

# Mennonite Historian

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



John Redekop (left) and Jake Fransen (right) shake hands. Anna and Isaac Tiessen stand at the left and Henry Brucks at the right. The photo was taken at the 1986 Conference of Mennonites in Canada convention in Waterloo, Ontario. Fransen is accepting on behalf of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada an apology from John Redekop and the Canadian Mennonite Brethren for past tensions dealing with modes of baptism, membership, and marriage, specifically for not accepting into full membership Mennonites baptized by modes other than immersion. Isaac Tiessen, a long-time advocate for dropping the re-baptism requirement, also figures in the lead article, "Two Mennonite Brethren Churches in Leamington, Ontario, 1938–1939," a story of contested leadership. See page 2. Photo credit: MAID CMBS NP149-2-372.

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## Two Mennonite Brethren Churches in Leamington, 1938–1939

by Alf Redekopp, St. Catharines

For a short period from March 1938 to November 1939, the Mennonite Brethren of Leamington were split into two congregations. The cause of this “schism” has sometimes been given as an example of the unique journey and difficult debate the Ontario Mennonite Brethren Conference had in the process of joining the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in North America.

The “difficult debate” concerned the prerequisite that members of any MB congregation must be baptized by immersion—something which could become a problem for Mennonites arriving in a community who had been previously baptized by another form and wanted to join an MB Church. When the Ontario Conference of MB churches was established in 1932<sup>1</sup> as an independent conference, it was not as rigid on the matter of baptism by immersion as were the MBs in western Canada or the U.S. The debate intensified in Leamington as more and more MB families moved to Ontario during the Depression years that were especially difficult on prairie families.

However, recent archival findings

related to the Gertrude Wiebe Reimer Family Letters Project<sup>2</sup> that I am working on suggest that the 1938 church schism in Leamington might very well have been caused—or at least exacerbated—more by differences related to leadership styles than by matters of biblical interpretation.

In 1930, minister Gerhard W. Reimer (1876–1931), younger brother of the prominent minister Jacob W. Reimer (1860–1948), moved to Leamington after having spent his first four years in Canada in Winnipeg. Gerhard W. Reimer had studied theology at the *Prediger Seminar* in Berlin, and, in 1904, met his wife Gertrude Wiebe (1884–1988) at a Bible conference at the Schmidt Estate (Steinbach, Molotschna, Ukraine), where his brother, Jacob, was preaching. These families were very much a part of the *Allianz Gemeinden*,<sup>3</sup> and the Gerhard W. Reimers (with seven children) were part of the wave of Mennonites coming to Ontario from the west.

Unfortunately, Gerhard W. Reimer caught pneumonia and died unexpectedly in Leamington in November 1931. It is interesting to note that he preached his last sermon in Windsor on the Sunday before he died. He was ministering there together with Jacob H. Janzen of Waterloo, the prominent leader of the United Mennonite Churches of Ontario. Their collaboration is an example of openness to working together with others beyond immediate denominational boundaries, something characteristic of the *Allianz*.

Gerhard W. Reimer, who had been leader of the Tiege MB Church in Molotschna (1924–1926), had worked closely with MB leaders in the west, such as C.N. Hiebert, A.H. Unruh, and others. He had also attended Northern district conferences of North American MBs and probably the 1930 General Conference of the MB Church, which met in Hepburn, Saskatchewan. These experiences certainly had also enriched the lives of his family members, who, when they settled in Leamington, missed the type of church fellowship they had enjoyed in Winnipeg. The extensive correspondence of the widowed Mrs. Gertrude (Wiebe) Reimer with her children about life in Leamington between 1937 and 1945 (see the Gertrude Wiebe Reimer Family Letters Project) sheds interesting light on the church split in the Leamington MB Church in 1938–1939.

In 1936, another Gerhard Reimer moved to Leamington. He was Bible school

teacher Gerhard J. Reimer (1885–1970), co-founder with A.H. Unruh (1878–1961) of the Winkler Bible School, where Reimer taught from 1925 until 1936. He was an articulate, experienced Bible teacher and preacher. In January 1937, several months after Reimer arrived in Leamington, when the Leamington MB Church membership met to hold elections for various positions, including the role of *Gemeindeleiter* (church leader), Gerhard J. Reimer was among those nominated.

Electing a leader annually seems to have been a bit of a new process, something that the newly formed Ontario MB Conference was calling for. Minister Isaac Tiessen (1904–1999) and his father-in-law, *Ältester* Abram Huebert, had been the main leaders since this congregation organized in 1931. Isaac Tiessen might have thought that the election of the church leader was just a formality and that the church would routinely elect him to continue, but that was not to be the case.

Tiessen was a little taken aback when there was discussion about what the election might mean, and that other candidates had been suggested and were willing to serve. The three candidates nominated were Isaac Tiessen, Peter Friesen, and Gerhard J. Reimer. For one reason or another, the vote was postponed from one meeting to the next, but it did occur on 24 January 1937.<sup>4</sup>

On 18 January, after the first meeting where some of the elections happened, Gertrude Reimer, widow of Gerhard W. Reimer, wrote a letter to her children, Helen and Henry B. Tiessen.<sup>5</sup> She wrote:

*Yesterday was a very busy day. We had our elections and Isaac Tiessen said he wished to be elected anew—something we all hoped for. We got the impression that he thought people would just say, “But Brother Tiessen, you will remain our leader as before,” but only Johan Neufeld stood up and said, “Brother Tiessen is good to us, and we want him further, or am I the only one that knows nothing about what is going on.” Not one person said Tiessen should stay. He was asked to clarify his desire for an election, and he said that it is often difficult for him, and not an easy task; he was unable to visit the people as he should, and if they wanted to choose someone else, it would be good. He also added that the Ontario Conference prefers that leaders don’t always remain the same, but that there is an election occasionally.*

(cont’d on p. 4)

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# Genealogy and Family History

## The 1920s Mennonite Immigration to Canada: Genealogical Sources, Part 2: Emigration Applications and Lists

by Glenn H. Penner <gpenner@uoguelph.ca>

Between 1922 and 1930, tens of thousands of Mennonites tried to leave the USSR. The paperwork involved was massive. A significant amount of this paperwork is still in Ukrainian and Russian archives. Copies of some documents have also made their way to North American archives. Every family wanting to get out of Russia would have completed an emigration application and provided the necessary documents. The ultimate goal was to obtain a set of passports that would allow the family to leave. Two sets of emigration applications from the Zaporizhzhia Archives are available—one for 1928 and one for 1929.<sup>1</sup> The information found in the 1928 list has been integrated into the GRANDMA database.<sup>2</sup> There should be applications for the years going back to 1923, but these have yet to be located.

