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Signatures of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald and of Governor General Lord Dufferin on the controversial August 13th, 1873 Order-in-Council (Courtesy Public Archives of Canada).

The Conspiracy That Never Was

by Adolf Ens, assistant professor of history,
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nipeg, MB.

The Mennonites who came to Canada in the 1870s had left their homes in Russia because their *Privilegium*, promising them complete exemption from military service for all time, suddenly no longer held less than a hundred years after it had been given. They hoped and believed that their new *Privilegium* from the Canadian government would be more reliable. It was therefore a surprise and a disappointment for them to discover 46 years later that what their delegates had been given was apparently not the "real" *Privilegium*, and that even the real one was not able to guarantee what it seemed to promise. Some historians have seen a kind of conspiracy on the part of the government against the Mennonite immigrants in this turn of events. However, some hitherto unknown facts dispel this notion of a conspiracy.

Two events, some 45 years apart, led later Mennonite historians to suggest the "conspiracy" theory. The broad outlines of these two events are known.

(1) When some of the Mennonites in Russia began to explore possibilities of immigrating to North America in the 1870s, an official delegation met formally with government representatives in Ottawa to negotiate terms of entry into the country. One of the key concerns of the Mennonite delegates related to the question of education. The official response to this concern, written by John Lowe, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (equivalent today to Deputy Minister of Immigration) on July 26th, 1873 said:

The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever; and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools.

This letter was always considered by the Mennonites as their Canadian *Privilegium*.

(2) In the aftermath of World War I the provincial governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan for the first time challenged the right of Mennonite communities to educate their children in their own church-operated schools. Attendance of school-age children at government-recognized public schools was by law required in all communities where such schools were available. By 1918, parents who failed to send their children to public school were being fined by the local courts. Mennonite leaders wondered whether their 1873 *Privilegium* no longer held. To find out, a group in the Altona, Manitoba area made the July 1919 conviction of John Hildebrand into a test case. The four justices of the Manitoba Court of Appeals, who heard the case in August 1919, unanimously dismissed the appeal on the grounds that the British North America Act (the Canadian constitution) gave exclusive powers in the area of education to the provinces. Ottawa had no legal basis to issue any kind of *Privilegium* in matters of education.

The point on which historians have pounced is the appearance of another version of the Mennonite "*Privilegium*" during this court case. Counsel for the Province quoted not the July 26th letter of John Lowe but rather a parallel Order-in-Council of August 13th, 1873. The official minute of the cabinet, signed by Prime Minister John A.

Macdonald and Governor General Lord Dufferin—the "legal" *Privilegium* according to the court—apparently came as a surprise to the Mennonite defendants. In it, the wording of the crucial education clause reads slightly differently from that of the Lowe version:

... that the Mennonites will have the fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles, and educating their children in schools, as provided by law, without any kind of restriction or molestation whatever.

J.J. Hildebrand charged the government with replacing Lowe's "Charter" with "another Order-in-Council" and then keeping the Mennonites in ignorance of the latter for 46 years.¹ E.K. Francis held that "the circumstances under which these changes were inserted in the official documents put them in a rather questionable light." That the August 13th Order-in-Council was then marked "secret" and thus kept from the public for 45 years, he saw as a "devious procedure."² Both John Bergen and Abraham Friesen considered the changes made in the wording of the education clause to be significant (Friesen says that adding the words "as provided by law" voided the entire clause of its previous meaning) and that it was therefore a serious matter that Mennonites were kept ignorant of them.³ More recently, H.J. Gerbrandt has suggested that the blame rests on John Lowe, who must have known the importance of the phrase "as provided by law" and "apparently . . . purposely slipped over this important point" in writing his letter of July 26th.⁴ F.H. Epp blames John Pope, the Minister of Agriculture, who "eliminated the education provision from the official document . . . without advising the Mennonites of the change."⁵

There is very little foundation for this "conspiracy" theory. The reasons for marking the August 13th Order-in-Council "secret" had nothing to do with the change in the wording of the education clause. Rather, it was done in direct response to British diplomatic fear about William Hespeler's energetic and somewhat illegal wooing of the Russian Mennonites to immigrate to Canada.

Already in April of 1872, before Hespeler

had appeared on the scene, Lord Loftus, the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, had drawn to the attention of the Foreign Minister "that the penalties imposed by Russian law on immigrants, and on those who further immigration, without the previous consent of the Imperi-Government are very severe."⁶ After Hespeler's meetings with the Mennonites in Berdjansk in July and Odessa in November, British concern mounted. The Foreign Office now advised the Colonial Office:

Lord Augustus Loftus appears to think that the Canadian government have been going rather too far in their endeavour to induce these Mennonites to immigrate to Canada . . . and he seems to think that Mr. Hespeler is likely to get himself into trouble and Her Majesty's government also if he again returns to Bessarabia . . .⁷

At that point the Colonial Secretary sent a coded telegram to the Governor General of Canada: "To avoid complications with Russia Canadian Government should take no further steps with respect to Mennonite emigration till informed matter can be safely proceeded with."⁸ From this point on, all correspondence between the Canadian and British governments on this subject was "secret". And within three days, Ottawa had recalled Hespeler to Canada.

