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**Der Bezugspreis der
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**Gleichberger
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bewährte Heilmittel gegen alle **Natarrhe** liefern Mineralwasserhandlungen, Apotheken,
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Saison: 15. Mai—Oktober. **Gleichberg in Steiermark.**

Gasthaus Raybach drehte sich vornehmlich um zwei Ju-
saganträge: des Grafen Witte
über die Fixierung der Einnahmen
vom Kronseiertränkeverkauf und Kur-
Odesa, Esmorodskaja (R. Kumanukaja) Str.
neu re. orientiert, neu mobilisiert, elektrisch be-
heizt und als Sommerkloster.

der Minister — stelle sich den Polen als unzulässig dar in Anbetracht der angeblichen Beteiligung ruthenischer Fanatiker an der Ermordung des galizischen Statthalters. Nach Ansicht des Ministers erscheine es gewagt, in dieser Sache alle Ruthenen zu beschuldigen, und unangenehm, daß das ukrainische Komitee aus lauter Mördern bestehe und Beziehungen zu den Verbrechern unterhalte. Bezüglich der Enteignung polnischer Güter erklärte der Minister, daß wenn die Polen neuerdings den Verkauf polnischer Güter an die Deutschen behindern sollten, die preussische Regierung wieder zur Enteignung Asylsucher nehmen werde. Nach dem Minister sprach Sozialdemokrat Hofmann im Laufe von fünf Stunden. Die Stenographen des Landtags teilten dem Vorsitzenden mit, daß es ihnen unmöglich sei, die Beratungen zu protokollieren. Die Fortsetzung der Beratung wurde auf den 29. Januar vertagt.

Ein Hochverratsprozeß in Laibach. Laibach. Hier hat die gerichtliche Untersuchung der Hochverratsangelegenheit begonnen, in der Bizebürgermeister Triller, der Führer der freisinnigen Slowenen, und der Vorsitzende des slowenischen Sozialverbandes Dratschew als Angeklagte figurieren. Bei den Angeklagten wurden Hausdurchsuchungen vorgenommen, die jedoch zu keinem Ergebnis führten.

Der Prozeß der Ugrorussinen. Marmaros-Egiget. Die heute verhörrten Zeugen, darunter zwei unierie Geistliche, ein Notar und zwei Lehrer, sagen aus, daß das Volk mit dem Unterricht in den Schulen in ungarischer Sprache, der Vereinheitlichung der Kalender und der Gründung eines katholischen Volksverbandes unzufrieden war.

Die Ereignisse in Schweden. Stockholm. In Extrazügen trafen 1800 Studenten der Upsalischen, Lundischen und Göttinger Universi-

der Mißbräuche beschuldigt wird, gilt. Das abgelehnte Votum enthebe den Premierminister nicht der Notwendigkeit des Rücktritts.
Die Schöde der mandschurischen Dynastie.

Mudan. Die Regierung gestattete der mandschurischen Dynastie, ihre Koffbarkeiten aus dem Mukdener Palast nach Peking überzuführen.

Explosionskatastrophe. Erura (Sollidia). Auf der Dynamitniederlage der Zinfabrik Espue-litas wurden durch eine Explosion zahlreich Personen getötet und verwundet.

St. Petersburg. Der St. Synod hat beschlossen, zu Gunsten der Rotleidenden in Galizien und der Bukowina 3000 Rbl. anzuhelfen in Ergänzung der im Vorjahr angewiesenen 5000 Rbl.
Der Hauptverweiser für Landwirtschaft und Vandeintrichtung M. W. Arimowitsch hat eine Urkunde nach

The *Odessaer Zeitung* was founded in the city of Odessa in 1861 and published until 1914. Each issue of the daily begins with international news, then national reports, then local news of the city of Odessa, followed by business news, reviews of books, and theatre notices. Illustrated advertisements of farm machinery and household goods adorn the rear pages. Of special interest to Mennonites was the *Koloniales* section devoted to news, views, and opinions of the German-speaking colonists that settled in New Russia (today Ukraine). The story goes that the Nazis looted the actual newspapers from Ukraine during the Second World War and then the Americans seized the collection and microfilmed all of them but for one year that was accidentally omitted. The entire print run was then destroyed. It is now only available via microfilm. In the late 1980s, Dr. James Urry produced an index of Mennonite-related content in the OZ. See his story beginning on page 2.

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The News from Odessa: Mennonites and the *Odessaer Zeitung*

by James Urry, Wellington, New Zealand

I sit in a steel carrel, hunched like some medieval monk reading a sacred text. But I am not consulting any ancient theological treatise, chained to an oaken desk, but small reels of microfilm. The year is 1986 and I am in Winnipeg. The microfilm reader hums softly as I turn the handle to advance the frames. Thrown down in a square of light before me are the pages of a newspaper—OZ—or the *Odessaer Zeitung*, to give the paper its full title. I have searched through reels and reels of most issues of the paper from its first number until it ceased publication in 1914, when the sound of gunfire heralded the outbreak of the First World War in Europe.

The paper was founded in Odessa in 1861. Odessa was, and still is, an important port on the Black Sea. Founded by Catherine the Great in 1794, it grew rapidly during the 19th century to become a major export and administrative centre for New Russia. It was a cosmopolitan city, containing many ethnic groups: Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Italians, Armenians, and Germans. A large Jewish population played an important part in city life. Many foreign consuls and merchants worked

in the city, and newspapers in many languages—Russian, Ukrainian, French, English, Yiddish, and, of course, German—were published.

The headings of the sections of the *Odessaer Zeitung* are well-known to me by now. Each issue begins with international news; then national reports are followed by excerpts from the Russian press. There are local news articles on the city of Odessa, items of business news, reviews of

books, and theatre notices. The city was noted for its literacy and promotion of the arts. Illustrated advertisements of farm machinery and household goods adorn the rear pages, while obituaries, notices of business opportunities, schools, doctors, or job vacancies appear in smaller boxes on the front and back pages. A literary section serializes novels: German romances and tales of rural life, translations of English and American adventure stories or thrillers, and the occasional Russian novel or story by writers such as Tolstoy, Turgenev, or Gorky.

But one section in particular attracts my attention. The section is headed *Koloniales* and is devoted to news, views, and opinions of the German-speaking foreign colonists that settled in New Russia (today Ukraine). In the countryside around Odessa there were a number of villages whose inhabitants had emigrated from various German states early in the 19th century to settle in the region. By religion they were mostly Lutheran or Catholic, spoke their own dialects, and followed their own customs.

The most important of the Odessa colonies was in the Liebenthal district, a series of mostly Lutheran villages with an excellent record of economic prosperity and advanced education. While many of the reports in the newspaper concerned these Odessa colonies, numerous others came from German-speaking colonists that settled elsewhere in New Russia, the Volga region, Russian Poland, and the



Caucasus. As the sons and daughters of the New Russian colonists emigrated to other areas of Russia in the late 19th and early 20th century, there are reports from Central Asia, the Urals, and Siberia.