The process of obtaining the required documents and receiving permission to leave the USSR was a frustrating process. The negotiations between the various agencies trying to help Mennonites leave and the Russian government, as well as with the governments who were willing to take the refugees, has been covered in many books and articles and will not be discussed here.<sup>3,4</sup>

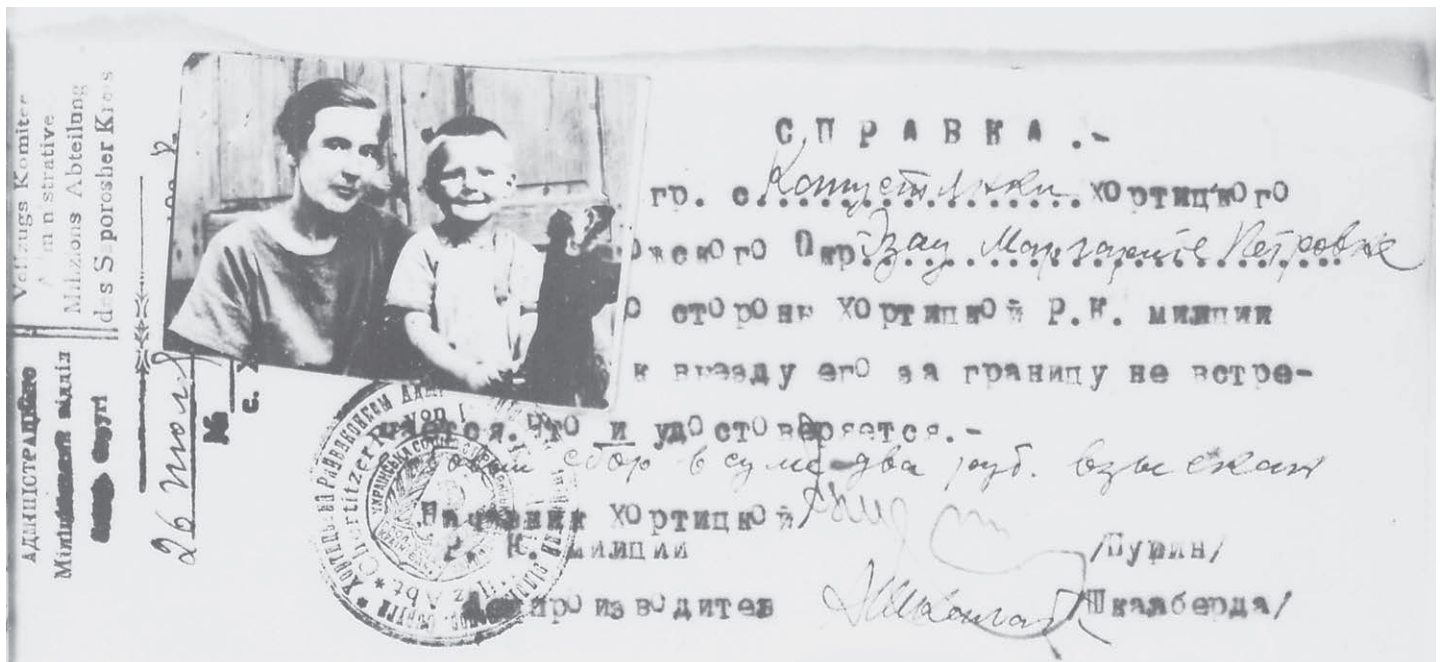
During the course of the 1920s, several agencies were set up in order to help Mennonites leave the USSR. The RUSKAPA (or RUSCAPA, Russian Canadian American Passenger Agency) was a company originally set up to help Germans from Russia leave. RUSKAPA had its headquarters in Kiev and Moscow.<sup>5</sup> The *Algemeene Commissie voor Buitenlandsche Nooden*<sup>6</sup> and *Hollandsch Doopsgezind Emigranten Bureau*<sup>7</sup> were Dutch Mennonite relief organizations that also helped some Mennonites get to out of Russia. Organizations such as the *Russlandmennonitische Studienkommission*<sup>8</sup> looked for suitable locations in North and South America. The *Verband der Bürger holländischer Herkunft* (VBHH, Association of Citizens

of Dutch Extraction) helped coordinate the emigration process from within Russia.<sup>9</sup> The Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (CMBoc)<sup>10</sup> was ultimately responsible for the settling of Mennonites in Canada between 1923 and 1930. An attempt to settle Russian Mennonites in Mexico was also made by Henry Krehbiel.<sup>11</sup> However, that settlement lasted less than a decade, with most moving on to Canada.

Not only did all these organizations compile lists of those wanting to flee communist Russia and ultimately come to Canada, but lists were also made at every level of Russian government as well as locally by Mennonite leaders. In chapter six of his book *Lost Fatherland*, John B. Toews describes the frantic attempts of B.B. Janz and his colleagues to get together lists of prospective emigrants for the Russian government's approval.<sup>4</sup> By August 1922, they had put together lists containing the names of 17,121 Mennonites who wanted to leave Russia. It appears that of these lists only a tiny fraction is now accessible. Available lists are being transcribed and/or translated and will be posted on the [mennonitegenealogy.com](http://mennonitegenealogy.com) website (see URL in endnote 1).

The *Mennonitische Rundschau*<sup>12</sup>

(cont'd on p. 11)



The 1928 passport application and picture for Margaretha (Penner) Esau (GRANDMA #343296) and son, Viktor. A separate passport application is also available for her husband, Victor Kornelius Esau (GRANDMA #199479). According to his passport, he was an engineer at the Dnepropetrovsk dam. This family was one of thousands who applied to leave the USSR in 1928 and 1929 but never got out. Viktor was one of the many Mennonite men who were arrested in 1938 and never seen again. Most were shot soon after arrest. Margaretha died of consumption two years later (*Der Bote*, 22 April 1940, p. 5). The fate of son Viktor is unknown. Photo credit: Zaporizhzhia State Archives, Fond 316, Opis 2, Delo 44.

## Two MB Congregations

(cont'd from p. 2)

*This is more or less what he said, but no one said anything. The air was heavy. Then Brother [Gerhard J.] Reimer stood up and said, "We want to accept Brother Tiessen's explanation and declaration and be thankful for the work he has done." Reimer then explained what it meant to be a servant leader [Leiter]. A servant leader must do what the congregation wants. A Leiter and a Führer are two different things. Is.[aac] T.[iessen] had been a "Führer" here as long as there was no organized congregation, but the congregation now needs a "Leiter" not a "Führer." And it was very appropriate to ask oneself and to ask the community whether they still wanted him to serve. In fact, everyone in the congregation should do this from time to time, whether preacher, Sunday teacher, and so on. Brother Reimer's words were very important to everyone. No one had explained it so well. Tiessen was shocked that no one stood up in his support. He then stood up and said, "I suppose we will now vote on absolutely everything, including membership in this congregation."*

Gertrude Reimer picks up on this somewhat sarcastic response of Isaac Tiessen and writes, "Many wondered what he meant by that." Eventually Gerhard J. Reimer's own membership would be questioned, but not for another year.

When the election finally happened by secret ballot on 24 January 1937, Isaac Tiessen was elected with a count of 38 votes out of the 56 members present (68%). At the same meeting, a five-person *Jugendverein* committee was elected with Gerhard J. Reimer as the chair. Over the course of the next year, the *Jugendverein* flourished with regular programs and much spiritual edification.

Gertrude Reimer wrote in another letter that she had company from Vineland, another Mrs. Gerhard Reimer, who told her about her own congregation's experience with elections. They too had a leader who was not good for the congregation, one who was such "a dictator" that he had to be told quite directly by several people that "we do not want your leadership." The congregation, she reported, chose another brother as their leader, allowing this first one to continue preaching but not to be involved with congregational leadership. And, she added, that is what



**Gertrude Wiebe Reimer, 1933.** Photo credit: Hildi Froese Tiessen.

should happen here in Leamington as well: Tiessen functions too independently.

