

# MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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Students and staff of the Deaf and Dumb School at Tiege, Molotschna (1913). Staff persons include (back, l-r) Anna Brau(n), Anna Fast, Mr. H. Janzen, Mr. and Mrs. Froese (houseparents), Mr. J. Schroeder (treasurer), Mr. H. Peters and further to the right, Mr. Ab(ram) Unruh and Mr. W. Sudermann (extreme right further down). At the very back (l-r) a former student working as shoemaker, and Henry Wall, who emigrated to Canada and became a minister, as well as a teacher at CMBC in Winnipeg. Photo: Courtesy of Agathe Redekop, Abbotsford, BC (1984).

## Peter, A Man of Stamina and Courage

by A. E. Heidi Koop

*This is an excerpt taken from a longer essay in a book-length manuscript. Peter Koop, the subject of this article, was born in Karassan, Crimea, Ukraine, and passed away in Winnipeg on August 12, 1990.*

It was a fabulous autumn evening in 1919 when a horse-drawn carriage with a coachman and three passengers in uniform (referred to here as Boris, Paul and Michael) appeared on the estate of Peter Janzen, Peter's uncle, at Kitaj. "Fellows of the White Army have come to spend the night," Junior declared quite naively. There was no reason for suspicion as far as he was concerned. But Peter was skeptical; too much baggage, and had they not come from the train station Bijuk-Onlar, 18 versts north of Kitaj?

The coachman appeared agitated and frightened. Russians under such circumstances tended to be fearful, while Germans, on the other hand, would have been inclined to lash out. Unlike Junior, a son of Peter Janzen and overseer of the estate, the coachman knew these guys were armed. He had been forced to transport them to Kitaj. He knew they were thieves. This was verified later on by a search of their baggage. They

had plundered a business in Bejuk. As was the way of soldiers, the three did not interpret their thievery as stealing. Rather they saw it as *requisieren*, (as their right to request and make their own anything they desired to possess). In actuality they were bandits pretending to be soldiers.

After inquiring as to their intent, Junior fleetingly perused their documents, acknowledging them as valid. He then accepted these strangers as legitimate White Army soldiers and granted them permission to spend the night. After all, they were of "our" army, so all were safe. Jakob Huebner and Peter backed off suspiciously: let them be soldiers of the White Army on vacation wanting to stay the night and then move on the next morning... They returned to their chores.

Soon Peter and Jakob were ordered to vacate their rooms for the night in order to accommodate the trio. As they were about to leave the room with some of their belongings including their rifles, Paul and Michael were already in the hall. Peter suspiciously took note of their eye movements as they assessed the situation: fifteen doors - that must have been an unusual setup from a Russian's viewpoint. He also noticed their

big eyes as they spotted the rifles. Michael had a conspicuously bandaged leg and crutches. Boris was engaged in unloading their loot. Peter kept a close eye on the scoundrels. In his mind they were suspect; their guns were not like those of the military.

After evacuating their room the boys returned to the barn. Even before the dinner bell pealed a shot resounded. Unexplainable, but since it was in the back yard the boys ignored it. After a brief interlude another shot close to the door leading into the house. They rushed to the barn door intending to enter the house when a voice, in German, alerted them not to leave the barn. They regretted not having taken their rifles to the barn. The Russian hired hands, some of whom had been present during the first attack, were also cautioned: "Beware! Don't leave the barn!"

Peter and Jakob could hardly endure the suspense and uncertainty. They blamed Onkel Janzen for being so naive, for allowing the scoundrels into the house. They did not spare him in their sharp criticism. Peter disregarded the fact that he was his uncle and called him anything that came to mind. "We're not done yet," Peter persisted. "Who knows what we'll be in for before the day is over? And we are without weapons! Two shots have already been fired. That's not very reassuring. Who else would shoot on this estate, either we or these scoundrels?" They were unaware of the *Selbstschutz* surrounding the estate - that's where the shots had originated. Peter continued: "Onkel Peter, do you have any further excuses? If at least you would have put them up in the workers' quarters. Those quarters are only a few steps off the kitchen. The girls could easily have waited on them there."

But blame and deliberation did not help the situation. They were perplexed. How could they ever resolve the predicament? Peter was convinced that had the episode in the end turned out differently than it actually did, Onkel Janzen would not have spared his nephew either. Junior, meanwhile, became defensive, still insisting, "They are soldiers from the White Army, our protectors."

Meanwhile the *Selbstschutz* was out to get these scoundrels. After dropping off the trio, the man who had brought them in had left the estate. On his return trip he had met the *Selbstschutz*, alerted them to the prob-

(cont'd on page 2)

## Peter, A Man of Stamina and Courage

(cont'd from page 1)

lem, and directed them to Kitaj.

The fruit orchard in the western quadrant of the estate was surrounded by a seven-foot wall. Though guards were placed all around, this section was only sparsely manned. The guards had advanced right to the workers' living quarters on the other side. Here they had fired warning shots.