What I am particularly looking for, however, and noting down carefully, are Mennonite reports, particularly those by Mennonites themselves. The early issues of the paper contain little, but suddenly, like a tidal wave, hundreds of Mennonite items start to appear. In their scope and variety, they provide an exciting new perspective on Mennonite life in Russia up to 1914, a rich resource that will be of interest to both professional researchers and lay people interested in Mennonite history.

Many of the Mennonite items are news reports. The weather, condition of crops, yields, commodity prices—all are listed, sometimes in detail. Local events, such as school and choir festivals, as well as community meetings, are reported regularly. Bad news always makes for good copy. Fires, a common occurrence, are reported, often in graphic detail. News of criminal activity are popular: robberies, including horse theft, suicides, assaults, and murder are vividly described. Warnings are regularly issued against the activities of defaulting businessmen and swindlers. The latter particularly played upon Mennonite sensibilities. Some claimed to be converted Christians or missionaries in search of aid.

Sometimes the reports were intended to promote Mennonite achievements in

(cont'd on p. 4)

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Genealogy and Family History

The 1747 Testament of Bartel Barckmann and Elske von Bergen of Tiegenhagen

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

The following is my translation of a last will and testament document from 1747, as communicated by Helmut Reimer of Heubuden (now Stogi, Poland, formerly West Prussia) and transcribed in the genealogical publication *Der Berg*.¹

Because I, Bartel Barckmann, through my great age, feel my life forces diminish very much and the great God could soon make an end with me, even so I still have healthy days. I have, therefore, in healthy days and in good sense, wanted to draw up a will with my wife on the grounds that she has shown me great goodness in my old age, and that I have also suffered much adversity and could still continue to do so, and that I have fallen into great debt through bad advice, so that I have had to sell a few morgen of land to save myself, as I still have about 5 morgen [about 7 acres]. Because also my wife has a capital of 500 guilders, which in April 1736 was added to my property, which is situated on the Tiegenhagen church land.

I also want my wife not to be left in the lurch, as I have also wanted to show her a reciprocal love: namely, that after my death, my soul will be buried in the wounds of the Holy Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, while my body will be given an honest burial in the earth, which is the mother of us all. So, I, Bartel Barckmann, to my wife Elisabeth, born von Bergen, out of my movable assets that she would now own, she shall pay the eighth part of those movables to my heirs, and to the Roman Catholic Church in Tiegenhagen, 8 guilders. This is my free and absolute will, and I also want it to be kept and fulfilled after my death.

On the other hand, I, Elisabeth, born von Bergen, have also promised a return of love to my husband, Bartel Barckmann, that if the Most High God should require me to die before my husband, he shall also pay the eighth part of my movable and immovable goods to my heirs or devisees, and to the Roman Catholic Church in Tiegenhagen, 8 florins. This promise is

my wholehearted and unconditional will, and also that such shall be kept firmly and validly after my death.

For more security, and in keeping with what we have thought individually, we have both made this will, as well as apart from malice and defence, and handed over the same content to the ecclesiastical authority for signature and confirmation.

Tiegenhagen, 17th April, 1747

Bartel Barckmann

Elske von Bergen

Jacob Bestvader, witness

Johan Grosnik, witness

Since the Barckmann property was on the land of the Catholic church of Tiegenhagen, it is possible that he was obliged, or felt obliged, to give 8 guilders/florins to the Catholic church. It is also possible that this was money to be set aside to pay the Tiegenhagen Catholic church for burial in the church cemetery.

At this time Mennonites in the area were not allowed to have their own cemeteries and were required to pay nearby Catholic and Lutheran churches for burials in their cemeteries. His burial is recorded in the burial register of the Tiegenhagen Catholic church. It shows that Mennonite “Bartol Barckmann” was buried on 3 Apr 1754 and a fee of 15 groschen was paid.²

Fifteen groschen seems to have been the minimum fee paid by adults, and the fee paid by most of those designated as Mennonites. Since there were 30 groschen to the guilder or florin, this is one-sixteenth the bequeathed amount. However, the register also shows that on the 30th of April, the church received a *Legatum* or legacy from the late Barckmann of 8 florins!

Bartel Barckmann of Tiegenhagen, Prussia, first appears in the Tiegenhof fire insurance register. In 1727, he is registered as owning 15 morgen (about 21 acres) of land.³ The fact that he was already a landowner in 1727 and also mentions his advanced age in his *Testament*, he was likely born in the late 1600s.

During the Polish period (pre-1772), inhabitants were required to pay various

fees to the Catholic church, which would have been the state church at the time. One such requirement was called the *Kalende*, in which each farmer (*Colonus*) had to deliver produce to the church. The records of these donations for the years 1738 to 1762 for the Tiegenhagen Catholic church are available and show that Bartel Barckmann made such contributions for the years 1740 to 1746.²

Barckmann’s family members, beyond his wife, are unknown. According to the 1772 census of West Prussia,⁴ the families of Bartel Bargmann (#415129) and Willem Bargmann (#198302)⁵ lived on Catholic church property. They each owned 7 morgen and 150 ruten of land, exactly one-half the amount owned by Bartel Barckmann in 1727! Could it be that his land was split in half when he died in 1754 and passed on to sons Bartel and Willem? Note that Barckmann, Bargmann, and Bergmann are simply variations on the same surname.

In an article about *Hausmarken* in Danzig, it notes that a Bartholomäus Bergmann owned a house there in the year 1559!⁶ Could he be a relative?



Arcaded house in Cyganek, Poland. Photo credit: Tomasz Przechlewski, Wikimedia Commons.

Endnotes

1. *Der Berg*. This newsletter, edited by Fritz van Bergen, was printed from the late 1930s until the early 1940s. Issues were rarely dated or numbered. This item is designated as Jahrgang 6, Nummer 2, with no date (possibly 1940).

2. Catholic church records of Tiegenhagen, Prussia.

3. For an alphabetical listing of those in the *Brandregister*, see https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/1727_Brandordenung.htm.

4. The 1772 census of West Prussia. For extractions of “Mennonite” villages, see <https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/1772/Tiegenhagen.pdf>.

5. Numbers come from the GRemDMA database, <https://grandmaonline.org/gmol-7/gwHelp/userGuide.asp>.

6. Joachim von Roy, “Danziger Hausmarken 1435–1656,” *Ostdeutsche Familienkunde*, Bd. 12, Jahrgang 37, Heft 1, Jan-Mar 1989.

The News from Odessa

(cont'd from p. 2)

the eyes of other colonists. Success in agriculture, in education, or the receipt of government awards were regularly chronicled. The annual reports and accounts of Mennonite institutions were recorded. The affairs of the School of the Deaf at Tiede in the Mennonite colony of Molotschna appear regularly in the paper, as does progress in the establishment and development of other schools.