During 1937, Gerhard J. Reimer chaired the *Jugendverein* committee and also taught an evening Bible school. Gertrude Wiebe wrote: "Gerhard Reimer's presence here is a great source of blessing, but Tiessen asks him to speak so seldom." When she describes Wilhelm and Sara Toews 25th wedding anniversary celebration, she reveals more about a growing frustration with Tiessen's leadership among members of the Leamington congregation. Wilhelm Toews was also a preacher but had never been ordained. Nevertheless, he was a faithful servant in the church and his 25th wedding anniversary was a significant event. On 9 May 1937, Gertrude Reimer wrote:

*Now I want to tell you about Toewses' silver wedding. Lydia [Lydia Thielman, Gertrude's oldest daughter] and I helped Saturday, mixing batter for the baking. We had a very nice raisin bread, nice sweet cakes and zwieback. Teacher Reimer and Gerhard Willms prepared a program. Liese Toews [daughter] had discussed everything with them. The Sunday before, there was a church business meeting and someone had circulated an anonymous note asking if anyone would be in favour of giving Brother Toews a gift, a concordance or something like that—anonymously, because everyone is much too afraid of Tiessen. Gerhard Willms did not even want*

*to lead the program, he was that afraid. Oh, it is so sad. There is much sighing under these conditions, and he dominates everything.*

Now the Toewses wanted to have Gerhard Reimer as the keynote speaker, but it ended up being mainly Tiessen again. Reimer spoke only very briefly and Tiessen about 15 minutes... Isaac Tiessen spoke first, emphasizing again and again, if only God would get the glory, and did not at all focus on the Toewses, marking this day with thanksgiving. The second speaker was Preacher Jakob Janzen.<sup>6</sup> He spoke very warmly and then Brother Reimer spoke very briefly and meaningfully. In between, the choir sang, also a quartet. [The Toewses'] daughter Liese recited a very beautiful poem and presented the parents with a very beautiful silver wreath and little Ernie recited a beautiful poem, followed by more poems and congratulations—Tina Wiebe, Elsa, and Marichen Huebert each had a poem. The Ladies Fellowship gave Sister Toews a flower, which I presented to them on behalf of the group. I also read a poem. Then Brother Toews shared how wonderfully God had led and provided for their lives.

*It was very beautiful. At last Brother Friesen spoke briefly, and then Brother and Sister Toews prayed, and all were invited to stay for the reception. They received many gifts. But imagine this, Tiessen had bought a Bible commentary for Toews and handed it to him when they were alone in the hallway full of tableware. Not even Mrs. Toews was there. No one knew whether a book had arrived or not. Then, when they had already eaten, Mrs. Toews had said to Anna, Mrs. Tiessen, that it was a pity that the book had not been presented publicly. Well, Anna had said, Isaac had asked several brothers and they had said that it was not necessary to make such a big fuss about it. Just imagine, how envious Isaac must be! He was so serious throughout the event. It was too much praise that Toews was getting. Immediately after the program, Tiessen had come to Gerhard Willms and asked who had asked him to lead the program. Willms had said that the couple and their daughter Liese had requested it. Then he had just said, "So?" and left.*

Differences in understanding of baptism and/or communion do not seem to figure into the growing tensions, but rather personalities and leadership styles.



Sometime toward the end of 1937, Gerhard J. Reimer began to withdraw his involvement in the congregation. There were some other older ministers who also wondered why they got to speak so infrequently. Sometime in February 1938, after the annual *Bibelbesprechung* (Bible study conference) in Kitchener, H.H. Janzen spent a week speaking in Leamington. According to Gertrude Reimer, Janzen listened only to one side of the growing conflict, namely to Huebert and his son-in-law Tiessen. And it wasn't until the end of the week of his time there that Janzen and Gerhard J. Reimer had several meetings to talk through some issues.

On 7 March 1938, Gertrude Reimer wrote:

*On Saturday, Teacher Reimer invited him [Janzen] again after the meeting, and they talked everything through. Janzen had said, "Brother Reimer, didn't I tell you right at the beginning to stick to the preaching; and now you even supported the other faction?" Brother Reimer had answered, "I stood by those who were right and spoke to the situation at hand." Then Brother Reimer told Janzen how Tiessen and David Boschmann had come to him last winter right after the elections and had said, "Those who come from the west, if they join here, they must first remain silent in the community for two to three years and wait and not immediately speak and participate, and what is your position, Brother Janzen?" "Well," said Janzen, "I take that position, too." Thereupon Teacher Reimer said, "Now I know everything, that's all I wanted to know."*

Perhaps those who "came from the west" did not understand the Ontario context, but that does not seem to have been the case in Leamington. There seemed to be lack of trust in the leadership coupled with an inability to incorporate and use the gifts of more members within the fellowship. The stage was developing for a group to withdraw and meet separately. The minutes of January 1938 record one couple who requested and were granted their release from membership. On 23 April 1938, a letter from Gerhard J. Reimer was read at a congregational meeting. The minutes record the following:

*Brother G. Dick reads a letter in which Br. G. Reimer reports his resignation from our congregation and at the same time*

*asks for the testimony certificate from the Winkler MB Church which he brought in at that time. The congregation takes the view that Brother Reimer became a member of our congregation when he gave this testimony, and that as a result, Winkler's testimony could not be returned to him. And because Reimer's position in the congregation is not a clear one, the congregation finds that according to the conference decision, he should not be given a testimony. Brother Isaac Tiessen is instructed to inform him of this.*

Gertrude Reimer had addressed her feeling about church membership a few months earlier in January 1938, when she wrote: "I think I'll take out my membership because I can't stay in it like this. There are too many things that are wrong." On April 11, she wrote:

*Reimers, David Wienses, and Heinrich Wiebes were here. The latter came from the west two weeks ago. They are a very dear brother and sister, already over 60 years old. He has been a leader in the Brethren Church for many years. I think Isaac Tiessen and Brother Huebert's fears are well founded, because there is a whole group who wants to organise themselves as a separate Mennonite Brethren congregation.*

*There is nothing to prevent them from doing so, but one thing is true, Heinrich Janzen and Isaac Tiessen and Brother Huebert are to blame for the fact that it has come to this, because of their attitude towards those who come from the west. In a short time, it could be quite different... This is all very difficult for us. May God give us all much wisdom.*

*Last Sunday was communion and almost everyone went out. Lydia stayed, but she said she was sorry that she had stayed. That's how she felt. We don't want to separate, but if Tiessen is so stubborn and sticks to his position, what then?*

On 30 May 1938, Gertrude Reimer wrote: "A group has organized itself as a Mennonite Brethren Church and have met separately. I think I should go there, too, because it's too hard here." This was the first mention of the second MB congregation in Leamington.