According to military standards the *Selbstschutz* was well-organized and ready to do its duty. Orderly in their approach, with adequate ammunition on hand, they first approached the barn housing three hundred sixty oxen from the south side. They soon detected Boris in the back yard. Boris, becoming aware of the danger as he noticed the soldiers, bent forward and ran for his life. But to no avail - the first shot downed him.

Paul meanwhile had stationed himself on the steps leading from the northwest corner of the house into the garden, playing with his belt while chatting through the open door with the maids in the kitchen. Coming around the corner of the house, from the north, one of the *Selbstschutz* men detected him. A bullet penetrated deeply into Paul's thigh and up into his abdomen. This was the second shot Peter and Jakob had heard while in the barn. Paul dragged himself on all fours through the kitchen and along the hall to his room, leaving a trail of blood behind. Then he collapsed.

Michael was pacing the hallway - his crutches were nowhere in sight. Tante Janzen and her daughter-in-law were also there. Seeing his wounded brother, Michael totally lost his composure. In spite of the women's protests he entered the room now housing Jakob's and Peter's belongings - unfortunately the door had been left unlocked. He grabbed one of the guns with the comment that he would protect the women. He disappeared into the dark *Garderobe*, a closet where outer wear was hung and stored, and parked himself in the corner by the door leading into a glass verandah which in turn led to the front door.

By this time dusk had changed to pitch darkness. Some of the guards met with Peter, Jakob and Junior to plan their strategy. The happenings were briefly renewed and a



Peter Koop as student in 1921.

decision had to be made: Who should be the first to enter the house? Two of the villains must still be in the house. It seemed logical that the guards, unfamiliar with the layout of the building and hallways, remain outside. They would also not have recognized family members. So who was appointed? The smallest one, Peter. Junior agreed, of course. Peter protested, insisting that since Junior had let the scoundrels into the house, he ought to be the first to enter. "I will not be the first," Peter objected forcefully. However, he did consent to follow Junior. Should there be a bullet, Junior ought to be the one to get it.

Forced to go, Junior finally entered the house making his way through the verandah to the *Garderobe*. He met his wife and mother in the dark hall discussing the situation. Peter could easily have slipped by unnoticed, yet as he entered the corridor he quivered in all his limbs. Inadvertently he twisted and turned, and in doing so noticed the silhouette of Michael in the corner. He was armed. Lunging toward Michael, a frightened and anxious Peter grabbed the gun, twisted it out of Michael's hand and immediately recognized his own weapon. It appeared Michael had not expected this turn of events. Albeit not yet sixteen years of

age, Peter, now courageous and unafraid, bravely ordered Michael out of the building. Michael hesitated, but Peter's voice escalated in volume and intensity, while his finger was already positioned on the trigger. Michael raised his hands, turned and fled, running right into the guard waiting for him outside.

The lamps were lit and the house was searched. Wounded Paul was treated as carefully as possible. Peter had the privilege of unbinding Michael's bandaged leg while one of the guards looked on. It was a healthy leg indeed. Not even a scratch could be detected.

Michael with his healthy leg and carrying his crutches, wounded Paul and dead Boris were loaded onto military vehicles and returned to Bejuk with all their belongings including the rusted guns. Paul apparently died enroute.

Following an adventuresome year on his Uncle Peter Janzen's estate, Peter's exit in the spring of 1919 was all but uneventful. He was still only sixteen years old. The Red Army was at the threshold of the Crimea. In May the Janzens were advised to "pack up and leave the estate." Their belongings were transported, under the direction of Junior, to Ekibash, a neighbouring town sixteen versts northwest of Kitaj where the Janzens were well-known.

A pair of the strongest horses was hitched to the covered wagon and Peter, rather than the coachman, was given the responsibility of taking Onkel Janzen, his wife, his daughter and daughter-in-law to Ekibash. They chose to travel a roundabout way, pausing at the Ekibash well, hoping to remain adequately concealed. Meeting some people at the well they heard stories about the White Army's invasion of the town of Ekibash under the direction of General Wrangel.

They also saw some of the evidence of this attack. Once again Onkel Janzen was overcome with restlessness and worry. He decided to take the family into town and to get rid of all conspicuously dangerous possessions. Even Peter's reliable and last rifle, a "Brownie," had to go. It was tossed into the well.

(To be concluded)

Heidi Koop is a writer residing in Winnipeg, MB.

## GENEALOGY AND FAMILY HISTORY

by Alf Redekopp

### QUERIES

**Alexanderkrone:** Can anyone send me information on this village in the Molotschna Colony? Contact: Brenda Dueck, 49 Arbour Cliff Close N.W., Calgary, AB T3G 3W5

**Beier:** I am looking for information on Johann Beier m. Marie Ratzlaff. He lived in Waldheim, Molotschna and died in 1897. Children: Helen Beier Nickel, b. 25 Oct., 1852, m. Jacob Nickel; Anna Beier Wiens, b. 6 Jan., 1954, m. Jacob Wiens; Susanna Beier Kliever, b. 3 Oct., 1857, m. Peter Kliever; Katherine Beier Regier, b. 22 Nov., 1864, m. Cornelius Regier. Contact: Donovan Wall, Apt. 201, 4502-58th Ave., Brooklyn Centre, MN, 55429-2931, USA.

