

Mennonite Historian



Volume XI, Number 4
December 1985

Echo=Verlag - the first Mennonite Book Club in Canada

by Henry Tessman, Winnipeg, Manitoba



On July 3rd, 1944, the former students of the Chortitzer Zentralschule held a reunion in Winnipeg. Fifty-three alumni attended and decided then to commemorate the centenary of their school by establishing a Mennonite historical publishing house and book club. From left to right, they were:

First Row: Abram Wiebe, Winnipeg; J. H. Wiebe, Morris, Man.; Johann Vogt, Steinbach, Man.; G. W. Sawatzky, Burnaby, B.C.; Pet. Lehn, Winnipeg.

Second Row: Heinrich Riediger, Winnipeg; Jacob Friesen, Holland, Man.; W. J. Peters, Steinbach, Man.; C. H. Plenert, Winnipeg; D. H. Epp, Rosthern, Sask.; Anna Peters (nee Heese), Winnipeg; A. K. Peters, Winnipeg; B. J. Schellenberg, Winnipeg; P. J. Reimer, Steinbach, Man.

Third Row: J. G. Rempel, Rosthern, Sask.; P. A. Rempel, Blumenort, Man.; J. P. Classen, Winnipeg; W. J. Wiens, Dundurn, Sask.; J. P. Schroeder, Morris, Man.; F. F. Epp, Hanley, Sask.; Johann Braun, Headingley, Man.; J. J. Banmann, Prairie Rose, Man.; G. W. Zacharias, Clavet, Sask.

Fourth Row: Peter Vogt, Steinbach, Man.; D. Kasdorf, High Bluff, Man.; Franz J. Braun, Arnaud, Man.; W. Martens, Winnipeg; Abram Vogt, Steinbach, Man.; P. B. Krahn, Altona, Man.; G. S. Derksen, Steinbach, Man.; J. H. Unger, Rush Lake, Sask.; D. Toews, Winnipeg; J. J. Wieler, Winnipeg.

Fifth Row: J. P. Neufeld, Winnipeg; G. H. Kasper, Grunthal, Man.; P. A. Hamm, Aberdeen, Sask.; Heinrich H. Isaak, Winnipeg; P. J. Penner, Winnipeg; A. Walde, Kindersley, Sask.; Arnold Dyck, Steinbach, Man.; D. Huebert, Winnipeg; F. H. Goerzen, Miami, Man.; Heinrich D. Dyck, Horndean, Man.

Sixth Row: G. G. H. Ens, Reinland, Man.; A. Martens, Glenbush, Sask.; A. P. Bueckert, Plum Coulee, Man.; W. H. Goerzen, Blumenort, Man.; P. H. Krahn, Niverville, Man.; H. J. Bergen, Brunkild, Man.; C. J. Warkentin, Herschel, Sask.; J. J. Sawatzky, Carstairs, Alta. (Courtesy of Warte-Jahrbuch 1944)

Echo=Verlag was founded on July 3, 1944, by alumni of the Chortitz **Zentralschule** at a reunion commemorating the school's centenary. The purpose of the publishing club was to maintain ties with former students, preserve the history of Mennonite life in Russia, as well as to commemorate the school.

As the 42nd annual sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada were to be held in Winnipeg in 1944, it was decided by Dietrich H. Epp, Rosthern, editor of **Der Bote**, and Arnold Dyck, Steinbach, beekeeper and author to hold a long-planned reunion of the **Zentralschule** alumni. Fifty-three former students attended. To commemorate the centenary of the school the former students resolved to create a memorial. At this time Arnold Dyck proposed the establishment of a Mennonite historical publishing house and book club. Unanimously the proposal was accepted, following which D. H. Epp, a former teacher at the school, was elected as president and Arnold Dyck appointed the secretary.

The proceedings of the reunion, as noted in Arnold Dyck's booklet entitled **Die ehemaligen Schüler der Chortitzer Zentralschule in Kanada**, indicate that initial funding of the organization came from 52 alumni each contributing a minimum of two dollars. After starting, the project fell into ranks of the general membership and membership was opened to all interested persons. Members paid a yearly subscription rate of one dollar; in return the member received the yearly publication of **Echo=Verlag**. In 1947 there were 414 members, which is thought to be the largest it ever was, although details of membership beyond 1947 are not available. Many memberships were actually a co-operative effort of a group who shared one membership. Despite the low membership, it should be noted the publications of the **Verlag** were widely read.

