

MENNONITE HISTORIAN

Published by the Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Centre for MB Studies in Canada

Volume XIII, No. 4, December, 1987



This was a meeting of the Conference of United Mennonites in Ontario held in 1954 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ministers' conference and the 10th anniversary of the provincial Conference. Among others we see, in the front row, [l-r]: Henry P. Epp, A.H. Harder, Nicholas N. Driedger, Johann Wichert, [second row]: P. Heinrichs, J.D. Janzen, J. Littke, Frank Andres, [third row]: N.N. Franssen, H.P. Lepp, A. Rempel, [fourth row]: C. K. Neufeld, W.W. Dick, J.C. Neufeld. Photo courtesy of N.N. Franssen and Der Bote.

On the Origins of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba

by Peter H. Rempel

In 1971 the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba celebrated its 25th anniversary on the assumption that its founding year had been 1946. In 1987 it commemorated 40 years of existence. Apart from the discrepancy between these two commemorations, the pre-history of the conference is somewhat unclear. This article presents recent research which clarifies the origin of the conference. Additional information from readers would be welcomed.

The emergence of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba was inspired by a vision of unity among all Mennonite church groups in Manitoba. It was also beset with disruptions. Various Mennonite groups converged and diverged until a viable union of two of these was finally formed in 1947.

The ministers of the Bergthaler Church of Manitoba were gathering as early as 1914 for

Bible discussions. From 1918 on these "Bible Conferences" included members of Mennonite Brethren and Evangelical Mennonite Brethren congregations. The invitation to the churches formed by the recent immigrants from the USSR was first extended by the Bergthaler ministerial in 1928.

In 1932 the ministers of the Bergthaler Church led by *Ältester* David Schulz expressed their desire that the annual Bible Conference, as a conference to which all Mennonite churches in Manitoba sent representatives, become responsible for home missions in Manitoba and that it be re-shaped into a district conference of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Soon thereafter the ministerial of the immigrant Blumenorter church also expressed the hope for a transformation of the Bible conference into a provincial conference.

The "Provincial Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba" in Plum Coulee on June 7-8, 1933, as it was noted in *Der Mitarbeiter* may have been the first explicit expression of such a goal.

Separate meetings of the immigrant ministers, in particular those of *kirchliche* background, were initiated with a meeting called by Johann P. Klassen in Winnipeg for March 10, 1926. Thereafter this ministers conference met at least annually — usually in Winnipeg. Eventually Bergthaler ministers, especially those immigrants who had joined this *Kanadier* church, attended these.

A comprehensive outline for a "Manitoba Mennonite Conference" was presented by Johann H. Enns at the immigrant-sponsored ministers conference in January 1935. He proposed a conference of congregational delegates alongside the continuing annual ministers conference. Its main purposes would be to take over the support of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna and to coordinate the ministry to Mennonites in isolated locations.

The proposal to form the conference was addressed to the Bergthaler Church and the immigrant churches such as the Blumenorter, Schoenwieser and Whitewater congregations. However it was also anticipated that other Mennonite groups would eventually join.

A subcommittee of the ministers conference together with Bergthaler representatives planned the founding meeting and requested J.H. Enns to draft a constitution. The conference assembled in Winkler on June 21-23, 1936 (not 1937 as stated in recent publications) preceded by a missions festival.

The Manitoba Mennonite Conference met again in July 1937 in Pigeon Lake, in 1938 in Lowe Farm, and in 1939 in Morden. The 1940 meeting, set for June 9-10 in St. Elizabeth was cancelled by the host congregation. A meeting in January 1941 considered the future of the conference and probably terminated its existence.

The demise of the conference was partially related to its inability to provide a broad and effective support base to the Mennonite Collegiate Institute. Some of the congregations which had been supporting the school were unwilling to join the conference with its General Conference orientation and not all member congregations were supportive of the school. The responsibility was transferred

(cont'd on page 2)

(cont'd from page 1)

to a new school association in 1939.

A greater factor, however, may have been the division between *Kanadier* and *Rußländer* in responding to military conscription introduced during World War II. The *Kanadier* held to their exemption from any state service while the later immigrants viewed some form of alternative service as inevitable and even commendable. The commitment to nonresistance of the immigrants was also suspect in the view of the *Kanadier* because of the *Selbstschutz* episode during the revolution in Russia.

This divergence had become acutely apparent in another series of meetings of Mennonite leaders. Representatives of most Mennonite groups had met in October 1938 to send a letter to Prime Minister Chamberlain of Britain in support of peace efforts. In May 1939 a Canada-wide set of church leaders assembled in Winnipeg to discuss the Mennonite position on military service in wartime. That fall the leaders of several Manitoba Mennonite churches began a series of their own meetings.

Soon a united stance was deemed impossible and the *Kanadier* and *Rußländer* groups each established their own representations. The new Manitoba Mennonite Conference included elements of both groups — the *Kanadier Bergthaler* and the *kirchliche Rußländer*. It could not remain unaffected by this broader division among Canadian Mennonites.

Though the Manitoba Mennonite Conference did not assemble as such after 1939 its youth organization conducted youth rallies, Sunday School and youth worker conferences. The minister conferences also continued, having shifted the time of meeting from January to November. However, the participation of Bergthaler ministers declined and it reverted to an almost exclusively immigrant assembly.

In 1943 a ministers gathering in Altona was announced for June 17-18. Its program included Mennonite Brethren and Rudnerweider as well as immigrant speakers. This gathering and the one in Winkler in the following year were a recasting of the Bible conferences initiated by the Bergthaler Church.

A controversy about a doctrinal position attributed to J.H. Enns, by now elder of the Schoenwieser church, disrupted the ministers conferences in 1945. After consultations involving ministers of all the participating church groups, except the Schoenwieser Church, the winter conference was re-located from Winnipeg to Altona. The summer conference was not repeated and the Schoenwieser Church reverted to separate ministerial meetings.

