

Mennonite Historian



Mennonite
Historian

Volume XII, Number 1
March 1986



Katie Peters working at one of her 600 binders of information. (Photo courtesy Centre for MB Studies)

Genealogy: A Service to God's Glory

by Ken Reddig

① Service to the church of Jesus Christ can take many different forms. Preaching and teaching, while important, are not the only ways to communicate God's love. Particularly for people who are less mobile and unable to participate in the usual service opportunities, more creative ways of giving glory to God must be found.

It may seem strange to say that genealogy is one form of giving glory to God. At first thought, most would dismiss genealogy as a purely "self-centered" activity. Not so, however, with Katie Peters. Her extraordinary collection, which she recently donated to the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, has always had as its primary focus a better understanding of the families who have been a part of the Mennonite church, and thus have a mission to glorify God on this earth.

To meet Miss Peters is to meet a bright, articulate individual with a keen sense of

history. She is a person who, for health reasons, is not able to get around as others do. At the same time, her active mind literally carries her around the world, particularly to areas where Mennonites reside.

To most Mennonites Katie Peters is relatively unknown. However, to those interested in Mennonite history, especially to genealogists, she is well-known. Over the past fifteen years she has compiled twenty genealogies, probably more than any other Mennonite genealogist.

How she first became interested in genealogy is, in part, a story of her own life. Her background provided her with a context out of which the study of history became meaningful.

Katie Peters grew up in Russia, in the village of Landskrone, in the Molotschna settlement. She lived through the revolution and its horrible aftermath. In 1925 her family moved to Canada. They settled on a farm

near Grande Pointe, Manitoba, which at that time was only ten miles from the end of the Winnipeg streetcar tracks. Between the years of 1930-1941 Katie worked in Winnipeg at various jobs, all the while relating closely to the "Girls' Home," that is, the Winnipeg "Mary-Martha" Home, administered by Anna Thiessen.

Katie worked at various jobs. She worked in a printery, sewing factory and during the evenings took courses at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. She also enrolled in evening business courses offered in Winnipeg. These courses enabled her to find office jobs where she took on secretarial and bookkeeping positions.

In 1962 health reasons forced her to begin working out of her home. She became self-employed and earned a living by sewing, typing and doing the bookkeeping for a local business.

At the same time she became involved with a home-care agency, taking care of two women in her home who required constant attention. Her experience with them made her resolve that being "home bound" could be devastating to one's mind. As she puts it, "I needed to do something with my mind so that I would not become like they were."

In 1962 her family began thinking of compiling a Peters genealogy. Katie began collecting data and eventually completed the book. Soon to follow was a Dyck book and a Riediger book.

But it was not until 1970 that she began compiling genealogies in earnest. In that year Ernie J. Klassen asked her to compile a Klassen book. Following the completion of that book she soon began another one, in all compiling eight books for him.

So it was in 1970 that she began what is now a very extensive collection of family/genealogical materials. Her collection is overwhelming. It includes 65,865 index cards of family names, 205 binders of family genealogies, 62 binders of histories of Canadian and Russian congregations, and five binders listing immigrants from 1874 to the 1970s. In total her collected materials on Mennonites contain some 600 binders of information together with the 65,865 cards, plus 7 linear feet of information in regular file folders. All this material was collected in the short space of 15 years of concentrated activity.

Katie Peters does not refer to these

statistics in a self-glorifying way; instead, she is always careful to point out that she gives the glory to God. "He helped me accomplish this work, it was done to glorify him, not me."

One senses that Katie means what she says. She has a strong sense of what God has accomplished through the many families who have made up the various Mennonite congregations both in Russia and Canada. An example is that among her many binders of information are 24 binders of clippings on congregations in Canada, South America, Africa, Central America, Europe and the Soviet Union. An additional 16 binders are full of biographies and autobiographies of various Mennonite leaders.

Why then have all her materials come into the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies? Health reasons again. Miss Peters is presently unable to maintain the collection as well as she would like. Therefore, she has given it to the Centre where "it will now be accessible to anyone interested."

Truly Katie Peters loves her church and the people who make up that body. The thousands of hours dedicated to this task have not only enriched her, but will also provide future generations with both resources for their family histories and provide a witness of the dedication to God of thousands of women and men.

Ken Reddig is the archivist of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



Gerhard Lohrenz presenting a lecture during the early 1970s at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg. (Photo courtesy of Conference of Mennonites in Canada)

In Memoriam: Frank H. Epp, 1929-1986 Gerhard Lohrenz, 1899-1986

Editor's note: With the deaths of Frank H. Epp and Gerhard Lohrenz in January and February of this year, the Mennonite world lost two scholars, pastors, writers, colleagues and above all, two friends. The two articles which follow are written in celebration and commemoration of the work and lives of these two men.

**Gerhard Lohrenz - Professor,
Colleague, Pastor**
by George Wiebe

Professor

It was the fall of 1952—my second year as student at CMBC. Two new, distinguished looking faculty members, both with outstanding teaching records in public and high schools, had been added to the small CMBC faculty at 515 Wellington Crescent. One was Rev. John Adrian, professor of Christian Education and Bible; the other, Gerhard Lohrenz, professor of church history. Both brought a blend of wisdom (*Mutterweisheit*), human warmth and a spirit of evangelical piety to the college.