The Ontario MB Conference that had been founded in 1932 met every November. Here is how Gertrude Reimer, on 8 November 1938, described what happened there:

*On Sunday [6 November 1938] the*

*annual conference occurred in Kitchener. From our group, the following went: Brother H. Wiebe, W. Toews, Peter Dück, Unger, and Dietrich Bergmann. They were only guests. From the other group, Gerhard Dück, Johann Wiebe, Flaming, Gerhard Willms, Abram Huebert, and Peter Friesen went. Isaac Tiessen did not go, he was probably a bit worried, because everything would be discussed there. They had had several closed meetings and will probably have talked about Leamington.*

*Heinrich Janzen welcomed the guests and then referred to our group as the "new congregation." Brother Heinrich Wiebe and the others were somewhat offended by this. Heinrich Janzen had spoken very highly of the General Conference School and said that we should only go there to learn, and he had also highly recommended the "Zionsbote," which he said was our periodical.*

*Yes, we have already lived through very difficult days here. Our small group is simply hated by the others. They give us all kinds of names... We simply have to suffer. The United Mennonite church community is much nicer to us. Heinrich Janzen and Boldt have always said that they are Allianz and now they say they are the authentic Brethren church. Oh, it doesn't feel so good; I would like to leave here...*

*A.H. Unruh was also here in Ontario in the interest of the Bible school and preached one evening. He spoke very earnestly. When he was here, he immediately went to see Heinrich Wiebe and then went to meet with Abram Huebert together with Wiebe. He wanted to have Abram Huebert have a meeting like this with Gerhard Reimer, but Reimer was working and not available... Unruh had said to Brother Huebert that they should recognize our group as a congregation, and he made clear to him the principles of the Mennonite Brethren Church.*

*He had few plans for Tiessen. The delegates had already been elected at the conference for next year's federal conference in Corn, Oklahoma. I[saac] Tiessen did not succeed this time... The Jakob Kroekers from the States are visiting here. When Henry Janzen had gone to Corn, Oklahoma, two weeks ago for the Missions Committee to discuss matters of the Africa Mission, he had invited Brother Jakob Kroeker to the Ontario conference.*

*(cont'd on p. 8)*

# Mennonite Heritage Archives

## New Faces and Projects

by Conrad Stoesz

There are some new faces and new projects to share with friends of the Mennonite Heritage Archives. We are pleased to announce that Administrative Assistant Selenna Wolfe gave birth to a healthy boy in July! We wish Selenna and Jesse all the best in their new role as parents. In Selenna's absence we have hired **Graeme Unrau**.

Graeme grew up on a mixed farm in the MacGregor area of Manitoba. Graeme loves history and culture and is involved with local community organizations such as Heritage Winnipeg and the



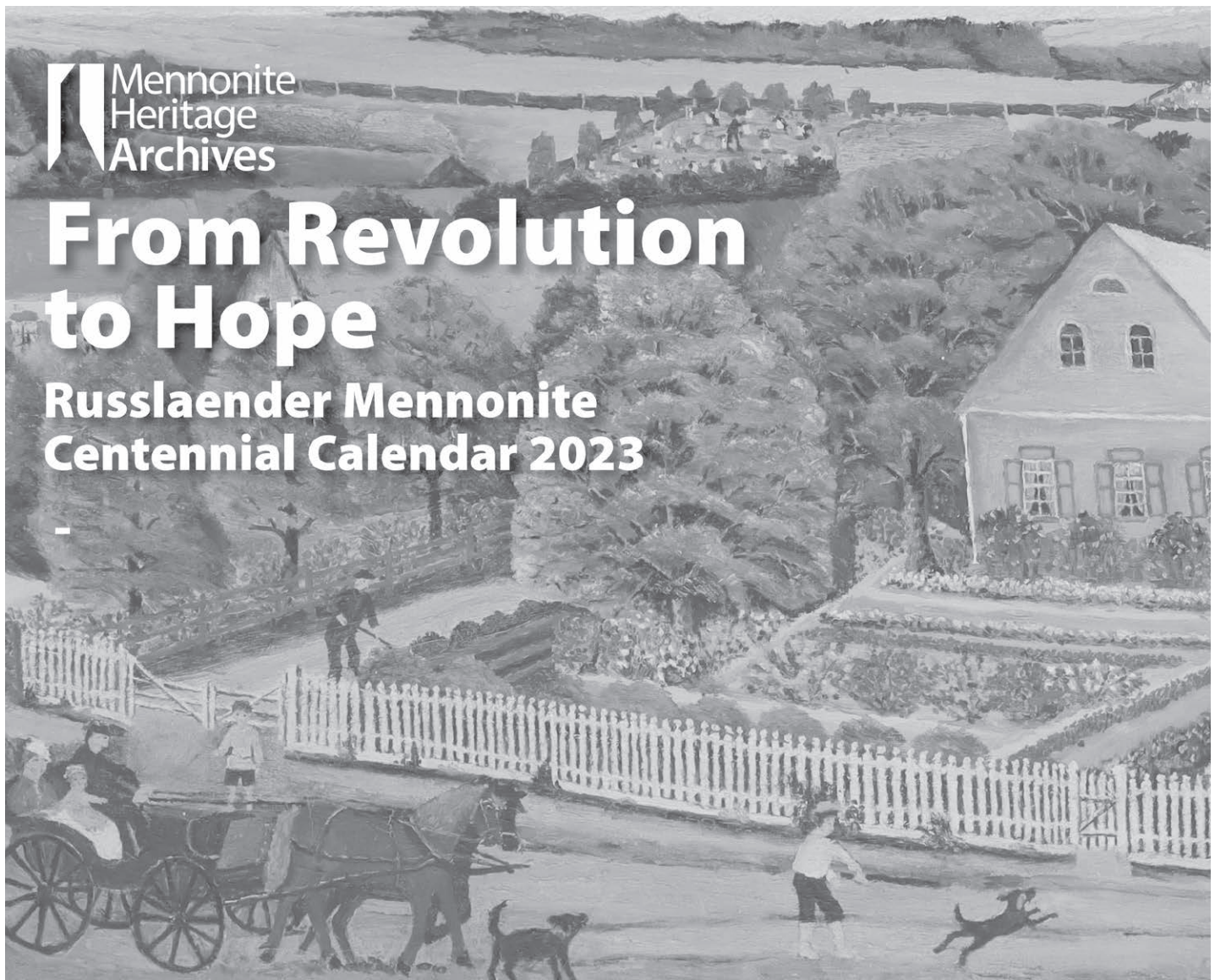
**Graeme Unrau.** Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

Manitoba Master Gardener Association. The Archives shares Graeme's time and talents with the MHC Gallery. Visitors will appreciate Graeme's warm personality and diverse interests.

One new project is the MHA production of a monthly calendar called ***From Revolution to Hope: Russlaender Mennonite Centennial Calendar 2023***. Between 1923 and 1930, over 20,000 Mennonites moved from Russia to western Canada and Ontario. The January to December calendar, designed by Craig Terlson, features rare photos and paintings from the Mennonite Heritage Archives and is available for a limited time (see cover image below). To reserve your copy, you can pre order here <https://www.commonword.ca/ResourceView/82/25836> or email us at [info@mharchives.ca](mailto:info@mharchives.ca). Cost is \$20 plus shipping. The calendar makes a great Christmas gift and proceeds go to support the archives.

Another new face in the archives is **Dr. Nataliya Venger**, head of the history department at the University of

(cont'd on p. 11)





## Historical Commission Publishes Ministry Life-Writing and Awards Research Grants

by Jon Isaak

On June 17–18, 2022, the Mennonite Brethren (MB) Historical Commission gathered for its annual meeting via Zoom video conference for the 3rd year on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to hearing how the four MB archives associated with the Commission (Fresno, Abbotsford, Hillsboro, and Winnipeg) have adapted to the pandemic, the Commission engaged deeply with the publication projects and research grant applications on its agenda.

The Commission announced the release of its latest publication, *On Holy Ground: Stories by and about women in ministry leadership in the Mennonite Brethren Church*, edited by Dora Dueck. The book is an anthology of life-writing from 15 MB women leaders, detailing their calls to ministry and experiences as women leaders.