All books published by **Echo=Verlag** were authored by members. Some of the material had been written by an earlier generation but never published. These works were redone by **Echo** members. Authors did not receive royalty payments. Compensation for material published was usually small and consisted of a one-time payment plus perhaps a few free copies of the book. For example, author C. P. Toews was paid forty dollars for his **Die Tereker Ansiedlung**. It



Echo = Verlag's historical series included fourteen titles. Some (see below) are still available for purchase from the Heritage Centre. Note the use of the Verlag logo on the front cover of some of these books. (Photo by Brenda Suderman).

was the first book of a series of fourteen monographs dealing with aspects of Mennonite history in Russia:

Historische Schriftenreihe des Echo = Verlags

Toews, C. P., **Die Tereker Ansiedlung. Mennonitische Kolonie im Vorderkaukasus.** 1945. 73p.

Epp, David H. **Johann Cornies. Züge aus seinem Leben und Wirken.** 1946. (A reprint of the 1909 edition published by the *Botschafter* in Jeksterinoslaw.) 147p.

Loewen, A. & A. Friesen. **Die Flucht über den Amur.** 1946. 66p.

Lohrenz, G. **Sagradowka. Die Geschichte einer mennonitischen Ansiedlung im Süden Russlands.** 1947. 115p.

Bartsch, F. **Unser Auszug nach Mittelasien.** 1948. (A reprint of the 1907 edition published by J. J. Braun in Halbstadt, with an appendix by Alexander Rempel.) 91p.

Dyck, Johann J. & W. E. Surukin. **Am Trakt. Eine mennonitische Kolonie im mittleren Wolgagebiet.** 1948. 77p.

Goerz, H. **Die Molotschnaer Ansiedlung.** 1950/51. 211p.

Epp, David H. & Nikolai Regehr. **Heinrich Heese. Johann Phillip Wiebe. Zwei Vordermänner des südrussländischen Mennonitentums.** 1952. 50p.

Toews, C. P. & Heinrich Friesen. **Die Kubaner Ansiedlung.** 1953. 74p.

Goerz, H. **Memrik. Eine mennonitische Kolonie in Russland.** 1954. 83p.

Sawatzky, Heinrich. **Templer mennonitischer Herkunft.** 1955. 69p.

Wiens, Peter & Peter Klassen. **Jubiläumsschrift zum 25. jährigen Bestehen der Kolonie Fernheim, Chaco = Paraguay.** 1956. 72p.

Goerz, H. **Die mennonitischen Siedlungen der Krim.** 1957. 71p.

Peters, Victor, ed. **Zwei Dokumente. Quellen zum Geschichtsstudium der Mennoniten in Russland.** 1965. 58p.

Dyck's intention, as the Dyck-Epp correspondence² reveals, was for **Echo = Verlag** to serve not only as a Mennonite historical publishing house, but also to stimulate writing in other areas of interest to the Mennonite people. In this he was less successful. In addition to the historical series listed above, **Echo = Verlag** published only three other titles: the proceedings of the 1944 alumni reunion together with an address list of over three hundred former students of Chortitza living in Canada, under the title **Die ehemaligen Schüler der Chortitzer Zentralschule in Canada** (1944, 41p.); Peter Klaassen's **Bei uns im alten Russland** (1959, 96p.) and Victor Peters' **Nestor Machno: das Leben eines Anarchisten** (1969, 139p.; English edition 1970, 133p.). **Echo = Verlag** was actually already defunct when the latter, copyrighted by Echo Books, was published.

All of the books were published in German, in a 9" x 6" paperback format, in Gothic print, and were stamped with the **Echo** logo, featuring a picture of the old Chortitza oak tree. The inscription read: "Echo Verlag 1943. Gegründet Von Dem Ehemal. Schülern Der Chortitzer Zentralschule." "Echo" is an acronym from "ehemalige Schüler der Chortitzer".

It was difficult for Dyck to obtain publishable material from the membership. The Dyck-Epp letters reveal their consternation regarding the unmotivated attitude that prevailed within the membership. One can speculate that this may have been a reason for the demise of **Echo**, namely that few members were able and willing to write.

The concern of **Echo = Verlag** to maintain the history of Mennonite life in Russia was closely tied to the Mennonite Church and people in general. Involved in **Echo's** operation as authors or as administrators were many prominent Mennonite leaders. Despite such features, **Echo** was never supported by a church or by church conferences.

During its existence the organizational structure of **Echo** did not change. D. H. Epp was the only president and Arnold Dyck the only secretary. The council or board of direc-

tors that was to assist in the managerial work never came to be. The unwillingness of candidates to serve in such a capacity resulted in a vacant board.

Without much financial and leadership support, Arnold Dyck assumed **Echo** on his own. From his Steinbach and later Winnipeg locations, Dyck procured manuscripts, published and distributed them. Often, as his meticulous bookkeeping shows, Dyck underwrote the costs of publishing books when funds from the membership dues were not sufficient. With no compensation, Dyck devoted a large part of his time to this cause close to his heart.

Central to the lapse of **Echo = Verlag** was the withdrawal of Arnold Dyck. His family lived in Germany and Dyck spent much time there. Consequently he could not maintain the operation of **Echo = Verlag**.

