

# Mennonite Historian



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Published by the History-Archives Committee of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada

## Mennonite Historian and you

With this first issue of the *Mennonite Historian*, the History-Archives Committee is beginning a new project. This publication is designed to meet a number of objectives.

First, we hope that it can become a medium for sharing materials of historical value to the general reading public. We do not intend to duplicate scholarly periodicals; rather we expect to publish letters, pictures, shorter articles, excerpts from diaries, genealogical information, and other suitable material. In this way we hope to fill a need that is not being met by existing publications.

Second, we wish to provide a forum for the various people involved in some form of Mennonite research to present their findings. These can be in the form of short research notes, or summaries. In this area too we hope this will provide an avenue of expression for many whom we now do not hear.

Third, we hope that *The Mennonite Historian* will become an important vehicle of communication between the groups and individuals who are interested in the various aspects of Mennonite experience both past and present. In future issues we expect to include articles in English, German and Low-German.

We hope that this publication can help to acquaint the readers with the wisdom of the past so that it can interact with the challenges of the future to produce a creative present. *John Friesen*



*This photo of Cornelius Hiebert (left) and his brother John was taken around 1910. Provided courtesy of Dr. Paul Hiebert, Carman, Manitoba.*

## Cornelius Hiebert: MLA (1905-1909)

Cornelius Hiebert (left, on photo) was born in 1862 in the Bergthal Colony (Schoenfeld) of south Russia. He came to Manitoba with his parents, Johann (1829-1904) and Helena Toews Hiebert (1830-1896), on the S.S. Sardinian, when he was 13 years of age (1876). Also with the family were nine brothers and sisters, Peter, Abram, Johann, Helena, Philip, Catherine, Anna, Maria, and Julius.

The family first settled on the East Reserve, and then moved to the West

Reserve where they took up a homestead in the school district of Neuhoftnung (now New Hope) about five miles west of Altona.

Two brothers of Cornelius, Peter and Johann (right on photo) taught school for several years, and the latter married Maria Penner, a daughter of Erdmann Penner. Erdmann was a merchant from Tannenau near Niverville, who later opened up new businesses at Gretna, Rosenort, Morden, and other locations in the West Reserve.

Cornelius married Aganetha Dick in

1888, and they had three children, Anna Helen, John Cornelius and Metha. They lived for a time at Gretna and also Holland, Man. In the latter town C. Hiebert operated a mill. In 1900 the Hieberts moved to Didsbury, Alberta, where Cornelius became a general merchant, dealing also in lumber and implements. From 1901-1904 he was overseer (mayor) of the village of Didsbury. Anna, the older of the daughters, served as head nurse of the Children's Hospital in

*Continued on next page*

## Hiebert *cont'd.*

Calgary for many years. Cornelius, Jr., studied law and later became mayor of Nanton, Alta.

In 1905 Cornelius, Sr., became an MLA in the newly-formed Alberta legislature, serving the Rosebud constituency as the sole provincially-elected representative of the Conservatives. Among other things, he supported prohibition and favored the flying of the Canadian flag over every school. Dissatisfied with various government measures, he ran as an Independent in his second term so that he would be better able to criticize government measures which he could not support. In 1909 he lost out to another Mennonite, J. E. Stauffer, of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, who represented the Liberals at that time.

Mr. Hiebert returned to Didsbury, and eventually moved to Calgary. For some years he was an active Mason. He passed away with cancer in 1919, and the burial took place in the Didsbury cemetery. An acquaintance had this to say after his passing, "He was a friendly man as I can remember him. He came to my parents one day when they were butchering pigs, and we youngsters had much fun with him that day." LK

**Sources:** The Didsbury Booster, *Echoes of an Era, History of Didsbury and District* (1969); Aron Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta and their Assimilation", unpublished MA thesis, University of Alberta, (1964); the Mennonite immigrant passenger lists (1874-1880); the church books of the Bergthaler Church of Manitoba; notes by Dr. Paul Hiebert, Carman, Manitoba; Frank H. Epp's book, *Mennonites in Canada 1786-1929* (1974).

## New Books

Jan Gleysteen, ed. *The Drama of the Martyrs*. Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA, 1975. 144 pp. \$5.95. Published by Mennonite Historical Associates, and depicting the 104 engravings of Jan Luyken first published in *Martyrs Mirror*. Order from LMC Historical Society, 2215 Mill Stream Rd., Scottsdale, PA 17602.