The paper was also a source of Mennonite opinion and debate. Articles on new ideas in agriculture, on methods of cultivation, crop rotation, fruit tree planting, and the testing of farm machinery continued a tradition established in the *Odessaer Zeitung's* predecessor, the colonists' paper, *Unterhaltungsblatt für deutsche Ansiedler im südlichen Russland*, published between the early 1840s and the 1860s.

One major area of discussion involved education. This ranged from debate over the form and range of educational institutions to discussion of pedagogical methods. The need for higher education, the improvement of the secondary schools, and plans to extend education into higher levels, for instance the establishment of schools which would admit graduates to university—these were frequent topics of discussion, particularly in the early 20th century.

The question of education for girls was debated and the reports on the girls' schools were obviously intended to reduce Mennonite opposition to higher education for women. School teachers were active in writing letters and reports of their various conferences to the newspaper. Many proposed improvements to classroom practice, particularly the teaching of the German and Russian languages. Suitable school texts were recommended and reviewed. The proper instruction of religious subjects was also discussed. Teachers also promoted animal protection and good health, middle-class concerns of many Europeans in this period.

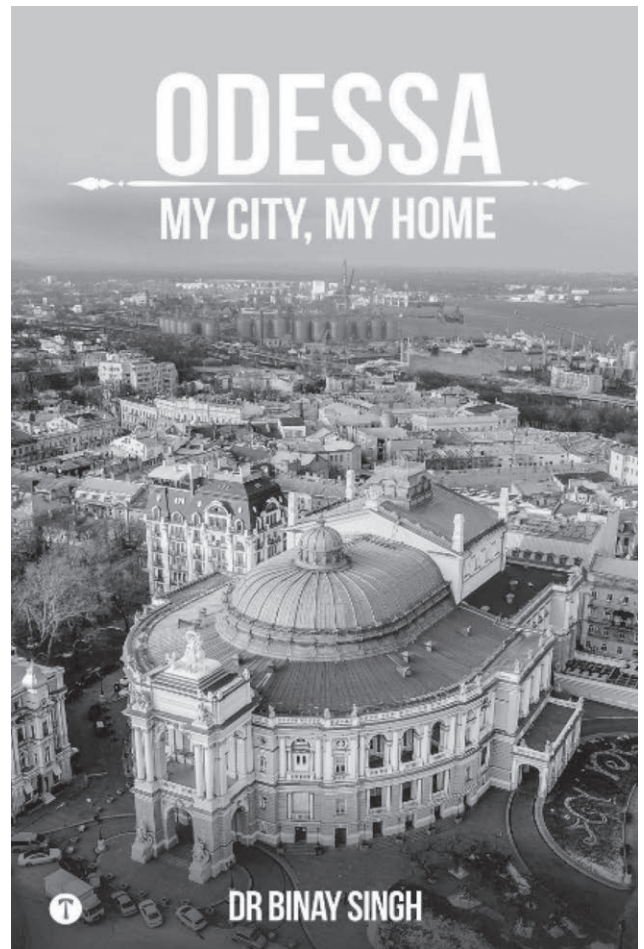
Not all discussions on education or other topics were conducted in an open and friendly manner, however. Often certain topics proved extremely controversial. Some contributors expressed themselves in rather intemperate language, openly accusing community members of

deception, corruption, or nepotism.

Access to land, and the use of community monies raised through taxation, were subjects of intense and continuing controversy through the years. The land issue, which was to divide Molotschna, reared its ugly head early in the 1860s and bitter debates filled the paper through to the 1880s. Questions over land, including access to pasture and rented land, the forming of daughter colonies, and the support of poorer settlements, continued to be raised. The Mennonite settlement of Orenburg proved controversial to the Chortitza Mennonite colonists, while the troubled early history of the Terek colony at the beginning of the 20th century caused a bitter exchange of letters between Molotschna people and their officials.

Often these disputes involved questions of money. Like many people today, Russian Mennonites were unwilling taxpayers. Individuals objected to paying taxes to support schools, the colony administration and health services, the landless, the Forestry Service (an authorized alternative to required military service), and anything else that cost money. But some Mennonites could also be incredibly generous with gifts of money to schools, hospitals, and other good causes.

Although reports of Mennonite religious affairs are far less numerous than those relating to the church activities of other colonist groups, particularly the Lutherans, brief reports can be encountered. Sometimes these involve controversial issues. For instance, the appearance of what would become the Mennonite Brethren is noted briefly during the 1860s. In later periods, the continued bad feeling between the MBs and the larger *Kirchliche* congregations is reflected in sharp exchanges of letters, with the religious leaders stating their



“Odessa has been called the Pearl of the Black Sea, and rightfully so. It is a magnificent city of industry and the most powerful port in the region. It has a rich culture, dating back hundreds of years and has been the scene of some of the most important cultural and historical events of the past century.” So writes Binay Singh in his 2021 travel guide dedicated to his adopted home. Book cover image credit: Amazon.ca

different opinions. Other areas of religious disagreement involved attempts to improve the standard of preaching and pastoral care, the establishment of a paid ministry, training seminaries for ministers, and the teaching of religion in schools. But I have the impression that the Mennonite religious leadership preferred that such discussions not appear in the press and instead be settled within the communities.

Perhaps one of the most surprising dimensions of the Mennonite contributions is the existence of a certain literary flair in some of their writing. Many of the letters are very well-written, and some are constructed in a distinctly literary prose style. In the late 1870s and early 1880s, one Mennonite wrote charming sketches of colonist life, and, as early as 1882, there were even contributions written in Low German. At least twice the newspaper serialized German novels written by non-

Mennonites that had Mennonites as their subject matter.

Mennonites also learned about their history in the newspaper. Sometimes old colonists or teachers would provide accounts of their youth. Old documents or articles from earlier journals were reproduced. The Chortitza teacher, minister, and historical writer (and later editor of the Mennonite *Botschafter* newspaper), David H. Epp, contributed a number of such items. In 1904, Pastor Jacob Stach, a noted historian of the German-speaking colonists in Russia, published in the paper the village reports from 1848, written by the village mayors of Molotschna on the history and progress of their settlements. The newspaper serialized these reports over many issues to celebrate the centenary of the settlement of Molotschna. The leaders of the civil administration, the religious congregations, and the School Board of Molotschna publicly thanked Pastor Stach and the newspaper for publishing these reports.

The Chortitza colonists appear to have been more regular contributors to the paper than the Molotschna colonists, at least in relation to the size of their colony. There is very little from, or on, the Volga Mennonite colonies, perhaps because they were too distant or contributed to other newspapers (two German-language papers were published in St. Petersburg and others appeared later in the Volga region). But Mennonites in the Crimea, in Zagradoivka, and other areas of New Russia wrote regularly to the editor of the paper. The Orenburg colonists were keen contributors, mainly of local news, but the Memrik colonists wrote very infrequently. As Mennonites expanded eastwards in the late 19th and early 20th century, reports from their settlements begin to appear. These include reports from Ufa, from Siberia, and from the troubled settlement of Terek.