The need to revive the Manitoba Mennonite Conference was advocated by Benjamin Ewert at the fall ministers conference in 1944 but decisive action was deferred until the



Benjamin Ewert (d. 1958) at work in his office on River Ave. in Winnipeg.

1946 meeting. The ministers assembled in Steinbach on November 15-16 resolved to [re-]establish the Manitoba Mennonite Conference at the time of their next meeting.

Thus on October 28, 1947 in Altona, preceded by the ministers conference, the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba was constituted under the chairmanship of G.G. Neufeld, *Ältester* of the Whitewater church.

The congregations registered as founding members were: the Schoenfelder (Headingley), Whitewater, Elim, (Grunthal), Steinbach, Lichtenauer (St. Elizabeth), Niverville, Springstein, Glenlea, Nordheim (Fork River), Blumenorter (Reinland), and Arnaud — all immigrant congregations — and the Bergthaler Church of Manitoba as well as the Bethel Mission church in Winnipeg. The church whose leadership had provided much of the original vision and impetus, namely the Schoenweiser Church based in Winnipeg, was outside this union at its founding — it eventually joined in 1968.

In the various episodes and assemblies which preceded the conference's formation there had also been fellowship and cooperation with other Mennonite groups, including the traditional conservative groups and the revived evangelical ones. Ultimately, only the Bergthaler and the immigrant churches which shared an association with the General Conference on the Canadian and North American levels merged to form the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba.

The Bergthaler and the *kirchliche* Mennonites had diverged from the time of the establishment of the Bergthaler colony in Russia and even more after its immigration. In Canada they converged after the arrival of immigrants in the 1920's until the pressures of the wartime situation again divided them.

The traumas of a divided peace witness in wartime and of an internal doctrinal dispute moved both groups toward a common per-

ception of the need for unity. This re-convergence in the face of internal and external threats led to the founding of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba.

Published Sources:

- Das Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt* (1936-1946)
Der Bote (1926-1946)
Der Mitarbeiter (1918-1934)
Conference of Mennonites in Canada Yearbooks
 Gerbrandt, Henry J., *Adventure in Faith: The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba*. Altona, 1970.
 Klippenstein, Lawrence, "A Brief Pre-History of the CMM," in *In Quest of Brothers: A yearbook commemorating twenty-five years of life together in the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba 1946-1971*. Winnipeg, 1972.

Unpublished Sources:

- Conference of Mennonites in Canada records
 Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba records
 First Mennonite Church [Winnipeg] records
 Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba records
 A.P. Bueckert papers, J.P. Claszen papers, G.G. Neufeld papers, H.J. Gerbrandt papers.

Peter H. Rempel is archival assistant in special projects at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives in Winnipeg.

Early Manitoba Mennonite Newspapers

by John Dyck

The *Volkszeitung* was probably the first Mennonite newspaper published in Manitoba. It was published weekly by Henry H. Neufeld, beginning in 1902 and ending in 1907. The first editor was P.P. Kroeker, who held that post until the summer of 1905, when he sold his interest in the venture and moved to Saskatchewan. Kroeker was succeeded by Peter Klassen.

The scope of the *Volkszeitung* was not strictly Mennonite, nor Manitoban. Neufeld and Kroeker envisioned an international paper, read by German people in every land with the object of promoting German and especially German colonial news.

The *Volkszeitung* was one of four newspapers begun in the first decade of the 20th century. The others were *Reisedtner*, published in 1904, *Der Mitarbeiter*, 1906-1934, and *Rheinlaender*, 1908. *Der Mitarbeiter* was able to survive because it became the official organ of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada for a time. *Reisedtner* and *Rheinlaender* seem to have run for less than a year and so far no issues have come to light.

GENEALOGY AND FAMILY HISTORY

by Alf Redekopp

A regular section of the *Mennonite Historian* featuring genealogical items of interest is beginning with this issue. In this first column we want to briefly outline the type of features you can look for in future issues.

1. A list of recently published genealogies will be featured. With each book listed we hope to add a brief description of the book, its key persons and relationships.

2. Articles focussing on helpful sources for the genealogist (eg. Katie Peters Collection, Mennonite Genealogy Inc., etc.).

3. Helpful hints for the genealogist in terms of how to organize materials, ways to use a computer with genealogy, how to prepare for publication and other researching skills could be featured.

4. A "search and find" column could also be developed, allowing genealogists to publish specific genealogical requests, or to share "clues" with others.

Additional ideas and responses to these would be greatly appreciated. We welcome your suggestions and contributions. Please address them to Alf Redekopp, c/o Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1-169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, Canada, R2L 2E5.

A.A. Kroeker: A Man for Agriculture and Community Involvement

by Walter E. Kroeker

Abram Kroeker was a man of wide-ranging interests and talents. He contributed much to both Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike in the areas of education, as a dedicated minister, agriculturalist, Sunday School promoter, home missions promoter and as a pioneer in Christian camping. A man of enormous energy with an interest in "making things happen", his contributions in many of these areas are still evident today in thriving institutions.

In remembrance of his contributions the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada conducted a commemorative evening on November 20, 1987, in Winnipeg. Of the many fine presentations of that evening we are publishing one, by his eldest son Walter Kroeker, who summarizes Kroeker's agricultural and community involvement in Manitoba. The full texts of the presentations of that evening are available from the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. Also available is a video-tape. Please write for cost of rental or purchase.

There was no hint in Abram Kroeker's early life that he had a particular interest in agriculture. His boyhood and youth were spent on farms, but at the first available opportunity he chose schooling and a teaching career over a farming vocation.



The General store and harness shop owned and operated by Abram A. Kroeker and his brother Jacob. The Kroeker brothers remained in partnership from 1915-1928.

Later, as a partner with his brothers Jacob and Peter in a business venture, his interests did include a farm. He seemed to be content however, that his younger brother Peter would operate it.