**Friesen:** I am looking for information on the family and ancestors of minister Franz Goerz 1820-1901 from Rudnerweide, Russia. Contact: Wilma Turner, 79 Glen Park Road, St. Catharines, ON L2N 3G1.

**Isaac, Dr. John:** I am researching the themes of refugee escape routes and resettlement of Russian Germans (also Mennonites) who were able to get to Harbin, China, 1929-1931. A Dr. John Isaac and his wife were able to help many to obtain immigrant permits to the USA. Does anyone have information about the Isaac family and their 3 children: Konstantin, Waldemar and Margaret? Did any of them come to North America? Contact: Wilmer A. Harms, 2904-B Ivy Dr., North Newton, KS 67117, USA.

**Martens:** Looking for the names of the parents of David Martens b. 3 Feb., 1820, d. 8 Aug., 1880, and married to Katharina Doerksen b. 2 Oct., 1820, d. 7 Dec., 1909. One of their children, Justina (Wall) was born 11 Nov., 1842 in Neuendorf, Chortitz Colony. David Martens homesteaded in Schoenfeld, West Reserve, Manitoba. Contact: Queenie Martens, 4435 Cascade Drive, Vernon, BC V1T8J7.

**Schellenberg:** Can anybody provide information about the Soviet-Mennonite author David Schellenberg? He was a successful writer in Soviet Union until Stalin cracked down on intellectuals in 1935 and sent him to Siberia. Did any of his sisters or brothers emigrate to Canada or the USA? His mother, originally from Armenia, was a German language student in Moscow before she was deported to Siberia. His son, Arkadi Schellenberg, presently living in Germany, was seven years old in 1953 when his father died. After David's death his mother moved to the Georgian Republic with her two children.

Only after *glasnost* did Arkadi learn that his father had a Mennonite background. Arkadi has emigrated to Germany and decided that he too would like to be Mennonite. Contact: Harold Otto bei Schmidt, Prenzlauer Allee 209, Germany or E-mail address: 100336, 3575 compuserv.com.

**Weier:** I would like information about the ancestors of Abram Weier and ? Schoenke, the parents of Abram Weier (1874-1943) of Tiegerweide, Russia. He married Katharina Klassen, the daughter of minister Dietrich Klassen and Anna(?) Klein. Contact: Wilma Turner, 79 Glen Park Road, St. Catharines, ON L2N 3G1.

### BOOK NOTES

Bert Friesen, *Faith-Love-Hope: Schoenfeld-Ens* (Winnipeg, MB: Dunvegan Publishing, 1994) hdc., 221 pp.

This book traces the family history of John Schoenfeld (1931-) and his wife Anne Ens Schoenfeld (1935-) of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The book includes sections on the Ens, Schoenfeld, Lehn, Penner, Funk and Tessman families. The Lehn family ancestry traces back to Christoph Lehn (1679-1771) of Danzig. The Ens family traces back to Jakob Ens (1828-1905) who lived in Neuendorf, Chortitz. The Funk family traces back to a Heinrich Funk who first married Margaretha Klassen (1782-1813) and then married a Helena Barkman (1795-1827). The Penner family begins with Heinrich Penner (1802-1843) who died in Schoenhorst, Russia. The Schoenfeld family begins with Franz Ferdinand Johan Schoenfeld who lived in Josephstal not far from Ekaterinoslav, Ukraine. The Tessman family traces back to Nicholas Tessman (1897-1992). A comprehensive index at the end of this book makes it easy to find specific individuals.

This book was produced using genealogy software currently being distributed by the Winnipeg Genealogy Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. Contact: Bert Friesen, 100 Dunvegan St., Winnipeg, MB R2K 2H1.

Gerhard Hamm and Bernhard Hamm, *Eine Familie mit über 700 Kindern* (Großwallstadt: Bibel-Mission, 1993) pb., 218 pp.

The focus of this book is on one branch of the Hamm family which traces back to Martin Hamm born in 1690 in West Prussia. This branch is that of Abram Hamm (1874-1937) who first married Anna Hein (1877-1907) in 1897 and then married Katharina Peters (1888-) in 1908. The surviving descendants of Abram Hamm numbered 702 in 1992 and hence the title of this book.

This book begins with a description of the life of the earlier ancestors of this family. Then it continues with a collection of the personal memories of the twenty-one children of Abram Hamm. Some interesting family photos are also included, such as that of a grandson Viktor Hamm who has worked with Evangelist Billy Graham or Gerhard Hamm with US Astronaut General Charles Duke. Contact: Gerhard Hamm, Lessingstr. 11, 53913 Swisttal-Heimerzheim, Germany.

Jacob W. and Hilda J. Born, *To be Born: Episodes in the Life of the Born Family: Wilhelm Jacob Born: Jacob William Born* (Matsqui, B.C.: Imprint Press Publishers, 1991) pb., 140 pp.

