

# Mennonite Historian

## “Two solitudes” collaborate in college and conference

by Karla Braun, Associate Editor, MB  
Herald

WINNIPEG - “A modern miracle” some call Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), because it was formed in 1999 when Concord College (an MB school) merged with Canadian Mennonite Bible College (a school attended largely by GC Mennonites) and Menno Simons College. As such, CMU was a suitable host for an event celebrating the history and exploring the interactions of Mennonite Brethren (MB) and General Conference (GC) Mennonites, both of which formally organized in 1860. (In 1999, the General Conference Mennonite Church integrated with the Mennonite Church North America, resulting in the formation of two country-wide church bodies: Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, and resulting in the end of the General Conference Mennonite Church.)

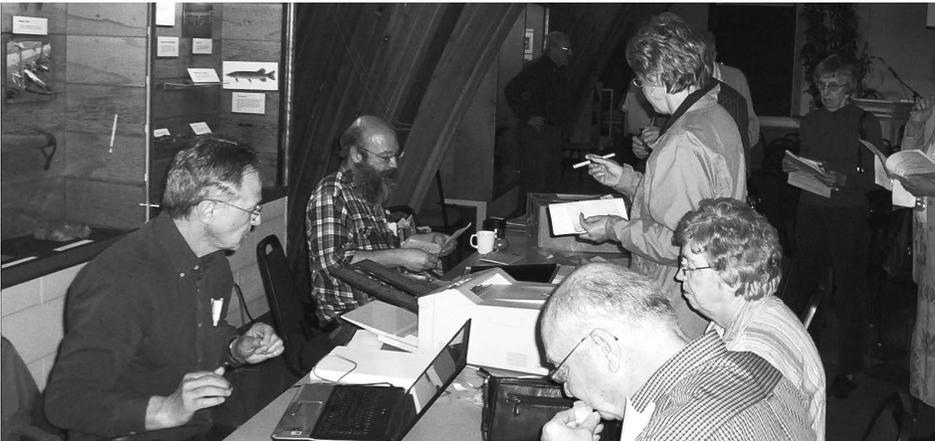
The grey hair of most of the 90-some attendees at the “Celebrating 150 years Conference,” lent credence to the suggestion that young people aren’t all that concerned about denominational lines. Presenters and participants exchanged jokes and anecdotes about walls between GCs and MBs, particularly in the “exploring stereotypes” workshop hosted by Don Peters and Terry Schellenberg, but the content reinforced the impression that these barriers don’t exist for younger generations. Other workshops explored confessions of faith, marriage across the denominational divide, periodicals, and worship. One representative of each denomination facilitated each workshop.

A panel of current or recently graduated CMU students agreed they knew little about GC or MB distinctions before beginning their studies. Now, equipped with some theological and historical background, these students noted certain language, worship styles, and emphases are particular to one or the other denomination, but said the denominational divide is not an issue in their friendships.

Following the student panel, four faculty members – who had taught at Concord or CMBC prior to the creation of CMU – spoke with gratefulness of everything they had learned from fellow faculty of other denominations since the merger. After a childhood experience of the denomi-

(cont’d on p. 2)

A PUBLICATION OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE and THE CENTRE FOR MB STUDIES IN CANADA



Alf Redekopp (l) and Glenn Penner (r) collecting DNA samples at a Family and Local History Day, April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, as part of the The Low-German Mennonite DNA Project coordinated by Dr. Tim Janzen and Dr. Glenn Penner. Photo credit: Bert Friesen.

## A little scientific background to the Mennonite DNA project

by Glen Klassen, Adjunct Professor of Biology, Canadian Mennonite University

Mennonites are paying good money to have their DNA analyzed, mostly for genealogical purposes. The data is being collected by Glenn Penner, a chemist at the University of Guelph, and Tim Janzen, a Portland, Oregon medical doctor.<sup>1, 2</sup>

What is the science behind this, and what can the project hope to achieve? I am a retired molecular biologist who specialized in the kinds of DNA that are being used in these studies: mitochondrial DNA and repetitive DNA. I would like to try to give you some basic information about these kinds of DNA and also give my own take on the Mennonite project. I will just say now that I think the work being done is a very good application of DNA technology as long as it is not oversold, and Penner and Janzen certainly are not guilty of that.

Two approaches are used in the study: Repetitive DNA in the Y chromosome,

and mitochondrial DNA. I will explain the first method in this article since it is most relevant to genealogy.

### The Y chromosome

Females have 22 pairs of chromosomes numbered 1 to 22 plus a pair of X chromosomes in the nuclei of each one of their cells. Males have the same 22 pairs plus a single X and a single Y chromosome. Only males have the Y chromosome, which is much smaller than the X and does not have the same genes as the X.