Thus it was somewhat of a sensation in Winkler when Abe Kroeker, a successful young businessman, announced that he planned to become a farmer. His answer to questions was simple and straightforward — a town was not the place to raise his family. His rationale was convincing. With five children, the oldest now entering the troubled and troublesome teens, there needed to be a wholesome outlet for energy and a purposeful direction for activity.

In February, 1928 agriculture was in a stable condition, prices reasonably satisfactory. The 360 acres he purchased from the partnership were in a good location, adjacent to Peter's, — and the fields, he knew, were clean. There were buildings suitable for a "mixed farm", — for horses, milk cows, pigs, chickens and sheep, — an ideal setting for the coordinated family venture he and his wife Elizabeth had in mind.

As matters turned out, a number of snags developed. The "clean" fields, along with those of their neighbours, had become polluted with sow thistle, a most pernicious perennial weed. In 1929 there was a virtual crop failure due to drownout, and in 1930 farm produce prices plummeted. Drought, wind, grasshoppers, Russian thistle (the tumbleweed of romantic cowboy ballads) arrived — the Great Depression had begun.

These conditions presented Abe Kroeker with challenges and opportunities. He responded with courage to both.

He had always been drawn to those who stimulated the mind and imagination, people who were not content to remain on well-trodden paths, notably Frederick Philip Grove, Heinrich Ewert, Reuben Torrey and Abraham Unruh. Now that farm problems required imaginative and innovative solutions, he applied to them the bold and fresh approaches of his mentors. As a "beginner" in farming he was unhampered by the baggage of narrow prejudiced views.

Agriculture in the late 1920's followed the traditional methods of the 50 years since the area was settled. The standard cropping cycle was three, four or more successive years of wheat followed by a fallow year.

In 1930 Abe Kroeker began using chemical fertilizer with dramatic results. The next year one of the first fertilizer attachments was installed on his drill, and nitrogen phosphate pellets were applied with all seeded grain. The crop response was excellent, and proved to be a valuable object lesson to other farmers.

Environmental concerns were voiced by thoughtful scientists even in those days. Abe Kroeker listened carefully and attentively to specialists Bill Breakey and Jack Crawford of Morden, Professors Tom Harrison and Joe Ellis and Jim Haney of International Harvester. They inspired confidence. Arguments against black summerfallow, and in favour of balanced crop rotations that included corn as a row crop and legumes or soil fibre sounded logical and convincing — they made good sense to the Kroekers. With characteristic enthusiasm and zeal, Abe made the historic and fateful decision to "go for it."

The following year, in 1932, he planted forty acres of corn. The crop was excellent, and even more important was the fact that the corn stalks trapped drifting snow during the winter. This provided adequate field moisture for a bountiful crop of wheat the next year, when extreme drought brought general crop failure elsewhere. The demonstration was so effective, and the results so widely promoted by Abe Kroeker and farm periodicals, that this new cropping principle for southern Manitoba was accepted quickly and applied generally.

"Black" summerfallow became almost extinct in the Pembina Triangle. The lessons learned from the successful introduction of the first row crop, corn, set the stage for other innovative applications: sunflowers, sunflower oil processing, sugar beets, and potatoes.

The popularity of corn-growing created a great demand for seed, which Abram Kroeker set out to fill. In 1936, after several years of trials with other methods, he modified, and adapted to Manitoba conditions, a Wisconsin kiln-drying system, which he found to be suitable. It was widely copied by others, and became the foundation on which a successful industry developed in Manitoba, both for seed and commercial grain corn, that was distributed across Western Canada.

(cont'd on page 5)

Donors Acknowledgement

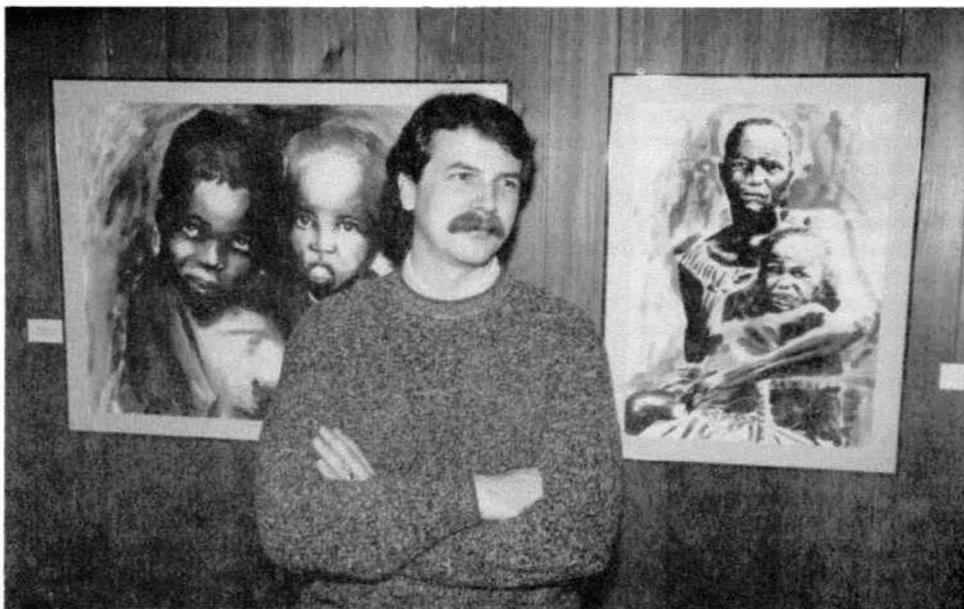
We at the Heritage Centre would like to express our gratitude to the people, listed below, who have made financial donations over the past year to support the programs of the archives. Our donations to date (Jan. 1 -Dec. 5) total \$3100.00, with our goal being \$3900.00. Thank you again for your support.