This book is a collection of experiences from the life of Wilhelm J. Born (1897-1969), and his eldest son, Jacob W. Born (1927 - ) who lived in Alberta from 1927 till 1946 when they moved to B.C. Wilhelm J. Born was born in Herzenburg, Russia and married Katerina Dueckmann who was born in Alexandertal, Russia. Jacob W. Born, co-author of this book, was born near Sedalia, Alberta, just six months after his parents arrived from Russia. Many photographs, both in colour and Black and White, having been reproduced using a colour photocopier, enhance this publication. Contact: Jacob W. and Hilda Born, 21-3055 Trafalgar St., Abbotsford, BC V2S 4N3.

Diana Loewen, *Family History of Heinrich John Loewen* (Calgary, AB: Private publication, 1994) pb., 48 pp.

This book traces the ancestors of Heinrich John Loewen (1906-) back four generations (complete except in one case) and sometimes five or six generations. It also gives family records, beginning with Loewen and his wife Vera May Webster (1902-1970), going as far back as the family tree shows. Contact: Diana Loewen, Apt. 101, 2131 17th St. SW, Calgary, AB T2T 4M5.

Victor Goossen, ed., *Franz Froese (1825-1913) and Anna Braun (1844-1908) Family Register* (Rosenort, MB: Prairie View Press, 1994) pb., 320 pp.

Here is a set of family registers of the descendants of Franz Froese and Anna Braun to the present. Their people were among the 1870s emigrants to Canada. The information is organized into families and generations by a numbering system. There is also an index of names. A few clippings and reminiscences are included. Contact: Prairie View Press, Box 160, Rosenort, MB R0G 1W0.

Send inquiries to Alf Redekopp, CMBS, 1-169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5.

## Recent Acquisitions

1. Ten cartons of congregational records from Sterling Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB. Brought in by Pastor Norm Voth.
2. Forty LP recordings by Mennonite music groups. Included a set of eight recordings, *Liederschatz*, by the *Mennonitischer Männerchor* of Winnipeg. Courtesy of Anne Schmidt, Nettie Rogalski, and John Friesen, all of Winnipeg, MB.
3. *Einlage - The Village that Vanished* by Catherina Martens-Berg nee Hildebrand (1991), manuscript, pb., 50 pp. Courtesy of Gerhard Ens, Winnipeg, MB.
4. Photocopy of the 1565 editors of *Rechenschaftbuch von den Leer und Glaubens von den Brüdern so man die Hutterischen nent* by P. Rydeman (Riedeman). 190 pp. Courtesy of John Friesen, CMBC.
5. Materials from Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba. One carton papers plus three cartons books. Courtesy of John Wiebe and Alice Pound, CMM office.
6. English translation of *Das verlorene Kind*, done by Justina Funk. Courtesy of Adolf Ens, CMBC.
7. Duplicates of several thousand pages of financial and emigration records from Mennonites in Mexico. Courtesy of Bruce Wiebe, Winkler, MB.
8. Negatives of 15 photos by Peter Rempel, Moscow. Related to research on his grandfather, the late Peter Petrovich Rempel. Courtesy of MCC, Akron, PA, and Herb with Maureen Klassen, Abbotsford, BC.
9. Fifteen rolls of microfilm of Dutch Mennonite materials found in the Mennonite archives at Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Courtesy of Bethel College, N. Newton, KS, and John Friesen, CMBC.
10. A collection of papers and numerous volumes from the library of Rev. Jacob Toews of Winnipeg, MB. Courtesy of Dorothy Keizer, Winnipeg, MB.



**Bethel Place (Winnipeg) Golden Brushes Club members who have mounted a paintings exhibition at the Mennonite Heritage Centre for May - July. Bottom right: Neil Fehr (Loon Magic Gallery, Winkler, MB), instructor. Photo: Courtesy of Esther Peters, Winnipeg, coordinator of the group.**



**Jacob E. Friesen (left), Hague, Saskatchewan, received special recognition as a local historian at a meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan held on April 29, 1994. Also on the photo are Dick Epp (centre), chairperson of MHSS and John Nickel, board member, making a presentation on behalf of Mennonite Heritage Centre. Photo: Courtesy of Frank Letkeman, Rosthern, SK.**



**Members of the CMM History Committee working on a history of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba. Seated (l-r) Henry Loewen, general secretary, Gerhard Ens; Anna Ens, author; Betty Dyck; Lawrence Klippenstein, MHCA consultant. Standing (l-r) Frank J. Neufeld, chairperson; Henry J. Gerbrandt; John Dyck, research assistant; Peter Rempel. Photo: Courtesy of Frank J. Neufeld, Winnipeg, MB.**

## Celebrating 50 Years of MB Institutions

by Abe Dueck

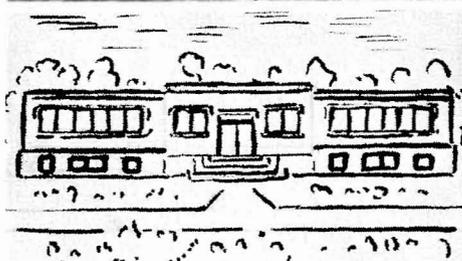
This year and in the next several years a number of Canadian Mennonite Brethren institutions are celebrating their fiftieth anniversaries. The years 1944-46, at the end of the World War II, were years when high schools were founded in at least three provinces.<sup>1</sup>

The Mennonite Educational Institute in Clearbrook, British Columbia, was founded in 1944. Its supporting constituency was predominantly, although not exclusively, Mennonite Brethren, and it became the largest Mennonite school in Canada.