Right from the first class in church history, it was clear that Gerhard Lohrenz was a born teacher. Although he held only a B.A. degree from the University of Manitoba, he had read, absorbed and thought far more than the normal precincts of knowledge associated with an undergraduate degree. His lecture notes were copiously and meticulously written out and often amounted to little more than a first-rate summation of textbook material. Some of the students preferred to underline the "required" portions in the book so as to avoid the affliction of writer's cramp.

Lohrenz made sure we would "cover de ground thoroughly for the examinations." Our feverish note taking (or covert underlining) would ever so often be rewarded by one of his memorable "anecdote breaks." Delightful anecdotes like, for example the antics of the young Mennonite men in the Russian *Forstei* (forestry service) were told and gesticulated with the consummate mastery of a Peter Ustinov, except that Lohrenz didn't have to rehearse his "lines."

Lohrenz's love and appreciation for Mennonites was summed up in his frequently quoted words "Unsere Leute" (our people). This affection held true with reference to agricultural, economical and cultural achievements. When dealing with theological differences of GC's and MB's, this endearing term didn't always fit.

A weakness of his teaching was a lack of fruitful class discussion. Lohrenz simply did not feel at ease when students presented opposing, but valid viewpoints. A good discussion could easily turn into volatile debate between himself and some of the keener students. In later years he became a caring friend and strong supporter of such students!

Colleague

When Esther and I were appointed to the music faculty in the fall of 1954, Gerhard Lohrenz

became our colleague. He took a genuine interest in what we were trying to accomplish in music and encouraged us as well as he could when relating to an area in which he professed no expertise. One day however, he surprised me by admitting that he too had taught music, but at the grade school level—"as best as von could. Vee vood simply drill and drill our Christmas songs until de students had everyting memorized - and de parents appreciated our Christmas programs immensely." Well now, that was an incentive. Here I, a professional choral musician teaching people to sing and not even insisting on memorization! Lohrenz nonetheless, did have an appreciation for the arts, including classical music. When it was well done and enthusiastically performed, he never failed to express his appreciation and support.

As for his relationships to other faculty members, Lohrenz was cordial and respectful. However, he did not manage to hide his prejudices or his misgivings of views, methodologies and teaching abilities of fellow faculty members. At faculty meetings he could effortlessly provide relief from tedium with a timely anecdote. On one occasion, when discussion focused on academic excellence, he referred to a certain teachers' training institution (normal school) which had lowered its entrance requirements in order to swell its enrolment. Lohrenz's view of the situation: "De only entrance requirement for students at dat time was a tremendous capacity to sit troo lectures." His own capacity to "sit through" a routine faculty meeting, however, wasn't that great. He could read through an entire issue of *Time* in the course of a single faculty meeting—to the mild chagrin of the current president. One year, when the regular president was on sabbatical, Gerhard Lohrenz was appointed interim president. No prof would dare flaunt a copy of *Time* when he presided!

Pastor

In 1958 Gerhard Lohrenz accepted the call to give half of his time to the leadership of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church. He was 58 then and managed to keep up his dual vocation as professor and pastor until 1965. In that year, after 13 years at CMBC, he resigned from the college to assume full time duties as pastor and leader of the Sargent Church.

During his early years of leadership at Sargent, I directed the church choir. Lohrenz often gently recommended that I choose "simple, plain songs which speak to the hearts of our people." There were times when I chafed under this restriction, since I was eager to explore a better quality of music.

As a pastor, Gerhard Lohrenz presented

somewhat of an enigma. His sermons on conversion and discipleship, although practical, often sounded severe and legalistic. On the other hand, when people experienced grief or domestic crisis, one could not find a more compassionate spiritual counselor. I would like to illustrate this by sharing how he stood by us in a time of need. In February, 1959, three days after birth, we lost our second child, Miriam Judith. We were too shocked and distressed to make any clear decision. How, where, when should we conduct the memorial service? We shall always appreciate the counsel and the compassion which Rev. & Mrs. Lohrenz offered us. They came over to our home and with only Esther, myself and my brother Menno in attendance, Rev. Lohrenz conducted a simple but heartfelt, touching service for our infant daughter in our little living room. They shared in some detail how they had experienced deep grief in the loss of their 15 year old daughter. Following this brief service and sharing we were at peace and felt comforted.

At the recent appreciation Sunday for Rev. Lohrenz on January 12, and at his funeral on February 10, many individuals shared how Gerhard Lohrenz had encouraged, comforted and inspired them through hospital visits and a variety of personal contacts. Although our historians and authors will assess his contribution to Mennonite history and to Mennonite literature, hundreds will remember Gerhard Lohrenz as a dear personal friend and an "encourager par excellence."

George Wiebe, professor of music at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, experienced Gerhard Lohrenz as professor, teaching colleague and pastor.



Frank H. Epp presenting one of the annual J.J. Thiessen lectures in 1981 at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg. (Photo courtesy of Conference of Mennonites in Canada)

Frank H. Epp: Historian

by John Friesen

Frank H. Epp cut his teeth as an historian in the writing of *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution* (Altona, 1962). Although this subject was very emotionally laden for Mennonite immigrants of the 1920s, he decided against nostalgia, choosing instead to write a critical history based on documentary evidence. The book cut a bold new path for Mennonite historical writing although in later years he may have wished he had used more non-Mennonite sources. *Mennonite Exodus* utilized the available published and unpublished sources to interpret the history of the events in Russia which led to the emigration to Canada, of the events in Canada which made immigration possible and of the events in the United States which opposed immigration into Canada.