Manitoba

Sid Barkman, Winnipeg
 Ken A. Braun, Altona
 William R. Braun, Winnipeg
 Henry Dick, Winnipeg
 Jacob Doerksen, Ile des Chenes
 David D. Duerksen, Winnipeg
 Gerhard Dyck, Birds Hill
 H. W. Enns, Winkler
 John W. Enns, Winkler
 William P. Enns, Kleefeld
 Dr. Vera Fast, Winnipeg
 D.W. Friesen & Sons, Altona
 Ernie A. Friesen, Steinbach
 Ted Friesen, Altona
 Ed Funk, Rosenfeld
 Agatha Giesbrecht, Plum Coulee
 Allen Giesbrecht, Altona
 Anne Giesbrecht, Winnipeg
 Abe L. Goertzen, Winnipeg
 Peter A. Hiebert, Steinbach
 Susan Hildebrandt, Winnipeg
 Hedy Janzen, Winnipeg
 Heinz Kampen, Winnipeg
 William J. Kehler, Altona
 Dr. George Kroeker, Winnipeg
 Peter Letkemann, Winnipeg
 Joseph Miller, Winnipeg
 Nettie Neufeld, Steinbach
 Delbert Plett, Steinbach
 H.W. Redekopp, Winnipeg
 Peter H. Rempel, Winnipeg
 Dieter Roger, Winnipeg
 Mrs. H. Ross, Winnipeg
 Anna Sawatzky, Winnipeg
 H. Schirmacher, Winnipeg
 G. Sickert, Winnipeg
 Erwin Siemens, Winnipeg
 A.J. Thiessen, Winnipeg
 Isaac Unger, Winnipeg
 Hilda Unrau, Winnipeg
 Dr. C.W. Wiebe, Winkler
 Henry F. Wiebe, Winkler
 Jake Wiens, Winnipeg

Ontario

Otto Andres, Scarborough
 P.C. Bergen, Kitchener
 Dr. Victor A. Dirks, Kingsville
 Ernest J. Dyck, Ottawa
 Peter F. Golbeck, Tiverton
 Herb Harder, London
 Henry C. Janzen, Ottawa
 Frank Klassen, St. Catharines
 James D. Kolesnikoff, Hamilton
 Mrs. Maria Naeser, Niagara-on-the-Lake
 Nelly Rempel, Port Robinson



The MHC gallery special exhibit "From Africa to Canada. Paintings from the Life and Mind of Ray Dirks" will close on January 15, 1988. Drop by to see it if you haven't till now.

Bev Suderman, Beamsville
 David Wiens, Ottawa

Saskatchewan

S. Eileen Epp, Hague
 Peter Funk, Lucky Lake
 Jacob G. Guenther, Saskatoon
 Katherine Hooge, Saskatoon
 Gordon Janzen, Saskatoon
 Antonia Krahn, Saskatoon
 Ingrid Lamp, Swift Current

Alberta

C. Blake Friesen, Calgary
 Evelyn Kathrens, Calgary
 William Pauls, Calgary
 Betty Penner, Brooks
 Katherine Peters, Didsbury
 Arthur Schwartz, Caroline

British Columbia

Art Hoock, Aldergrove
 Harold P. Klassen, Victoria
 Katherine H. Loewen, Maple Ridge
 Mrs. Mildred Neufeld, Ladysmith
 John P. Nickel, Nanaimo
 Henry Schapansky, Clearbrook
 G. Thielmann, Clearbrook

United States

Sherrell Eckstein, Kerville, Texas
 William D. Funk, Bellevue, Washington
 Hazel Hassan, Rockford, Illinois
 Ernest Hiebert, Gainesville, Florida
 Noble C. Hiebert, Whispering Pines,
 North Carolina

Amos B. Hoover, Denver, Pennsylvania
 Ronald Loewen, Baytown, Texas
 John Neustadter, Vernon, New York
 David C. Peters, Stillwater, Oklahoma
 Etta S. Schmidt, Goshen, Indiana
 John Thiesen, Newton, Kansas

REFLECTIONS ON COLLECTIONS

The Walter Burow collection

by Jim Suderman

The main piece of the collection is the Walter Burow memoir (very possibly composed with the aid of a diary) which presently consists of about 115 type-written pages (in German). Two parts of this memoir, concerning Burow's life in Halbstadt prior to the civil war and the *Selbstschutz* (of which Burow was a member), have been translated into English by Solomon L. Loewen (see the *AHSGR Journal*, Vol. 9, Nos. 2, 4). The remainder (ca. 100 pages) relates Burow's experiences during the German occupation of Halbstadt and two trips to the Neufeld estate in the Crimea.

A second piece of the memoir, 30 pages, written in 1947, covers Burow's life from his birth to the end of 1917, when he fled Omsk. Included in this piece are transcripts of letters to and from his mother, some of which he sent and received in Russia.

Thirteen pictures and a document entitled *Beschreibung* complete the collection. The photographs, dating from 1922 to 1968, are of Walter Burow and his family as well as of the Hermann Neufeld family, dated 1904 and 1913.

Walter's son, Egon Burow, from Berlin, spent a month doing research at the Mennonite Heritage Centre this past summer and donated the collection.



MB Centennial Calendar — 1988

19-20 February, Centennial Conference of the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Churches. Portage Ave. MB Church in Winnipeg.

21 February, Centennial Sunday: Morning "Praise" service and afternoon "Historical Drama" at the Winnipeg Convention Centre.

26-27 February, Ontario Provincial Conference in Orchard Park MB Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

11-12 March, Alberta Provincial Conference in Lethbridge.

18-19 March, Saskatchewan Provincial Conference in Herbert.

26 March, Rev. H. H. Janzen evening, 7:30 p.m. in the Kitchener MB Church, Ontario.

8-11 June, British Columbia Provincial Convention in Chilliwack Central MB Church.

8-11 July, Centennial Conference of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Winkler.

10 July, Centennial Sunday: Morning "Praise" service and afternoon "Outdoor Music Festival" in Winkler.

10 July, Conference send-off for the "Centennial Youth Caravan" summer ministries program.

20-22 October, Disciple-making 1988, Centennial Program, Central Heights MB Church in Abbotsford, B.C.

3-6 November, Deeper Life Services at the Winkler MB Church with Rev. J.H. Quiring.