In 1945 several other Mennonite Brethren high schools were founded. One was Eden Christian College in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario.<sup>2</sup> Another one was the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In fact, a high school curriculum was already being offered by the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in 1944-45, but a separate high school was seen as necessary. (A series of events as well as a publication are being planned to celebrate the anniversary of MBCCI in 1994-95.) A third high school was established in 1945 in Yarrow, British Columbia and named Sharon Mennonite Collegiate Institute. It closed briefly in 1950 and then reopened at a new location in Yarrow in 1951 where it operated until 1970.

In 1946 another high school (predominantly MB) was established in Coaldale, Alberta. It was named the Alberta Mennonite High School and continued to operate until 1964. Also in 1946, a high school curriculum was added to the Steinbach Bible School (now Steinbach Bible College), a school which was founded in 1931 and which had significant Mennonite Brethren involvement in its early years.

It is interesting to note that it was mainly the Mennonite Brethren who established high schools in this period, although some were operated by societies which included members of several denominations. Only two or three other Mennonite high schools were begun in those years - the United Mennonite Educational Institute in Leamington, Ontario (opened by Conference of Mennonites in Canada congregations in 1945), Rockway Mennonite School in Kitchener, Ontario (opened by (Old) Mennonites (now MC) in 1945, and Menno High School in Sardis, British Columbia. The sponsorship of the latter is not clear. It offered Grades 7-10 in 1946-47



**Top:** The main building on the Virgil Bible School campus. It had three classrooms and a dining room in the basement. **Bottom:** Sketch for a proposed new school building. The school was located near the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON. **Photo:** Courtesy of CMBS.

and 7-11 in 1947-48. Then it closed permanently, a move caused by financial difficulties and the major flood in 1948.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the high schools which were opened from 1944-46, the Mennonite Brethren also launched another major educational institution in 1944. That was the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, begun as an "advanced Bible school" in October, 1944. Mennonite Brethren communities had already established many Bible schools in the previous decades, beginning with the Herbert Bible School in 1913. Most of the Mennonite Brethren Bible schools were established in the late 1920s and in the 1930s, and only two in the 1940s (Black Creek in 1942 and East Chilliwack in 1947). The move toward advanced Bible training was not, however, simply a vertical move; it was also a horizontal move toward a more broadly-based education. The curriculum of the Bible College from the beginning included various non-religious subjects in the social sciences, humanities, music, etc. Therefore the motives for the establishment of high schools were not always that far removed from the forces that led to the founding of the Bible College.

Much work still needs to be done to interpret the establishment of these schools, and to place these events in the larger context of the Mennonite Brethren experience in Canada. There were some obvious reasons for the different developments among Mennonite Brethren and other Mennonites, but other factors may still need to be explored.

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The various anniversary events and stories that are or will be written will enrich our understanding of the issues that were the driving force behind the establishment of these institutions. Together they could become the basis for a broader interpretation and understanding of that period of our history.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The author wishes to acknowledge help received from a manuscript in preparation for the third volume of *Mennonites in Canada* by Ted Regehr.
- <sup>2</sup> The school was initially operated as the High School Department of the Virgil Bible School.
- <sup>3</sup> *Mennonitische Lehrerzeitung* (June 1949):5.

### Recent Acquisitions

1. One file entitled "Morija" containing the research notes for the article with this title published in *Sophia* in 1993. Donated by the author Dora Dueck, Winnipeg, MB.
2. Thieleman J.v.Braght, *Der blutige Schauplatz, Märtyrer-Spiegel...* (Elkhart, IN: John F. Funk, 1870). Donated by Harold Jantz, Winnipeg, MB.
3. One video recording of the 1984 Canadian Conference service celebrating the Quebec Conference joining the Canadian MB Conference.
4. Manitoba MB Conference records of the secretary (1988-1991) consisting of 30 cm textual records. Donated by Fred Wiens, Winnipeg, MB.
5. Sixteen colour photographs (9x13cm) depicting five Mennonite Brethren congregations in Germany among the recent immigrants from Russia. Donated by John N. Klassen, Germany.
6. One photocopy of a map of Durango Kolonie, Mexico. Donated by Gerhard Friesen, Winnipeg, MB.
7. Records of the Canadian MB Conference minister 1980-1990 consisting of 36 cm textual records transferred from the Canadian Conference Offices.

## Stories From the Past Workshop in Altona

by Elmer Heinrichs

Stories from the past: the founding of Altona 1875-1900, the Mennonite Collegiate Institute - a pioneer school, and pioneer health care on the West Reserve were dealt with at a Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society local history committee workshop held at Altona, Manitoba on April 30. In opening comments, history committee chairman John Dyck welcomed participants from as far as Winnipeg and Steinbach suggesting it should be "an encouragement for the restoration of family and community history."