In London, however, the matter became more serious as the Foreign Office learned new details of Hespeler's activities while in Russia, including the fact that he had carried with him some of the official correspondence between London and Ottawa regarding the immigration and had even given some of it to the Mennonite leaders. In pompous understatement that must be unique to British nobility, Lord Tenterden warned the Colonial Office that "such a line of conduct on Mr. Hespeler's part . . . is liable to create inconvenient discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Russia."⁹ In St. Petersburg, Prince Gratchakow warned Ambassador Loftus against any involvement of the British Consul in Berdjansk in these immigration matters. When all of these concerns converged in the Colonial Office, Lord Kimberley demanded of Ottawa a "full explanation", adding, "Your Lordship cannot fail to perceive the very serious embarrassment which may be caused by these proceedings."¹⁰ This stern note reached Ottawa while the Mennonite delegates were investigating the land in Manitoba. The Governor General sent his "full explanation" (marked "secret", of course) to the Colonial Office just two days before Wiebe, Peters, Klassen and Toews met with John Lowe.¹¹ That is why both Agriculture Minister Pope's report to cabinet of the negotiations with the Mennonite delegates, and the subsequent

August 13th Order-in-Council were marked secret.

There was one further complication. A copy of the Order-in-Council was routinely prepared for the Minister on August 20th. Two days later, the Governor General denied his approval of the Order and instructed that it "be cancelled until he can send further instructions." This is noted on the original copy of the Order, together with the instruction "Suspend order accordingly and do not act on or enter it."¹² The Minister's copy of the Order-in-Council, the only one in circulation, was withdrawn on the same day. Until March 1916, when a new copy was made for the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, the official Mennonite "*Privilegium*" was thus not only "secret", but also entirely removed from circulation.

Once it came back into circulation in 1916, there was no attempt on the part of the government to keep it from Mennonites. Rev. John P. Wall, chief government contact person of the "Old Colony" Mennonites in Saskatchewan, received the full text of the controversial education clause of the August 13th Order-in-Council from his Member of Parliament in March 1916, and his attention was specifically drawn to the words "as provided by law" and their possible significance.¹³ When the entire Order-in-Council was tabled in the House of Commons in 1917, it became a very public document. At least four branches of the Mennonite church in Saskatchewan and individual Mennonites as far away as Kansas and Nebraska had copies of it by 1918.¹⁴ It should therefore not have come as a surprise to Manitoba Mennonites when it was quoted in the 1919 court case.

From Ottawa's side, there was thus no conspiracy. The government did not withhold the "official" "*Privilegium*" from Mennonites in order to deceive them but rather for the reasons indicated above. Internal correspondence makes it clear that Lowe's July 26th letter had official status as long as the controversial August 13th order was not in circulation.¹⁵ And there is no indication that anyone at that time thought that the later Order-in-Council promised the Mennonites anything less than John Lowe's letter had done. Both attempted to describe and interpret for Mennonites the existing laws regarding education. In 1873, Manitoba law provided for denominational schools to operate without any kind of governmental restriction.

It is not quite as simple to dismiss the charge that in both versions of the "*Privilegium*", Ottawa appeared to make promises in the area of education, which it knew to be an exclusively provincial domain under the BNA Act. When the Manitoba Court dismissed the Mennonite appeal in 1918, it

did indeed do so on these constitutional grounds but also in light of the precedents set by the courts during the 1890s when Manitoba Catholics challenged the Province's right to abolish denominational schools. The Macdonald administration which issued the "*Privilegium*" in 1873 had only three years earlier legislated the Manitoba Act in which, it thought, the right to denominational schools had been constitutionally guaranteed. Given that assumption, Lowe's "promise" of school freedom to the Mennonites should not be seen as misleading.

Endnotes

¹J.J. Hildebrand, *Hildebrand's Zeittafel* (Winnipeg: by the author, 1945), pp. 242-243, 338.

²E.K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia* (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), pp. 48-49.

³John J. Bergen, "The Manitoba Mennonites and their schools from 1873-1924," M. Ed. term paper, University of Manitoba, 1950, pp. 75, 135-136. Abraham Friesen, "Emigration in Mennonite history," M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1960, pp. 27, 59.

⁴H.J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith* (Altona: Berghaler Mennonite Church, 1970), pp. 59, 83.

⁵Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 192-193.

⁶Dispatch, #60, Lord Loftus to Earl Granville, 3 April 1872. Public Archives of Canada, RG 2, 5, vol. 14, #883B.

⁷2 December 1872. PAC, C042, vol. 712, Canada #12062, microfilm #B-523.

⁸Lord Kimberley to Lord Dufferin, 7 December 1872. Ibid.

⁹13 December 1872. PAC, RG 2, 5, vol. 17, #13-C.

¹⁰Lord Kimberley to Lord Dufferin, 11 June 1873. Ibid., vol. 20, #313-C.

¹¹21 July 1873. PAC, C042, vol. 718, pp. 349-351, microfilm B-527.

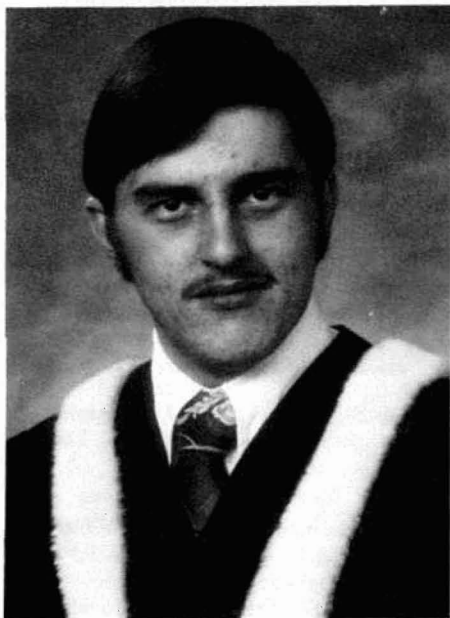
¹²PAC, P.C. #957. In a letter of 1 October 1873 to John A. Macdonald, Lord Dufferin says that he took this action in response to a dispatch from Lord Kimberley instructing him not to sanction further proceedings in respect to the Mennonite immigration. MG 26A, vol. 79, pp. 30931-30932.

¹³G.E. McCraney to J.P. Wall, 29 March 1916, CMCA microfilm #62.

