in the end to an easy acceptance of the Christian as a temporal soldier who would not object to killing others. Ironically the church's progressive slide from its position of antimilitarism occurred at the same time that Tertullian, Origen and Lactantius were developing a doctrine of positive nonviolence (**patientia**).

Prior to his conclusion, in which Hornus reflects upon the relevance of the thought and action of the early Christians for our own violent age and calls for a review of the question of antimilitarism in our own present day in the light of history and experience, he includes a most interesting and stimulating discussion of Constantine's spiritual condition. Hornus concludes that his was a Christianity against which Christ stands as uncompromising accuser, thereby calling into question the apologetic tradition begun by Eusebius according to which Constantine was a perfect Christian.

Hornus provides the reader with a scholarly, thoroughly researched treatise. The documentation is impressive and the list of primary and secondary sources is extensive. Alan Kreider, the editor, has added a supplementary list of secondary sources which deal with the subject at hand but have been published in the past decade.

Daniel Herzler. **From Germantown to Steinbach, A Mennonite Odyssey**. Scottdale,

Pa., and Kitchener, Ontario; Herald Press, 1981. 256 pp. \$7.95 (\$9.20 Can.) Jan Gleysteen. **Mennonite Tourguide to Western Europe**. Scottdale, Pa., and Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1984. 340 pp., pb. \$12.95 (\$15.55 Can.) Reviewed by La Verna and Lawrence Klippenstein, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The **Odyssey** book emerged from a sabbatical safari when Daniel Herzler and his wife Mary spent time in eighteen communities and visited thirty-one Mennonite congregations. They began in Germantown, Pennsylvania, site of the first permanent Mennonite settlement in North America.

The Herzlers visited congregations in Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California and other states as well as three western Canadian provinces. Some were rural, some urban, some suburban. Some were small (9 members) some large (1,381 members). They were affiliated with the Mennonite Church, the Mennonite Brethren, the General Conference and Evangelical Mennonite conferences.

The book is more, however, than recorded impressions of someone who visits a congregation for a Sunday morning worship service. The chapters are careful congregational profiles, (enhanced by Mary Herzler's photography) based on information from church documents and interviews with church leaders and other active members.

Included in these profiles are the fascinating stories of their diverse origins. There is also diversity of worship patterns, language, race, mission, structure and lifestyle. But consistently, there is energy and enthusiasm, and a caring committed community of Christians.

The book is refreshing and encouraging. In many areas the Mennonite church is growing in obedience and outreach. The book itself is an invitation to pick up the Herzler's good idea and make a special effort to visit other Mennonite congregations when we travel.

Mennonite Tourguide is an exciting and timely new aid for travellers in Western Europe. The Strasbourg conference will certainly put this item in such demand. Specific attention to Anabaptist-Mennonite sites in various countries adds other orientation to the World Conference for which the publication has been designed.

More than fifty "yellow pages" near the beginning of the book fall under the title "Getting Ready". Here can be found dozens of tips on everything a traveller might need information on - literature, customs and immigration, missing baggage, how to say thanks, voltage converters, even writing home, and much, much more.

Mainly though, the book discusses things to see and know about nine different countries of Western Europe - Switzerland, Ger-

(Cont'd on p. 7)