Longtime hospital administrator Otto Hamm (Morden) presented a paper on pioneer health care on the Mennonite West Reserve, while Gerhard Ens (Winnipeg), for thirty-three years a student, faculty member and principal of the Gretna MCI, made a presentation on "The MCI: A Pioneer School."

Mennonite Heritage Centre director Lawrence Klippenstein traced the beginning of Altona from the origin of *Darp Aultneiv* in the late 1800s to the first decade of the adjacent town of Altona, now planning to celebrate its centennial in 1995.

Three key developments shaped the birth and early development of the town, said Klippenstein. These were the coming and growth of the railways, the Mennonite migration of 1874-1880, and Winnipeg's in becoming the capital of Manitoba and Winnipeg's "boom period."

Much of the eastern part of the Western Reserve, a second Mennonite reserve west of the Red River nestled against the Canada-U.S. border, received Mennonites who arrived there after first settling down north and east of the Rat River, an area then known as the East Reserve.

The first flurry of building in the town occurred in 1895. Soon three elevators stood on its streets - Lake of the Woods, Ogilvie's and a third by Peter and John Schwartz (sons of Johann Schwartz of the village of Altona.)

Businesses flourished and in its first years Altona was basically "a service town for a farming community. Blacksmiths, lumber merchants and machinery dealers served at least ten villages within a four-mile radius of the town, with another ten villages located within a six-mile radius."

Hamm, a former administrator of hospitals at Altona and Morden, said in his talk that the early settlers "relied on chiropractors (*trachtmaocka*) and midwives, when available, for medical help. Some of these had



**Peter Hiebert, Steinbach and John Rempel, Altona (Halbstadt) examine rare documents at the *Stories of the Past* workshop held in Altona on April 30. We are sorry to have to inform our readers that John passed away on May 20, 1994. He was co-author with Bill Harms of two important volumes dealing with homestead maps in the former East and West Reserves and was deeply involved in other historical activities as well. Photo: Courtesy of Elmer Heinrichs, Altona, MB.**

some training, but most were self-taught."

Mrs. J. J. Wall of Altona was one of the midwives who assisted at many births. After their mother died in 1910 two Siemens' sisters went into nurses' training and in 1915 established their own nursing home in Altona. This service continued till the mid-thirties. One of the first doctors in Altona, added Hamm, was a lady, Susan Isaak, who practised here from 1895-1900. The first hospital in rural Manitoba was built in Morden by the Free Masons about the same time.

While Gretna has had doctors in their community since 1883, one of the first Mennonite doctors, Dr. C. W. Wiebe, began a practice in Winkler in 1925. Ten years later he became a strong proponent of a hospital to be built in Winkler. In Altona a hospital opened in a renovated home in 1936, with a new hospital dedicated in 1948, said Hamm.

Ens informed the workshop participants that between 1891 and 1921 enrolment in the Mennonite Educational Institute (after 1908, the MCI) averaged 40, ranging from a low of 13 to almost 90 in 1915.

The school was conceived and begun by progressive elements of West Reserve Mennonites, many of whom had found a spiritual haven in the Bergthaler Church. It promoted the use of English in Mennonite schools, the common language of most people. "At the same time," said Ens, "it sought new ways of adapting and still perpetuating the Mennonite faith. Principal H. H. Ewert's policy produced Mennonite teachers well-trained in English and Mennonite beliefs for district schools. Thus emerged a system of publicly-supported schools, separate in all

but name."

This early policy, in place from about 1891 to 1907, produced Mennonite teachers well-versed in English and German and deeply Mennonite in conviction. These individuals later stepped into the district schools forced on the Mennonites; they helped to keep them Mennonite, said Ens.

After World War I the MCI was a pioneer school again, this time pioneering in the conservative sense, one of the primary bulwarks of cultural conservatism, in particular the retention of German.

*Elmer Heinrichs is a writer residing in Altona, MB.*

## Events to Come

**Anniversary** - The Arnaud Mennonite Church will celebrate its 50th anniversary on July 30-31. Registration will begin on Saturday at 2:00 p.m. An old-fashioned auction sale will begin at 3:00 p.m. Supper will follow. Services will be held on Sunday morning and evening. A history book will be available. For further information call Art Kathler at 427-2582 in Arnaud or Art Toews at (204) 475-3615 in Winnipeg.

**Reunion** - A Klippenstein reunion will be held in Altona, Manitoba on Tuesday, July 25, 1995. All relatives in the clan are invited. For further information call Ted Friesen at 324-5018 in Altona or write to him at Box 720, Altona, MB R0G 0B0.

**Reunion** - Otterburne, MB. has been chosen for a reunion by the Loeppkys of Strassberg - *dit Sied* and *jant Sied* (both sides of



A *semlin* at the Pembina Threshermen's Museum, Winkler, of the type built by early Mennonite families in the East Reserve and West Reserve. The Mennonite Memorial Landing Site Association is erecting a park at the fork of the Rat and Red Rivers to recall the arrival of these Manitoba pioneers in the 1870s. Donations for this project may be mailed to MMHS, 1-169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5. They must be designated *Landing Site Donation*. Tax deductible receipts will be issued. Photo: Courtesy of Elmer Heinrichs, Altona, MB.

the Red River) in 1995. The time for the reunion, to be held on the campus of Providence College, has been moved forward one week to the July 15-16 weekend. For further information contact Elmer Heinrichs, Box 1106, Altona, MB R0G 0B0, Ph. (204)324-5281.