¹⁴Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1978, pp. 245-246.

¹⁵Department of Agriculture memo, 3 August 1877. PAC, MG 29, B-13, Vol. 9; John Lowe to A.M. Burgess, 28 September 1882, RG 15, vol. 232, #3129 (2A).

Centre Receives Grant



Jake E. Peters, a graduate of Canadian Mennonite Bible College and the University of Manitoba, began work on a one-year grant project at the archives on September 3rd.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre recently received a grant of \$33,975.00 to research and publish a *Guide and Inventory of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives*. The one-year project grant comes from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Ottawa. The purpose of the *Inventory* is to provide the public with a better idea of the resources available at the archives. The book will introduce the researcher to the archives' records, photographs, maps, vertical file, periodicals, audio-visual materials and to the Mennonite Historical Library. It will also provide a detailed description of some 70 record groups and manuscript collections. This will allow persons to assess which materials will be useful to their research.

Jake E. Peters, a 1979 graduate of the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, and a 1981 graduate of the University of Manitoba has been hired for this one-year project. Mr. Peters has just completed two booklets for the Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach, and has earlier worked at the Ethno-Cultural Centre, Winnipeg, the University of Brandon and at the Transcona Museum, Winnipeg.

The project will start in September 1985 and will continue until August of 1986. Information on the publication details of the *Guide and Inventory* will follow later.

1918 Mennonite Home To Become Museum in B.C.

by J.V. Neufeld, Surrey, B.C.

The Nechako Valley Historical Association is establishing a heritage village in Vanderhoof, British Columbia. The village, known as the Community Museum Village and located in this town near Prince George and on the Nechako River in B.C.'s interior, will include a house built by an early Mennonite settler, John Reimer, in the Mennonite settlement which lay 12 miles west of Vanderhoof. The Association plans on using this home exclusively as a Mennonite museum.

The Mennonite settlement began when a group of about ten Mennonite families from Manitoba and Minnesota arrived in the district of Braeside during the spring of 1918. The location was well selected: the area was abundantly supplied with natural assistance—forests provided wood for building, fences and firewood; the countryside abounded with wild fruit; the soil was exceptionally productive for gardens and grasses; and the climate was agreeably moderate. When they arrived they looked into the future with hope and enthusiasm.

During that first year, many buildings were erected, much land cleared and made arable and many roads built. Also during that first year, many American Mennonites who had heard about this venture came to look over the area. A variety of reasons brought them to Vanderhoof—the entry of the United States into the First World War in 1917, years of crop failures at home, the

lure of better and cheaper land in B.C. and a pioneering spirit. One of the most enthusiastic of the American settlers was John Reimer who with his family of six came from Oklahoma. They and several other families arrived in Vanderhoof in early September of 1918. Reimer and another settler walked the ten mile distance to Braeside to look over the newly-established Mennonite settlement. They were anxious to get started in the young settlement and were quick to purchase their lots. Reimer hurriedly built a log building and a shed which provided temporary shelter. In early October they moved out of Vanderhoof and by October 25th, they had erected the two-storey, frame building which has now been allotted to the Community Museum Village.

Times proved difficult for the young Mennonite settlement—the economic situation was poor and their cash reserves were soon depleted; influenza claimed the lives of several as did accidental deaths. In the end, facing desperate financial uncertainty, many families, including the John Reimers, left in 1919 and moved back to the United States, this time to Oregon. The house built by the Reimers was later used as a school until the settlement completely disintegrated.

It was not until the spring of 1942 that Mennonites returned to the area. Thirty families from drought-stricken areas in Saskatchewan cleared and cultivated the area and a church of Mennonite background still exists in Vanderhoof today.

Donor Acknowledgement

The staff and committee members of the Mennonite Heritage Centre extend a heartfelt "Thank you" to those people who have sent us cash donations since December of 1984. Approximately 10% of the Centre's budget comes from private donations. Our goal for 1985 is \$3,500.00, of which \$350.00 has come in. We are very grateful to those people who already have supported our program in this manner. They are:

December, 1984

R.L. Ferguson, Midwest City, OK
David G. Friesen, Altona, MB
Clarence Hiebert, Hillsboro, KS
Dorothea & Walter Kampen, Winnipeg, MB
H.H. Krushel, Calgary, AB
David G. Rempel, Menlo Park, CA
O.J. Wall, Frazer, MT

January, 1985

Bruce Entz, Benton, KS

February

Henry H. Goertzen, Winnipeg, MB
Peter Penner, Winnipeg, MB

March

John L. Braun, Lowe Farm, MB
Peter Funk, Lucky Lake, SK
D.P. Heidebrecht, Sardis, B.C.
Maria Naeser, Niagara on the Lake, ON
Mary Unruh, Saskatoon, SK

April

William R. Braun, Winnipeg, MB
John G. Penner, Ste. Anne, MB

May

Marie H. Neufeld, Portage la Prairie, MB

July

Anonymous
T.D. Regehr, Saskatoon, SK

August

Anonymous

Education Kit Completed

In conjunction with the Manitoba Department of Education and the Secretary of State, the Mennonite Village Museum of Steinbach, Manitoba, has completed a social studies education kit. The kit, entitled "Settling Manitoba: The Mennonite Way", consists of a filmstrip with audio tape, a teacher's manual and a *Museum Guide*. The filmstrip was photographed at the Museum and tells the story of the early Mennonite settlers through the modern eyes of a young immigrant new to Canada herself. The kit can be ordered through the Department of Education, Winnipeg, or from the Resource Centre of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4.

Book Reviews

Stoesz, Dennis E. *The Story of Home Street Mennonite Church, 1957-1982*, Winnipeg, Manitoba: Home Street Mennonite Church, 1985. 111 p. \$14.95. Available from the church, 318 Home Street, Winnipeg, MB R3G 1X4.