### On Holy Ground



Stories by and about women  
in ministry leadership in the  
Mennonite Brethren Church

Edited by  
Dora Dueck  
Introduction by  
Valerie G. Rempel

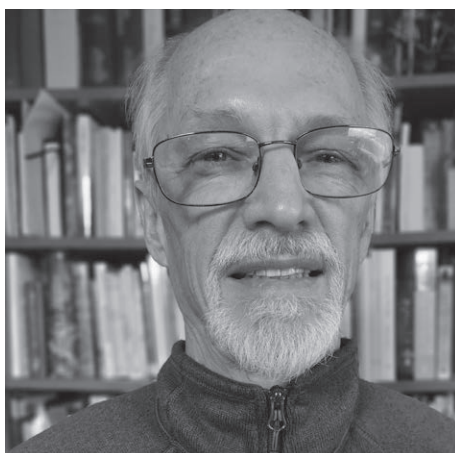
A book launch for *On Holy Ground* with four of the contributors took place on June 17 at the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, British Columbia. A second event with four other contributors took place in Winnipeg, Manitoba, at Canadian Mennonite University on June 23. The book is now on sale through the Kindred Productions website, <https://www.kindredproductions.com>.

Besides funding publications, the Commission also awarded three project grants, including one new grant named in honour of **Prof. Alfred Neufeld (1955–2020)**, the Paraguayan MB theologian and Anabaptist advocate with Mennonite World Conference. It is called the **Global Church History Project Grant** and aims to fund projects that document the stories of churches associated with the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) outside North America.

The first recipients of the Alfred Neufeld global church history grant are **Anička Fast and Rodney Hollinger-Janzen** for their project to translate Anička's doctoral dissertation on African Mennonite church formation into French. They were awarded \$2,000 USD for the translation project that will make her research findings accessible to French-speaking Mennonites in Africa.



Anička Fast, mission educator, lives in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.



Rodney Hollinger-Janzen, retired missionary, lives in Goshen, Indiana.

The second grant in the amount of \$1,500 USD was awarded to **Buduma Ramesh** for his dissertation research into the dominant social forces impacting the lives of Dalit Christians in India, particularly

## Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



the missiological significance for the Mennonite Brethren Church in Telangana. This is an MB Studies Project Grant.



Buduma Ramesh, doctoral student at Serampore University, lives in Bangalore, India.

The third award in the amount of \$2,000 USD went to **Denisse Aguilar**, a Goshen College student, for her senior project entitled "The significance of shifting Mennonite Brethren women's clothing traditions." Her project explores what these shifts say about changes in gender roles. The award honors Katie Funk Wiebe (1924–2016), known advocate for women.



Denisse Aguilar, Goshen College student, lives in Elkhart, Indiana.

More information about the work of the Commission—a funded ministry of both the U.S. Conference of MB Churches and the Canadian Conference of MB Churches—is available on its website, <https://mbhistory.org>.

## Two MB Congregations

(cont'd from p. 5)

*Brother Kroeker was also supposed to hold some evangelistic meetings here.*

*The tide has definitely changed; not that long ago, Janzen had warned us against inviting Kroeker and now he invites him. What bothers me is the great contradiction in all of this...*

In 1936, a "working fellowship" was established between the Ontario MB Conference and the General Conference. This relationship was to be formalized at the next session meeting in Corn, Oklahoma, in October 1939. The small "new group" (for lack of a better name for the 2nd Leamington MB Church) was established as another congregation within the Ontario Conference. When the Ontario Conference would join the General Conference, then these two congregations in Leamington would both be members of that body. Some wondered how that would be viewed and whether the groups could be brought together in such a way. This is where Jacob Kroeker from Oklahoma, who had moved to Leamington in 1939, played a significant role. The minutes of the congregational meeting on 12 November 1939, just two weeks after the conference in Corn, read as follows:

*Minutes (No. 1) of a joint meeting of the two groups of the Brethren Church at Leamington, Ontario on 12 November 1939.*

*Since the Ontario Conference of the Brethren Churches was admitted to "Union" [Bund] at the last General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America held on October 21–25 of this year, and since a "Union Church" [Bundesgemeinde] has existed in Leamington for some time, the above-mentioned reasons make it necessary for the two groups to merge into one congregation.*

*The Opening is made by Brother Jakob Kroeker with words from Corinthians 13:1–7 followed by a session of prayer.*

*Election of the chairman and the secretary for the current meeting. The following were elected by majority vote: Brother Jakob Kroeker as chairman [Leiter] and Brother Heinrich J. Wiebe as assistant chairman [Gehilfleiter], Brothers Gerhard Willms and Dietrich Bergen as secretary.*

*Members present: 95 members, both sides included.*

*It is suggested that this meeting be*

*viewed as a founding meeting for the current congregation and henceforth it will exist as a Mennonite Brethren congregation under constitution of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. The question concerning members not baptized by immersion baptism is still to be settled and the decisions of the consultation will be considered binding.*

*And now to bring about a merger it is necessary to let go of individual or personal misunderstandings that exist. The above proposal is accepted with 90 votes; the others abstain.*

*Now Br. A. Flaming proposed that we unite as one community. This proposal is seconded by Brother J. Dyck and adopted with 82 votes; the others abstain.*

Additional agenda items addressed included: 1) meeting location, 2) who will coordinate the Sunday School, 3) report from the building committee, 4) time of next meeting, and 5) congregational leadership.

At the next meeting, dated 26 November, the minutes were amended to clarify that Jacob Kroeker and H.J. Wiebe were elected as the leader and assistant leader for an undetermined period, until the fellowship has calmed down ("*auf unbestimmte Zeit ... bis die Gemeinde zur Ruhe gekommen ist*"). With regards

to the issue of non-immersed members, the initial meeting minutes included a draft resolution which addressed the issue in part. It was in subsequent meetings that further clarification was spelled out about how non-immersed believers could participate in "all the blessings" of hearing the word and fellowship—but not in holding positions of leadership nor in being elected as delegates to represent the congregation in any conference.

Jakob Kroeker showed himself as an able minister and moderator for the congregation, able

to lead meetings, present agenda clearly, listen to debate, and work in a collaborative manner. He provided leadership from November 1939 until the end of June 1940, even though he was affirmed to lead until 1 January 1941. For personal family reasons, he needed to return to Bessie, Oklahoma, which he did in July 1940. H.J. Wiebe, the assistant "Leiter," filled in for the rest of the year, until the next election in January 1941. By then Gertrude Reimer had moved to Kitchener, Ontario, but her good friend Sara [Mrs. Wilhelm] Toews informed her in a letter of the result of the next leadership election.

On 14 January 1941, Sara Toews wrote:

*Brother Janz very clearly proclaimed the word of God to us; no wonder you also long to have him preach there. May God continue to bless him.*

*Brother J. Kroeker was at church on Sunday. It was rather upsetting for him, that he wasn't even invited to say a word. We had the big leadership election on Sunday and Isaac Tiessen has become our leader. Brother [Johann] Wiebe had only one vote less ... I was at your daughter's place today, and their tenants, the Ennses, said it was such a pity that they had not gone to the meeting, because they would have voted for Johann Wiebe, and there*



**Pastor Isaac H. Tiessen (1904–1999) standing in front of the Toronto MB Church (ca. 1968), one of several congregations he led. See [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Tiessen, Isaac Henry \(1904-1999\) for his biography](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Tiessen,_Isaac_Henry_(1904-1999)_for_his_biography). Photo credit: MAID CMBS NP149-1-9019.**



were more who stayed at home that would have voted for Wiebe. Some said that a leader should have two thirds of the votes, but he hardly would have had the support of one third.