Schaefer, Paul J. *Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten!* Vol. 2. 84 pp. Paperback. \$2.00. An enlarged reprint of the first edition published in 1942. Published by MCC (Canada). This section deals with the story of Mennonites in Russia, and beginnings in North America. Order from Fellowship Bookcentre, 302 Kennedy St., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2M6.

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## Mennonite Genealogy, Inc.

One aspect of Mennonite history in which the expert and the novice can both participate in a special, personal way is the compiling of their genealogy. These genealogies provide basic information, not only for the historian, but also for theologians, sociologists and writers of a variety of other valuable literature.

Across Canada and the United States Mennonites from high school to retirement age are writing genealogies. Results can be seen in about 400 family registers in our library today. For two decades now the records of Mennonite Genealogy Inc. have been used by researchers in this field. Anyone who has not heard of our corporation, may want to become acquainted with our program.

There are many private collections of valuable historical material in Canadian Mennonite homes today. Until 1967, Mennonite Genealogy Inc. could be labelled as one of these. However, as this collection grew, and the public demand increased, it became necessary to seek larger facilities and to become organized as a group. A fireproof building was built and officially opened in 1967. It is located in the town of Steinbach at present.

Our work involves the gathering of Mennonite genealogical material and indexing this information to make it easily accessible to the researcher. We encourage anyone who possesses such information, whether in family registers, biographies, diaries, or photographs, to share it with us.

The library is staffed solely by volunteers so it is impossible to undertake extensive research of family histories by correspondence at the present time.

On these pages we would like to share some of the prize possessions which are being stored here, and also report on new material as it is received. We shall try to give the newcomer to genealogy a few tips on available sources of information, numbering systems and sample family charts. It may also be of interest to publish a family name exchange for those who are researching the same surnames. We will outline several sur-

## The CMC history-archives committee

The present history-archives committee of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada has been given two tasks to carry out. One is to be alert to, and to promote, historical concerns in our conference constituency. The other is to build up and administer the archives of the Conference.

The goals for such endeavors were set forth by the Conference as long as four decades ago. In the 1930s B. J. Schellenberg, formerly of south Russia, collected considerable archival material by encouragement of Conference decisions to preserve historical documentation. A Conference Historical Committee now incorporated into the H-A Committee came into being later on.

At CMBC Gerhard Lohrenz has, for more than twenty years, worked at building up an excellent Mennonite historical library and archival collection. It also includes the materials gathered by Schellenberg earlier. For the past five years or so Henry H. Epp, now of Vineland, Ontario, has spent time promoting and developing the archives, preparing a filing index, and encouraging historical research. Lawrence Klippenstein was appointed historian-archivist on Sept. 1, 1974.

The history-archives committee presently includes the following: Dr. Gerhard Lohrenz, minister, teacher, and historian; Adolf Ens, instructor at CMBC; Art Fast, a Winnipeg school teacher; and chairman of the Congregational Resources Board of the Conference; John Friesen, instructor at CMBC; Dr. Ted Regehr, professor at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon; Dr. J. Winfield Fretz, professor, and former president, of Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario; and A. Olfert, publisher, of Clearbrook, B.C.



names that are being pursued at present and invite you to participate in this exchange program. Your queries should be as brief as possible, but include pertinent dates for identification purposes, i.e. birth, death, marriage, baptism dates and locations, name of spouse, profession, etc. Please write to Mennonite Genealogy Inc. Box 1086, Steinbach, Manitoba. — Margaret Kroeker.

## Our congregational historians

These persons have consented to help gather historical material on the local level. Such materials could include regular church records like bulletins, membership directories, annual meeting reports, etc.; old church books no longer in use; materials dealing with the history of the congregation (reports, letters, diaries, photos, etc.), and other items worth preserving in the effort to record the story of God's working in our communities.

Congregational historians are appointed by their congregations annually. It is hoped that every congregation in the Conference will be able to appoint at least one person to serve in this way. The list below includes appointees whose names have been submitted to the Conference archives office till now.

1. Ewanda Boehr — Zoar Mennonite Church, Langham, Sask.
2. N. J. Kroeker — First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C.
3. N. N. Friesen — Bethel Mennonite Church, Aldergrove, B.C.
4. John H. Epp — Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim, Sask.
5. Vic Penner — Altona Mennonite Church, Altona, Manitoba.
6. Jacob Rempel — Sargent Ave. Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
7. Susan Epp — Zion Mennonite Church, Swift Current, Saskatchewan.
8. Ruth Schroeder, Berghthaler Mennonite Church, Altona, Manitoba.
9. Ingrid Regier, Niagara United Mennonite Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
10. Betty Banman — Mount Royal Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.
11. Rev. Jacob Priess — Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