To record the history of life in Russia brought out the special place which the Mennonite faith had for Arnold Dyck. **Echo = Verlag** was a way through which this could be expressed. **Echo = Verlag** is an expression of Arnold Dyck's uncompromising vitality and issues a challenge to us to maintain a similar vitality in our beliefs.

Notes

¹The list of founding members of the **Verlag** was published in *Der Bote*, October 4, 1944.

²Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Dietrich H. Epp Papers, Vol. 1106. Other correspondence and clippings regarding **Echo = Verlag** are found in the D. W. Friesen collection.



Echo = Verlag Books Available from MHC

Some copies of the 14 titles published by **Echo = Verlag** are still available for purchase from the Heritage Centre as are a few copies of Arnold Dyck's works. If ordering, please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery and do not include payment. We will bill you for the books plus postage.

will bill you for the books plus postage.
Dyck, Arnold. **Koop enn Bua faore nao**
Toronto. Vol. II, 1949, 103p. pb. \$3.00.

_____. **Verloren in der Steppe**. Vols.
II & III. 1945 & 1946. 102p. pb. \$3.00 ea.

_____. **Warte Jahrbuch**. 1944. 121p.
pb. \$3.00.

_____. **Wellkoam op'e Forstei**. 1950.
65p. pb. \$3.00.

Dyck, Johann J. & W. E. Surukin. **Am**
Trakt. Eine mennonitische Kolonie im
mitleren Wolgagebiet. 1948. 77p. pb.
\$3.00.

Epp, David H. & Nikolai Regehr. **Heinrich**
Heese. Johann Phillip Wiebe. Zwei
Vordermänner des südrussländischen
Mennonitentums. 1952. 50p. \$3.00.

Epp, David H. **Johann Cornies. Züge aus**
seinem Leben und Wirken. 1946. 147p.
pb. \$3.00.

Toews, C. P. & Heinrich Friesen. **Die**
Kubaner Ansiedlung. 1953. 74p. pb.
\$3.00.

New column for Mennonite Historian

With the article "The School Records Collection of the Mennonite Heritage Centre" (this page), we are beginning a new series designed to feature some of the many collections of the Heritage Centre. It is hoped that this column will not only provide our readers with more detail about the collections deposited here and make them easier to use, but will also identify some collections which are as yet relatively unknown to most researchers. If you have any specific questions about any of the collection held at the Centre, please do write us. We will do our best to help with your request.

New family history book available

Abraham and Johanna Funk Family Album, 228 pages, 517 pictures available for \$30.00 plus postage from Sylvia Regier, P.O. Box 208, Laird, Saskatchewan S0K 2H0 (Tel. 306-223-4324). Abraham and Johanna (nee Kliever) and their family came from West Prussia in 1903 and settled in Tiefengrund, Saskatchewan, near Laird.



Some of the many school attendance registers deposited by various Manitoba School Divisions at the Heritage Centre.
(Photo by Dennis Stoesz)

The School Records Collections of the Mennonite Heritage Centre

by Beverly Suderman, MHC Staff

The records of public schools form an important part of the holdings of the Heritage Centre. Although records of private Mennonite schools such as Elim Bible School in Altona, Manitoba or the Mennonite Collegiate Institute of Gretna, Manitoba are deposited here, a private institution such as ours is an unlikely place for public school records. And yet, there they sit, over 2000 attendance registers, cash books and minute books from schools of southern and south-eastern Manitoba. By and large, the records originate from those areas which were and are heavily populated by Mennonites, which created Mennonite "semi-private" schools of public schools. Many of the schools employed Mennonite teachers as well and the records read like Mennonite family directories.

Shortly before the archives moved into its new building in 1979, records from the Garden Valley, Hanover and Rhineland School Divisions, some dating as far back as 1893, were brought to the archives. These have been organized alphabetically by school name, chronologically within each set of school records and lists have been made of which years are represented for each school.

The records hold much interesting and valuable information for many types of researchers: community historians can check to see which families lived where and when; information regarding the economic status of a community is reflected in the salaries of the teachers; the educational qualifications of the teachers employed in these divisions are of interest to those researching the changing views of education among the Mennonites. And of course, these records are always of interest to those who attended the schools themselves. Sometimes the attendance registers are used in an effort to identify all former students of a particular school

and thus to prepare for a reunion or an anniversary celebration. At other times, the records are needed for legal purposes, that is, to verify the spelling of a name or a birth-date. Some of the older registers include weekly lesson plans and brief outlines of subjects taught and a very few even include grades received — all very interesting information. The appearance of the material alone suggests interesting stories. The covers of some registers are marked by the crayoned scrawl of a youthful scholar; other books are water-stained or burned at the edges, bearing mute testimony to the floods and stove fires which were not uncommon on the Prairies.