Reviewed by Henry J. Gerbrandt, Winnipeg, MB.

The Story of the Home Street Mennonite Church focuses on the experiences of a group of rurally oriented believers who took seriously the mandate to plant a church in an urban setting. The author is highly sensitive to the struggles which ensued when these sincere migrants from rural southern Manitoba Mennonite communities set out to build a congregation in Winnipeg.

The Berghaler Mennonite Church of Winnipeg was to be and remain one of the many "Lokals" which made up the Berghaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba in the 1950s. Its rural proponents could not have envisioned the struggles which were to accompany this post-World War II dimension of the Mennonite move to the city.

The *Story* is divided into two sections. The first ten years are characterized by rural activities in an urban environment. The next fifteen years take the reader into that more serious urbanization phase. Characteristic of that rural mentality were the weddings, funerals, family gatherings back home in southern Manitoba. Even baptisms were at times rather experienced with the people back home. Those that were baptized in the city were baptized by their beloved Bishops Schulz or Pauls. And the members who had already become members of the church had the nostalgic common denominator of having been baptized by either Bishop Schulz or Bishop Pauls.

The struggle to be a congregation with its own pastor that began to understand the uniqueness of its urban needs was long and hard. The very rapid early growth with transfers from many rural and highly different congregations did not allow time to appreciate the new environment. For that time, the transfers created their own environment and that was rural.

The writer traces the congregation's positive handling of its recurring space problems which entitled a number of significant moves. Each new location is identified as a new dimension in the maturing process through which the congregation journeyed. The move to Home Street is portrayed as the coming of full age, as the gaining of independence, as the acceptance of the city, of the realization that they were now a congregation and no longer just a "Lokal" of a larger *Gemeinde*. The Berghaler Mennonite Church of Winnipeg and its rural

cloak had been left at Sherbrook and Ross and Home Street Mennonite Church emerged at Home Street. Stoesz implies that this name change was rather natural. He does not depict the struggle. He is careful to soften the magnitude of this name change by adding that the Berghaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba had just recently dissolved and that many other "Lokals" were making similar changes. The move to Home Street and subsequent name change also symbolized a maturing process in the congregation's yearning to be a church in society. Its long, often discouraging struggle to be a Christian community in society is depicted in what Stoesz says was its move from doing missions by saving souls to focusing heavily on service, to a new balanced stance of merging missions and service in an active redemptive mission in society.

The writer treats carefully the tensions that caused four deacons to transfer membership to other Winnipeg churches. He softens the hurts that must have been felt by leadership when so many people left the congregation by reminding the reader that many rural people seemed to have used the Winnipeg Berghaler Mennonite Church to find their way into the city and into Winnipeg church life. He also treats very charitably the delicate issue of disciplining absentee church members and also those who deviated from the norms expected from church members.

During the twenty-five years of its history, the congregation was led by four leading ministers who worked in various forms of ministerial groupings. It began with the typical Mennonite "Lehrdienst" which had so adequately served the Mennonite congregations through centuries, to the fully salaried pastor who worked by himself, to the new concept of the ministerial team. Though all of the four pastoral leaders made their unique contributions to the Berghaler Mennonite—Home Street Mennonite Church experience, Ernest Wiebe remains the undisputed founding leader and the guiding star through most of the *Story*.

The story is enhanced by the testimonials of former and present members. It is a tribute to the writer that testimonies of a number of deacons and members who left the church because of discords are included. The numerous charts of membership trends, growth, origin and destination of transfers are helpful. The financial charts show healthy participation and growth.

The Story of Home Street Mennonite Church merits reading. It may not be a great success story. It may also not present us with a flawless, storybook church-planting venture handled by professionals. As might be expected, it reveals many human foibles and illustrates rather well our Mennonite liability of quibbling over minor issues. However these negative manifestations are not uniquely Home Street. They are human and it is to the credit of the author that they are treated honestly, yet charitably. They are very much

part of our rural Mennonite response to be the Church of Christ in the urban environment. Dennis Stoesz has done well in giving us this story.

Dennis E. Stoesz is interim archivist of the Mennonite Heritage Centre. He received his education at CMBC and the University of Waterloo. He is married to Rhoda (née Lehman) and they live in Winnipeg.

Buchsweiler, Meir. *Volksdeutsche in der Ukraine am Vorabend und Beginn des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Ein Fall Doppelter Loyalität?* Gerlingen, F.R. Germany: Bleicher Verlag, 1984. 500 p. 58 D-Mark. Available from publisher.

Reviewed by Peter Rempel, Research and Administrative Assistant for MCC Europe.

This is the second major study of Germans in the Soviet Union to be published in the German language in the past few years. Whereas the earlier published book by Ingeborg Fleischauer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Deutschen in der Sowjet Union* (see review in *Mennonite Historian*, Volume IX, Number 3, September 1983) focused on the Third Reich's policies and treatment of Germans in the Soviet Union, the present book focuses on the attitude and reception by the Soviet Germans of the Nazi invasion and occupation. Both books provide crucial background for understanding the Mennonite experience in the Soviet Union during the Second World War.

The particular question which Buchsweiler addresses is the extent to which the Soviet Germans were subject to conflicting loyalties at the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union. How did Soviet Germans decide between loyalty to their German ethnicity or to their Soviet citizenship in a time and situation where these were claimed by opposing and at the same time oppressing forces? Buchsweiler concentrates his attention on the Soviet Germans living in the Ukraine which was occupied by the German army and does not deal with the situation of the so-called Volga Germans whose area was not occupied. However he does draw upon the situation of the Volga Germans before the outbreak of the war in order to elucidate the overall situation of the Soviet Germans. He also pursues the question of the causal and chronological relationship between the German invasion and the deportation of the Soviet Germans in the Volga region.