Every father passes a copy of his Y chromosome to all of his sons, but never to his daughters. This happens to agree exactly with the way surnames have been passed down in European countries ever since surnames came to be used as they are today. Because of this the Y chromosome data is very useful in studying male genealogical lines. My Y chromosome was copied and passed down

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## “Two Solitudes”

*cont'd from p. 1*

nations as “two solitudes,” former CMBC professor Dan Epp-Tiessen called his interactions with MB pastors and pulpits subsequent to the merger “a gift.” MB professors Gordon Matties and Cheryl Pauls benefitted from their Mennonite Church Canada colleagues’ deep theological approach to worship and Bible study.

The day began with a summary of the founding of the two denominations in 1860. CMU professor Sheila Klassen-Wiebe responded to historian Abe Dueck’s presentation on the MB story with “there is always a mix of good and bad, faithfulness and sinfulness in any new movement.”

After former MC Canada general secretary Helmut Harder’s story of the GC, River East MB pastor Connie Epp highlighted the importance of listening and seeking to understand “the other,” particularly when passions are high. This is essential for integration to happen, she said, as it did when the GC church rejoined the larger Mennonite body of MC Canada.

An enduring stereotype, noted by both the students and long-time leaders, is that MBs are interested in evangelism while

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**A CMU faculty panel with representatives from both Mennonite Brethren and General Conference traditions reflected on their experiences and what each has learned from the other. L-R: Irma Fast Dueck (GC), Cheryl Pauls (MB), Dan Epp-Tiessen (GC), Gordon Matties (MB).** Photo credit: Rachel Bergen

GCs are focused on peace and justice work. Several of the students touted the current climate of collaboration and focusing on “what we have in common;” Andrea Dyck added this is an opportunity to learn from the other.

Heads of their respective denominations, David Wiebe (MB) and Jack Suderman (MC Canada) took the stage at the close of the event to respond to what they’d heard, and left some unanswered questions or issues on the table. Suspicion of the other’s approach to Bible study still creates a rift, Wiebe observed. But working with youth and in mission, he said, is the “pathway forward.”

Suderman responded to Karl Koop’s question from the morning whether denominational schism was in essence sin. Noting the history of conflict and pain evidenced in Dueck’s presentation, Suderman called the notion of churches breaking off for the sake of renewal “an ambiguity we feel in our bones,” given Anabaptism’s split from the larger church. He hinted that a reconciliation of denominations may be a worthy future goal.

## Apologies re. March 2010 Historian

Please accept our regrets for the following errors in the last issue of the *Mennonite Historian*.

On page 1, top of column 2 the following line was missing: “Church North America (MCNA) resulted.” The bottom of column 1 on p. 5, was missing “ship in both the GCMC and the MCNA”. Column 2, page 5, was missing “ownership of Associated Mennonite.” The photo caption on page one was missing the word “Aeltester” referring to Heinrich Huebert as the first Elder/Bishop of the MB church.

Column 1 on page 8, also had a section of text that was misplaced as the bottom of column 1, but no words or lines missing. We apologize for any these and other errors we missed in our proof-readings.

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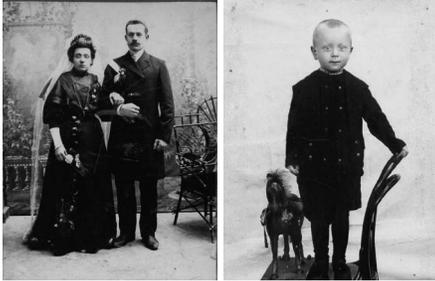
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# Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

## Photos Identified

In the March 2010 *Mennonite Historian*, p. 3, we published four unidentified photographs with a request for help in identifying the people. The following two have been identified:



Thanks to Hildegard Adrian of Steinbach, we now know that the couple is most likely the 1908 wedding photo of Elisabeth Dueck (1880-1944) with Johann Martens (1882-1958).

The boy standing on the chair has been identified from another private collection as being 3 year-old Jacob Loepp (1901-1921).

## Recent Books

Walter and Linda Jansen, *Our Stories* / translated by Walfried Jansen (Private publication, 2010) 112 pp.

This book contains the memoirs of Walter Jansen (1913-2006) and his wife Linda Schulz (1919-2009), who suffered many hardships and ordeals under the Soviet regime from 1917 through 1945, and survived, to experience half a century of peaceful years in Canada. The story of arrest, torture, courage and faith in God's providence makes for an inspiring story. The book also includes genealogical data on three family lines: the Janzen family descendants starting with Peter Janzen (1845-1918), Walter's grandfather; the Voth family descendants which includes the siblings of Anna Voth (1888-1977), Walter's mother; and the Schulz family descendants, starting with Heinrich Schulz (1840-1918), Linda's grandfather. Contact: Walfried Jansen, 12 County Villa Blvd., East St. Paul, Manitoba R2E 0L8 or e-mail [wjansen@mts.net](mailto:wjansen@mts.net).

Michael Penner, *The Shepherd David and His Flock: The David and Katharina Regehr Family of Steinbach, Molotschna, 1835* (Richmond, BC: Private publication, 2010) 102 pp.