Although many people supported the study, others found it deeply troubling. How could a young man who had not lived through that era interpret these events? For many people, Frank's stance as a critical historian, dispassionately organizing the material available to him, violated the intensely personal experiences of the war, revolution, famine and emigration. His conclusions failed to confirm some of the most cherished memories of those experiences, memories which had been molded during forty years of collective retelling. Despite the sometimes sharp controversy, the methodology employed in *Mennonite Exodus* lifted Mennonite historical writing to a more critical level.

Frank continued his historical interest and critique of the Mennonite community in his doctoral dissertation, "An analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority group, the Mennonites, in the 1930s" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1965). In this study, written while working as editor of *The Canadian Mennonite*, Frank probed other sensitive areas. During the Second World War and in the years immediately following, Canadian Mennonites expended considerable effort on peace education. What Frank revealed through his study of *Der Bote* was that a disturbingly large number of Canadian Mennonites of the 1920s immigrant group had either actively or tacitly supported National Socialism. By implication this observation identified these people with anti-Semitism, militarism and racism. Many people would have preferred to forget that period; Frank, however, was convinced that the historian's task was to bring even the most painful experiences to the light of public discussion.

Frank Epp's most important contribution as a Canadian Mennonite historian has been the writing of the first two volumes of *Mennonites in Canada*. What was at first to be a one-volume set developed into a multi-volume set in which the first volume covered about 130 years and the second 20 years. At the time of his death the third volume, beginning with events in 1940, was in process.

The first volume of *Mennonites in Canada* was published in 1974, the centennial of Russian Mennonite immigration into Canada. The study was widely acclaimed, and presented a coherent survey of Russian, Prussian, Swiss and Amish history. It however, also revealed a tension in Frank Epp's historical efforts, namely, the tension between the journalist and the historian. By 1974 he had spent more than two decades honing his writing skills, learning to turn a phrase, writing emotionally charged hortatory discourses on ethical issues and above all, learning to write in a popular readable style. In *Mennonites in Canada* the journalist's desire for style and popular appeal and the historian's search for careful analysis and deliberation were frequently in tension. Some historians felt he sacrificed too much to style, others who appreciated Frank the journalist, felt his history was too burdened down with facts.

Frank Epp's hope that someday the fragmented Mennonite community would be united was expressed in the weaving of various strands and groups into one history in the two volumes of *Mennonites in Canada*. Fragmentation and separation he saw as negative, unity as positive. Consequently when he selected the themes of separation and unity for his books, Frank was not only an historian who analyzed from a detached perspective but also the prophetic preacher, moving people in the direction he saw as good.

In all of Frank Epp's writing one sensed a strong commitment to progress. His hope for the future and his belief that people and institutions could change for the better committed him to expect that the future would be better than the present. Only through change could peace, justice and unity be attained. This belief in progress made it difficult for him to positively interpret the more "conserving" branches of the Mennonite community, although he tried hard to understand them.

In the midst of his writing of *Mennonites in Canada*, Frank also found time to write the history of Rosthern Junior College (Saskatchewan), *Education with a Plus*. It was based on methodology similar to *Mennonites in Canada*. In this study Frank expressed his strong commitment to education as a driving force for change.

Frank Epp will be remembered as an important Canadian Mennonite historian. He was bold, daring to address controversial topics. He made contributions in both methodology and content. Frank wrote history in order to move people to a greater sense of justice, to a fuller experience of peace and to a greater unity. At heart he was a prophet for whom history was a medium to proclaim a message.

John Friesen is on sabbatical leave from his position as associate professor of church history and theology at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg.

Book Reviews

Peters, Gerald, editor and translator. **Diary of Anna Baerg, 1916-1924**. Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1985. 185 p. Illus. \$7.95. Available from CMBC Publications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4, or from your local bookstore.

Reviewed by Adolf Ens.

"I don't think there will be much to tell in my diary," modestly wrote Anna Baerg, 19 year old daughter of the overseer of a Mennonite estate in southern Russia, as 1916 drew to a close. The Great War was far away. "Nothing much happens here. One day passes like the next." (14 November 1916)

A few months later came this excited entry: "What monstrous events have occurred between the time I last wrote and now. The Czar has been dethroned! Russia has become a Republic!" (11 March 1917)

For the next seven tumultuous years Anna faithfully recorded events of her small world: the frightening robbery of their estate household by eight armed soldiers (11 January 1918); the arrival of the German "liberators" (17 April 1918); the disarming of the *Selbstschutz* (13 March 1919); the death of her father of spotted typhoid (18 April 1919); a thanksgiving service at Alexanderkrone; choir rehearsals and song fests; the funerals of 1922. Many of the entries speak of difficult times. But always signs of hope are noted. 25 February 1922: "A day like today draws all life out of its gloomy chambers into the open air, awakening new energy and the desire to go on, even in those where depression and hopelessness reigned. We've already prepared the garden today and have seeded potatoes and other vegetables."

Anna resolved early in her diary not to write about politics. She felt that one could "hardly trust the rumors" or the newspapers, that there was too much political material to write about, and, most importantly, "I am no politician, not even an enthusiastic patriot." (13 November 1917) Yet it was impossible to avoid political comment. With refreshing (if occasionally embarrassing) candor, she reflects Mennonite attitudes toward Russians, Germans, Bolsheviks, Makhnovtses, and, as she prepares to emigrate, her own low opinion of the Canadian medical profession.