While Mennonites are sometimes named and some contributions are signed, the *Odessaer Zeitung* is not a great source for tracing family names or family history. Often the reports are unsigned or signed merely by initials. The controversial articles and letters, particularly in the early years, are signed with *nom de plumes*, occasionally Latin tags (revealing perhaps a Prussian education), or by bland titles such as “An Observer,” “A Farmer,” “A Colonist,” etc.

The contributions, however, do reveal Mennonite attitudes to a wide range of topics and increasingly their awareness of current events. Surprisingly, there is practically nothing about the emigration movement in the 1870s, at least from the Mennonite point of view. A couple of items written by non-Mennonites oppose the movement and warn of the dangers lurking in North America: wild animals and blood-thirsty Red Indians!

Discussion of emigration, however, may have been tantamount to the promotion of emigration and this was strictly prohibited in Russia at this time (although individual emigration was permitted). The period of the Great Reforms (1861–1880), when many aspects of Russian life and most government institutions were reformed, did indirectly engender debate in the paper. This involved matters of colony and school administration, land and inheritance law, and military service.

Like other colonists, Mennonites pledged their allegiance to the Tsar and his government at times of celebration (imperial births, weddings, and coronations) and crises (assassination, revolution, and unrest). They also contributed financial and other aid at times of crop failure, particularly in the bad famine years in the early 1890s on the Volga. At times of war, Mennonites expressed their patriotism. During the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 and 1905, they contributed money to assist soldiers’ families and wounded troops, while some young Mennonites volunteered to serve in the field hospitals. The letters of these serving men were reprinted in the paper. Briefly, before the paper was closed in 1914, a new Mennonite mobilisation for assistance in hospitals and to the Red Cross is noted.

The articles, reports, and letters reveal a Mennonite community whose members had a clear idea of their rights and duties. But beyond involvement in local and occasionally regional government, there were few opportunities for many Mennonites to be active in political affairs before the Revolution of 1905. This saw the establishment of a national parliament (the Duma). From reports in the paper, it is clear that the Mennonites were keenly involved in the political opportunities offered by the establishment of the new parliament, in spite of the later restrictions placed in the way of popular representation.

Given that the Mennonites were regular

and prominent contributors to the *Odessaer Zeitung*, how widely was it read in the Mennonite communities? This is a difficult question to answer. However, in 1904 a series of articles appeared reporting the names and numbers of the newspapers and magazines subscribed to by people in the leading German-speaking colonies. The Mennonite reports reveal that in Chortitza there were 68 subscriptions to the paper and 143 in Molotschna. This may appear small compared with the population of the colonies (almost 15,000 people lived in Chortitza, and over 26,000 in Molotschna in 1904), but the Mennonite principle of “why bother to buy a paper when you can borrow one” undoubtedly applied as much then, as it does today! In Chortitza, the paper could also be read in the reading room of the community’s lending library.

The subscriptions to the *Odessaer Zeitung*, and the wide range of topics raised by Mennonite correspondents in its columns, reveal that the Mennonite community was not as isolated from the affairs of the wider world as many like to think. Readers had access to international and national news as well as the concerns of other colonists, like themselves. Indeed, many of the topics, ideas, and opinions discussed by the Mennonites in the paper are similar, if not identical, to those of the other German-speaking groups living in Russia at the time. What is more, Mennonites were not just concerned with their own affairs, but also actively participated in the debates and disputes involving other colonists. The reverse is also true. Even in debates over Mennonite religious affairs, colonists of other denominations occasionally contributed their opinions.

The 1904 reports of Mennonite reading habits reveal, however, that the most popular newspaper subscriptions were to the North American *Zionsbote* (42 in Chortitza, 166 in Molotschna) and the *Mennonitische Rundschau* (91 in Chortitza, 132 in Molotschna), both of which contained personal and family news. The continuing links between Russian Mennonites and their relatives who had migrated to North America should not be overlooked. Occasionally, the *Odessaer Zeitung* carried reports from emigrants in America, including Mennonites.

The sole Russian Mennonite newspaper, the *Friedensstimme* (although at this time

(cont’d on p. 8)

Mennonite Heritage Archives

News from MHA

by Conrad Stoesz

Providing access to historically significant materials is the central goal of the Mennonite Heritage Archives. To increase access, we've launched a new online platform. You can sign up for a free account at <https://collections.mharchives.ca>. While the archives is open to the public five days a week, and the staff respond to hundreds of email requests a year, the new site provides new levels of access to MHA's holdings.

The first materials that come up on the site are old newspapers and magazines, such as the *Steinbach Post*, Conference of Mennonites in Canada yearbooks, and CMBC Alumni Bulletin. Development of the site was by PeaceWorks Technology Solutions and came at a price tag of over \$30,000 with a similar amount spent on the digitization of the materials.

Sara Dyck began digitizing the *Steinbach Post* newspaper in 2021, thanks to a grant from the D.F. Plett Foundation. Funds from the Young Canada Works program and the MHA's own budget were needed to complete the project.

What was the process? After images of the newspaper were taken, the images were cropped, straightened, and combined. Then a specialized program was used to turn the images into searchable text (optical character recognition). These files were then uploaded, tagged, and organized on www.collections.mharchives.ca.

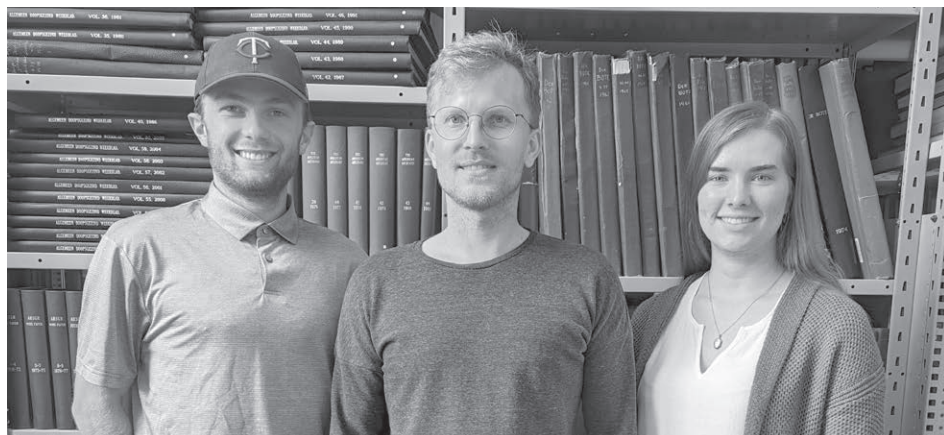
The newspaper was not only produced in German but printed using the Gothic

script. This, together with "folds, ink blotches, and faded print, make word searching less than perfect, but miles ahead of what we had," said Dyck. Previously, researchers would have to come to the archives to access the resource and page through the paper, searching for what they wanted. Now they can read any one of the 25,000 pages from home and even search for keywords. More materials will be added as time and resources permit. Dyck continues working at MHA, thanks to grants and designated gifts.