**Symposium** - "Anabaptist Visions in the 20th Century: Ideas and Outcomes." The sessions will be held at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana from October 13-15, 1994. Registration will be at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 13. For further information contact Dr. Albert Keim at (703) 432-4468 or (703) 433-0543, or the Centre for MB Studies, Winnipeg, (204) 669-6575.

## Book Review

Heinrich Goerz, *The Molotschna Settlement*, Trans. by Al Reimer and John B. Toews (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1993). pb., 252 pp. \$18.00 CAN.

Reviewed by Abe Dueck

This volume is the fifth in the series of translations of the *Echo Verlag* series. As the translators state, Goerz's book forms the centrepiece of the series and thus it makes a very valuable contribution to our understanding of Russian Mennonitism.

Although the book focuses on the Molotschna Mennonite settlement, and thus is narrower in scope than a book like Peter M. Friesens *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)*, the reader soon feels that the Molotschna experience is presumed

to capture the essence of the entire Mennonite experience in Russia. The book is "triumphalist" not only in its point of view regarding the development of the Mennonite commonwealth in Russia, but also in its implicit understanding of Molotschna in the context of Mennonitism in Russia as a whole.

Although Goerz's primary interest may have been in the religious and ecclesiastical aspects of Mennonite life, he does provide a great deal of information on various other facets of life, including education, agriculture, industry, and culture. His sources were evidently quite limited, and he quotes secondary works like Friesen's extensively and uncritically. Much information also comes from his own personal experiences and the personal accounts of others. Goerz was obviously someone who had mastered the art of story-telling, even though he could not have known what might be demanded of a professional historian. One of his concluding statements is particularly revealing in this respect (pp. 247-48):

*Again and again I reminded myself that I was writing history - and history is, above all, a factual account, an objective presentation of what has happened.*

Fortunately for us, Goerz unconsciously



did much more than that. He gave us a sense of the drama of unfolding events, his own personal pride in the Mennonite accomplishments, as well as the trauma associated with the decline and fall of the Mennonite commonwealth.

The translators must be commended for making the book very readable. Seldom do questions about the nature of the translation emerge. Two relatively minor instances might be noted. In one case (pp.20-21) the German term *Kaiser* is translated "Emperor" and "Tsar" within the same quotation. The translation of *Kirchenkonvent* as "General Assembly" seems inappropriate, since it was more like a Council of Church Leaders (p. 76).

Most of the pictures in the original volume are retained, while substitutions and additions are made at other points. Questions might be raised about the omission of pictures relating to the Great Trek (pp. 244-47). The editorial footnotes make an excellent contribution.

The translation also has a selected bibliography and glossary. The Preface is really much more than a usual preface. It is in fact a very excellent, albeit short, interpretive essay which should be read very carefully by every reader.

*The Molotschna Settlement* is a book that belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in the Russian Mennonite story.

Abe Dueck is Director of the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg, MB.

## MMHS Board Meets

The MMHS Board met on April 12 at Grace Mennonite Church, Winkler. The following positions were approved for 1994: **Executive** - Bert Friesen (president), Richard Thiessen (vice-president), Lawrence Klippenstein (secretary), Alf Redekopp (treasurer) and Adolf Ens (member at large); **Membership and Publicity** - Richard Thiessen (chair), Alf Redekopp and Bert Friesen; **Genealogy** - Hans Werner (chair), Alf Redekopp, Evelyn Friesen, and Abe Hoepfner; **Research and Publication** - Abe Dueck (chair), Adolf Ens and Victor Doerksen; **Local History and Memorials** - John Dyck (chair), Bruce Wiebe, Ed Falk, Otto Hamm, Bill Harms, John Rempel and Abe Loewen; **Finance/Treasurer** - Alf Redekopp.

The Research and Publication committee reported that the next *Echo Verlag* publication by CMBC Publications will be the biography of Johann Cornies. The Local History Committee reported that the *Reinländer*

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Dick, Harold J. *Lawyers of Mennonite Background in Western Canada Before the Second World War*. (Winnipeg, MB: Legal Research Institute of the University of Manitoba, 1993), pb., 163 pp., \$19.95 CAN.

Reviewed by Delbert F. Plett

In the words of the author this work "examine(s) two cultures as they existed in Western Canada during the period between 1870 and 1940, ...the Mennonites and the legal profession." This study was completed as part of a Master's Thesis at the Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba, under the auspices of Professor Alvin Esau.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part is intended to provide a theoretical and historical background to the study. I will restrict myself to two comments on this section.