By the end of March 1941, Jakob Kroeker had moved back to the U.S. and was ministering in the small MB church in Gladwin, Michigan. Isaac Tiessen remained the leader in Leamington. In August 1944, Jakob Kroeker and his wife Susanna moved back to Leamington and were accepted into membership.<sup>7</sup> Isaac Tiessen was the leader who signed the document. Jakob Kroeker died 9 December 1955 and was buried in Leamington.

Isaac Tiessen continued to give leadership in Leamington until 1958, when he moved to B.C. He also served the Ontario MB Conference (ONMB) as moderator, 1946–1954.<sup>8</sup>

While it is evident that differing views of baptismal practice and membership played a role in the contested beginnings of the ONMB conference,<sup>9</sup> it is clear that the differences in leadership style were also a factor in the tension. However, in spite of Isaac Tiessen's more "directive" leadership style, his support and advocacy for a more relaxed understanding of modes of baptism and Lord's supper practice were eventually vindicated. In 1963, the General Conference reversed itself and agreed to allow Mennonites baptized by a mode other than immersion to be members.

Before 1963, there were only two choices for married couples where one was MB and the other partner was a non-immersed Mennonite: the non-immersed spouse had to be re-baptized by immersion or the MB spouse would lose his/her membership. However, it took until 1986 for MB denominational leaders to apologize (see cover image) to those families touched by this practice of discriminating against Mennonites baptized by modes other than immersion.<sup>10</sup>

Gertrude Wiebe Reimer's plain-spoken and perceptive personal letters, as well as numerous notices in *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*,<sup>11</sup> offer a rich commentary on several facets of MB culture during her lifetime, including the backstory to the two Mennonite Brethren churches in Leamington, 1938–1939. She died in Kitchener in 1988, at the age of 103.

*Retired Mennonite archivist Alf Redekopp lives in St. Catharines, Ontario, and continues to volunteer as a contributor/*

*editor with several Mennonite research websites (GAMEO, GRanDMA, and MAID).*

## Endnotes

1. The five congregations forming the Ontario MB Conference in 1932 were located in New Hamburg, Hespeler, Kitchener, Vineland, and Leamington.

2. The Gertrude Wiebe Reimer Family Letters Project is grounded in a collection of some four thousand letters, over a dozen journals and other documents, and over two thousand photographs that were assembled and preserved by the late Viola Gertrude Tiessen. The project, directed by Hildi Froese Tiessen of Conrad Grebel University College (University of Waterloo), through the generous support of the Bill and Margaret Fast Family Foundation (Winnipeg), will result in the preservation of artifacts that reflect the cultural and religious sensibilities of the Mennonite immigrants to Canada of the 1920s. The immediate aim of the project is to produce digital copies and typed transcriptions of those documents in the collection that were written in the old German cursive script, making them more accessible to the public. I am a collaborator on this project, functioning as transcriber and annotator of the materials, preparing them to be deposited at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario.

3. A Mennonite reform group that practiced immersion baptism but did not demand it of members coming from other Mennonite groups. "This group tried to serve as a bridge between the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren groups in Russia. In the immigration to Canada after World War I, however, members of the *Allianz Gemeinden* did not continue as a separate organization but joined the Mennonite Brethren. The Mennonite Brethren Conference in Ontario has its roots in this group." See "Allianz Gemeinden," in *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (GAMEO).

4. See Leamington MB Church (now Meadow Brook Fellowship) congregational meeting minutes dated 17 Jan. 1937 and 24 Jan. 1937, book 1 (microfilm reel 78, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies [CMBS], Winnipeg).

5. Henry B. Tiessen, who married Helen Reimer, the second of Gerhard and Gertrude Reimer's five daughters, was a teacher in Reesor, Ontario, 1937–1944; he would later become the founding principal of Eden High School, 1945–1950.

6. Presumably *Ältester* Jacob H. Janzen, of Waterloo.

7. See certificate in Leamington congregational meeting minutes, book 3 (microfilm 78, CMBS, Winnipeg).

8. It was in 1946 that the Ontario Mennonite Brethren Conference (ONMB) and the Northern District of MB churches in North America united to form Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

9. Allan Siebert, "Mennonite Brethren in Ontario," *MB Herald*, 8 June 1979.

10. See tribute to Isaac Tiessen by Conrad Stoesz, "Undoing a Long-Standing Practice: The Convictions of One Person can Change a Church, even a Church Conference," *MB Herald*, 29 April 2005. "Tiessen appeared before the Mennonite Brethren Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns and brought this issue to their attention [i.e., excommunicating MBs for marrying a Mennonite baptized in a way other than immersion]. He believed that too long he and the conference had suffered from spiritual pride and as a result were too proud to admit that this practice was wrong. His personal convictions eventually brought the board to accept his recommendation that an apology be made."

11. The issues of *Die Mennonitische Rundschau* church newspaper have been scanned and uploaded to the Internet Archive for viewing at [https://archive.org/details/pub\\_die-mennonitische-rundschau](https://archive.org/details/pub_die-mennonitische-rundschau).

## Mennonite Medics in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905, as reported in 1954

by Anton Sawatzky, Schönhorst, Neuland Colony, Paraguay

*Editors' note: This article first appeared in the Mennoblatt and was reprinted in Der Bote, 27 October 1954. It was translated from German into English by Erika Marand, an MHA volunteer, who also provided the translator's notes at the end.*

In the years 1904–1905,<sup>1</sup> a terrible war raged in the far east, the Russo-Japanese War. I was 21 years of age at the time. Already right at the beginning of the war, Mennonite young men volunteered to serve as "compassionate brothers" to care for the wounded and ailing soldiers of the battlefield. It was only a small group of seven young men: Heinrich Friesen, Jakob Thiessen, Jakob Penner, J. Hensen,<sup>2</sup> Wilh. Dueck, Joh. Dueck, and Jakob Loewen, who lives in Philadelphia today.

This first group travelled with the Ekaterinoslav Red Cross to the far east and served as basic medics. This work, which was unfamiliar to them, was very difficult, but the Lord strengthened and helped these volunteers so that they excelled. The authorities were very satisfied with their work, resulting in enquiries for more Mennonite volunteers.

H. Friesen wrote a letter from the far east to our *Ältester*,<sup>3</sup> Isaak Dyck of the Chortitzer congregation, to specifically stimulate volunteers. The letter was read at congregational meetings at several churches, and the urgent need at the front was stressed. It was decided that volunteers could sign up until 20 January 1905. These young men would require a certificate from their local pastor, vouching for their reliability and honour.

With approval of my parents, who recognized my sincerity, I volunteered. However, they pointed out the dangers and that I could lose my life out there. But I was prepared for that and feared nothing, trusting in God's compassion. At first, we volunteers were 42 in number. It took another two months before we departed.

In the meantime, 20 changed their minds, but 22 remained steadfast in their decision. I waited impatiently for our departure date. Finally, on 18 March 1905, the hour had arrived. I was ploughing the field when the news came that I was to report to the Chortitza volost on 19 March.