In other staffing news, the MHA paid tribute to **Selenna Wolfe**, who completed five years of service at the end of June 2023. Selenna began as a temporary worker while Connie Wiebe was away in 2018 and grew into the Administrative Assistant position. Selenna was part of figuring out MHA's new partnership model that began in 2017 and helped grow its online presence. She is furthering her studies in chaplaincy and working part-time as an associate pastor at Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, starting August 1, 2023.

Taking the Administrative Assistant position is **Graeme Unrau**, who is no stranger to the archives. He began in July 2022 when Selenna Wolfe was on maternity leave and continues the tradition of working for the archives as well at the MHC Gallery. Graeme excels at customer service and event planning, eagerly learning about the resources at the archives and delving into Mennonite history.

Like many past years, the MHA is fortunate to receive funding from the Young Canada Works program of the Government of Canada. This year **Isaiah Letkeman** has been hired and will work part-time from August through to March 2024. He will be learning to process records and do some digitization of materials.



MHA staff (L-R): Isaiah Letkeman, Graeme Unrau, and Sara Dyck. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

Voices from EMC & EMMC



From Paraguay to Northern Saskatchewan, beginning in the 1950s and still going strong, kids' ministry has been an important way to serve kids and communities and reach families. Vacation Bible School, unapologetically teaching about Jesus, has been a primary outreach since the earliest days of EMC missions and church planting. Above is VBS in La Nortena, Mexico, July 1971. Below is the "Wheels Parade" on closing evening of VBS at the Steinbach EMC, August 1979. Text and photo credit: Erica Fehr.



Singing in the new *Rudnerweider Gemeinde* (now EMMC) was a blend of the old and the new. The *Vorsaenger* (song leaders) were elected locally to lead the congregation in singing the chorales from the *Gesangbuch*, which was always done in unison. The gospel songs found in the *Evangeliumslieder* had become well-accepted by many who had attended the youth meetings and evening services. Choirs began to form in various locals, frequently conducted by the local schoolteacher. Above is the choir at the Bergfeld Mennonite Church near Altona, Manitoba, in the 1950s. Below is the choir in the 1980s. Text and photo credit: Lill Goertzen).

Historical Commission Awards Four Grants and One Scholarship

by Jon Isaak

The Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission, through its four archives (Fresno, Abbotsford, Hillsboro, and Winnipeg), continues to offer research and archiving services to MB churches—their institutions and their people.

At its June 2023 meeting, the Commission awarded two research grants and two publication grants.



An Alfred Neufeld \$2,000 USD global church history grant was awarded to **Stephen Kapinde**, a professor at Pwani University in Kifili, Kenya. His project explores the key actors and stakeholders in the Kenyan Mennonite peacebuilding story. The project title is *Mission as Transformation: A Theo-Historical Reflection of the Mennonite Development and Peacebuilding Mission in Kenya, 1960–2010*.



An MB studies \$2,500 USD project grant was awarded to **Jeremy Rich**, a professor at Marywood University in

Scranton, Pennsylvania. His project probes the impacts of agricultural development initiated by Mennonite missionaries in the 20th century. The project title is *Congolese Perspectives on Mennonite Brethren Missionary Development, 1960–1990*.



The first publication grant—a \$2,000 USD Katie Funk Wiebe women's studies grant—went to Canadian Mennonite University Press to help with the production costs of a forthcoming publication. The CMU Press book features a collection of poetry from award-winning Mennonite poet, **Sarah Klassen**. The title is *Sarah Klassen: New and Selected Poems*, edited by Nathan Dueck.



The second publication grant—a \$2,000 USD MB studies grant—went to CMU Press to help with the production costs of another forthcoming publication. This CMU Press book features a collection of academic essays by field-defining author **Hildi Froese Tiessen**, professor emerita, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario. The title is *On Mennonite/s Writing: Selected Essays* by Hildi Froese Tiessen, edited by Robert Zacharias.



The Commission also awarded a \$750 USD J.B. Toews college scholarship to Olivia Chittick of Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C.

For details about the Commission's funding initiatives and application procedures—and the news releases announcing past recipients—see the Commission's website, mbhistory.org.

Readers are invited to consider submitting a manuscript proposal or a project grant application, perhaps something to mark the upcoming 500th anniversary of the start of the Anabaptist movement in 1525.

Since its formation in 1969, the Commission has helped coordinate the collection, preservation, and interpretation of MB archival records that form and inform MB theology and history (congregational meeting minutes, conference proceedings, personal papers, periodicals, publications, and photographs).

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, mbhistory.org.

Elected Commission members include Don Isaac, chair (Hillsboro), Chris Koop, vice-chair (St. Catharines), Valerie Rempel, recording secretary (Fresno), Karla Braun (Winnipeg), Benny Leung (Calgary), and Maricela Chavez (Fresno). Archival representation on the Commission includes Kevin Enns-Rempel and Hannah Keeney (Fresno), Peggy Goertzen (Hillsboro), Richard Thiessen (Abbotsford), and Jon Isaak, executive secretary (Winnipeg).



The News from Odessa

(cont'd from p. 5)

still printed in Berlin, Germany), had a very low circulation in Chortitza (only 18) but much larger in Molotschna (181). Published by Abraham J. Kroecker, it was perceived as a Molotschna paper, and an obvious supporter of MB views, which limited its circulation among the majority of *Kirchliche* Mennonites. The need for a *Kirchliche* Mennonite newspaper published in Russia was obvious. The publication of the *Botschafter*, at first in Ekaterinoslav and later at Berdiansk after 1905, fulfilled this need. In format, the *Botschafter* followed the *Odessaer Zeitung* in certain respects.

Although the *Odessaer Zeitung* still found favour among Mennonite readers, and reports and contributions continued after 1905, the existence of two Mennonite newspapers (*Friedensstimme* and *Botschafter*) in southern Russia steadily reduced the flow of items to the Odessa paper. But for over fifty years, the newspaper had provided an essential medium of news, views, and debate for the Russian Mennonites. Today, through rereading *Odessaer Zeitung* issues preserved on microfilm, we can recapture aspects of a Mennonite past and of an age that otherwise has vanished forever.

This is Dr. James Urry's account of his OZ microfilm research. He wrote it in the late 1980s. Urry is now a retired professor from the School of Social and Cultural Studies, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand. A specialist in Russian Mennonite history, his latest book is On Stony Ground: Russländer Mennonites and the Rebuilding of Community in Grunthal (U. of Toronto, 2024). Copies of the Odessaer Zeitung are preserved on microfilm in the collection at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg where Urry read them in 1986. The Centre also has a copy of the listing or index of the OZ Mennonite content he created, which is now viewable online, <https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/publications/odessaer-zeitung-2/>

The GRandMA Database

by Richard D. Thiessen, Abbotsford, B.C.