This book traces the lives of three generations of the descendants of David Regehr (ca. 1835) and his wife Katharina Warkentin (ca. 1835) who began their married life in 1856 as a poor, landless couple, hired to tend the sheep on a large Mennonite estate called Steinbach in South Russia. David and Katharina Regehr had a family of five daughters and one son. The married surnames of the daughters include Fast, Wiens, Schmidt, Reimer and Neufeld. The Regehr story is closely tied to the Steinbach Estate in Molotschna and the founding of the Allianz Gemeinde. Contact: Michael Penner, 11671 Seahurst Road, Richmond, BC V7A 4K1.

## Recently Received

Ellie Friesen, compiler, *The A.A. Driedger Heritage* (Grunthal, Manitoba: Private publication, 1996?) 160 pp.

This family history compiled a number of years ago, was recently donated to the Mennonite Heritage Centre. It traces the ancestor and family history of the blended family of Abram A. Driedger (1878-1965), a widower with 6 children, who married widow Katharine (Bartel) Krahn (1887-1942), a widow with 7 children, plus one child together. In Russia the Driedgers lived in the Schoenfeld Mennonite settlement and the Krahns in Grigorjewka. The families came to Canada in 1924 and 1925, respectively, where they farmed at Grunthal, Manitoba. Many photos, biographical sketches and genealogical data are included in this book. *Donated by Werner Neufeld.*

Henry J. Block, compiler, *The Johann Block Family* (Private Publication, 1995) 457 pp.

This book (or rather computer print-out) is divided into three main

sections. The first gives genealogical data about members of the family, the second section provides family group sheets for all family groups that include at least one child, and the third section consists of biographical sketches of each family member which chronologically tell the story of the family. Specifically, this family history is about the descendants of Johann Block (1837-1896) and his wife Maria Klassen of Krongarten, South Russia. *Donated by John and Anne Neufeld of Winnipeg.*

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## Queries

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## Migration Letters Conference

(cont'd from p. 4)

accessible? What are the challenges of transcription and translation? What are our current priorities?

The most useful benefit of the two-day event for me was the networking that happened. I am much more aware of the rich resource that personal letters are for the study of everyday life. I was reminded on a number of letter collections that have been deposited at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, letters received by immigrants from their loved ones that remained in Russia, the Soviet Union or Ukraine today, or those received from Germany, Latin and South America, or those from a mission field in Asia or Africa. However, I wondered where the letters may have stayed that immigrants in Canada wrote back to those who remained behind, or those who settled in other areas of the world. I also wondered about starting a letter collection for other immigrant groups within our Mennonite Church family today (Laotian, Vietnamese, Hmong, etc.); but then the postal era for personal communication seems almost to have ended, with the advent of the low-rate long distance telephone plans, e-mail and other electronic means of communication. I also became much more aware of the challenges and need for transcriptions, translations and capturing the interpretive context in order to create the most useful research resource. AR



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## Migration Letters Conference

On May 17-18, 2010 I was privileged to attend a scholarly symposium and archivists' workshop sponsored by the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) in Minneapolis. The overall topic for the two-day conference was "The Migration Letter: Archiving Intimacy in the Postal Era."

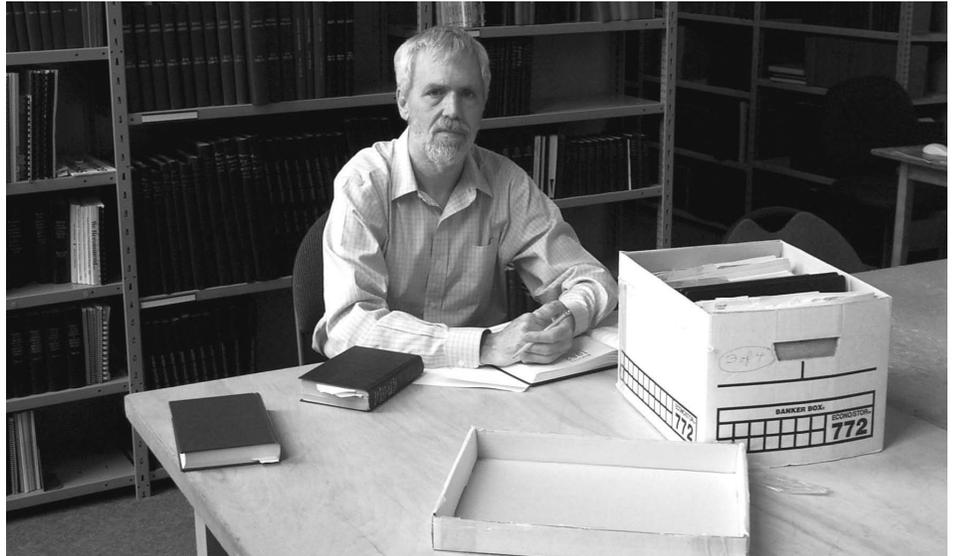
The IHRC located at the University of Minnesota is widely recognized as a leader in documenting, preserving and promoting research on immigration history. Founded in 1965, the IHRC is dedicated to advancing research on global migration with a special emphasis on immigration to the United States. Its goal is to promote the study and appreciation of ethnic pluralism through an active program of research, education and public engagement. The IHRC hold the largest collection of immigrant and refugee manuscript and print collections in North America.