Her diary reflects Mennonite perceptions of the times. It could not be otherwise, for Anna's world was very much the Mennonite world of southern Russia. Yet the diary is more than the "tiny mirror" she set out to produce. Her own quiet personal reflections and unique perspective make this a rare document. She sees events and relationships as a young person, as a woman, as a member

of the servant class: "Today Mr. and Mrs. Dick had coffee with us. This is the first time in all the twelve years we've been here that they came to visit us." That 31 March 1918 entry about a rare social meeting between master and servant speaks volumes. So do some of the entries in which she confesses to her diary the frustration of not being able to tell her beloved Gerhard Harder her true feelings, of having "to keep silent" about her inner longings. "Oh to be allowed to love without bounds!" she bursts out at one point. (10 May 1922)

Diary of Anna Baerg does not have the intensity and continuing drama of Dietrich Neufeld's *Russian Dance of Death* (1919-20); nor does it attempt to interpret the chaotic war-revolution-civil war era like Gerhard Lohrenz's *The Fateful Years* (1913-23). But it provides a fascinating and unusual account, by a gifted observer and warmly committed Christian woman, that adds much to our understanding of the end of the "golden era" of Mennonites in Russia.

Clara Dyck's painstaking transcription of the original diary from the backs of milk tin labels and other paper scraps from relief packages made the task of translator-editor Gerald Peters much easier. Mennonite Central Committee Canada and the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada are to be commended for sponsoring this publication.

Adolf Ens is assistant professor of history and theology at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg.

Reimer, Al. **My Harp is turned to Mourning**. Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press, 1985. 439 p. \$14.95. Available from Mennonite Book Club, 203-818 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4. Postage extra.

Reviewed by Esther Epp-Thiessen.

Al Reimer's first novel is about the Mennonite experience in South Russia prior to and during the time of the Revolution. It tells the story of Wilhelm Fast, a young man who yearns to be an artist, but whose artistic vision is devastated by the ravages of war and revolution. He is one whose "harp is turned to mourning."

Reimer's novel explores the classic Mennonite themes of isolation vs. integration with the Russian environment, and the testing of the Mennonite principle of nonresistance. Reimer builds on these themes by depicting the choice taken by Wilhelm as opposed to the choices made by others within the Mennonite community.

Wilhelm cannot, for instance, understand his black sheep brother Nikolai for turning his back on the Mennonite people and identifying with the Russian peasant, but neither can he live in the isolated "island on the steppe" that his great-great-grandfather helped to create. He must leave, at least for a time, the sheltered Mennonite world where he has lived all his life, in order to gain artist's eyes and also to see the Russian as his brother.

Wilhelm must also make a choice when the war challenges the principle of nonresistance. While Nikolai joins the Russian army, and a machinery firm run by a friend's family produces munition casings and gun carriages, Wilhelm volunteers for alternative service in the ambulance corps. Later, however, when Nestor Makhno's men brutally rape a former sweetheart, he joins the Mennonite *Selbstschutz*.

Reimer's technique of juxtaposing the various Mennonite responses to crises is an effective one. It reminds the reader just how complex the dilemmas were that confronted the Mennonites during this time. As Wilhelm says, "... good and bad are too hopelessly mixed up for them to be neatly separated according to principles."

As an historical novel, Reimer's book is well done. The author has taken pains to build his story upon the historical record, and has done his research carefully.

My Harp is also good literature. Reimer's story is fascinating, his language is vivid, and his characters are generally well-developed. One puzzling figure is Erdmann Lepp, an itinerant preacher who feels called to proselytize the Russian peasant. At the outset he seems self-righteous and patronizing, but at the end arrives at profound insights.

The novel has some weaknesses. The plot has so many coincidences that it becomes rather unbelievable at points. The extensive use of German and Russian words, with only occasional translations, is somewhat frustrating.

Moreover, the book does not really depart from the stereotype of Nestor Makhno and his men as mindless butchers. To his credit, Reimer does allude to some of the reasons why Makhno resented the Mennonites, and several of his Mennonite characters come to the realization that they bear some responsibility for Makhno's attacks. Still, one finishes the book with the same old feeling that the Makhnovists were demented savages. Was this really the case?

In spite of this, **My Harp is turned to Mourning** is a very significant work which brings alive a very important era in Mennonite history. Hopefully, the wait for Reimer's next novel will not be a long one.

Esther Epp-Thiessen, recently returned from an MCC assignment in the Philippines with her husband, is author of Altona: The Story of a Prairie Town.

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

Reviewed by Harold Funk.

In 1970 Manitoba celebrated its first Centennial. For many ethnic groups it reawakened memories of the early pioneering days and their "beginnings" through the story-telling of their parents and grandparents. What is ironic about our brief history is that the past is still with us through examples of buildings and artifacts, but that their rapid disappearance is giving urgent cause to record what is still remaining before it too disappears, buildings and stories alike. This book, **Architectural Heritage**, is just such a record.

Architectural Heritage focuses on the settlement region of MSTW (Morden-Stanley-Thompson-Winkler, Manitoba) Planning District which was settled both by the Anglo-Ontario people beginning in 1872 and shortly afterwards by the Mennonite people beginning in 1875. As the title suggests, the research behind the book addresses mainly the early settlement structures and the subsequent changes which took place.