For most people, the word “Grandma” conjures up memories of the mother of one of their parents. For me, I remember

things like chicken noodle soup, home-made grape juice and peppermint cookies, shapeless floral dresses, and interesting hats on Sundays. For those whose ancestry stems from the Dutch-Polish/Prussian-Russian stream of Mennonite history, the word “Grandma” can have another meaning. Mennonite genealogists often talk about Grandma, and one would think that they are talking about their Grandma or Oma, but more often than not, they are talking about GRandMA, the **Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry** (<https://www.grandmaonline.org/>).

On 1 May 2023, GRandMA contained 1,519,491 individual records and had a total of 3,684 subscribers from around the world, including 3,457 who subscribed to the online version (*GRanDMA Online* or GMOL), 172 who subscribed to the downloadable *Brother's Keeper* version, and 55 who subscribed to the GEDCOM version that can be imported into any genealogy software program.

GRanDMA has come a long way since 1991, when the California Mennonite Historical Society announced that it had recently formed the Genealogical Project Committee (later known as the Genealogy Project Committee). The goal of the committee was to create a computerized and unified genealogical database of Prussian-Russian Mennonite and Hutterite families.

Alan Peters of Fresno, California, had created a large collection of index cards that formed the nucleus of this project.

(For the history of Alan's database, please see <https://grandmaonline.org/gmol-7/gwhelp/petersHistory.asp>.) These records were entered into a database and merged with records collected by Jane Friesen and Kevin Enns-Rempel. Jay Hubert and Bob Friesen provided the technical expertise needed to organize the database, Jeff Wall provided legal assistance, and Jane Friesen and Carol Friesen spent many hours on data entry. Each of these contributors was from Fresno, California, except for Jay Hubert, who was from San Rafael, California.

After several years of planning and implementation, on 6 September 1996, GRANDMA Volume 1, a CD-ROM version of the database, was released that contained information on 135,482 individuals, along with digitized copies of some Prussian and American source records, ship passenger lists, and maps. The software program recommended by the Committee was *Brother's Keeper*.

It should also be noted that during this time, a Manitoba group had been formed, chaired by Bert Friesen, to explore creating a similar genealogical database using dBase, a database management system for PCs. Development on this project was set aside once GRandMA—the current form of the database acronym—became established, and the Manitoba database was merged with the GRandMA database.

Subsequent CD-ROMs of the GRandMA database were released every few years, along with additional source material, including primary records such

as various Prussian church registers and other records. The 2013 release of GRANDMA 7, containing 1,250,285 individuals, was the last CD-ROM issued by the Committee. In subsequent years, many GGrandMA subscribers began to transition away from the CD-ROM, first to a subscription that allowed for the downloading of the database, and in more recent years, to an online subscription to the “cloud” version of the database. Most GGrandMA users today access the database online, *GGrandMA Online* (GMOL), a site that is managed by Ken Ratzlaff from Kansas.

In 2000, Ken joined the GGrandMA project. He had participated in the Mennonite Heritage Cruise along the Dnipro River in 1999 where he met Alan Peters, one of the founders of the GGrandMA database. At that time, Ken already saw the limitations of a database distributed by CDROM and suggested that the database could be made available online. Ken provided the programming required to develop an online version of GGrandMA in 2001, initially called *GRANDMA's Window*. The online version of the database did not contain birthdates of living people in view of privacy concerns, but it could be updated much more frequently than the CD-ROM.

As stated earlier, *GGrandMA Online* is now the preferred format for most database subscribers. Like *Brother's Keeper*, *GGrandMA Online* can provide basic genealogical reports such as ancestry charts and *Ahnentafel* (genealogical numbering system) reports, descendancy charts, family group sheets, and relationship reports. In addition, *GGrandMA Online* provides several additional reports, as well as search options.

GGrandMA Online can generate some very useful reports about one's ancestors. For example, it can generate reports that tell someone the average lifespan or the average family size of all their ancestors, generation by generation, or it can generate a report of the average age of their ancestors when they first married. It can generate a migration timeline or an ancestor map. It can even generate a report that tells someone which of their ancestors in the database have had their information changed, and when that change took place. Many of these reports can be downloaded as Word documents.

One of the most powerful search

options is the Two-person Search. Unlike *Brother's Keeper*, users can search for a husband-wife pair, a parent-child pair, or a sibling pair. For example, you might have an ancestor named Jacob Dyck or Dueck who was married to Helena Schellenberg. You do not know anything else about them, such as dates or years of birth. Searching for all the Jacob Dycks married to a Helena Schellenberg in GGrandMA would take quite a while using *Brother's Keeper*, but you can locate this couple in a few seconds in *GGrandMA Online*.

Another genealogical tool is the sibling search. You might have the names of two brothers—Andreas and Wilhelm Enns—and that's all the information you have. Using the sibling search gives you five pairs of siblings with those names, literally in a few seconds. This is a search that you probably could not even do with *Brother's Keeper* or many other genealogy programs. Another search is the Quick Search, where you can search for women by their maiden name or married name. These are just some of the reasons why so many users of GGrandMA now choose *GGrandMA Online*.

If you have submissions or corrections that you wish to make, you can do these on the *GGrandMA Online* website. At this point in time, GEDCOM files cannot be submitted.

The GGrandMA Store is now located on the grandmaonline.org website. A two-year subscription to *GGrandMA Online* is \$20 USD. If you wish to download the *Brother's Keeper* version or a GEDCOM version of the database, a two-year subscription is \$40 USD.

Currently, well over a dozen volunteers from North America make regular contributions to the database, working nearly around the clock. In recent years, the GGrandMA database surpassed the limits of the software being used to manage it. So, the Genealogy Project Committee was forced to move the database to a software platform that could accommodate its size but had other limits. For example, GEDCOM files can no longer be properly imported, and only one editor can be logged into the database at a time.

New software for the GGrandMA database is currently in development, relying on the dedicated work of programmers who are volunteering their time and expertise. Once completed, the database will allow for simultaneous edits

by multiple volunteers and the importation of GEDCOM files with a sophisticated merge feature so that each record can be compared to a match in the database before it is imported.

Richard Thiessen is Executive Director at the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Abbotsford, B.C. and a member of the Genealogy Project Committee. This article was first published in the June 2023 issue of Heritage Postings and is reprinted here with permission.

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Lost in the Chaco Bush

Dora Dueck, Delta, B.C.

The mules had wandered away and two young men from the crew cutting a road through the bush went looking for them. They lost their way. Six days later, after their failure to return was reported to authorities and an intensive search undertaken, the two were finally found. Cornelius Peters, 16, was dead from heat and thirst, and Hans Schmidt, 21, was close to death.

This happened in March 1953, in Fernheim, a settlement formed in the Paraguayan Chaco by Mennonite refugees from Russia. At the time, the settlement was not much older than Hans, the survivor.