The present book was originally published in Hebrew and we can be grateful that the wealth of information and analysis is now available in German, a language which most students of the Mennonite experience in the Soviet Union understand.

There is much in this study which is sobering—the extreme persecution of the Soviet Germans by the Soviet state but also

their unquestioning acceptance of Nazi occupation and even in some instances collaboration in its barbarities toward their neighbors, especially Jews in the Ukraine.

The author, a Jew himself, concludes his survey of the relationship between Soviet Germans and Jews in the Nazi-occupied Ukraine as follows: "Almost all the indigenous Germans in the Ukraine knew what was being done to the Jews and knew this shortly after the conquest. Many received some of the wealth which was robbed from the Jews and at least several hundred (if not several thousand) participated actively in the extermination measures" (page 383). It is Buchsweiler's conviction that the relationship to the Jews at that time became the fundamental indicator of the moral level of a people. It seems that the Soviet Germans did not distinguish themselves in this respect but were rather preoccupied with their own "liberation" after years of ethnic and religious discrimination.

The basic thesis of the book is stated as follows: "Most of them (the Soviet Germans in the Ukraine) in 1941 had no reason to have a special sympathy toward the Soviet regime because it had brought them much suffering since 1917, in some aspects as much as other minorities and in other aspects even more." The author concludes that despite this experience, the indigenous Germans were not active to any noteworthy extent as a fifth column behind the Soviet-German front, even though this was the formal reason given for their deportation from their settlements. This was due not so much to a rejection in principle of such activities by the Soviet Germans as to the terror and isolation under which they lived. After the German conquest, the overwhelming majority of the Soviet Germans worked to various extents with the occupation force, ranging from passive cooperation to participation in war crimes.

Special mention is made of Mennonites at several points, drawing upon the study by Frank Epp on sympathies for National Socialism among Canadian Mennonites in the 1930's but more directly drawing upon studies of Soviet Mennonites by Adolf Ehrt, John B. Toews, and Frank Epp as well as a Soviet author named Reinmarus which Buchsweiler claims is a pseudonym for David Penner. Buchsweiler notes especially the cohesiveness and the introversion of the Mennonites which made them more resistant to Soviet efforts to assimilate them socially and ideologically but also concentrated their charity upon themselves and excluded assistance to their compatriots such as Jews who were suffering under the Nazi occupation.

A primary concern of the author is to discern a moral relationship between the sympathies of the Soviet Germans toward the Nazi occupation and its policies, in particular its policies toward the Jews and the policy

of the Soviet government toward them, in particular the deportation eastward and the destruction of their settlements. This is an uncomfortable question for a Mennonite reader and we may not appreciate the implicit questioning of Mennonite claims of moral and political innocence. In the year of

the 40th anniversary of the end of WWII we have an obligation to inform ourselves of this background to the Mennonite experience in the Soviet Union and reflect on our role and involvement in the cruelty and suffering it brought to ourselves and all those around us.

Springfield School Reunites for Weekend

by Marlin Jeschke, Goshen College, Indiana

Nostalgia flowed thick as Rogers Golden Syrup at a Springfield School reunion held over the 1985 Canada Day weekend at Waldheim, Saskatchewan. Refreshments following one meeting were in fact served out of the old-style syrup pails in memory of their use as lunch pails in former school days.

The reunion began with a Saturday evening ice-cream social in the Waldheim park, continued under cloudless skies with a Sunday morning service in the park grandstand and an afternoon unveiling of a memorial cairn out in the country to mark the old site of the school. The reunion further continued with a Sunday evening program of reminiscences in the Waldheim school gymnasium, and concluded with brunch and a farewell service Monday forenoon.

The Springfield reunion and erection of a historic marker was supported by a grant from the Saskatchewan Culture and Recreation Heritage Conservation Division. Erecting an historic marker is necessarily a singular event and for this reason the commemoration merited--and received--excellent attendance. Former Springfielders returned from Canada's five most Western provinces as well as from numerous U.S. states. Chairman of the reunion committee was William Ratzlaff, now retired, former minister and more recently administrator of Mennonite Trust, Waldheim.

Springfield School No. 535 began eight miles northeast of Waldheim in 1900. In 1920 it was moved a mile south into a new square box-style building, the kind at that time characteristic of Saskatchewan's one-room prairie schools. In 1960, its doors were closed and students were bused to the Waldheim town school. Both old buildings are still in existence, however, serving as tool sheds on area farms. After the dedication of the cairn on Sunday afternoon, many former students, cameras in hand, made the pilgrimage to see the old buildings and to be stirred by additional memories and emotions.

The Springfield School district covered most of the central geographical area of the Salem Krimmer (formerly) Mennonite Brethren Church. Respective church and

school functions therefore overlapped and reinforced each other, creating powerful community bonds, so much so, in fact, that Salem's June 30 Sunday morning worship was canceled in favour of an open-air reunion service, even though the church was moved to the town of Waldheim several decades ago and no longer stands in the old Springfield district. For this reason also celebrating Springfielders hospitably indulged old non-Springfield interloper friends.

Over the years, the church and school produced several dozen ministers and missionaries. The Sunday morning worship and Saturday evening program offered evidence of the talent generated by this school-church combination--songs, recitals, skits, speeches. For example, all eight children of Agnes and H. M. Epp, missionary to China and later elder of the Salem Church, went into the ministry, counting former Bethany Bible schoolteacher and now long-time Christian writer Margaret Epp. At the Sunday evening program Margaret offered an imaginative poetic--and genuinely thorough--review of "Where Have All the Springfielders Gone?"