**Mennonite medics in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905. First row (front, l-r): Johann Federau, Abram Dürksen, Jakob Thiessen, Franz Enns, Johann Tjart, Heinrich Wiebe, Johann Wiebe, and Gerhard Klassen. Second row: Heinrich Wiebe, Peter Rempel, David Penner, Chortitza district treasurer, Jakob Klassen, district secretary, Isaak Dyck, Chortitza *Ältester*, Jakob Wiebe, Chortitza volost mayor, and Heinrich Heese, district judicial secretary. Third row: Heinrich Wiebe, Jakob Falk, Anton Sawatzky, Johann Funk, Jakob Derksen, Jakob Janzen, Heinrich Vogt, David Letkemann, and Johann Penner. (Evidently, the photo and its owner have travelled a long way—from southern Russia to Paraguay via Moscow, Mölln [or via Harbin?]. This would explain the condition of the photo. – The editor, D.H. Epp, *Der Bote*, 27 October 1954, p. 3.) Photo credit: Anton Sawatzky.**

At six in the morning, I bade my parents and siblings farewell and left Neuendorf. The young men from Miloradovka, Ignatjevka, and Fuerstenland came the next day. That same day, a farewell service was held in the Chortitza church. At the end, we sang the song, *Befiehl du deine Wege* (Entrust your way). Then, 19 of the volunteers were photographed with our *Ältester* Isaak Dyck, *Oberschulze*<sup>4</sup> Jak. Wiebe, and the *volost*<sup>5</sup> secretaries, Jak. Klassen, Dav. Penner, and H. Heese (see photo above). I would be interested to know who of the above-mentioned volunteers came to North America and who are still alive.

Our *Ältester* accompanied us on the Dnieper River via Aleksandrovsk to Ekaterinoslav. Here, clothing and boots were ordered, and the necessary paperwork issued. This took 12 days. Then the journey began. We had a good trip. In 18 days, we covered the long trip of 10,000 km. Of the mentioned 22 volunteers, Abr. Froese, Pet. Penner, and A. Wallmann had left a month earlier to accompany the freight train of the Red Cross to the far east. It took them 45 days.

The trip through the Ural Mountains, which we traversed on the 2nd Easter holiday,<sup>6</sup> was very interesting. After the Urals came the wide-open steppes and

great forests. We travelled 172 hours, over 3,000 km, through forests. In Irkutsk, we met up with the first 150 Japanese prisoners of war. Sixty km further was Lake Baikal. During the war, the Russians had built a railroad around the lake. We were travelling on this new railroad that led through 39 tunnels. It seemed as if the large boulders would come down upon us. And it actually happened. At one station, we received a telegram that a piece of rock, 12 m in diameter, had fallen from a great height after our last railcar passed. It could have derailed us into the lake, but the good Lord protected us.

Thus, we arrived at the Urulga station in safety and good health. Two km from the station was a Tungusic village where the Red Cross hospital was located; it was in the school and several other buildings. A lot of work was waiting for us. We received good food and billeting. During the first three months, the work was very stressful because our hospital was overfilled with patients. Our schedule was 24 hours of work and 12 hours of rest. We could not have kept this up for any length of time, as we would have tired and become ill.

Then came the armistice and eventually the end of the war. Things eased, the

wounded and sick got better and were released. New patients did not arrive any longer. We were almost out of work and had free time, time to discover this wooded area.

In this Tungusic village was a monument to Tsar Nicholas II, who had once lunched here during his banishment. As heir to the throne (so the story goes), he had written a decree that would have had his mother shot. He had slipped this document among others being presented to Tsar Alexander III to be signed. Alexander used to sign everything without reading it. When the ministers pointed out the document, he banned his son from St. Petersburg for six months. However, he was allowed to travel all over Siberia. There were also several families and nobles that had been banned to Siberia for many years. Joh. Penner, H. Vogt, and I were billeted with one of these nobles. He lived there together with his sister. We never found out why they had been banned; they kept it a secret.

On 12 July 1905, on a high hill, 7 km from our location, a Buryat festival was held in Mongolian tradition. At the very top, stones had been piled up. Among the rocks stood a statue and in front of that was placed a smoke-blackened goat's



head. The locals then brought various food offerings for the deity. Then a sweet gruel was poured over everything. After this the Buryat people danced around the stones and their service was concluded.

Now, at the base of the hill, a race was held. The winner received three Rubels.

When everything had ended, we returned to our billet. I was deeply moved by everything I had seen. It seemed so sad to me that these locals still lived in such blindness, that no one had shown them the path to our Saviour.

In our spare time, we organized a brass band. Among the older medics were four who had served as music directors in the forestry service. They made it possible to establish a good music group in a short time.

Our authorized representative, General Nicolai Matvejewitsch Koch, took a month's holiday. Upon his return, we pleasantly surprised him with our music. He had previously written an article in a Russian paper praising the Mennonite medics.

Abr. Froese from Einlage taught Joh. Penner and me the clarinet. This gave us the opportunity to get to know each other better on a spiritual level. He had studied two years at a seminary in Basel but returned home a "spiritualist." He lived a moral life even out here in the medic service, but he did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Upon his deathbed he returned to the true belief in God and Jesus Christ and thus was saved from eternal fire. But what was the fruit of this? He led many to the path of spiritualism. However, we medics were not turned from our belief in Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

Two months before the general demobilization, six of our medics including me, had to report for inspection on 20 October 1905. On 6 October, we returned to our homes. I had not even been sick while away. On 1 March 1906, five out the six had to report for forestry service. This too ended eventually. Then there were only a few years of peace before the First World War erupted.

## Endnotes

1. Russo-Japanese War, 8 February 1904 to 5 September 1905.
2. Alternate spelling, Hoensen.
3. Elder.
4. Mayor.
5. District.
6. Easter Monday.

## New Faces and Projects

(cont'd from p. 6)

Dnipro, Ukraine. With help from the Plett Foundation, she is a Visiting Scholar at the University of Winnipeg and a Faculty Fellow at Canadian Mennonite University for the next year. Her two research topics are Mennonites and Russian Nationalism and Mennonites in Ukraine after the fall of the Soviet Union. For the second topic, she will be looking at organizations that have been providing support to Ukrainians and heritage tourism. Nataliya has been viewing documents from Russian and Ukrainian archives that we have on microfilm. This is her fourth visit to Manitoba.

A second project to tell you about is the digital collections platform that we have been working on with PeaceWorks Technology Solutions. It is progressing, and we are aiming for an autumn launch date. This website will house digital copies of the selected materials to encourage further research. We continue to look for financial support for this exciting new initiative; to date we have received about 10% of our \$30,000 goal.

## Voices from EMC



**EMC mission work began in Nicaragua in late 1966, when Alfred and Doris Friesen made the transition from the Mexico field. Their journey of "steep, winding roads, zig-zagging through fast moving city traffic, and pass[ing] through anxious moments as [their] loaded truck was being checked at the various borders" ended at their new home in Managua, Nicaragua. With political unrest brewing, they undertook a study of the evangelical work being done in Nicaragua in order to seek the Lord's guidance as to where they should begin. The photo above, submitted with their first mission report sent from Nicaragua, depicts a slow, stubborn oxen team, the typical transportation of the poor in Nicaragua at the time. The Nicaragua work continued and grew from there, and though there are no longer EMC missionaries in Nicaragua, our ties to the conference of churches birthed from this work continue. Text and photo credit: Ruth Block.**



**Nataliya Venger.** Photo credit: Nataliya Venger.

## Emigration Applications and Lists

(cont'd from p. 3)

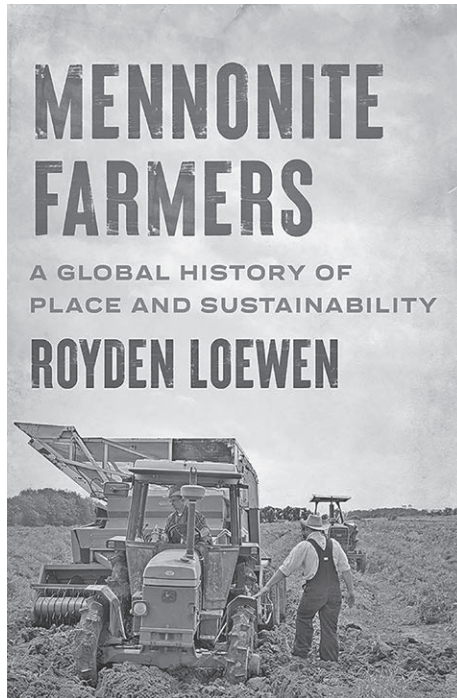
contains many lists of those requesting and/or receiving help from friends and relatives in North America. For example, nearly every issue for 1922 has such a list. For 1923, there are 20 issues with similar lists. Of interest is the 13 December 1922 issue; it includes a 16-page supplement that lists over 4,200 names of those emigrating! The 27 December 1923 issue has a list of those emigrating through Poland.