The conference opening address by Professor Orm Overland, Emeritus, Bergen University in Norway, spoke of the role of the Norwegian-American Historical Society in the making of a collection of immigrant letters now in the Norwegian National Archives.

In a subsequent session, another group of scholars, including Canada's John Willis, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Historian of the Canadian postal system, and others from Europe and the U.S., participated in a roundtable discussion assessing the scholarly field of immigration history.

The participants also heard Selia Tan from China's Guangdong Wuyi University speak on building new letter collections in China, which would consist of the 1000s of letters sent by American Chinese back to the families with money earned in Canada and the U.S., which funded their children's education and homes they built in Guangdong Province.

To conclude the first day, the IHRC introduced their Digital Pilot Project, a web exhibition featuring letter writing of Finnish, Ukrainian, Italian and Latvian



**Some pastors donate a week of vacation time to serving in camp. Recently Harold Peters-Fransen donated a week of time to working at the Centre which has led to a commitment to be a regular weekly volunteer. He has written book notes for the *Historian* (see p. 6) and also begun to process the Henry H. Epp collection.** Photo credit: Alf Redekopp

immigrants with selected digital images of letters, transcriptions, translations and research providing the context for each collection. This project can be viewed at [www.ihrc.umn.edu/research/dil/index.html](http://www.ihrc.umn.edu/research/dil/index.html).

On the second day, participants heard of a number of case studies of letter writing in the postal era. Speakers included: Jennifer Attebery, Idaho State University on "Swedish Immigrant Letters as 'Written Oral Texts'"; David Fitzpatrick, Trinity College, Dublin on "Letters from Home: Themes and Functions of Letters addressed Irish Emigrants in Colonial Australia"; Orm Overland on "Listening to Immigrant Voices: Reflections on Letters from Norwegian Immigrants, 1838-1914"; Haiming Liu, California State University, on "Letters as a Primary Source in Understanding Chinese American History"; Wladimir Fisher, University of Vienna and post-doctoral fellow at University of Minnesota, on "South-Slavic Correspondence between the U.S. and Austria-Hungary"; and Sonia Cancian, University of Montreal, on "Intimate Letters in Italian Postwar Migration to Canada."

Immediately following the final session of the scholarly symposium, the IHRC hosted an Archivists' Workshop with the purpose to continue to build networks of communication and collaboration among scholars and archive/library specialists who collect, preserve and provide access to letters written by and to immigrants. The participants heard some more about a collaborative project among international archives (North America, China, Europe)

to provide researchers with digital access to transcribed and translated non-English language personal correspondence written to or/and by immigrants in North America between 1850 and 1970. Brought together digitally by the IHRC, this project would allow scholars for the first time to begin comparative and cross-national comparisons on a wide variety of topics. These topics would range from social historical analysis of everyday life and decision making in the sending areas of Europe and Asia and in immigrant communities in North America to studies of emotions, literacy, linguistic change, religiosity, and life writings among persons and cultures on the move. By linking the personal correspondence exchanged between sending and receiving areas, this project would facilitate a far richer description of trans-national communication in the past, when pen, ink, postal services and steamships provided the main international infrastructures of communication and transportation. While the main users of this project, would be specialized scholars, features of the project would also assist diverse audiences such as teachers, students, family historians ethnic communities and genealogists in interpreting their stories.

As managers of archives we were asked about the extent of immigrant letter collections in our various jurisdictions. What gaps might exist in collecting? What are the challenges of collecting, describing and making the materials

(cont'd on p. 3)

## Called to Serve with MBMS International

**D**oug Heidebrecht, director for the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), since July 2008, has announced his resignation. Heidebrecht will remain at CMBS until the end of August, at which time he and his wife Sherry will begin mission training in British Columbia with Mennonite Brethren Missions Services International (MBMSI) prior to heading overseas for ministry work.



The bulk of Heidebrecht's work at CMBS involves addressing current issues facing MB churches. The Centre preserves Mennonite Brethren congregational and conference records. Theological and historical resources for both individual research and churches engaged in theological reflection and conversation are also available through CMBS.

"We pray that God will continue to bless the ministry of the Canadian Conference of MB Churches as it seeks to build up the church," says Heidebrecht.

Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (CCMBC) executive director David Wiebe says of Heidebrecht, "He implemented a new vision to collect MB writings, particularly scholarly work. This has contributed significantly to theological understanding on a wide variety of issues. It has benefitted the Board of Faith and Life, our conference, staff leadership, and local church leaders, who have taken advantage of this resource.