Heppner, Ratzlaff, Epp, Schmidt, Goossen, Unruh, Dirks, Gliege, Driedger, Grunau, Strobel, Schultz, Rempel, Jeschke, Harder are some of the names represented by the six decades of pupils who went through Springfield. Offering brief remarks at the cairn unveiling was the Right Honourable Gordon Dirks, Minister of Welfare for the Province of Saskatchewan, son of former Springfielders Menno and Verna Schmidt Dirks and grandson of one of the earliest pupils (1902), Edwin T. Schmidt. Edwin Schmidt later served as teacher at Springfield for several years and also as minister of the Salem Church for an entire generation. He retired in Saskatoon and died there in 1978, a member of the M.B. church.

In conjunction with the Springfield School reunion, the descendants of the Tobias and Helena (Unruh) Schmidt family also held a family reunion. A 92-page genealogy compiled by Wilma Schmidt of Dalmeny and Saskatoon was prepared for this occasion.



Ian E. Wilson (right), Provincial Archivist of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, in conversation with other participants at the annual sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, held in early July in Regina. Wilson led a part of the workshop sponsored by the History/Archives Committee. (Courtesy Conference of Mennonites in Canada)

History Writing as a Healing Ministry: Workshop Held in Regina

by Dennis Stoesz, MHC Staff

"Writing history is one kind of ministry in the church." This was the statement made by Peter D. Zacharias (Blumenort Mennonite Church, Manitoba) on the process of writing congregational histories in a workshop sponsored by the History-Archives committee during the annual sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada in Regina in early July. The workshop had two foci: 1) the huge array and variety of records and materials available at an archives; and 2) the process of writing congregational histories.

The two-hour workshop began with Saskatchewan archivist Ruth Dyck Wilson's presentation on Mennonite source material available at the Saskatchewan Archives Board in Regina and Saskatoon. She listed such diverse records as telephone books, school records, personal and business papers, petitions, immigration records, newspapers, maps, photographs and so on. Ian E. Wilson, provincial archivist for Saskatchewan, pointed out the importance of archives for our culture. The Saskatchewan Archives Board is in a unique situation in that as an independent corporation, it can walk between and among both government and private organizations and individuals. The Wilsons then gave the group a tour of the spacious facilities of the Saskatchewan Archives building located at 3303 Hillsdale Street in Regina.

The second hour of the workshop focused more directly on the experiences of several people who had been involved with writing congregational histories. Peter

Zacharias' discussion of the treatment of sensitive issues in any published history was significant for many of the participants. He stressed that looking at past conflicts can open up new ways of healing us in the present. John Bergen of the First Mennonite Church in Edmonton spoke about the committee approach to congregational history writing; this method allows many interpretations to be represented. John Friesen of the Canadian Mennonite Bible College discussed various approaches to the writing of such a history--analytical or reminiscent; single author or committee; the context within the larger society, etc.

The evening concluded with a group discussion on dealing with sensitive material. Twenty persons from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta attended the workshop.

New Books in Print

Bestvater, John, et al, eds. *The Family of Abram P. Martens: 1875-1985*. Steinbach, MB: Abram P. Martens Family Book Editorial Committee, 1984. 624p. Available from publisher, P.O. Box 430, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0.

Braun, Helena, ed. *The Klassen Clan from Kaump to Canada*. Sardis, B.C.: the editor, 1984. 184p. Available from publisher.

Buchseiler, Meir. "German Rainoy and their newspapers, 1927-1941." Jerusalem:

Congregational Historians Meet in Regina

by Dennis Stoesz, MHC Staff

Ten congregational historians of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada met during the annual sessions of that body to discuss their work and role within the congregation. They were: Esther Patkau of First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon; Arnold Schroeder of Grace Mennonite Church in Regina; Kay Funk of Tiefengrund Rosenort Church, Laird; Nick and Tina Harder of Pleasant Point Mennonite Church, Dundurn; Erika Enns of Eyebrow Mennonite Church; John and Justine Warkentin of Zion Mennonite in Swift Current; D. G. Friesen of Altona Berghaler; and Dennis Stoesz of Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and of the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

The meeting began with individuals reporting on their work as historians in their respective congregations: involvement in the writing of congregational and conference organizational histories, collection and mailing of bulletins to the archives of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, editing of church newsletters, gathering church records and so on.

Dennis Stoesz also led a discussion on the role of the historian within the congregation. Discussion focused on the sending of bulletins to the Heritage Centre. The decision was made to send the bulletins annually to the archives as opposed to weekly, monthly or semi-annually. It was felt that this would not only save postage costs but also simplify matters for the historians and for the archives.

Our Mistake

In our last issue (XI, 2, 1985), we incorrectly identified the woman in the photograph on page five, Mrs. Abraham Lepp, as the mother-in-law of Mrs. Olga Lepp. The caption should have stated that Mrs. Abr. Lepp was the sister-in-law of Mrs. Olga Lepp's parents-in-law, Johann and Justine (Niebuhr) Lepp. Our apologies for the mistake.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1984. 37p.

Available from author, Kibbutz Beeri, Post-Negev, Israel 85135.

Butterfield, David K. & Edward M. Ledohowski. *Architectural Heritage: The MSTW Planning District*. Winnipeg, MB: Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources Branch, Province of Manitoba, 1984. 229p. Available from Dept. of Cultural Affairs & Historical Resources, 3rd Floor, 177 Lombard Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3B 0W5.

Denlinger, Steven L. *Glimpses Past: Annotations of Selected Social and Cultural History Material in the Mennonite Herald of Truth, Gospel Witness, and the early Gospel Herald*. Lancaster, PA: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1985. 155p. Available from the publisher, 2215 Millstream Rd., Lancaster, PA 17602-1499, USA.