12. Lillian Epp — Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
13. Menno Lepp — Steinbach Mennonite Church, Steinbach, Manitoba.
14. Carl Driedger — North Kildonan Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
15. Rudy Friesen — Schoenfelder Mennonite Church, Headingley, Manitoba.
16. Lena Harms — Mather Mennonite Church, Mather, Manitoba.
17. H. H. Pauls and Brian Petkau — Berghthaler Mennonite Church, Morden, Man.
18. Gerhard Isaak — Sherbrook Mennonite Church, Vancouver, B.C.
19. Herbert P. Enns — United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ontario.
20. Henry Koop — Springridge Mennonite Church, Glenwood, Alberta.
21. Rudy Williams — Grace Mennonite Church, St. Catharines, Ontario.
22. John D. Rempel — Hague Mennonite Church, Hague, Saskatchewan.
23. Peter J. Wiens — Ottawa Mennonite Church, Ottawa, Ontario.
24. Frank Enns, Glenlea Mennonite Church, Glenlea, Manitoba.
25. Ted Rempel — First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, Alberta.
26. Nellie Rempel — St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, St. Catharines, Ontario.
27. John Friesen, Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, Man.
28. Erica Ens — First Mennonite, Eyebrow, Sask.
29. Irene Klassen, First Mennonite Church, Calgary, Alta.

Total appointed: Ontario — 5; Manitoba — 11; Saskatchewan — 7; Alberta — 3; British Columbia — 3.

A description of the work (in yellow pages) of such persons was mailed out to pastors some months ago. Additional copies are available upon request.

## Research inquiries

- **Bill Schroeder** of 434 Sutton Avenue, Winnipeg, Man. is seeking information on the life and work of **Cornelius Buhr** of the Berghthaler Colony, in the Ukraine. Buhr was one of the group of 12 Russian Mennonite delegates who visited Manitoba in 1873. His entire family emigrated to Butterfield, Minnesota, around 1874.
- **Peter Goertzen**, of 12253-101 Street in Edmonton, Alta. is doing some research on the Russian Mennonite colony of the **Fuerstenland**. Any information will be appreciated.
- **John Friesen**, of 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Man. is collecting documentary and manuscript material related to the late **Henry H. Ewert** of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Manitoba. Anything sent will be duplicated and returned, if not to be donated.
- **J. D. Robert Wiebe**, of 1013-26th Ave. S.E., Great Falls, Montana, 59404 is working on a study of the **Elder Johann Wiebe** of the West Reserve in Manitoba, Canada. Family history materials will be especially welcome.
- **N. J. Kroeker**, of 484 E. 50th Ave., Vancouver, B.C. would appreciate information on the life and work of **Bernhard J. Schellenberg**, archivist, formerly from south Russia, and later of Winnipeg, Manitoba.
- **G. I. Peters**, of the **First Mennonite Church**, Greendale, B.C. is working on a **congregational history**. Persons having material on the subject should contact him at 6385 Underhill Drive, R.R. 1, Sardis, B.C. V0X 1Y0.

**Note:** This column is open to any person wishing to solicit information on research projects, or other studies.

## New books (cont.)

Mary Kornelsen. *Give Me This Mountain*. Steinbach, Manitoba, 1975. 150 pp. \$3.50. Paperback. An autobiographical sketch of a teaching career in southeastern Manitoba Mennonite schools. Order from Derksen Printers, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Dr. Adam Giesinger. *From Catherine to Khrushchev. The Story of Russian Germans*. Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1974. 443 pp. Cloth. \$12.00. Includes a significant section on Mennonite communities in Russia. Order from Fellowship Bookcentre, 302 Kennedy St., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2M6.

Dr. Hartmuth Froeschle, ed. *Deutsch-kanadisches Jahrbuch*. Toronto, Ontario, 1975. 293 pp. Cloth. \$15.00. A publication of the Historical Society of Mecklenburg Upper Canada, Inc. Order from Dr. Hartmuth Froeschle, St. Michael's College, 81 St. Mary St., Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1J4.



A Mennonite Historian's seminar was convened under the sponsorship of the CMC History-Archives Committee on March 8, 1975 at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba. About forty persons joined the day-long sessions. A similar meeting is being considered for the fall of the year. Photo: Rudy Regehr.





The 1916 council members for the Rural Municipality of Rhineland were (l. to r.): Peter Kroeker, Henry Penner, A. Sawatzky, Henry J. Friesen, Isaac Hildebrand, A. P. Hiebert, A. Hiebert and H. H. Hamm. The municipality was officially organized on the eastern portion of the West Reserve, Southern Manitoba in 1891. Photo: Courtesy of Klaas Kroeker, Altona, Man.