Although the above-mentioned divisions now deposit their registers here on a regular basis, the beginnings of that process were somewhat more complicated. When, in the 1960s, many school districts consolidated to form divisions, many of the small one-room country schools closed their doors and sent their pupils to the "town" school. Closing down a school also meant closing financial records and making decisions regarding all the records generated by a school. In many cases, the trustees on the school board at the time of dissolution were the recipients of the records. But eventually, more permanent decisions had to be made regarding their disposal. Some of the schools gave their records to the new division offices and these offices contacted the archives while some schools contacted us directly. Some records are still in attics or storage sheds and the archives of course would be interested in ensuring that these records not be destroyed.

The school records collection is an important part of the holdings of the Mennonite Heritage Centre. As is the case with all our holdings, these records cannot be borrowed but they are available for use at the Centre.

Mennonite Periodicals of Canada

Part of the ongoing work of the Heritage Centre is the collection of current Mennonite periodicals. Keeping up with the many Mennonite periodicals now being published is sometimes a difficult and rather confusing task. Therefore we were delighted to see that the Mennonite Bicentennial Commission compiled and distributed the following list of current Mennonite periodicals, making our task of keeping track of them just a little easier.

Der Bote

Gerhard Ens, editor
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4
Phone: 204-888-6781
\$13.00 per year

Der Bote is the weekly German-language organ of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

Bote des Heils

John G. Penner, editor
R.R.1, Box 92
Ste. Anne, Manitoba R0A 1R0
Subscription rate: Donation
Bote des Heils published quarterly by the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman) in the German language.

Calvary Messenger

Ervin N. Hershberger, editor
Edgewood Press
Seymour, Missouri 65746
\$30.00 (US) per year.
Calvary Messenger is published monthly by Calvary Publications, Inc. for Beachy Amish churches.

The Church Correspondent

R.R.1
Waterloo, Ontario N2J 3Z1
Subscription rate: Donation
Church Correspondent is a newsletter published monthly by members of the Markham-Waterloo Conference.

CMC Chronicle

Box 968
Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0
Subscription rate: NA
CMC Chronicle is published monthly by the Board of Publications of the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference.

EMMC Recorder

Henry Dueck, editor
Box 126
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 2G1
Subscription rate: NA
The EMMC Recorder is published monthly as the organ of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference.

Evangelical Visitor

Glen A. Pierce, editor
301 N. Elm St. (P.O. Box 166)
Nappanee, Indiana 46550-0166
Phone: 219-773-3164
\$10.00 per year
Evangelical Visitor is the official publication of the Brethren in Christ church, published monthly in magazine format by the Evangel Press.

Family Life

Elmo Stoll, editor
R.R. 4
Aylmer, Ontario N5H 2R3
\$7.50 per year
Family Life is published eleven times a year by Pathway Publishers for Amish and Mennonites.

Gospel Herald

Daniel Hertzler, editor
616 Walnut Avenue
Scottdale, Pennsylvania 15683
Phone: 412-887-8500
\$18.95 (US) per year
Gospel Herald is the official periodical of the Mennonite Church, published weekly in magazine format by Mennonite Publishing House.

Gospel Tidings

William Regehr, editor
5800 So. 14th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68107
Phone: 402-731-4780
Subscription rate: NA
Gospel Tidings is published monthly, except August, by the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Conference.

Le Lien

Claudette Leblanc, editor
c/o Mennonite Brethren Herald
159 Henderson Highway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1L4
Telephone: 204-667-3560
\$5.00 per year
Le Lien is the French-language bulletin of Mennonite Brethren churches in Canada, published monthly by the Canadian Conference Board of Publications.

The Mennonite

Bernie Wiebe, editor
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4
Phone: 204-888-6781
\$13.00 per year
The Mennonite is published biweekly by the General Conference Mennonite Church.

Mennonite Brethren Herald

Herb Kopp, editor
159 Henderson Highway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1L4
Phone: 204-667-3560
\$14.00 per year
Mennonite Brethren Herald is the church

paper of Canadian Mennonite Brethren congregations, published every other Friday by the Canadian Conference Board of Publications.

Mennonite Mirror

Al Reimer, editor
203-818 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 0N4
Phone: 204-786-2289
\$8.50 per year and no charge for those on pensions.
Mennonite Mirror is published 10 times each year for the Mennonite community by the Mennonite Literary Society Inc.

Mennonite Reporter

Ron Rempel, editor
3-312 Marsland Drive
Waterloo, Ontario N2J 3Z1
Phone: 519-884-3810
\$16.00 per year
Mennonite Reporter is an inter-Mennonite tabloid published every other Monday by Mennonite Publishing Service.