My husband, Helmut, who grew up in Fernheim, was a toddler at the time, so did not remember this event. And yet he knew the story well. His father had been on the search, his older brothers recalled it, Hans Schmidt lived just down the street. It was a known community story—and a warning. The rule for playing in the dense, thorny bush? If you entered to play, you had to keep the house in view.

Schmidt's recollections of being lost in the bush, along with the perspectives of several men involved in the search, were captured on cassette in 1993, by ZP-30,



Cornelius Peters, 16, grieved by his mother. Translated, the banners on the casket read: “My beloved child, thus says the Lord, ‘I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him’” and “My beloved brother, Cornelius, rest in peace, until we meet again.” Photo credit: Archive Fernheim.

a Chaco radio station. Someone from our Paraguay family sent us a copy. Recently, when sorting, I listened to it again.

The conversation is informal and conducted in Low German. Schmidt recounts the experience in a straightforward, unembellished manner. He hints that it’s an unburdening. He tells of the realization that he and Cornelius were lost, of shouting as long as they had strength, of the despair of walking a day only to discover themselves back where they had begun in the morning, of seeing the search plane over their heads but unable to make themselves visible to it, of finding no water but gaining a little nourishment from cactus berries and wild honey. He tells of the fantasies that possessed him as thirst weakened them: sights of water and food, people appearing and assuring them they were nearly where they wanted to be, and so on. “You don’t think clearly,” he says.

He does not recall the rescue or being taken to the colony centre for medical treatment. He was found sitting against a tree some way beyond Cornelius Peters, his face swollen with ticks (Schmidt wanted to find cactus and promised the younger man he would come back).

During the transport, one of the search team remembers that Schmidt continuously turned his head back to ask, “Cornelius, are you there?”

The younger man was easily

discouraged, Schmidt says kindly, and being younger, was weaker. They had prayed and sung—“though it wasn’t much by way of singing by then.”

Listening to this tape, I’m struck by the value in, and importance of, such oral archiving. There is something vitally immediate about preserving an event in the voices of participants. In the storytelling, themes relevant to the history of a time and place are illustrated—themes important to also rehearse for contemporary life.

Themes in this re-telling include the challenges of settling in a new place, and the sense of danger that must be faced and overcome to succeed in new environments. There’s the power of community, as witnessed in the massive search mounted for the two young men and the huge turnout at Cornelius Peters’s funeral. There’s the theme of failure—to report their absence only after 30 hours had passed (the crew boss thought they may have followed the mules back to town) and fateful near-misses (they had crossed the trail once and were not far from a water hole when they were found).

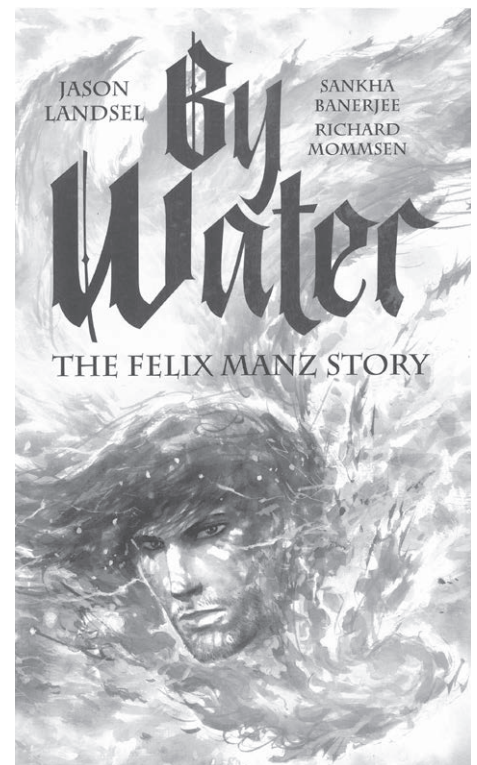
Another failure, explicitly acknowledged, intersects with the theme of relations with local Indigenous people. Large numbers of Mennonite men searched, but it was only when they were sent home (“they had destroyed evidence on their way”) and the search given over to the leadership of Indigenous men, fully at

home in the Chaco, that a footprint was discovered, and the lost men’s wanderings discerned. “They see what we don’t, a twig broken on a branch.”

The recording is also an opportunity for Hans to express, forty years later, his deep gratitude for the search and colony-wide prayers. The theme of faith is not triumphalist, however. Also recalled is the shattering of Cornelius Peters’s mother at the news. To her dying day, she wondered “why?” over the loss of her son.

Dora Dueck is an award-winning writer, former editor, avid reader, and lay historian. She is the author of four books of fiction, as well as articles, essays, and short stories in a variety of journals, and, most recently, a book of non-fiction, Return Stroke: essays & memoir (CMU Press, 2022).

Book Reviews



Jason Landsel, Richard Mommensen, and Sankha Banerjee, *By Water: The Felix Manz Story* (Plough, 2022), 143 pp.

Reviewed by Jonathan Dyck, Winnipeg

The first of a series depicting the “Heroes of the Radical Reformation,” the graphic novel, *By Water*, focuses on

Junges, dakj den Borm too!



The English language equivalent of this Mennonite Low German (MLG) saying is *Pride goeth before a fall* (Proverbs 16:18). But to understand this saying takes a bit of explaining. Many English language expressions are abstract, while many MLG expressions are concrete. The latter have images that can be seen or felt or heard.

I first heard this expression when I was a 12-year-old on the farm outside Osler, Saskatchewan. My father had hired 16-year-old Peter whose parents had moved from Mexico to Saskatchewan. Peter was teaching me how to make a *Schleida* (sling) out of binder twine. It was a Saturday evening in July and Helen, who was my mother's helper, came out of the house to meet her date. She was wearing a colourful, hand-sewn print dress. Peter saw her and guessed her to be a bit proud. To alert all of us to Helen, he called out for all to hear, *Junges, dakj den Borm too* (Boys, close the well!). There was no open well for her to fall into, but Peter's point was well-understood. A person who is uppity would not see danger and would indeed fall into a hole. Which reminds me, *Pride goeth before a fall ... into the well*. This is what the English language infers but does not say.

Text by Jake Buhler and illustration by Lynda Toews.

the short but influential life of Felix Manz, one of the best-known figures of the early Anabaptist movement. Along with artist Sankha Banerjee and scriptwriter Richard Mommsen, author Jason Landsel has created an immersive reading experience, using the medium of comics to recreate the visual world of central Europe during an era of social, economic, and religious upheaval.