## Notes and Comments

### The story of a Mennonite town

**Grunthal History 1874-1974**, Grunthal, Man. Grunthal History Book Committee, 1974, 241 pp. By Adolf Ens. Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The series of centennial celebrations which we have experienced since Canada's one hundredth in 1967 has stimulated a keen interest in local history. This is cause for rejoicing since it has led to the discovery and preservation of much valuable archival and historical material, and frequently, as in the case of Grunthal, in the compilation and publication of such materials. The **Grunthal History** is an attractive volume describing the first hundred years of one southeast Manitoba community. Descriptions, largely pictorial, of the neighbouring villages of Bergfeld, Schoenenberg, Gnadenfeld, Schoensee, Edenthal, and Kronsard are also included.

No author or editor of the book is identified, and the highly uneven literary style and quality of the text reflects this lack. The best-written sections are those which relate only indirectly to Grunthal: on Mennonite origins by P. J. B. Reimer; on Mennonites in Russia by G. Lohrenz; on the journey to Canada by Al Reimer; and chapters 2 and 13 reprinted from Abe Warkentin's **Reflections on our Heritage**.

In a centennial history one looks for a concentration on origins and early years. The Grunthal book succeeds only partially in this respect. The section on the Chortitzer Church, the oldest and over a hundred year

period most important of Grunthal's four church groups, is far too brief and sketchy.

Perhaps this is due to the fact that Grunthal had, so to speak, a second beginning fifty years after the first one, when one group left for Latin America and another arrived from Russia in the 1920's. This second beginning being more recent and hence more vividly recollected by more people, makes its presence felt in many parts of the book. This is very evident, for example, in the much more detailed description of the beginnings of the Elim Church.

The chapter on education has only one brief paragraph on the controversial introduction of public schools. A more detailed look at this issue seems warranted in view of the fact that a large part of the original community left the country because of it. As late as 1925 parents of the Goodwill and Spencer School Districts were convicted under the School Attendance Act (see **Manitoba Free Press**, 22, June 1925).

On the other hand, the book is to be commended for good and lengthy descriptions of the practice of folk medicine, a subject that "dry historians" would be more apt to overlook.

For the outsider the series of photographs of succeeding graduating classes or sports teams becomes repetitive. Many of the other pictures, however, are of general interest, and some have considerable historical value.

Derksen Printers are to be commended for a fine technical job in the printing, layout and binding. Local historical committees should be encouraged to look for similar technical assistance by outside specialists in the researching and writing of historical books.

## Mennonite Saengerfest '75

The Manitoba Mennonite Centennial Committee is sponsoring its second "Saengerfest" Oct. 27 at the Centennial Concert Hall in Winnipeg. This "song festival" will feature premiere performances of new works by Winnipeg composers.

Esther Wiebe, Canadian Mennonite Bible College faculty member, has composed a special piece entitled "Maranatha", for orchestra, soloists and choir. It is her comment on 450 years of Anabaptist history. Also a new composition is one by Peter Klassen, Mennonite Brethren Bible College faculty member. He has composed a series of three anthems for choir. These choral numbers will be conducted by George Wiebe of the Canadian Mennonite Bible College faculty.

In addition the program will include choral music by Ralph Vaughn Williams, Geoffrey Shaw and Larry Warkentin. There will also be a selection of German hymns and anthems.

The adult choir will be made up of singers from church choirs in Winnipeg and surrounding area.

The evening's program will be rounded out with selections by a massed children's choir prepared by Helen Litz, conductor of the Mennonite Children's Choir.

Rehearsals are scheduled to begin in several locations in early September. Later all groups will rehearse in Winnipeg for the performance on October 27.

Tickets for the Saengerfest will be available at ATO and CBO for \$2.50, 3.50, 4.50, and 5.50.

## Jan Gleysteen Tour

The Mennonite Centennial Committee and the History-Archives Committee sponsored an Anabaptist Heritage tour by artist-historian Jan Gleysteen on September 5-12. Jan is with the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottdale, and is lecturing widely with slides to tell the Anabaptist story. He shared it with about 1000 persons in various high schools and churches of Manitoba. Audiences were enthusiastic everywhere he went.

### To Be Published Soon

A book on the history of the village of Reinland, Manitoba entitled

### REINLAND;

### An Experience in Community

by

Peter D. Zacharias

### Order from:

Reinland Centennial Committee  
Box 218, R.R. 1  
Winkler, Manitoba  
R0G 2X0