Throughout the 1920s, the *Rundschau* published letters and short communications from those in Russia requesting aid and help with emigration from specific relatives in North America. We are also in the process of transcribing or translating these lists. Anyone who is interested in helping should contact the author at the email address, <gpenner@uoguelph.ca>.

## Endnotes

1. These applications are posted at <https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/1920s/>. Note that the originals for the 1929 set of emigration applications should also include photographs. Unfortunately, these were not included in the photocopies sent to the Mennonite Heritage Archives in the 1990s.
2. <https://grandmaonline.org/gmol-7/gwHelp/userGuide.asp>
3. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus* (Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen, 1962).
4. John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1967).
5. RUSKAPA documentation is found in both Kiev and Moscow archives. Unfortunately, Mennonite documentation, which is a small fraction of the total files, is mixed in with files from other groups. There is no online introduction to the RUSKAPA organization. The web page on RUSKAPA at the Enzyklopädie der Russlanddeutschen (<https://enc.rusdeutsch.eu/articles/542>) is incomplete.
6. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Fonds\\_voor\\_Buitenlandsche\\_Nooden\\_\(Dutch\\_Relief\\_Fund\\_for\\_Foreign\\_Needs\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Fonds_voor_Buitenlandsche_Nooden_(Dutch_Relief_Fund_for_Foreign_Needs))

7. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hollandsch\\_Doopsgezind\\_Emigranten\\_Bureau](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hollandsch_Doopsgezind_Emigranten_Bureau)
8. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Russland\\_mennonitische\\_Studienkommission](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Russland_mennonitische_Studienkommission)
9. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Verband\\_der\\_Bürger\\_holländischer\\_Herkunft](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Verband_der_Bürger_holländischer_Herkunft)
10. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Canadian\\_Mennonite\\_Board\\_of\\_Colonization](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Canadian_Mennonite_Board_of_Colonization)
11. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Krehbiel,\\_Henry\\_Peter\\_\(1862-1940\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Krehbiel,_Henry_Peter_(1862-1940))
12. [https://archive.org/details/pub\\_die-mennonitische-rundschau](https://archive.org/details/pub_die-mennonitische-rundschau)



Royden Loewen, *Mennonite Farmers: A Global History of Place and Sustainability* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2021), 352 pp.

Reviewed by Rebecca Janzen, University of South Carolina

Loewen's *Mennonite Farmers* centers on the idea that a study of rural life in the 20th century will add a new dimension to our understanding of global changes in that same century. This monograph is a scholarly companion to the documentary film, *Seven Points on Earth*, which Loewen produced in collaboration with Paul Plett. *Mennonite Farmers*, like the documentary, focuses on Mennonites in Apollonovka, Siberia, Russia; Riva Palacio, Santa Cruz, Bolivia; Margorejo, Java, Indonesia; Friesland, the Netherlands; Washington County, Iowa, USA; Southern Manitoba, Canada; and Brethren in Christ people in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe. Loewen's discussion is organized into four main themes that he develops in eight distinct chapters: Mennonite growth and expansion, Mennonite responses to global changes, faith, and gender.

The first and second chapters deal with Mennonite growth. The first describes how Mennonites began in the Netherlands, and then expanded via migration to the United States, Canada, and Russia. Loewen contextualizes this settlement within expanding imperial power that coincided with their migrations, for instance, showing that they were allowed to settle in Manitoba shortly after the province was created following the Red River Resistance (1869–1870) led by Louis Riel. The second chapter, for its part, complements this discussion of expansion via migration in the Global North with a discussion of Mennonite expansion via mission and settlement throughout the Global South. It examines two significant 19th-century developments: Dutch missionary Pieter Jansz's role in starting the Mennonite church in Indonesia, and the way that Brethren in Christ missionaries established themselves in Zimbabwe, thanks to a land grant from Cecil Rhodes. Chapter two contrasts these Indonesian and Zimbabwean examples with a study of Mennonite migration from Canada to Bolivia's Santa Cruz department or Oriente region.

Chapters three, six, seven, and eight deal with Mennonite responses to global changes that took place over the course of the 20th century. The third chapter, "Something New under the Mennonite Sun," focuses on changes in agriculture in the United States, the Netherlands, Siberia, and Bolivia. This chapter shows that Mennonite responses have shifted and changed, using evidence from farm diaries, personal diaries, interviews, and newspapers to understand these responses. It also touches on the ambivalence of many U.S. and Canada-based Mennonites and Amish regarding their governments (197).

Chapter six, "Farm Subjects and State Biopower," discusses other elements of this response. Loewen highlights the connection between Mennonite farmers in Indonesia and the Green Revolution, showing that they made technological improvements in agriculture due to this 1950s and 1960s aid program. The seventh chapter, "Vernaculars of Climate Change," uses examples from Zimbabwe to demonstrate that the Global South has been living with the effects of climate change for many decades and uses examples from the Netherlands to show that environmentalists can be so idealistic that they are unwilling

to implement incremental changes. Like the discussion of Mennonite ambivalence regarding the government, Loewen could have discussed how and why some groups of Mennonites have more positive views of government than others. He could also tie this to broader sociological studies of religion that deal with social and political attitudes of white Christians in the United States and Canada.

The eighth chapter, "Mennonite Farmers in 'World Scale' History," continues to develop these themes, for instance, discussing how Bolivian Mennonites participate in migrant farm labor. I would have been interested in learning about the Mennonite farmers, particularly in Canada and wealthier colonies in Mexico, who employ Low German-speaking Mennonites from Latin America, or Mennonites in Iowa who engage in similar labor practices, hiring Latin American farm laborers who are largely non-Low German-speaking.

Chapters four and five deal with issues of faith and gender, respectively. Loewen draws on interviews, diaries, and newspapers to claim that Mennonites practice their religion in a particular way; it is the "silent, hard work of historically aware gardeners" (144). His discussion of gender, in chapter five, uses examples from Indonesia to illustrate that women's place in agricultural communities is shaped by wealth.

*Mennonite Farmers* esteems rural life and, even as it mentions climate change and migrant farm labor, opts not to dwell on the massive uncertainties farmers face, regardless of their country of residence or whether they own land or perform farm work. Nevertheless, Loewen's book deftly weaves together information from textual sources and ethnographic research—the first study to compare Mennonites across the globe around a general, non-historical theme. It is an important book that is worth reading for any researcher of Mennonite history, missionary work, or international aid and development.

Rebecca Janzen is Associate Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina. Her most recent books are *Unlawful Violence: Mexican Law and Cultural Production (Vanderbilt UP, 2022)* and *Unholy Trinity: State, Church, and Film in Mexico (SUNY Press, 2021)*.