Prior to his work at CMBS, Heidebrecht served on the faculty of Bethany College in Hepburn, Saskatchewan, for 16 years, teaching hermeneutics and biblical/theological studies. He and Valerie Rempel recently co-edited a collection of essays entitled, *The Voice of a Writer: Honoring the Life of Katie Funk Wiebe*. "Doug has been a fantastic addition to CCMBC operations," says Wiebe. "His gifts of teaching and theological insight have been utilized increasingly throughout our churches. We wish Doug every blessing as he and Sherry follow God's leading."

—Canadian Conference of MB Churches

## Historic birthday used to build bridges

**O**n June 3, 2010, twenty office staff from Mennonite Church Canada (MC Canada) and two staff from the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) attended an historical celebration at the Canadian Conference of MB Churches (CCMBC) office in Winnipeg. The event was held to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Conference.

Some drove to the event while others arrived in a flotilla of bicycles. After a brief introduction of the various activities of the conferences, people divided into groups for a tour of the MB office and were given a synopsis of each of the conference ministries. The event was capped with a BBQ of southern Manitoba farmer's sausage, birthday cake, and a birthday "goodie" bag.

"We are appreciative of the Canadian conference and are watching very closely as it deals with important issues," commented EMC general secretary Tim Dyck.

Conference leaders have the opportunity to interact at MCC meetings or at the Canadian Council of Anabaptist leaders, however conference staff rarely have opportunities to network. The activities, programs, and strengths of each of the conferences are virtually unknown to their counterparts.

"I appreciated the glimpse into their office workings... and was impressed by the range of financial services offered by the denomination," commented MC Canada resource centre director, Arlyn Friesen-Epp.

Over a relaxed meal, staff ate and shared about their work.

"I was interested in what they had to say



MC Canada and CCMBC staff touring the various ministry areas (l-r): Yvonne Snider Nighswander, Alf Redekopp, Rebecca Doerksen, Edith von Gunten, Esther Froese. Photo credit: Kyle Thomas



MC Canada and CCMBC staff mingling at the Centre for MB Studies on June 3, 2010. Photo credit: Kyle Thomas

and...intrigued by their involvement with immigrants and art at the MHC Gallery," commented Tracey Craigon, communications administrative assistant at CCMBC. "Immigrants may not be able to effectively communicate in their adoptive country's language, but through art they can express their feelings, ideas, and beliefs," continued Craigon, who has spent several years teaching English in Japan.

When asked if a similar event should be hosted by MC Canada staff, Friesen-Epp was enthusiastic and noted, "You do not get a sense of the other until you are in their space".

The two archival centres of MC Canada and CCMBC have had a long history of partnership. The periodical *Mennonite Historian* has been a joint publication since 1987. The Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies have also shared a staff person since 1994. *Conrad Stoesz*



General Secretaries (l-r): Tim Dyck, EMC, Jack Suderman, MC Canada and Dave Wiebe (CCMBC). Photo credit: Kyle Thomas

## Friedenstimme on DVDs

By Abe Dueck

Recently a series of 8 DVDs was released by Samenkorn (Liebigstr. 8, 33803 Steinhagen, Germany) containing digital copies of the *Friedensstimme* from 1906-1914. The set is presumably taken from the microfilm set created by University Microfilms many years ago with the same issues missing, but makes the periodical much more accessible to researchers. Each volume also has a table of contents (*Inhaltsverzeichnis*) for each issue.

A detailed story of the periodical was written by John B. Toews ("A Voice of Peace in Troubled Times," *Mennonite Life* 27, 3 (Sept., 1972):93-94. The periodical was founded by Abraham Kroeker in 1903 and initially printed in Berlin until 1906, when it was moved to Halbstadt and published by Raduga until 1914 when German language publications were banned. Then in 1917 Kroeker resumed publication under the title, *Nachrichten des Volksfreund*, and then simply *Volksfreund*. In subsequent years it was published under a variety of titles, including *Molotschnaer Fulblatt*, *Friedensstimme* and *Hoffnungsstrahlen*, generally published by Raduga Press.

Unfortunately there are still significant gaps in the holdings, although a number of the issues published under a variety of titles from 1917-1918 are available at CMBS in hard copy. These have apparently never been microfilmed and are not included in the DVDs. CMBS (Winnipeg) hopes to scan these issues and digitize them in the near future. It is regrettable that these are not included in the DVD set published by Samenkorn.