We are introduced to the young Manz as the illegitimate son of a Catholic priest, raised by his mother, and bullied by his peers. From the first few pages, it's clear that this will be a hero's tale with all the hallmarks of Reformation history that Protestants know and love: corrupt priests, angry peasants, humanism, unjust taxation, the Black Death, and so on. But because this is about the origins of Anabaptism, questions around the limits of Reformation loom large. As he comes of age, Manz is depicted as an earnest theologian and people's champion whose ideals draw him and his growing brotherhood (including Conrad Grebel and George Blaurock) into conflict with their more moderate ally, the Swiss magistrate, Ulrich Zwingli. Their break from Zwingli results in the

movement's first adult believers' baptism, a subversive act that forges a link between the watery episodes that open and close Manz's story.

By Water features realistic artwork infused with iconography from the early modern imagination, riffing on artists like Bosch, Bruegel, and Dürer. The soft lines and watercolours of Banerjee's artwork are well-suited to a story where water carries such significance. At times, however, due to the low colour saturation, some of the more delicate renderings appear washed out and risk being lost. As the narrative progresses toward Manz's martyrdom, the scenery becomes more vivid and varied, and instances where the imagery breaks free of the grid are used to great effect.

While the overtly heroic register of retelling may put off some readers—the morally upright men all seem to have square jaws and chiseled physiques, while nearly all the women are buxom and idealized—there is plenty here to encourage further exploration of Anabaptist history and its visual milieu. A generous appendix features write-ups of key figures, a timeline of historical events, and reprinted source texts.

As always, one of the major difficulties in narrating Anabaptist history is the fact that it has no precise origin, nor does it follow a linear progression. As a medium, comics are well-suited to represent this kind of complexity, and, although *By Water* is fairly linear in its telling and conventional in its character depictions, it offers many helpful jumping-off points.

Jason Landsel, a member of the Bruderhoff whose wife has Hutterite roots, remarks in his introduction on the importance of "preserving her heritage and presenting it to our children." The book's epilogue suggests where we're heading next in the series: to Tyrol, home of Jacob Hutter, namesake of the Hutterites, who, along with the Bruderhoff, are one of the few Anabaptist groups that retain the practice of the community of goods. Often missing from mainstream accounts of the Protestant Reformation, this emphasis on economic reform—highlighted with the repetition of Thomas Müntzer's famous dictum *Omnia sunt communia* (all things in common) throughout the story—shows us just how radical this segment of the Reformation really was and, in some cases, still is.

Jonathan Dyck is an illustrator, designer, and cartoonist based in Winnipeg. His graphic novel, *Shelterbelts (Conundrum)*, was published in 2022.



Sofia Samatar, *The White Mosque: A Memoir* (New York: Catapult, 2022), 315 pp.

Reviewed by Paul Doerksen, Winnipeg

The subtitle of Sofia Samatar's book identifies it as a memoir, which while accurate, doesn't quite do justice to the richness and depth found in this work. Her memoir includes significant reflections not only on events, experiences, and people, but insightful reflection on just what kind of book she is writing. Samatar uses a trip which retraces the Great Trek, an infamous Mennonite journey to Central Asia, 1880-1884, undertaken largely as a response to the apocalyptic vision of Claas Epp, Jr., as an organizing principle around which to weave personal reflections on identity, and fascinating discussions of Mennonite identity, ethnicity, and writing. The titular "White Mosque" refers to a whitewashed Mennonite church erected in a Muslim village in Central Asia, a phenomenon which provides a reference point for Samatar's thinking about notions of service, interfaith relationships, witness, and presence. The front matter refers to the book as "a work of creative nonfiction"; blurbs for the book refer to it as "kaleidoscopic"; Samatar variously

describes her project as a "palimpsestic quest," an account of a "research journey," a "(secular) pilgrimage," and a "mosaic, a shattering." But the image she returns to most frequently is that of a "magpie existence," a term that helps Samatar to consider her existence as the daughter of an American Mennonite mother and a Muslim Somali father, her place in various academic and church contexts, and her immersion in several languages. This "magpie condition" helps her explain the way she picks and chooses what to embrace (or not) of various dimensions of the contexts in which she finds herself, provides a way of explaining her status as a "secular Mennonite," and helps the reader understand her reticence toward fitting easily into unquestioned collective and especially totalizing narratives.

Samatar's structural use of the Great Trek as an organizing principle opens the way for deep reflection on the self, as she "inserts herself" (210) into that story. The book includes three major sections, each of which is further divided into three sections, and each of those sections is further subdivided, a structure which provides space for reflection on various dimensions of Samatar's personal identity. So, as she describes the Great Trek, and then her tracing of that route, she inserts stories of her childhood ("stories of a brown girlhood"), her education, and her experiences more broadly. She reflects on Mennonite identity, warning of the problem of living according to a "consensual hallucination," offering insights into the role of "ethnic ghosts" that haunt Mennonites, thinking at length about what it means for her to write "like a Mennonite," pondering the import of the *Martyrs Mirror* on Mennonite identity. And, while she describes herself as a secular Mennonite, she sees the Mennonite Church's strength as that which "looks like weakness and contradiction, the patchwork of people brought together in such different ways by birth and faith and trust, to build a house of effort and care. I would say our strength is that we can't get everyone on the same page" (292).

Samatar rehabilitates the Great Trek to some extent by complexifying the story so that it doesn't read like a complete failure, reducible to fanatical following of misguided apocalyptic delusions. She draws on both primary and secondary

sources in a way that teaches the reader to understand the kinds of spiritual, cultural, and intellectual currents that undergirded the taking up of the Trek, as well as providing explanations for those who abandoned the Trek at some point. Further, Samatar's work here pays attention to the often-neglected Uzbek people, who lived in the places to which Mennonites migrated.

This is a deeply engaging memoir, very well-written, able to be intensely personal without being solipsistic. It is well worth reading for the work on the Great Trek, the keen insights into the art of writing memoir, the appropriate cautions regarding Mennonite totalizing narratives, and much more. While it is sometimes difficult to keep track of the sheer number of topics addressed, the book rewards reading slowly, and many of the sections are compelling as stand-alone sections; for example, the ten-page passage titled "writing coming home," a brilliant reflection on writing as a Mennonite.

Samatar's reflections on Mennonite identity are insightful and challenging, asking us to consider issues such as racism, colonialism, spiritual pride, exclusionary practices, and more, and this without turning the book into a screed against the church. However, I am left with a question regarding Samatar's self-description as a secular Mennonite. What happens if a secular Mennonite inhabits a magpie condition, picking and choosing from what's on offer? In Samatar's case, this scenario obviously does not result in dismissing or being disrespectful to Mennonite tradition. Nonetheless, on what basis does a secular Mennonite pick and choose from Mennonite history, tradition, spirituality, and community life? A magpie condition presumes there's a tradition from which to pick and choose, but what happens if the magpie condition persists and spreads, and maybe even becomes the dominant experience, and the tradition wanes or fragments (or both)?

The White Mosque deserves a wide readership. Samatar's book is an exceptional memoir, from which I learned a lot, and which caused considerable self-reflection on my part. I recommend it highly.

Dr. Paul Doerksen is Associate Professor of Theology and Anabaptist Studies at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.