Epp, J. J. *Historical Sketch of our Mennonite People's Trek from Russia to Canada and Early Development in the New Land*. Rosthern, SK: Saskatchewan Valley News, 1985. 12p. Available from publisher, P.O. Box 10, Rosthern, SK S0K 3R0.

Esch, Henry D., ed. *The Mennonites in Arizona*. Phoenix, AZ: by the editor, 1985. 200p. Available for US \$9.95 & \$2.00 postage from editor, 8112 N. 7th St., Phoenix, AZ 85020, USA.

Exploring Local History in Saskatchewan. Regina & Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1985. (No. 3 in Saskatchewan Archives Reference Series.) 44p. Available from publisher, University of Regina, Regina, SK S4S 0A2.

Historical Directory of Saskatchewan Newspapers, 1878-1983. Regina & Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1984. (No. 4 in Saskatchewan Archives Reference Series.) 87p. Available from publisher, University of Regina, Regina, SK S4S 0A2.

Memories: Sixty Years of Mennonite Life in Essex and Kent Counties, 1925-1985. Leamington, ON, 1985. 78p. Available for \$5.00 from Peter A. Epp, 57 Danforth Ave., Leamington, ON N8H 2P8.

Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. *Celebrating Our First Twenty Years: 1965-1985*. Toronto, ON: Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 1985. n.p. Available from publisher, 43 Queen's Park Cresc. E., Toronto, ON M5S 2C3.

Patchwork of Memories. [History of Wymark, SK and surrounding districts.] Wymark, SK: Wymark & District History Book Committee, 1985. 1088p. Available from publishers.

Plett, Delbert F. *The Golden years: The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Russia (1812-1849)*. Steinbach, MB; D.F.P. Publications, 1985. 335p. Available for \$29.95 from publisher, P.O. Box 669, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0.

Schroeder, David, ed. *Family Record: Heinrich Schroeder and Maria Kehler*. Winnipeg, MB, 1984. n.p. Available from editor, 745 Coventry Rd., Winnipeg, MB R3R 1B8.

Stupnikoff, Sam George. *Historical Saga of the Carlton Region, 1797-1920*. Blaine Lake, SK: Sam G. Stupnikoff, 1985. 113p. Available from the publisher, P.O. Box 96, Blaine Lake, SK S0J 0J0.

Diary . . . Jottings from the Archives

by Dennis Stoesz, MHC Staff

Congregations

Two Saskatchewan congregations have recently inquired about having their church records microfilmed: Herbert and Eigenheim. Of the Saskatchewan churches to date, the archives has microfilmed the Osler and Langham congregational records and those of the Nordheimer Gemeinde. The microfilming of Conference of Mennonites in Canada congregations' records is an ongoing project of the archives.

It was enjoyable meeting with and hearing from nine congregational historians at the Conference sessions in Regina, most of whom were from Saskatchewan churches. The reports of the various kinds of work being done at the congregational level were encouraging. I feel we need more of these meetings to help support each other in caring for records and in telling the story within those records.

Several interesting facts came to light at this meeting. It was mentioned that the Zion Mennonite Church in Swift Current was originally part of the Emmaus Gemeinde which had several meeting places. Zion became independent around 1960. The historian of the Eyebrow-Tugaske church related that the rural church building has been moved to Eyebrow and is presently being used by senior citizens of the town. Mention was also made of Tiefengrund's plans to celebrate its 75th anniversary at a fall church service. They have also hired their first minister.

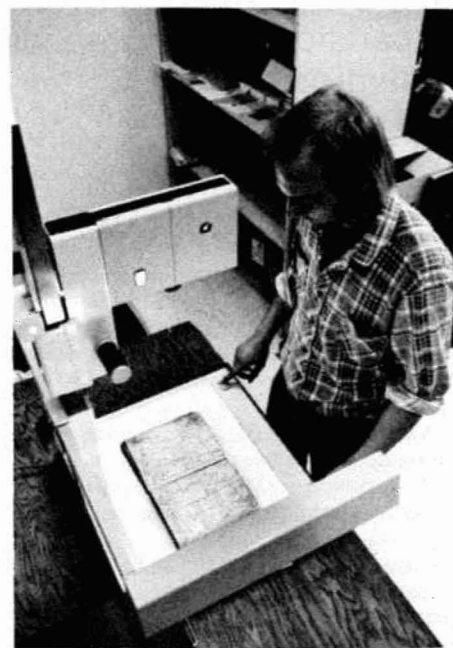
Research

Most of the researchers dropping in at the archives during the past three months have been working on genealogical and family studies. Names that have been researched are: Albrecht, Bergen, Bock, Buhler, Derksen, Dick, Enns, Esau, Falk, Funk, Goerzen, Grunau, Guenther, Harder, Martens, Neufeldt, Neustaedter, Reimer, Schellenberg, Schmidt, Schroeder, Thiessen, Voth, Wall and Wiebe.

Other areas of research included the Gretina custom records, the *Selbstschutz* in Russia, the great trek from the Soviet Union to Germany in the 1940s, the Arkadak settlement in Russia, Native concerns, and background information on shunning. Research has also been done using the Spencer and Blumenfeld public school registers in preparation for school reunions and someone was searching for the score of the folksong "Der Zigeunerbube im Norden".

Translation Work

Recently a request came in for some translation work to be done of the book by



Microfilming the congregational records of CMC churches is an important part of the work of the Heritage Centre. Two Saskatchewan churches recently requested information on having their materials filmed (see Diary below). Pictured here is Glenn Penner, a former staff person at the archives, in the process of microfilming.

F. D. Guenther, *Meine Erlebnisse in Mexiko und Canada*, 1957, 99 pages. The book is typewritten in Gothic letters. If anyone is interested, please contact Tena Boklage, 740 School Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2Y 0S5, Ph. (204) 832-5967.