Briefly, the book traces the settlement locations and building types of both the Anglo-Ontarians and the Mennonites. Although of different cultural backgrounds, both groups faced the same problems: settling into a previously uninhabited region, limited access to materials and supplies, upcoming mechanization of farming methods and, particularly for the Mennonite people, the adoption of the Public School and Municipal Government systems which were to cause the erosion of their culturally self-governing village concept. It was not as if, having settled into this strange frontier land, their past communities or life styles would be recaptured once again. Rather, it would become a new departure point facing new conditions and new influences. For the Mennonite people this would prove challenging and cause many to abandon established villages during the prosperous 1920s for Mexico. This void would soon be filled with the arrival of the Russian Mennonite people who settled into many of the empty villages and thereby preserved the village community a while longer despite the onslaught of changing trends, while other villages would simply disappear.

The reader will be pleased to find the many freehand ink drawings representative of building types and building techniques and their ensuing refinements of both groups. Settling the MSTW region was a formidable task, requiring great courage and endurance.

The first structures were canvas-like shelters, dugout and sod shelters with thatched roofs, or steeply pitched thatched covered shelters for both houses and barns. Soon after, however, thatch-roofed "log structures" appeared. Being accustomed to masonry construction, the Mennonites would benefit greatly from the Ontario people in the technique of log construction: the joining and connecting of logs, the clay and straw in-fill between logs to provide the necessary wind break envelope. Because sawmills were still a great distance off in this early period, log construction and its improvements continued well beyond the turn of the century. However, with the establishment of the first sawmill in Silver Creek in the MSTW district in 1877, the early log structure type slowly disappeared. First, sawn shingles replaced thatched roofs, then square cut timber replaced the logs. Soon the entire structure was built out of sawn timber: post and beam frame with sawn boards for floors and ceilings, and inside and outside wall covering.

The authors methodically trace the changes which took place in the practices both in the residences, which always received the greater attention and detail, and the barns as well as subsequent out-buildings.

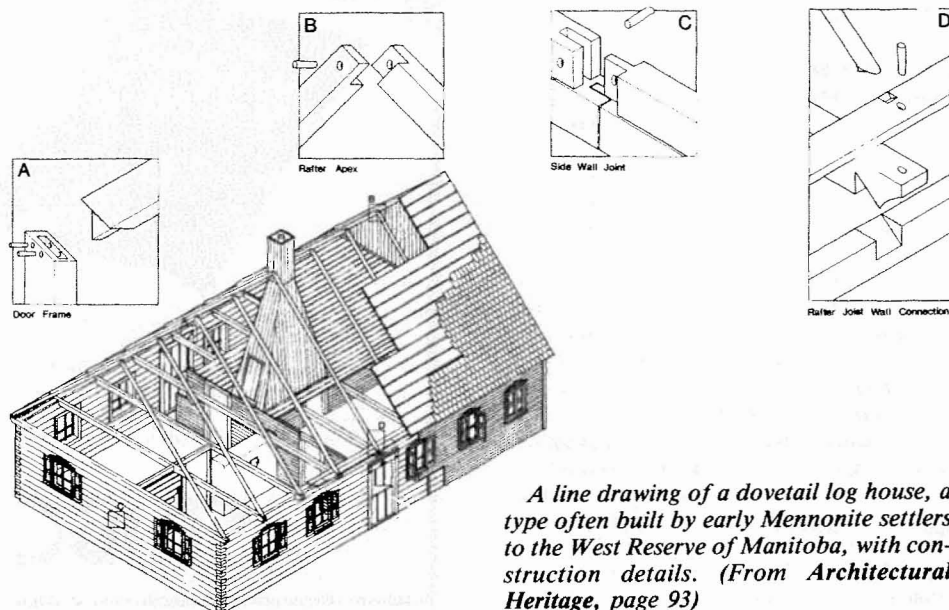
Building practices within the Mennonite community kept up with the trends evident in the non-Mennonite areas. Families who moved out of communities to separate farmsteads usually followed the building practices of the Ontario people, that is, separate house and barn, although there are examples of separate Mennonite farmsteads which continued to follow the attached house-barn practice. In the villages the attached house-barn prevailed, but with variations such as turning the house perpendicular to the barn, thus introducing a new connecting link be-

tween house and barn. Except for size increase, building shapes remained much the same. The Mennonite houses compared to the houses of the other ethnic groups were less ornate and remained simple. Nevertheless, subtle refined detailing, surface treatment and respect for the individual building component was clearly recognizable. Noteworthy attention was given to techniques such as side wall joining and to mortise and tenon and saddle notching connections. The post and beam and wall in-fill technique became accomplished with elegance and pride. Decorative shutters and trimmings were introduced. And in describing the buildings, technique, spaces and uses, the reader will much appreciate the attention given in the book to the small changes which were introduced into the spatial uses of house, barn and out-buildings alike as they became necessary. Of further interest will be the effort made to include all the Low German names given to the spaces and functions as they had once been identified.