Die Mennonitische Post

Abe Warkentin, editor
Box 1120
Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0
Phone: 204-326-6790
\$16.00 per year
Die Mennonitische Post is a German-language biweekly in Steinbach, Manitoba.

Mennonitische Rundschau

A.W. Schellenberg, editor
159 Henderson Hwy.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1L4
Phone: 204-669-1897
\$12.00 per year
Mennonitische Rundschau is the German-language periodical of Canadian Mennonite Brethren churches and is published bi-weekly.

The Messenger

D.K. Schellenberg, editor
Box 1268
Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0
Phone: 204-326-6401
\$6.00 per year
The Messenger is published every other week by the Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

Messenger of Truth

Menno Koehn, editor
R.R.2, Box 87
Halstead, Kansas 67056
Phone: 316-835-3247
\$8.00 (US) per year
Messenger of Truth is published bi-weekly by the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman).



This seal was used by Bishop David Schulz of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba in 1932 on a membership certificate. It was likely made by Johann Funk who, from 1882-1911, was the first bishop of the Bergthaler Church and who resided in Alibergthal. (Photo by Dennis Stoesz)

Book Review

Plett, Delbert F. **The Golden Years: Kleine Gemeinde in Russia (1812-1849)**. Steinbach, Manitoba: D. F. Plett Publications, 1985. 350pp. \$29.95. Available from publisher at P.O. Box 669, Steinbach, MB. R0A 2A0.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein, London, U.K.

The Mennonite **Kleine Gemeinde** had a low profile in 19th century Russia, even among the Mennonites of that period. Its somewhat stormy origins in 1812-1814 seemed to fade rather quickly into the landscape of Chortitza and Molotschna in the early decades of their existence. The group managed, moreover, to ride out more or less unshaken and unnoticed, the **Sturm und Drang** of the Cornies reforms in the 1830s and 1840s, the religious revival of the 1850s and 1860s and the crusade of the "landless" in the 1860s and 1870s. By 1876 the group's best-known Ältester, Peter Toews, and the great majority of his followers had left Russia to settle in Manitoba, Canada or Nebraska, U.S.A.

Historians dealing with this period in Russian Mennonite history have done little till now to fine-tune the older perceptions. The publication of **The Golden Years**, following its more modest predecessor, **History and Events**, into a multi-volume series, alters the scene dramatically. In fact, in more ways than one the appearance of these materials in the two volumes really constitutes a landmark in the process of studying this general area of history.

To begin with, **The Golden Years** gives us access for the first time to a mass of additional documents from the handwritten German language manuscript collection of Peter Toews, tapped already in **History and Events**. It appears that Toews actually planned to do for his community of congregations what Peter M. Friesen did for the

Mennonite Brethren church in Russia. The total corpus of the **Kleine Gemeinde** documents (including some from Johann Dueck and other writers) may well equal in scope that of Friesen's book manuscript printed in Halbstadt, Ukraine in 1911. Small published fragments of the Toews, Dueck, etc., documents have been out of print for many decades, hence not always available even in the major Mennonite libraries of North America and Europe.

The author is no mere documentarian, however. As he sees it this material holds forth a direct challenge to the older interpretations of Russian Mennonite history as a whole. Besides that, of course, they offer a fresh opportunity to tell the fuller story of the **Kleine Gemeinde** itself. That is what he has done for the period encompassed in the subtitle of the volume, namely 1812-1849, and less thoroughly for the **Kleine Gemeinde** beginnings dating back to the Prussian Mennonite pre-emigration setting.

For purposes of analysing the prevailing Russian Mennonite historiographical approaches, Plett refocuses the 19th century situation in terms of a **troika** of categories which he titles Anabaptist-Mennonitism, pietistic Mennonitism and cultural Mennonitism. Clearly aware himself that this must over-simplify the inter-faces of the Ukrainian Mennonite settlements, Plett nevertheless proceeds to re-sketch the up-and-down socio-religious development of the "**Grosse Gemeinde**" and its offshoots, with the hope of creating a more accurate picture of the **Kleine Gemeinde's** origins and evolution within that framework.

Among other things, this initiative includes a forthright criticism of the widely-accepted P.M. Friesen view of the **Kleine Gemeinde**, and particularly of its first Ältester, Klaas Reimer. Such negative evaluations, the author is not afraid to say, prejudiced and uninformed as they were, have distorted the truth. The documents certainly provide a different, much more positive and balanced picture of the "**Small Church**" than Friesen had given reason to see.

As Plett reads the primary sources, it was precisely the **Kleine Gemeinde** leadership (he calls them Anabaptist-Mennonites, to the exclusion of most other Russian Mennonites) which called its more pietistically and culturally oriented co-religionists back to their Reformation roots. It is this group, he points out, which actually promoted the publication and distribution of Anabaptist books such as the writings of Menno Simons, Peter Peters, etc., in the face of outright opposition from other sectors both of the Prussian Mennonites on the Vistula and those on the Dnieper and the Molotschna in the Ukraine.