Visitors

There have been many visitors to the Heritage Centre these past several months. They have included a tour group from Pennsylvania, tourists from nearly every Canadian province and several American states, as well as guests from the Netherlands and several from the Federal Republic of Germany.

Centre's Hours

During the summer months, the archives has been open to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. With the return of autumn, the hours will revert back to their normal schedule, that is, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Also, the archives will continue the practice, begun in spring of this year, of regularly having the archives open on Monday evenings from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. It is hoped that this will make the Centre more accessible to those researchers who cannot use the archives during daytime office hours. It is, however, advisable to call before coming in on any given Monday evening to confirm that it will be open.

Expansion And Bureaucracy Mark Summer Activities of MMHS

by Dennis Stoesz,
Publicity Committee, MMHS

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society is expanding. That is the impression left by such large projects as the recently erected monument at the Mennonite museum, the now completed composer's competition, the newly released Volume I of Arnold Dyck's *Werke*, and the large \$50,000 budget for 1985.

A second look at the Society leaves one in amazement when one sees 67 persons sitting on 13 committees. (Many double or triple up on various committees.) One is not always sure who is doing what.

Hopefully all this activity and burgeoning bureaucracy is heading toward a meaningful interaction with Mennonite history.

Mennonite Monument

A monument in memory of Mennonite victims of violence during the period since 1914, particularly in Eastern Europe and Siberia, was unveiled on Sunday, July 28, 1985, at the Mennonite Village Museum at Steinbach, Manitoba. The monument was planned, designed and erected by a special committee authorized by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

The monument, a hexagonal column on a rectangular pedestal, is constructed of Manitoba tyndall stone, construction steel and cement, and has a height of six metres (20 feet). The large pedestal holds two bronze plaques. The front plaque consists of a relief sculpture by Mrs. Elfriede Bergen, a Winnipeg artist, depicting the tragedy of separated families when the husbands and fathers are sent to forced-labour camps. The rear plaque contains a brief summary of the history of the suffering of Mennonites in the period indicated above. Five of the six smaller plaques on the faces of the column are dedicated to identifiable groups of people affected during this period. The sixth one is dedicated to peace and reconciliation.

The monument was unveiled by Anita Priess and Maria Regehr, both of whom lost family members during this period. The program was chaired by Gerhard Ens. The Hon. Jake Epp and the Hon. Vic. Schroeder brought greetings from the federal and provincial governments respectively. Speakers at the proceedings were Dr. Gerhard Lohrenz and Dr. George K. Epp. A particularly moving part of the service was a brief talk by Hans Epp, Espelkamp, West Germany, who is one of the few survivors of the forced-labour camps.

The monument was erected at a total cost of approximately \$30,000 all of which has been raised by voluntary contributions. Donations came from all parts of Canada, U.S.A., and the Federal Republic of

Germany.

Designer and contractor for the project was Otto Klassen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Composers' Competition

The winners of the composers' competition were Leonard J. Enns (first prize) from Waterloo, Ontario, for his vocal piece entitled "Prayer for Peace," Harris J. Loewen (second prize) of Coralville, Iowa, for his vocal piece "Jubilee Canticle," and Leonard J. Enns (second prize) for his instrumental piece "Duo for oboe and piano" which incorporates the tune "So nimm denn meine Hände." There was no first prize awarded for the instrumental category. A total of 10 entries were made to the competition, which called for instrumental works based on traditional Mennonite tunes and choral works based on historic Anabaptist/Mennonite themes.

Arnold Dyck Project

The first volume of the *Collected Works of Arnold Dyck* has been released and can be ordered from the Mennonite Book Club office, 203-818 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 0N4. It sells for \$29.95.

Budget

A budget of \$49,250 was approved at the MMHS board meeting of May 4. A large portion of this included the wholly self-generated budget item of \$30,000 raised by the Monument Committee. The second



This monument was unveiled and dedicated on July 28, 1985 at the Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba, in memory of Mennonite victims of violence from 1914 to the present, particularly in Eastern Europe and Siberia. (Courtesy Derksen Printers)

largest budget item of \$6,500 will be used by the Research, Scholarship and Publication Committee to continue its work on the Arnold Dyck project.

Endowment Fund

An endowment fund of MMHS has recently been established under the auspices of the Mennonite Foundation of Canada. The first donation of \$1,000 to this fund was made by Delbert F. and Doreen M. Plett of Steinbach, Manitoba. The annual income of this sum is to be given as an award to encourage the writing and publishing of Mennonite family history. The Genealogy and Family History Committee is to administer the award(s).

The larger budget, a recent fund drive, and the establishment of an endowment fund shows an increased concern for finances and is reflected in the large six-member Finance Committee.

Fall Programs

The program committee has been discussing doing several regional fall programs, one in the Altona area and the other in Winnipeg in connection with the Arnold Dyck publication project.

Genealogy And Family History

Collecting family history data from tombstones has continued in the Steinbach area under the direction of Henry Fast, a teacher at Steinbach Bible College and a member of the MMHS Genealogy and Family History Committee. This work was begun by Historic Sites and Monuments Committee under the direction of Herman Rempel. With the restructuring of committees, this task fell to the Family History Committee.

John Dyck, another member of this committee, reports that several regional seminars will be planned this fall on various genealogical themes. Last year's October seminar was very successful. The need is for people to help plan these programs.

Book Club

Al Reimer from the Mennonite Book Club reported that membership in the Club stands at 120 with sales over \$4,000. Susan Froese is the manager of the club.

The newly formed Education and Resources Committee will begin its work this fall. The Inter-Mennonite Faith and Unity Committee has not yet become active. At present membership in the Society stands at 135. The next board meeting is scheduled to take place in Altona on September 7.

Hopefully unity and purpose will reign over the impressions of expansion and amazement left by the activities of this organization.

This page was paid for by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society