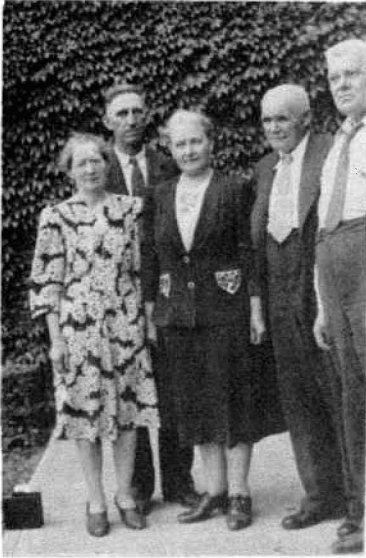
The book is a most timely and valuable undertaking in a period where escalating urbanism and cooperative farming is continuing and quickly causing the demise of any heritage in buildings and artifacts remaining. This book, along with other documentations, once more demonstrates the need to preserve the finest examples reflecting the heritage of any ethnic group, in this case the Mennonite heritage—not for nostalgic reasons but for historical ones. The book **Architectural Heritage** will be a treasure forever.

'See reviewer's article, "Daut Darp," **Mennonite Life**, July 1970. Reprinted as "The Darp" in **Mennonite Mirror**, Jan.-Feb. 1974.

Harold Funk is an architect in Winnipeg.



*A line drawing of a dovetail log house, a type often built by early Mennonite settlers to the West Reserve of Manitoba, with construction details. (From **Architectural Heritage**, page 93)*



Two Saskatchewan couples who attended the Conference of Mennonites in Canada sessions in Beamsville, Ontario, July 3, 1946: (l-r) Elisabeth and Deacon Jacob J. Epp, Laird; Sara and Rev. Edwin S. Bartel, Drake; and Rev. Jacob H. Janzen, Ontario. (Photo from E.S. Bartel Collection, MHC)

Diary . . . Jottings from the Archives

by Dennis Stoesz, MHC Staff

Melita Bartel of North Battleford, Saskatchewan, recently dropped in at the archives and brought the first deposit of records from the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan. She was secretary of this conference from 1981-1985. The material included constitutions and bylaws, published minute booklets and report books. A study of these documents will aid in understanding some aspects of Mennonite life in Saskatchewan from the 1950s to the present.

Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan: Historical Overview

The first meeting of the conference was held on October 29th and 30th, 1959, in Rosthern. Present were 103 delegates from 22 churches. This meeting contrasted sharply with the annual meeting of the previous year when 52 ministers and deacons participated; this 1959 gathering was now a delegate conference. One historian comments: "It had taken until 1959 for the province's ministers to accept the need for a central body."¹ Ministers and deacons had been meeting in Saskatchewan for many years before,² and had been coordinating many of the programs which the conference then took over in 1959.

Another influencing factor in the formation of the conference structure was the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization (SMYO). The youth had organized in 1940 at Rosthern and by 1959 boasted an ac-

tive program including the Youth Farm, the Invalid Home, the Children's Home, Young People's Retreats, various mission projects and of course the running of the organization itself. The conference inherited the programs and personnel of SMYO in 1959.

The conference was incorporated on December 9th, 1960, under the Societies Act (1959) of the Province of Saskatchewan. Five clergymen, one retired farmer and one secretary-treasurer signed the document as applicants: Paul Schroeder, Henry A. Wiens, Jacob J. Wiens, Henry H. Penner, Nickolas W. Dick, Irwin Schmidt and John R. Dyck.

The original 1959 constitution and bylaws have been amended through the years. For example, although the official name of the conference was "Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan," it seems that the secretaries of the conference momentarily forgot this in 1965 when they unconsciously translated the commonly-used German name "Konferenz der Mennoniten von Saskatchewan" to "Conference of Mennonites in Saskatchewan," rather than "of Saskatchewan." This caused some confusion in the early 1970s when the conference wanted to register amendments to their constitution with the Saskatchewan provincial government. They found that they had to go back to "of Saskatchewan" instead of the more familiar "in Saskatchewan." It rather humorously illustrates the effects of the German to English language change.³


Conference meetings were held in the fall of each year. Printed programs were

distributed to the delegates at each session and minutes of the meetings were later printed as a records of the proceedings and decisions.

In 1970 the timetable for the annual meetings changed to late winter sessions and thus no meeting was held in 1969; instead, the delegates at the February 1970 sessions discussed the previous calendar year of 1969, setting the pattern for the years to follow.

During the mid-sixties the conference began to duplicate and distribute reports from the various committees to the delegates. In 1966 mimeographed reports came from the Christian Service Committee, Mennonite Youth Farm Institution, Herbert Invalid Home, (Youth) Farm Operations, Rosthern Junior College, Education Committee, Missions Committee, J.C. Schmidt (evangelist), Finance Board, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Swift Current Bible Institute and the Camp Committee. Reports from the Women's Mission Society, the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization and the Seminary did not make it into the packet material for 1966.⁴

In 1984, Henry F. Funk reflected that urbanization, affluence, language transition, the paid ministry, a professional lay people, television, the family, the welfare state and inter-church dialogue had been significant changes in the 25-year history of the conference.⁵ An examination of the records of the conference will begin to fill in this story of these changes with more detail and understanding.



NEW RELEASE

Diary of ANNA BAERG

1916-24

Gerry Peters
Translator and Editor

An eyewitness account of the turbulent revolution and civil war years (1916-24) in Russia from the pen of a young woman.