It was the **Kleine Gemeinde** people, Plett goes on to say, who upheld in their teaching and writing and in their sermons, the older Anabaptist emphases on non-resistance (no punishment of violators by force, no support

of war against Napoleon), congregational discipline (the ban is not outdated) and the meaning of responsible membership in the congregation (discipleship does matter). With thoughtful and educated persons like Heinrich Balzer among them, the "**Small Church**" kept on making these "big" points, loud and clear.

For the **Kleine Gemeinde** itself the "golden years," a period dated 1824-1849, are seen as a time of "internal peace, balanced consolidation, and steady growth" (p. 267). "These developments," writes Plett, "had their roots in the solid theological teaching and practises which were established in the **Kleine Gemeinde** under the gifted and inspired leadership of founder Klaas Reimer, theologian Heinrich Balzer, and particularly Abram Friesen, who played a leading role throughout the period" (p. 267).

Combining a large number of shorter and longer documents with a major re-interpretation of the entire Russian Mennonite community is not without its problems. The analytical model will need to be tested. Some of the included documents do not fit their theoretical framework altogether comfortably. Someone else might well have organized all the data differently, and there would be other, perhaps even better ways of doing so. To have a reprint of H.S. Bender's "The Anabaptist Vision" simply inserted willy-nilly as the second chapter, following a brief outline of church history right from the Apostles, as Chapter 1, may sit poorly with this historian or that, or even with some other readers. One could wish for slightly larger print on the documents, and a clearer demarcation of them (perhaps also by print variations) from the writer's comments about them. A little more editorial work (proof-reading, for instance) would have eliminated the minor inaccuracies, typographical errors, stylistic oddities, etc., which now appear in the text.

These are small points for the most part, to be remembered in the production of Volume III, already extant in manuscript form. There is no doubt, however, that Plett's work will stimulate more research and writing on the Russian/Ukrainian Mennonite story. That is how it should be. It will stand those in good stead who may want to write a history of the **Kleine Gemeinde**, now the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, from its origins to the present. Such a project is apparently also already underway.

The series, in its envisioned four volumes, must find its way into all Mennonite and many other public library holdings. All students of Mennonite history, Anabaptist, Prussian, Ukrainian, Canadian or whatever, will want to consider it for their private shelves as well.

It is no discredit to the author to say that more work needs to be done on the topic. All who do so will acknowledge their indebtedness, surely, to what has now been completed here.



Reg and Kathy (Shantz) Good and their MennoVan stayed "behind the archives" during their itineration in Manitoba for the Mennonite Bicentennial Commission in the summer of 1985. (Photo courtesy of The Mennonite).

Life Behind the Archives

by Kathy Shantz Good

Most people probably think that life in an archives is quite dull. In fact, they may even think that working with records of the past is positively deadly. But my husband, Reg, and I had an unusual opportunity to find out that this is not the case at all.

During the summer months from about the middle of May to the middle of September, Reg and I had occasion to become intimately acquainted with life in an archives. Perhaps I should qualify that and say we got to know the Heritage Centre both inside and out.

As MCC Voluntary Service workers Reg and I are travelling on behalf of the Mennonite Bicentennial Commission. We have been presenting programs on Mennonite history in churches and communities throughout Canada. For much of our stay in Manitoba, we were based in Winnipeg and through the generosity of CMBC, were provided with a camping spot for the MennoVan behind the Heritage Centre. (The "van" is actually a motor home provided by Triple E Canada of Winkler, Manitoba.)

Our itinerating took us to almost every corner of the province, including many excursions to southern Manitoba, one three-week trip as far north as Leaf Rapids and one jaunt to western and southwestern Manitoba. Thus, we were sometimes away from Winnipeg for several weeks at a time but it gave us a warm feeling to always be able to turn down Shaftesbury Boulevard. Often we would pull up behind the Heritage Centre late at night and both heave a sigh of relief: "Home again!" It felt good to have a homebase in the midst of our transience. Once in awhile we had breaks in our schedule and this gave us a chance to become ac-

quainted with our "archival" neighbours. Reg knew Dennis Stoesz from student days at Conrad Grebel College and he made us feel at home. He introduced us to Bev Suderman who also works at the archives and she too made us feel welcome.

Maybe people expect an archives to be dull, a dusty and disorganized place. But we found the atmosphere of the Heritage Centre to be both friendly and organized. Bev and Dennis both have a talent for meeting and helping people. Some days it seemed like there was a constant stream of researchers and genealogists needing assistance. On "quiet" days, when there were no visitors, Dennis and Bev would often work together organizing and labelling the many boxes of archival records. I was particularly impressed one day when I found Bev working in the vault dressed in a beige lab coat and white gloves. She was busy numbering boxes with quill and white ink.