Abe Dueck, *Winnipeg is the Interim Executive Secretary of the MB Historical Commission, and former CMBS director.*

## Book Notes

by Harold Peters-Fransen

The MHC archives has come into possession of a series of poetry books by Paraguayan born author Walfried Jansen, a chemist for Inco in Thompson Manitoba, photographer and poet, published by Boreal Publishing, a publisher of Northern writers. The first two, *Not a prairie river* (1996, 68 pages), and *The sharp edge of the north* (1997, 89 pages), are illustrated with a number of sketch drawings by Robert Doorenbos. *Not a prairie river* is based on the

author's canoeing experience. His poems are interspersed with accounts of river travels by several early white explorers. In *Sharp edge of north*, Jansen organizes his poetry by the four seasons, with an added section, winter lament. The terrain, wildlife, and human interaction with this world comes alive in his poetry. *In the beginning* (2004, 68 pages) shifts in emphasis to an interaction of the natural world with events in the author's life. The first section, The Garden, reflects on the biblical themes of creation and Noah's flood. The poetry is easy to read and is at various times picturesque, comforting, provocative, and jarring.

*The Batum Story: God's Mercy and Man's Kindness 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* edited by Mary E Janzen, contains a series of first person accounts of persons whose journey from Crimea or South Russia in the early 1920s included Batum, today known as Batumi, Georgia, and then through Turkey before coming to the United States. Stories include the decision to flee Russia, the journey, lengthy stays in Batum and Turkey, the contraction of diseases like typhoid, the interaction with differing host cultures and fellow emigrant cultures, and the intersection in the United States between newly arrived Russian Mennonites and their Swiss Mennonite hosts. The stories include the author's paternal grandparents, and four others, written in the 1970s. The revised edition includes many photographs from a variety of sources, maps, and illustrations by the editor's sister, Margie Hildebrand. The footnotes are excellent, tying the first person stories to historical sources.

*Margaret Suderman, Missionary Nurse* (93pages, self published) written by Allan Labun, a nephew, is the story of a Mennonite Brethren nurse/missionary to India. Born in 1902, trained as a nurse in Winnipeg and a graduate of Moody Bible Institute and Tabor College, Sudermann spent most of her career building up the medical facility in Wanaparty, Hyderabad State, India. Labun in the first 40 pages tells her story chronologically, with many quotes from her letters and writings, and the memoirs of her colleague from most of those years, Anna Suderman (unrelated). Telling the stories of her triumphs and disappointments, many photographs are embedded. The last half of the book includes writings of Margaret's, that do not easily fit the chronology of her story. Written primarily for extended family, the book will be of interest to those wishing to read one

account of mission efforts by the Mennonite Brethren in India through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a glimpse as to how a North American experienced India during this time frame.

*Harold Peters-Fransen has served as a Mennonite pastor in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta congregations.*

## Book Review

(cont'd from p. 8)

one becomes personally linked with those to whom he reveals them, and becomes fully a person thereby."

Maria gains some relief by finally telling her secret to two family members she knows will not betray her to her community. One is her uncle Peter, a dreamer who has never been successful in his endeavours nor much respected by the family or the Mennonite community. The other is her ailing father, who conveniently can no longer comprehend what she is saying.

Characterization in the novel is inconsistent at times and some incidents are rather bizarre (for example, the scene where Maria waltzes through the house in her niece's wedding dress at midnight, singing *O pow'r of Love, all else transcending*, only to discover a man's face pressed to the window, watching her intently).

Although the momentum of the book slows somewhat in Section II, I could not put it down and several weeks after reading *This Hidden Thing*, Maria still lingers in my mind. She will be there for a long time. That is the mark of a good book.

*Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder, a former German instructor and English language tutor in Ontario, now lives in Manitoba.*

## Scientific Backround to DNA

(cont'd from p. 1)

through all my Klassen grandfathers for as long as that line goes back to men who had my surname. Before that it was still being passed down, but just not linked to the Klassen name.

If we can identify my Y chromosome in some way, we can then see whether other Klassens have the same chromosome too (with a few mutations, perhaps). If they do, then our families can be connected because we now know that all of us must have inherited our Y chromosomes from the same guy, even though he may have lived in the 1400s. It is not likely that we

will ever get a paper trail all the way back to this ancestor. So genetics allows us to extend genealogies beyond written history in the sense that we can make connections even though we do not know anything else about the actual people we have discovered. All we get is family connections. We may find that all Klassen in the Low German Mennonite world are descendants of the same person or they are not. It turns out that Penner and Janzen's data shows that there may be at least three different kinds of Klassen.

How are Y chromosomes identified? Running from one end of the chromosome to the other is a thread of DNA, which is like a pearl necklace with four different kinds of pearls. The pearls are molecules which we call A, T, G and C. The Y necklace is about 60 million "pearls" in length. All of the DNA in all 46 chromosomes amounts to about 6 billion of these molecules, so Y represents about 1% of all the DNA in each cell's nucleus. (The size of the genome is usually given as 3 billion, but that actually refers to half of the DNA in a cell.)