160 pages with photos \$7.95

Also available:

Epp, Menno H. <i>The Pastor's Exit: The Dynamics of Involuntary Termination.</i> 1984	\$8.00
Rempel, Olga. <i>Siberian Diary.</i> 1984	10.95
Schroeder, David. <i>Anleitung zum Bibelstudium.</i> 1984	5.00
Wiebe, Esther. <i>That They May Be One.</i> 1984	5.75

Available at your local Christian bookstore or order from:

cmBC
PUBLICATIONS

600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4
Telephone: (204) 888-6781

(51 postage and handling charge when ordering directly)

Endnotes

¹Henry H. Funk paraphrased in "Saskatchewan Delegates Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Conference," by Allan J. Siebert, **Mennonite Reporter** 5 March 1984, p. 1.

²The earliest minutes of these ministers' meetings at the archives is 1943.

Collected material on the Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan, Volume 682. Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg.

³Constitution and Bylaws File in Conference of Mennonite of Saskatchewan Collection, Volume 2946. Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg.

⁴1966 Conference File in Conference of Mennonites of Saskatchewan Collection, Volume 2947. Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg.

⁵Henry H. Funk, "Twenty-Five Years of Change in Saskatchewan," in **Mennonite Reporter** 2 April 1984, p. 5, section B.

Donor Acknowledgment

The Heritage Centre wishes to thank all those individuals and businesses who have made a financial contribution to the work of the Centre in the past six months. The Centre depends on voluntary financial contributions for 10% of its budget. Listed below are the donors for September 1985 to February 1986. Once again, our thanks.

Anita Bergen, Kitchener, Ontario; P.C. Bergen, Kitchener, Ontario; Peter Bergen, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Joanna Buhr, Calgary, Alberta; Peter Dyck, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Anna Eitzen, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Wm. P. Enns, Kleeefeld, Manitoba; Werner Epp, Winkler, Manitoba; D.W. Friesen & Sons, Altona, Manitoba; E. Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba; T.E. Friesen, Altona, Manitoba; Peter Funk, Lucky Lake, Saskatchewan; Tina Gollan, Edmonton, Alberta; John W. Hiebert, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Lawrence & LaVerna Klippenstein, Bromley, England; Walter E. Kroeker, Winnipeg, Manitoba; William Kruger, Kitchener, Ontario; Ron Lamp, Swift Current, Saskatchewan; Edmund A. Lehn, Edmonton, Alberta; Katherine Martens, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Maria Naeser, Niagara on the Lake, Ontario; David T. Penner, Kleeefeld, Manitoba; Sylvia Regier, Laird, Saskatchewan; David G. Rempel, Menlo Park, California; Henry Sawatzky, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Ron Sawatzky, Toronto, Ontario; Ed Stoesz, Altona, Manitoba; Sarah Stoesz, Altona, Manitoba; George Thielmann, Clearbrook, British Columbia; Walter's Mac Tools, Boissevain, Manitoba; Jacob Wiens, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Mary Grace Wilson, Sperling, Manitoba.

Donations are always welcome; income tax deductible receipts are issued for donations above \$5.00.



Part of the Centre's bound periodical collection. These, along with loose and microfilm copies are available to the public at the Centre. (Photo by Dennis Stoesz)

The Periodical Collection of Mennonite Heritage Centre

by Beverly Suderman, MHC Staff

Editor's Note: This article is the second in the four-part series featuring various collections of the Heritage Centre. It is hoped that these articles will inform the readers of some of the lesser-known collections of the Centre and make them more accessible.

From Mennonite history to technical data about "archiving" to regional history to local newspapers; from Russia to the Netherlands to South America; from English to Russian to German to Dutch—this is a sample of the range of periodicals collected by the Mennonite Heritage Centre archives. In bound volumes and loose copies the archives holds nearly 500 titles. Various catalogues make the collection accessible to researchers.

The wide range of serials collected by the Centre is valuable to many types of researchers. Obituaries in weekly papers such as **Der Bote**, **Mennonitisches Rundschau** or **Saskatchewan Valley News**, for example provide the genealogist with information about little-known previous generations and may indeed give details not otherwise available. A church historian will find reports about special meetings and church events hidden within the pages of the religious papers. The writer of a community history will likewise find otherwise forgotten bits of history in the local paper or perhaps in a religious paper as well. More scholarly journals provide the researcher with not only the views of a century ago, but also with the most current trends of thought.

Another tool making periodicals a valuable source of information are the indices specific to certain titles. **Der Bote**, **The Mennonite**, **Mennonite Historian**, **Mennonite Life**, **Mennonite Mirror**, **Mennonite**

Quarterly Review and **Mennonite Reporter** are all indexed for part or all of their runs. This makes finding articles on specific topics or about specific people or places a less complicated task.

The periodical collection, though large and extensive, is by no means complete. Collecting is an ongoing process. Many times, when individuals "clean out" their homes of several decades in preparation for a move into an apartment, for example, their periodicals are offered to us. And often, these offers yield some "new" material for our collection. At other times, the archives may directly approach someone who is known to have certain periodicals and ask to microfilm or photocopy them. Other archives or libraries are also a source of back issues when they find themselves with duplicate copies and then share these with institutions in need of those particular copies.

In addition to the original copies of periodicals, some longer runs of rarer periodicals are on microfilm and enable us to make available otherwise inaccessible materials. Recent microfilming of the **Steinbach Post**, for example, has made its privately-owned early issues available to researchers.

Periodicals are a fascinating but often frustrating item. Where else but in periodicals does one frequently find title changes, volumes combined, changes in size and format? But then, where else is there such a wealth of information about topics ranging from church history to genealogy to paper conservation to current trends in Mennonite thought?