Life out and around the archives was also interesting. Even though it was summer, there were still a handful of students around to talk to and the deans, Brian and Linda Matwichuk, were the kind of friendly neighbours you can borrow chili powder from when you run out in the middle of making chili-con-carne. On the occasional sunny day, I even found a nice, quiet, wind-shaded spot to do some reading and sun-bathing.

In the fall and winter, the MennoVan will be itinerating in Saskatchewan and Alberta. We will miss our camping spot behind the Heritage Centre. Some people would probably choose to spend their free time at the beach but believe it or not, Reg and I prefer life behind the archives.

Diary . . . Jottings from the Archives

by Dennis Stoesz, MHC Staff

During the past two months, Jake Peters, who is compiling the **Guide and Inventory to the Mennonite Heritage Centre** (see September 1985 issue), has spent much of his time doing an inventory of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC) records. He reports that to date, we have 57.76 metres of material, or more simply put, 30 four-foot shelves of records. An inventory of these documents as well as those of several other institutions and individuals will be available next year.

While looking through these CMC materials, Peters came across a 1966 report by CMC Executive Secretary, D.P. Neufeld on the development of this archives. The report sheds a little more light on the history of the archives program and how it grew from collecting records of the Conference to become the Mennonite Heritage Centre, "an inter-Mennonite facility supported by the Conference of Mennonites in Canada".

Neufeld's report was presented at an April 19, 1966 meeting of the Historical Study Committee. (Its text is provided below.) The meeting was called by H.T. Klassen, executive secretary of the Board of Education and Publication, in response to a decision by the CMC Executive in May 1965 to have that Board "study the matter of the Conference archives, the gathering of further materials, supervision and operation of the same". The purpose of the meeting, which took place a year after this decision, became that of thinking about the creation and responsibilities of an Historical Committee.

The Study Committee consisted of the Executive Secretary, D.P. Neufeld, two Canadian Mennonite Bible College Board representatives, J.J. Thiessen and Waldemar Janzen, and two Board of Education representatives, David Schroeder and H.H. Epp. Resource people at the meeting also included Leo Driedger, H.T. Klassen, Gerhard Lohrenz and Frank H. Epp. The recommendation of this meeting was to have the Board of Education appoint an Historical Committee consisting of three representatives from the Education Board, two from the CMBC Board and one from the Executive. The task of this committee was "to collect materials for the Historical Library and the Archives, relate to other Historical Societies, encourage research and publications, etc."

This 1966 meeting provided a chance for D.P. Neufeld to reflect on the archives as he knew them during his position as Executive Secretary from 1961-1966. It also gave an opportunity for the Historical Study Committee members to visit the archives room. It was located in Room #031 in the northwest end of the basement of CMBC's newly-built kitchen and expanded residence facilities. Today that room is a Study Room, and the

archives has been relocated first to the new CMC office building in 1974 and then to the new Mennonite Heritage Centre in 1979.

What is interesting in Neufeld's report is his disappointment at the lack of success in gathering early Conference records. He noted in his report that most of the documents in the archives originated after 1950 when a central Conference Office was established and when persons were hired to administer the program. Before then, the Conference missions, publications, and education programs were run by several key individuals such as J.J. Thiessen, Benjamin Ewert, J.G. Rempel, David Toews, Jacob Gerbrandt, Jacob Hoepfner, Peter Regier and others. Usually these persons operated from their homes and kept records there. We will need to make a list of these people and see what records from their work in the Conference we have here at the archives.

Archives of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada: Developments in the last five years (1961-1966)

by D.P. Neufeld, Executive Secretary of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (1961-1967)

When I first got to the office we had practically nothing in the way of archives. At first I was quite hopeful of getting materials pertaining to Conference work prior to 1950. Rev. J.J. Thiesen and Rev. H. Gerbrandt have been the only ones who have turned over a substantial amount of correspondence. Rev. Thiessen's material has not been classified in permanent files, but we have done some classifying for the Board of Missions. All the records of the offices have been put in permanent form.

Two years ago the files of Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council were put into our archives room. Considerable work is needed to make these files usable, but before further work is done on them, it must be established who is responsible for them.

During the first several years I put some work into finding and getting some archives which pertain to the work of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. It was practically fruitless. I became aware that such men as Benjamin Ewert and (J.) G. Rempel or their successors burned a great deal of material. People are extremely hesitant to give to the archives, hence nothing has come from G.G. Epp, Rev. Hoepfner, Altona, Jacob Pauls, J.J. Bartel and others. It was only within the last year that we received the minute books of the early years of the Conference sessions.

With the establishment of the central offices I can see no difficulty in getting adequate records of conference activity from here on. However, I am not too optimistic about getting records of the early years of our conference.