A, T, G, and C molecules are sometimes arranged in DNA so that they spell out a message. These messages are called genes and each one is necessary to direct some task in the cell. A few genes on the Y chromosome make sure that the bearer turns out to be a male. Most of Y, however, does not have genes: it is a genetic desert with only a few oases. Ironically, it is the deserts that are of the most interest to the genealogist. Within these regions the DNA often seems to have a bad case of stuttering. The message may go CATA CATA CATA..... with the CATA repeating 17 or more times. These repetitive regions are highly variable between individuals. I may have 17 such repeats at a certain region on my Y, while you may have only 15. The DNA genealogist finds about 40 such regions and counts the number of repeats in each region for each individual. His results for me might look like this: 17, 19, 30, 5, 21, ....up to about 40 such numbers. This string of numbers is highly specific for me, but my father and my sons will have very similar strings of numbers. These regions are not genes; they may be merely the DNA equivalent of styrofoam.

How can the lab worker actually count these repeats in so many individuals? Fortunately there is a very simple method that can be applied once you know one person's sequence. This person's

sequence was found about 10 years ago by a course of very spectacular research costing hundreds of millions of dollars. All we have to do now to count the number of repeats in a certain region is to build a bridge across the region and measure the length of the bridge or actually get the actual order of the A, T, G, and C molecules in the bridge. "Building the bridge" is actually a technique called the polymerase chain reaction which uses known sequences next to both ends of the repeating sequence to make new DNA which copies the span between the two known sequences. The resulting piece of "bridge" DNA can be measured by letting it travel through a gel under the influence of an electric current (the DNA is negatively charged) alongside other pieces of DNA of known size. The rate of travel of DNA in the gel depends on the size of the pieces. Small pieces travel faster than large pieces so measuring how far the "bridge DNA" travelled in the gel is just like measuring its size. You can see the DNA in the gel by staining it with a dye and then shining UV light on it to reveal beautiful pink bands. The DNA can also be extracted from the gel and "sequenced" by a method too complex to be explained here.

Thus, the complex pattern of DNA sequence stuttering is used to identify Y chromosomes. When two or more men have the same recognizable Y chromosome, they must have inherited it from the same male ancestor. A very large amount of data large amount of information is examined in these comparisons so that there is virtually no chance that two Y chromosomes would be so similar by chance.

The repetitive regions in the Y chromosome change at a certain rate by way of mutation. This rate is fast enough so that distinct families have emerged that are very different from each other even though we know that they all had a common ancestor way back. The rate, however, is slow enough so that we can still clearly see family connections as old as 500 years or more. Theoretically we should be able to trace the Y chromosome all the way back to Adam.

Because the Y chromosome is so barren of genes and because we deliberately choose the non-genetic parts to do genealogy, the results have almost nothing to do with the characteristics of an individual other than his name. My characteristics depend just as much on my

Koop, Unger, Toews, Reimer, and Fast ancestors as they do on the Klassen. The first Klassen, let's call him Adam, had many contemporaries who contributed to my genetics, but it just so happens that I got my Y chromosome, which is only 1% of my DNA and not very significant genetically, from this Adam. So we should not focus exclusively on our father's male line as though it is the most important one. However, the origin of names is interesting, especially because our system of passing down names results in the inevitable extinction of surnames and their associated Y chromosomes. This is the fate of the Y chromosome of men who have no offspring or those who have only daughters and is especially obvious in the Hutterite community, where only a few surnames are left.

Another interesting thing about Y lineages is that they can show where there have been "non-parental events" such as adoption or other forms of fatherhood. A boy may be given his unmarried mother's name or another boy may have been fathered by his married mother's lover or rapist. Some people who volunteer their DNA for the Mennonite DNA project could be in for a surprise. Someone who has the name Peters may find that Klassen is stamped on his Y chromosome. That would be those other Klassen.

Does the fact that the Y chromosome has been passed down for as long as there have been humans mean that we can postulate a single male ancestor for all humans and see him as the biblical Adam? Unfortunately not. We are arbitrarily focusing on 1% of the DNA genome to identify this individual. We could just as well have chosen some other 1% elsewhere in the genome to focus on. That could give us a different "Adam", perhaps one of the Y chromosome Adam's contemporaries. Nevertheless, the Y chromosome story would be consistent with the literal creation of the first male human. This idea, however, falters when we consider the "mitochondrial Eve", a woman who gave all of us her mitochondrial DNA, who lived in a different time period than the "Y chromosome Adam". More on this in a future article on mitochondrial DNA.

#### Notes

1. See [www.mennonitedna.com](http://www.mennonitedna.com). Prices range from free testing to as high as \$500 per person.
2. Tim Janzen has written an excellent technical explanation of Y chromosome science at [www.mennonitedna.com/guide.html](http://www.mennonitedna.com/guide.html).

## **Book Reviews**

Adolf Ens, Ernest N. Braun and Henry N. Fast, editors, *Settlers of the East Reserve: Moving In - Moving Out - Staying* (Winnipeg and Steinbach: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2009), pb., 328 pp., \$30.00 CND.

*Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein*

This volume has brought to creative fruition the joint labours of the late John Dyck, as compiler and author of much of the material, the editors noted, the work of EastMenn Historical Committee, and the publisher, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. It is a fitting start-up item for the celebrations of the 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of 2009-2010. That celebration highlights the coming of the first of 7000 Russian Mennonites to Manitoba in 1874-1875.