The periodicals of the Mennonite Heritage Centre are available for use by the public and as with all our collections, are available for use in the archives only.

Happenings

Bicentennial: Special issue of **Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage** commemorating the **Canadian Mennonite Bicentennial** (1786-1986) will be published in April of this year. It will include photos by Jan Gleysteen, articles about early Mennonite migrations from Pennsylvania and the life of pioneer Mennonite leader, Benjamin Eby, plus its regular features. Persons interested in this 48-page special issue should send (US) \$5.00 to Florence O. Horning, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602.

Forth-coming book: Close-ups of the Great Awakening is a compilation of letters, diary excerpts, biographies and newspaper reports dealing with the divisions of the (Old) Mennonite Church during the late 19th and early 20th century in both Canada and the USA. This 332-page book is available for a pre-publication price of \$6.50 until September 1, 1986 from the compiler, Isaac R. Horst, R.R. 2, Mount Forest, Ontario N0G 2L0. After September 1, the book will retail for \$7.95.

Reunion: A Stoesz family reunion for all North American Stoeszes is planned for June 21st & 22nd, 1986 in Steinbach, Manitoba. For more information contact Dick Blatz, P.O. Box 807, Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0 (Ph. 204 377-4218).

Awards: Treasures and Traditions, a 1985 exhibition which displayed paintings, prints, rare books, folk art, etc., from 25 ethnocultural collections in Manitoba, received two awards of distinction for its design and overall high calibre. Several items from the collection of the Heritage Centre were on display at the exhibition.

New book: The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism: The Grebel Letters and Related Documents, an 816-page hardcover book edited by Leland Harder, has just been published by Herald Press. The book is a major source of information on the events leading up to the beginning of the Anabaptist movement in 1525 and is available through your local bookstore.

Celebrations: Mennonite Village Museum of Steinbach is celebrating five special events this summer: "Spring on the Farm" May 19th; "Paraguay Fest" June 21st; "Canada Day" July 1st; "Pioneer Days" August 1st-4th; and "Labour Day" September 1st. For more information contact MVM, P.O. Box 1136, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0 (Ph. 204 326-9661).



This long-time residence of the Frank Suderman family in Reinland, Manitoba (now the home of the Jake Fehr family) is an excellent example of the attached house-barns built by the early Mennonite settlers to the West Reserve. (Photo courtesy Harold Funk)

Books Available from Heritage Centre

Berg, Abram. **Dietrich Heinrich Epp: Aus seinem Leben, Wirken und selbstaufgezeichneten Erinnerungen.** Saskatoon, SK: Heese House of Printing, 1973. 87 p. German. \$3.00.

A brief biography with photos and illustrations about this Russian Mennonite teacher and former editor of the German-language periodical, *Der Bote*.

Epp, Frank H. **The Glory and the Shame: Editorials on the past, present and future of the Mennonite church.** Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Mennonite Publishing Assoc., 1968. 79 p. English. \$2.00.

A collection of the late Frank H. Epp's editorials from *The Canadian Mennonite* during his final year (1966-67) as editor of that paper.

Epp, Frank H. **Stories with Meaning: A Guide for the Writing of Congregational Histories.** Winnipeg, MB: Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, 1978. 32 p. English. \$2.00.

A brief guide to assist those working on a written history of their congregation.

Gerbrandt, Henry J. **Adventure in Faith.** Altona, MB: Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1970. Illus. 379 p. English. \$10.00.

A history of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, its development and growth by one who was involved with this *Gemeinde* for many years.

Isaac, Frank K. **Elim: 50th Anniversary, 1929-1979.** Winnipeg, MB: Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 1979. Illus. 60 p. English. \$2.00.

A brief history of the Elim Bible School of Altona, Manitoba.

Jeffery, Mary Dueck, ed. **Ältester Johann Funk: A Family Tree with Notes on His Life and Work.** Winnipeg, MB, 1980. 229 p. Illus. English. \$10.00.

A brief biography of Johann Funk, a minister and an Ältester of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba along

with a genealogy.

Klippenstein, Lawrence, ed. **Directory of Mennonite Archives and Historical Libraries.** Winnipeg, MB: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 1984. 28 p. English/German/French. \$5.00.

A listing of Mennonite archival centres and historical libraries of four continents.

Klippenstein, Lawrence, ed. **That There Be Peace: Mennonites in Canada and World War II.** Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba CO Reunion Committee, 1979. Illus. 104 p. English. \$7.95.

An album portraying the life of Mennonite conscientious objectors during WWII and the alternative service they did.

Manitoba Mennonite Women in Mission. **History of Manitoba Mennonite Women in Mission, 1942-1977.** Winnipeg, MB: MMWM, 1977. Illus. 96 p. English & German. \$2.00.

Brief overview of the history of Manitoba Mennonite Women in Mission and each of its member groups.

Peters, Gerhard I. **Remember Our Leaders: Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 1902-1977.** Clearbrook, B.C.: Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia, 1982. Illus. 189 p. English. \$10.00.

An album commemorating the work and lives of ministers and leaders of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

Wiebe, Gerhard. **Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America.** Trans. by Helen Janzen. Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981. 73 p. English. \$5.00. English translation of Wiebe's 1901 *Ursachen und Geschichte*.

Please send your orders to the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4. Do not send payment; we will bill you for the books and for postage costs. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.