Ben Horch Receives Award

Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation Minister Judy Wasylcia-Leis presented the first Manitoba awards for Multiculturalism at an awards banquet on November 21, 1987. Six winners received a cast bronze sculpture, "Prairie Rainstorm — Prairie Gold," designed by local artist Gordon Reeve.

In the Media and Communications category the winner was Benjamin Horch, in recognition of his 60-year career as singer, conductor, teacher and broadcaster.

It was noted that through his CBC radio programs, "The Prairie Schooner," "Prairie Choir" and "Song Recital," members of the Anglo, French, Ukrainian, Polish, Icelandic, German, Mennonite, Jewish and other communities were able to share their musical traditions and contribute to a growing sense of cross-cultural awareness among Canadian listeners.

In making the presentation, the Minister noted, "The common characteristic of our winners here tonight is their devotion and determination in ensuring that our society's mainstream has recognized and accepted the multicultural presence in Manitoba. All Manitobans are indebted to them."



Rev. Henry Janzen (1901-1974)

A Henry Janzen Evening

An evening in memory of Rev. Henry H. Janzen will be sponsored by the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada and the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Ontario on March 26, 1988. This informative event is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. in the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church. The public is invited to attend. Presenting brief talks on Rev. Janzen's contributions to Mennonite Brethren missions, education and conference activities will be Ed Boldt, Rudy Janzen, Ken Reddig and featured guest speaker, Dr. J.B. Toews of Fresno, California.

Recent Accessions at CMBS

Flucht Vom Terek by Gerhard C. Kroeker.

A History of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church in Manitoba, 1874-1914 (M.A. thesis), courtesy of author Dennis Stoesz.

Two maps of Mennonite colonies in Paraguay, 1987.

Quien es mi profimo, Paraguay.

Atlas der Kolonie Menno, Paraguay.

Five maps of Mennonite colonies in Mexico, courtesy of Dr. Len Sawatzky.

Minutes, correspondence and reports of the Board of the Manitoba Missions and Church Extension office, 1978-1984.



CANADIAN CONFERENCE OF
MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES

Minutes and reports of the Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of MB Churches, 1978-1983.

Minutes and reports of Mennonite Brethren Communications, 1969-1974.

Hillsboro Vorwärts (weekly), 1921-1953, almost complete.

A.A. Kroeker (cont'd from p. 3)

The diversification of cropping practices from a grain base to row crops, that was initiated and popularized by Abe Kroeker, brought intensive land use and much higher employment levels and economic activity to southern Manitoba. It led to significant growth in population density and to a prosperity that is still expanding and developing.

In bringing to realization his dream of a continuing family farming venture, a partnership of A.A. Kroeker and Sons was formally launched in 1936. It later became Kroeker Farms Limited.

As a result of a disastrous frost in August of 1942, a diversification from corn into potatoes began on the Kroeker farm. Acreage of both seed and table potatoes was expanded year after year, and again leadership was provided in the development of an important new and profitable industry for Manitoba. The potato industry later expanded into the manufacturing field (french fries, instant mashed and chips), and potato processing is now more concentrated in Manitoba than in any other province.

The significant contributions of Abram Kroeker to Manitoba agriculture were recognized in several awards of honorary life memberships in industry organizations, the granting of a Robertson Associateship by the Canadian Seed Growers Association, a citation in the Encyclopedia Canadiana, in which his leadership role in the introduction of row crops is confirmed, and a "Golden Boy" Good Citizenship Award.

The Good Citizenship Award also recognized Abram Kroeker's community services. These involvements included a key role in the 1936 founding of the Bethel Hospital in Winkler, many years as a school trustee, conductor of a rural community choir, organizer and leader of Junior (4H) Grain Clubs, encouragement of 4H Potato Clubs, and in the development of senior citizens' accommodations in Winkler, (Heritage Manor and Heritage Centennial Apartments).

An important part of Abram Kroeker's contribution to society was his unique ability to recognize opportunities, to accept challenges, to impart his insights, to infect those about him with his irrepressible enthusiasm, and to bring about positive innovative action. The final result had a lasting impact on agriculture and on the wider community.

Walter Kroeker is a retired businessman and biculturalist living in Winnipeg, Man.

MHSC Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada was held on December 5 at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Eighteen persons attended.

Reports from the provincial historical societies led off the agenda. The newly-organized Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta has now joined four others. This group has nearly 20 members and is actively recruiting more. In B.C. the search is on for funds to begin the proposed heritage project at Chilliwack. It's a tough, uphill struggle as Mennonite communities sometimes place priorities in a way that leaves such items low on the list. It's hoped that the Saskatchewan society can be revitalized soon. Manitoba members want to publish Volume III of the Arnold Dyck series, and find their fund-raising a challenge as well.

The main project of MHSC is still Volume III of *Mennonites in Canada*. Dr. Ted Regehr, Saskatoon, and Marlene Epp, Waterloo, are the writers. It is hoped that more released time will give Ted a chance to push the project next year. Marlene will be giving more time after graduate school classes terminate in April. Publication is "hoped for, but not promised" for the MWC meetings in 1990. *Mennonite Symposium II* will raise a number of issues to be faced in this volume. A report on the program appears elsewhere on this page.

Archival reports were added from Sam Steiner, Ken Reddig, Lawrence Klippenstein and Roy Loewen (EMC archives in Steinbach). The Chair of Mennonite Studies (University of Winnipeg), Mennonite Heritage Village (Steinbach) and Mennonite World Conference Publication committee were heard from as well.

A budget of just over \$43,000 was brought forward for 1987-88, and the incumbent executive was asked to stay on for the coming year.