Firstly, the author has not referred to the new source materials which have recently been published regarding *Kanadier* Mennonites, for example, the publications of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and the studies by Dr. Royden K. Loewen. Had Mr. Dick looked at *Profile of the Kleine Gemeinde 1874* (1987, pp.61 and 68), he would have found some of the earlier Russian history of Wilhelm Vogt (b. 1842), the father of two of the lawyers later referred to in the study.

Secondly, Dick has chosen to beg the question in the opening quotation. To understand the relationship between Mennonites and the legal profession, it must be recognized that the Ukrainian Mennonites who came to Canada had an awareness of a legal system that was probably more sophisticated and equitable than that of their host society. Many individuals were involved in lawyer-related activities such as the *Waisenamt*, and the *Brandältester* who ran large institutions complete with legal machinery to handle estates and fire insurance claims. Also, there were a number of notary publics, such as my great-great uncle Abraham S. Friesen (1848-1917) in Steinbach, who were active conveyancers and estate attorneys.

The impact which Mennonites have had on the legal system and culture of Manitoba and the other western provinces during the years of the study would only come to light from a study of these individuals and institutions. Mr. Dick has chosen to study only those individuals actually practising law as lawyers thereby restricting the same to individuals who were no longer part of the critical mass of their own communities.

The second part of the thesis consists of biographies of seven lawyers of Mennonite background who practised in Saskatchewan and Manitoba: Abraham Buhr (1880-1960), Henry Vogt (1886-1968), David Vogt (1900-1979), Peter Hooge (1886-1963), John Everette Friesen (1895-1987), Erdmann Friesen (1904-1969), and Elmer Abraham Driedger (1914-1985). Five of these men were interrelated: the Vogts were brothers and Henry Vogt was married to Buhr's sister. The two Friesens were father and son.

Four of these men had quite distinguished legal careers. Buhr had a successful law practice in Morse, Saskatchewan. Hooge practised in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, where he served a term as the local MLA. In 1948 he was appointed a provincial judge. John E. Friesen practised in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, serving as mayor of the city from 1953-54. He was appointed to the Federal Bench in 1957 and Queen's Counsel in 1971. Driedger practised in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, and was appointed King's Counsel in 1949. He became Deputy Attorney-General of Canada in 1960.

The seven men were all 1870s Mennonite immigrants to Manitoba or their descendants. Buhr and the Friesens were from *Berghaler* background and the Vogts and Driedger were from *Allkolonier* or Chortitza Colony background. Hooge was born in the Molotschna settlement but had moved to the Old Colony prior to the immigration. The *Kleine Gemeinde*, the smallest of the three denominations to settle in Manitoba during the 1870s, and the *Rußländer*, i. e. Mennonites who came to Canada during the 1920s, were not represented in this group.

Dick has brought forth some interesting observations regarding these men. None of the seven were formally associated with the Mennonite church. Six of them attended the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna and four had parents who were active supporters of the school.

*Delbert F. Plett, Q. C., is a lawyer and author residing in Steinbach, MB.*

Epp, Reuben. *The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch. Tracing a Language Across the Globe*. (Hillsboro, KS: The Reader's Press, 1993) pb., 130 pp., \$12.95 US.

Reviewed by Ken A. Braun

For those readers who know Reuben Epp through his recordings of short stories and anecdotes in *Plautdietsch*, here is Reuben Epp the scholar, the linguist and the pioneer who has researched, as he states in his pref-

ace, "the history of Low German and its relationship to the English language." The fact that this study is "interesting and enjoyable" is an understatement when one realizes he has given us a cultural, political and social overview of medieval times stretching back to 500 A. D. and moving us to the present.

Each chapter deals with a particular period in Low German history: the Anglo-Saxon roots, the Middle Low German period, the era of the Hansa trading centres governed by the Teutonic Order of Knights, and the modern Low German period from about 1850.

In good academic fashion, each chapter is summarized and completed by extensive endnotes. Six maps and two schematics enhance the clarity of a rather complex subject by showing regions of Low German culture and Germanic language groupings. Speech characteristics and dialectical differences are dealt with thoroughly, including four and one-half pages of words in English, Low German and *Plautdietsch* which are identical or similar.

Epp's impassioned plea is that we need to study and promulgate *Plautdietsch* in North America just as scholastic and literary activities in Low German are widespread in Germany as well as at the University of Groningen in The Netherlands.

Mennonites have already carried this oral culture across continents making it a creative, expressive and adaptable dialect widely used by creative, expressive and adaptable people.

*Ken Braun is a farmer who resides near Altona, MB.*

## MMHS Board Meets

(cont'd from page 7)

*Gemeinde Buch* is now in the final proof-reading stage and will go to the printer in the next few months. They also reported that the West Reserve Settlement Register of 1880 has been entered on the computer as well. Additional information is being compiled for each family in the register. This document is expected to be ready for printing in 1995.

In other news, the society has agreed to be a participant in the Jewish-Mennonite-Ukrainian Conference planned for late August, 1995. It has appointed Bert Friesen and Lawrence Klippenstein to represent MMHS on the Conference Steering Committee. A vote of thanks was given to Peter H. Rempel for serving on that committee up to now. The next board meeting is scheduled for October 11 at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.