(L-R) D. P. Neufeld, Executive Secretary, CMC; H. T. Klassen, Executive Secretary, Board of Education and Publication; and David Schroeder, Chairperson, Board of Education and Publication, in committee discussion in the early 1960s. These men were part of the 1966 discussion regarding the development of the archives and its program and the acquisition of early Conference records. (Photo courtesy Conference of Mennonites in Canada)

New display cases for gallery

Late in the spring of 1985, the gallery area of the Heritage Centre was enhanced by the presence of three new display cases. The cases were built by John Dyck, a volunteer maintenance person for the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, who "lent" him to the archives for this project. Mr. Dyck modelled the cases after some which he had seen in another exhibition hall; he used scrap

lumber and several pieces of old window glass to bring his idea into reality, building a little bit of history into the cases themselves.

The cases will be used to highlight new acquisitions and to display documents and artifacts from the collections of the archives which otherwise remain unknown.



The new display cases built by John Dyck which now grace the gallery area of the Heritage Centre. (Photo by Dennis Stoesz)

Drama Review

Chislett, Anne. **Quiet in the Land**. Coach House Press, 1983. 120p. \$7.00.

Reviewed by Susan Rempel Letkemann, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Anne Chislett's **Quiet in the Land** is an authentic, compassionate and frequently humorous depiction of a rural Ontario Amish community during the First World War. The play accurately represents the ethnic and denominational peculiarities of the Amish, but it does not make a defensive apology for a particular religious or cultural minority group. Rather, it sensitively portrays the diversity of human conflict within a particular milieu. More insight into the individual characters' thoughts, motivations and inner struggles is needed, however, to make the external representation and resolution of these conflicts compelling.

A major appeal of **Quiet in the Land** is its successful fusion of the multiplicity of doctrinal and cultural issues confronting the Amish in the context of changing political, economic and technological circumstances. Although the successive introduction of all the fundamental tenets of the Amish faith and tradition in the opening scene appears somewhat pointless, gradually these issues, along with the unobtrusive rural domestic activities, are skillfully integrated into the central action of the play. Instead of treating the ethnic and denominational characteristics of the Amish as objects of difference, Chislett deals directly with how the Amish doctrine of remaining separate from the world creates generational conflicts, community dissension and denominational and racial tensions.

The multiplicity and graduation of conflict within an ostensibly homogeneous community is further suggested in the two-act play by the sudden and frequent shifts in dialogue from one individual, generation or household to another, and by the pairings of characters. Specifically, these techniques are used to pose alternative responses to the central issue of authority.

Two contrasting models of authority are represented in bishop Christy Bauman and deacon Zepp Brubacher. Having sought his status within the Church as a means of realizing personal ambitions, Christy protects his authority by becoming increasingly autocratic in his obsession to maintain legalistic orthodoxy. Although he proclaims pacifism and love, he violates all human freedom in his abuse of authority, a practice resulting in the division of his church and in the loss of his son. Zepp, in contrast, demonstrates a responsible use of authority. His conciliatory application of the Christian "weapons of patience and love" in all his relationships allows him to transcend individual, denominational and cultural differences. His curious lack of involvement in

his own daughter's struggles resulting from her love for Christy's heretical son, Yock, points not so much to an inconsistency in Zepp's character as to an omission on the part of the playwright.

The youths' polar response to the authority of the elders and of traditions is represented by Christy's son Yock and by Menno Miller, who becomes Zepp's son-in-law. Menno initially gives unthinking allegiance to the Church, but comes to question a dictatorial leadership that fails to address current problems. Although he attempts to work for a spiritual revitalization from within the Church, he quickly becomes an aggressive proponent of external change. Yock sees his father's autocratic rule as a violation of his own personal freedom and integrity, and attempts to gain autonomy by rejecting his family, community and faith, and finally by joining the army.

Yock's final affirmation of his father's pacifist ideals and the traditional Amish way of life is arrived at too suddenly. His regret at having left the community at all and his facile decision to return to the insular Amish society and "tell silly boys how well off they are" are natural conclusions in the context of his realization that he cannot evade problems, but are inconsistent with his fundamental need for individual liberty. Furthermore, they contradict his experience of the commonality and unity of humankind as he confronts and kills a German soldier "who could have been Zepp", the character most closely representing a religious ideal. Ultimately, however, Yock's affirmation of another man's faith, ideology and humanity explains both his compassion towards his father and his acceptance of his pacifist inheritance.

WANTED

Canada's National Postal Museum is seeking post office memorabilia such as artifacts or photographs of post office buildings (interior and exterior views), postal activities, mail-carrying equipment, postmen, and the like.

If you have any items of interest, please contact:

Curator of Material History
National Postal Museum
Canada Post Corporation
OTTAWA, Ontario
K1A 0B1

NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

CANADA POST CORPORATION