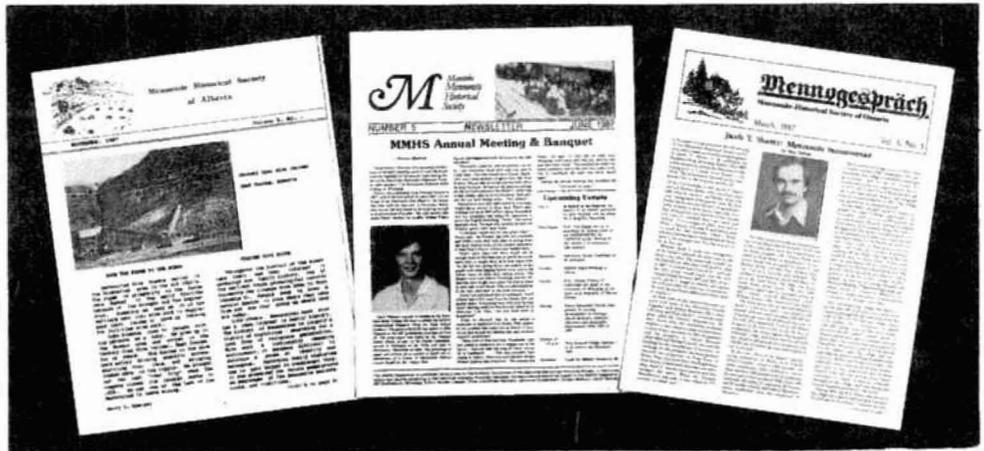
Lawrence Klippenstein

Second Symposium on Mennonites in Canada

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and the Institute of Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel College are planning a second symposium on Mennonites in Canada for May 12-14, 1988.

The first symposium was held on May 21-23, 1987 at the University of Winnipeg in Winnipeg. It featured papers in the areas of history, education, theology, immigration, emigration, peace, and the role of women.

The second symposium is designed to widen the focus of research to include the areas of literature and social sciences. In addition to the major addresses, the symposium will include numerous brief historical vignettes presented by people from the local community. These will focus on personal experiences as they relate to the session topics. The scope



Three of the five existing provincial Mennonite historical societies (Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario) now publish their own newsletters. Addresses are as follows: **Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta Newsletter**, c/o Henry Goerzen, MHSA, 76 Skyline Cr. N.E., Calgary, Alberta, T2K 5X7; **MMHS Newsletter**, c/o Roy Loewen, RR 1, Box 1, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0; and **Mennogespräch**, c/o Sam Steiner, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3G6.

EMC Archives Under Way

Dave Schellenberg, formerly editor of the *EMC Messenger*, has been hired to develop the Evangelical Mennonite Conference archives. Roy Loewen of Steinbach gave a presentation of these archives at a meeting of the Association of Manitoba Archivists, held at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on December 7.

of the second symposium will be the period of the 1950s and early 1960s.

Both symposia are designed to help the writing of *Mennonites in Canada, Volume III*. The writers of Volume III presently are Dr. Ted Regehr, a historian at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and his associate, Marlene Epp, graduate student at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario.

The first symposium was made possible with a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. A grant application has also been made for the second symposium.

Below is a tentative program for the symposium at Conrad Grebel College. The projected registration fee is \$20.00 per person. All interested people are invited to register for the symposium by writing to: Sam Steiner, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3G6.

Theme: "From people of God to citizens of the world?: Canadian Mennonites in the 1950s"

Thursday, May 12, 1:00-4:30 p.m.

Presentation: "Mennonite home missions in the 1950s" by Peter Penner.

Presentation: "The changing Mennonite theological identity of the 1950s" by John Friesen.

7:30-9:00 p.m.

Presentation: "Urbanization of Mennonites in post-war Canada" by Leo Driedger.

This page is sponsored and paid for by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

Friday, May 13, 9:00-12:00 a.m.

Presentation: "Changes in the social, religious and economic life of a Mennonite community in the 1950s" by Hugh Laurance.

Presentation: "Changes in language and cultural symbols during the 1950s" by Adolf Ens.

1:00-4:30 p.m.

Presentation: "Retaining the youth: developments among Mennonite young people in the 1950s" by Marlene Epp.

Presentation: "Private Mennonite education in the 1950s" by Ross Bender.

7:30-9:00 p.m.

Presentation: "Northern enterprise and the Mennonites" by Ted Regehr.

Saturday, May 14, 9:00-12:00 a.m.

Presentation: "Post-War developments in Canadian Mennonite literature" by Victor Doerksen.

Presentation: "Developments in Canadian Mennonite music after World War II" by Wes Berg.

1:00-4:30 p.m.

Presentation: "World War II: interpretation and self-understanding during the 1950s" by Harry Loewen.

Presentation: "Changes in Mennonite congregational and denominational authority and polity structures in the 1950s" by Jacob Peters.

7:30-9:00 p.m.

Discussion, review and condensation of themes.

John Friesen

Book Reviews (cont'd from page 8)

cal consequences. Redekop's position is that, "most Mennonite Brethren leaders do not see ethnicity as a noteworthy reality, let alone a problem. At least they tend not to discuss it" (p. 120). A California study by Warner is cited extensively to illustrate the integration of the ethnic and religious realities with the conclusion that "the ethnic is more important" (p. 129).

The Mennonite Brethren leadership must act now, says Redekop, to prevent erosion of religious reality, i.e. it must clarify the church's identity as a religious community and ground it more rigorously in an Anabaptist theology. The present trend of "denying both Mennonite ethnicity and rejecting Anabaptist theology" (p. 147) is not a realistic option. Instead, Redekop suggests "separating Mennonite ethnicity from Anabaptist theology, in a formal and official sense, and reaffirming both" (p. 147).

In practical terms this means adopting more Christ-like attitudes toward non-ethnic Mennonites, practising more egalitarian relationships and affirming "conference" as a religious community. The latter would be signified, the author suggests, by renaming the denomination — The Canadian Conference of Evangelical Anabaptist Churches.

This book is a "must" reading for Mennonites interested in the survival of the Mennonite community. The position that our religious witness will continue to erode unless we are prepared to separate ethnic and religious entities will not sit well with those seeking to integrate faith and culture. One also gets the uneasy feeling that the suggested name-change highlighting religious commitment is yet another strategy for differentiating Mennonite denominations. To be both Mennonite and an Evangelical Anabaptist — is that the answer?