The East Reserve (initially called by some the Rat River Settlement) northeast of Winnipeg (then known also as Fort Garry) was the destination of the 1874 - 1880 Bergthaler and Kleine Gemeinde arrivals. It was soon to be followed, in 1875-1880, by even more Chortitzer and Fürstenland emigrants from south Russia to the West Reserve (sometimes then called the Pembina Reserve) during that period.

A number of well-researched articles, charts, maps, photos and other material offer much "flesh and bones" data for rounding out a full account of this historic Mennonite emigration experience. New information appears in the 1876 listing of family provision loans (*Brotschuld*) which not only provides sums received by various recipients but gives their places of residence. Twenty five very early village names for the total region appear here. Some village listings of recipients seem to have been merged so this list does not include all established villages of that time.

An essay titled "Homestead Applications, Patents and Cancellations" provides a clearer full sketch than we have had till now of the people taking up homesteads, and early changes in landownership, including data on those who left the region altogether. Publication of the census results of 1891, which include Rosenhof and Rosenort near Morris, is very important here also (but note the spelling of Tannenau ("Tanneau"), p.103).

We find new village histories, i.e. of Rosengart/Rosengard, Friedrichsthal and

Schönwiese (all now extinct as villages), to be added to many already published histories, at least of early settlement periods. New studies on the emigrations from the East Reserve to Cass County, North Dakota, USA, Paraguay and the West Reserve round out this anthology. A small thirty-family movement to Bergthal near Mountain Lake, Minnesota, still needs to be fully researched and added to this list.

This compilation of quite detailed summaries on various themes does not fully eliminate the need for serious researchers to check original hand written sources to make sure transcription errors have not crept in (as some readers are already saying is the case). Unfortunately the published materials do not always provide clear and complete references to the titles and locations of original documents.

The volume is generally well-edited and visually appealing, with a useful bibliography, although page margins are somewhat skimpy in places. A brief identification of authors and translators would have been useful.

To sum up though, both East Reserve and West Reserve studies will benefit a great deal from what is now on offer in this book. Both the Mennonite Heritage Village and *Mennonitische Post*, as well as other bookstores will be pleased to sell any reader a copy.

Dora Dueck, *This Hidden Thing* (Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2010) 327 pp.

*Reviewed by Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder*

Dueck's novel is one of those books that attracts readers: first of all by its beautifully designed cover (a detail from *Seasoned Offerings*, by Agatha Doerksen), and secondly by its title which invites readers to turn its pages in order to begin a journey of discovery. They will not be disappointed.

This novel is a result of years of research, beginning with its historical setting, the 1920s Mennonite immigrant experience in Winnipeg. In the process, the author earned an MA in history, which she states may have interrupted her work, but at the same time "stimulated my thinking on the past in many ways and thus made [its] own contribution to this novel."

Dueck begins her novel with the words "You're not wanted," directed at the main character, Maria, who arrived in Canada three days ago, and is applying for a job

as a domestic. She is refused because she doesn't speak English. Completely dependent on someone else to interpret for her while at the same time shivering with cold and culture shock, Maria is vulnerable and confused.

This introductory scene is a premonition of what is to come. Although in a complete state of misery, Maria does not succumb to her feelings. Instead, she insists, through her reluctant interpreter, that she must have this job, until the woman finally agrees to hire her on a trial basis.

When Maria's father comes to visit her at her place of work (just to make sure she is all right), he says, "Mother insisted I come. She doesn't trust the words of letters." Again, this is a foreshadowing of what takes place later in the novel: people are deceived and in turn deceive others through the letters they write.

Maria draws strength and encouragement from a promise made to her by Aron Ediger, a young man in Russia, to keep in touch by letter until they are together again. She receives only one letter from him in two years, even though she desperately writes several. After two years she receives a letter from her cousin with news that devastates her and breaks her heart. However, having observed the mental breakdown of a fellow domestic, she makes a vow that she will remain strong, and she does so. She also concludes that privacy, although it seems selfish, is very important to her after she sees another domestic who has become pregnant, shamed and ostracised by her Mennonite community.

This penchant for privacy marks the rest of Maria's life and subtly alters her personality. Still hurting from her experience with Aron, she falls into a trap that changes everything. Ironically, what others see as acts of heroism are actually attempts to cover up her neglect and get rid of her guilt (rescuing a boy from drowning and taking care of her siblings after her mother dies). She too is guilty of misleading people through letters. She does not share with her family and friends what really happened to her, bearing the burden of keeping the secret to herself for most of her life.

In the Acknowledgements, Dueck states that she received psychological insights for her novel through *Secrets*, a book by the Swiss physician and writer, Paul Tournier. Tournier writes, "By opening out, by telling one's secrets ... freely ...

(cont'd on p. 6)