Dr. Jacob Peters is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Winnipeg in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Doell, Leonard, **The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan, 1892-1975.** (Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1987). 120 pp., pb., \$8.00.

Reviewed by John Friesen.

Leonard Doell has woven together the fascinating story of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan from its roots in the Bergthal Mennonite settlement in Russia until 1975, when the present *Ältester* Johann D. Reddekopp began his term of service.

A number of years ago when he began this study, Doell was in fact merely searching for his family's roots. However, the more he researched his family's history, the more he realized that its story was interwoven with the story of the Bergthaler people. Consequently he shifted the focus of his research and the result was this very fine history book.

For the Saskatchewan Bergthaler people the pioneer years in the 1890s were very diffi-

cult. They had to lay out villages, build houses and barns, develop roads, establish schools, and form innumerable community structures.

Organizing the Church was also difficult. The Bergthaler Church was established in 1893 but it had no *Ältester* during its first three years. From 1896-1900 the Church completely dissolved and the members worshipped in neighboring congregations. In 1900 the Church reorganized, and in 1902 the first *Ältester*, Kornelius Epp, was ordained by the Sommerfelder *Ältester* from Manitoba.

Even though Doell organizes his story around the years of service of each *Ältester*, his is not an institutional history. He attempts to tell the story as that of a pilgrim people searching for ways to be faithful to the Biblical convictions they have received from their forbears. One of the Bergthalers' most important concerns is that of controlling the education of their children and the author notes the anguish of the people when they feel compelled repeatedly to emigrate, either to Paraguay, to the Peace River area, or to Bolivia.

Doell deals with a number of issues which particularly help the reader to see life within the community. He discusses, for example, the role of engagement celebrations, the search for appropriate forms of non-conformity to the world, the impact of the flu of 1918, and the role of the midwives.

The book is augmented by a helpful bibliography, a chart delineating the groups which have descended from the Bergthal settlement in South Russia, a number of maps, a list of 1926 emigrants to Paraguay, and numerous photos. The appendix includes additional helpful information: brief biographies of all the *Älteste* and ministers, a list of homes and churches in which the Church has met, and a year-by-year membership list from 1902 to 1975.

Doell is to be commended for his study of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan. With a great respect for his subject, the author sensitively allows the reader to peer into the life of a gentle, peaceful and often misunderstood people.

Dr. John Friesen is Associate Professor of History and Theology at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Book Notes

Bethel College, North Newton, KS, inaugurated the Cornelius H. Wedel Historical Series this year with two books: Rodney J. Sawatzky, *Authority and Identity: The Dynamics of the General Conference Mennonite Church* (123 pp.), and James C. Juhnke, *Dialogue with a Heritage: Cornelius H. Wedel and the Beginnings of Bethel College* (109 pp.). David H. Haury of Mennonite Library and Archives is the series editor. The books are available from Conrad Grebel College for \$8 (paperback) and \$20 (hardcover) CAN.

Michael M. Miller, director of the North Dakota Institute of Regional Studies at Fargo, has compiled a very helpful annotated bibliography of the "Germans from Russia Heritage Collection" at the North Dakota State University library. The 8½ x 11" book is entitled *Researching Germans From Russia* (Fargo, N.D.: Institute of Regional Studies, 1987; 224 pp.). It lists and describes not only books but also the map, microfilm, manuscript, newspaper and periodical holdings of the Institute.

Mennonite researchers will find the Amish, Mennonite and Hutterite sections useful, but will be particularly pleased with the 16 pages of detailed description of the contents of the *Heimatsbuch der Deutschen aus Russland* series, begun by Dr. Karl Stumpp in 1954. Twenty five pages of indexes make the book a highly accessible research tool.

Gerhard P. Bassler, history professor at Memorial University, Newfoundland, has translated, edited, and combined the contents of five of the key publications of Heinz Lehmann on *Deutschtum* in Canada into one packed volume. The contents of *The German Canadians, 1750-1937: Immigration, Settlement & Culture* (St. John's: Jespersion Press, 1986; lxvii + 541 pp.) consists of Lehmann's two books of 1931 and 1939 and of three significant journal articles published between those two dates.

Bassler's publication is especially important because Lehmann's 1939 book (*Das Deutschtum in Westkanada*) was destroyed in an air raid on Leipzig in 1942 after only about a hundred copies had been sold and very few copies had reached Canada. His 38-page bibliography and a concise survey of sources for the study of German-Canadian history are invaluable. Lehmann's book includes extensive treatment of Mennonite communities from Ontario to British Columbia in the context of the larger story of German Canadians.

Anna Hiebert Esau. *What God Has Done: The Story of the Latin American Mennonite Brethren Conference.* (Winnipeg & Hillsboro: Kindred Press, 1987), 191 pp., \$25.15 pb. An account of mission work begun among Mexican Americans in Texas by the Southern District Mennonite Brethren Conference fifty years ago, which led to the establishing of a new conference of some 300 members.

Horst Penner, *Die ost- und westpreussischen Mennoniten in ihrem religiösen und sozialen Leben in ihren kulturellen und wirtschaftlichen Leistungen*, Band II. (Kirchheimbolanden, W. Germany: Horst Penner, 1987). 361 pp., 42 pages of photos. Available from the author, Am Kahlenberggring 9, 6719 Kirchheimbolanden, W. Germany for DM 30,- (pb.), or DM 35,- (hc.).

Just received: Abe Warkentin, *Gäste und Fremdlinge/Strangers and Pilgrims.* (Steinbach: Die Mennonitische Post/Derksen Printers, 1987, 361 pp.). Review to follow.

The book is available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre for \$33.00.

BOOK REVIEWS

Huebert, Helmut T., **Hierschau. An Example of Russian Mennonite Life.** (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 1986). 404 pp., pb., \$24.95.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

There may be some truth in saying, as the introduction does, that this book "does not add all that much to what historians already know about the Russian Mennonite experience." Nowhere, however, have the known bits of information on a village been so exhaustively and carefully gathered, then presented under the covers of one volume as they have been here.

Hierschau may indeed have been one of the less important Mennonite villages in Russia. However, Huebert's comprehensive account, carefully placed into the larger context of life in the Molotschna colony, makes the book, in a real sense, representative of the larger Mennonite community in Russia since 1848 when Hierschau was founded.

The inclusion of a series of biographies is a further useful feature of this book, as are the maps — carefully drawn and illustrating a breadth of development hardly attempted in this way before. Charts and related photographs significantly supplement the other information.

The encyclopedic nature of the book, to be sure, raises the question of organizing such a mass of data. The author has struggled valiantly with the problem, though one senses at times that there is simply too much material to fit it all in properly; too much that is, to provide a narrative that creates an integrated portrait of the whole.

One misses as well a nuanced analysis of Hierschau's significance to the larger Mennonite community. What was its relationship to neighbouring villages and how did these look on Hierschau as a younger settlement than most of the others? Why did the Mennonite Brethren movement seemingly affect this village less than many others? In other words, what kind of *Grosse Gemeinde* congregation existed here? There are hints but one is eager to know more. The view we get of the "Kirchliche" *Ältester* Gerhard Plett is nonetheless a very important contribution to an understanding of the broader religious scene.

Remarkably free of typos and editorial errors, as such studies go, there are a few items that did slip through. Hermann Bergmann sat in the Third Duma (1907-1912) and Peter Schroeder in the Fourth (1912-1917), rather than Goertz and Isaak. P.M. Friesen's reference to eight Mennonite *Forstei* camps is repeated here, with no mention of the ninth one, set up on the Trans-Siberian Railway at Issyl Kul in 1912-13, i.e. after the publication of Friesen's work in 1911. It is also not quite correct to speak of the Provisional government as having been set up under the "auspices" of the Petrograd Soviet, although the latter was definitely a powerful force, almost a kind of parallel government, that had to be reckoned with at the time.

Back once more to the strengths. The book provides significant new material on the *Selbstschutz* in the section (ch. XIII) that introduces "Führer Braun" (derived from interviews with Heinrich Braun). The final chapter is an excellent effort to bring the older story of a Mennonite village completely up-to-date (cf. a similar venture in William Schroeder's *The Bergthal Colony*).

Hierschau is an exemplary illustration of the way in which interview material may be integrated with document data and other written forms of information. A number of interviewees have contributed significantly to this study, and one can only hope that this source of information will be pursued aggressively in other studies as well.

That this historical treatment should come from the pen of a medical doctor is in itself a bit of wonderment. Dr. Huebert has done all this alongside a very busy practice which occupies ordinary persons to the fullest extent. A precedent has been set here, with a challenge to give us the stories of other "examples of Russian Mennonite life" as well. It may be a while before one quite like this appears again.

Peters, Victor and Jack Thiessen, **Menonitische Namen/Mennonite Names.** (Marburg, West Germany: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1987). 247 pp., pb. \$25.00.

Reviewed by Alf Redekopp.

This bilingual book contains a study of surnames most common among Mennonites of West Prussian-Russian descent. The German-English format with Low German pronunciations will certainly be an advantage to those readers who possess the use of only one language.

The study contains a section on the origin of surnames in general and of Mennonite surnames in particular, including such aspects as: first appearance of the name among the Mennonite people, the number of families with the particular name who migrated from Prussia to Russia, and the frequency with which the name can be found in specific communities in Canada today.

For genealogists the appendices containing a reprint of Karl Stumpp's list of Mennonites who migrated from Danzig-East Prussia to Southern Russia in the years 1789-1820 (and in part till 1870), and a section of maps and photographs will be helpful resources.

Alf Redekopp is a part-time assistant at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies.

Redekop, John H., **A People Apart: Ethnicity and the Mennonite Brethren.** (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Kindred Press, 1987). 198 pp., pb., \$11.95.

Reviewed by Jacob Peters.

To be or not to be Mennonite. Evidence shows that more and more established Mennonite Brethren churches are dropping the designation Mennonite from their official names, and that the majority of new congregations (75%) are choosing other names. Further evidence suggests that accompanying the name-dropping is a gradual erosion of vital Anabaptist biblical distinctives, particularly the peace position. The MB leadership seems reluctant, however, to confront the issue.

A national, non-random survey of MB leadership/membership (600), university students (345), Bible institute and Bible college students (493), and Mennonite high school students (232) is used in the study. This purposive sample selection raises serious concerns in comparative analysis. It is difficult to see how combining the opinions of university students from a non-random selection of universities and classes (e.g., in Mennonite Studies or Religious Studies) can be said to represent the viewpoint of university students as a whole.

For some unclear reason, CMBC is included for comparative purposes but no such consideration is given to Mennonite high schools such as Westgate or Rockway. A rather unfortunate sampling oversight is that only first year students were included in the MBBC sample. The various non-Mennonite Brethren samples merely distract from the focus of the study. In my view the study would have been enhanced by selecting a leadership/membership sample from another Mennonite denomination for comparative purposes.

The data are collected by means of a short-structured questionnaire and described in Chapter Three by means of percentage tables, bar graphs and interpretive comments. The latter tend to be on the brief side but predictably in support of the author's thesis. Alternative explanations are alluded to but not seriously considered.

The core of the book is contained in a 60-page review of how Mennonites in North America are perceived and portrayed by insiders and outsiders in such media as books, journals, magazines, papers, radio, T.V., cultural activities, and multicultural involvements. Redekop concludes that Mennonites are functioning as (successful) ethnics and that the name Mennonite today signifies an ethnic, not a religious, reality.

A more central concern is that the Mennonite Brethren are also ethnic. A survey of significant MB writers indicates a growing awareness that North American Mennonite Brethren are ethnic and not fully aware of the theologi-

(cont'd on page 7)

