

Mennonite Historian



A side view of the Rosenort (Scratching River) Windmill. It was of standard smock mill design. The windmill cap rotated on a metal track. Any change in wind direction would cause the "fan" to turn, which would then move the whole cap until the sails faced directly into the wind. (Photo courtesy Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Windmills in Early Manitoba Communities, 1876-1924

by Jake E. Peters

Mennonites have a long-standing involvement with wind milling. In 1650 the Mennonite minister Pieter Pietersz built a windmill in the Zaan district of Holland which is still operational. In Prussia also the Mennonites built many windmills, largely for draining wetlands.

In Russia "corn milling" became the sole object of Mennonite mills. When the Prussian Mennonite delegates negotiated the terms of settlement with the Tsarina's officials they insisted on assistance in building several windmills. The windmill quickly

became a prominent feature on the landscape of the Russian Mennonite colonies. By 1860 there were one or more in most villages in the colonies of Khortitza and Molotschna. By 1865 even the less-prosperous Bergthal Colony had five windmills.¹

Windmill Design

Until 1890 the Mennonites utilized three types of mills: post mills, smock mills and tower mills. The post mills were usually fairly small and were built so that the whole unit could rotate on a fixed post.

Among the Mennonites in Prussia and Russia (especially in the Khortitza Colony), the post mill was the type most commonly used.² Despite their small size some of these mills generated enough power to run two sets of millstones. The post mills also had the advantages of being inexpensive and long-lasting.

A second type, the smock mill, was usually found in areas where wood was the most plentiful building material. The name is derived from this mill's resemblance to a peasant's smock. The design originated in the mid-seventeenth century. The body was fixed, but the cap could be turned in order to face the sails into the wind. All the early (pre-1885) Manitoba Mennonite windmills were of this type, including those at Grünfeld, Tannenau, Eigenhof and Steinbach (East Reserve), Rosenort (Scratching River), Reinland, Rosenthal and Burwalde (West Reserve). J.F. Galbraith, a co-pioneer in southern Manitoba with the first Mennonite settlers in the early 1870s and careful observer of their developing settlements for twenty-five years, wrote of these mills in 1900:

A quaint institution of the Mennonites when they first came to Manitoba, was their flour mills. These are of very ancient pattern, the buildings being of octagonal construction and pyramidal in design, and a good deal more capacious than they appear to be at first sight. They had a height of about 30 feet. The grinding power was derived from the wind, and the great arms and huge sails of the motor looked decidedly pretentious from underneath. Several of these mills are still standing and are a novel sight in this country.³

The final type was the tower mill. It was round rather than polygonal, but shared the rotating cap design of the smock mill. Tower mills were built of stone or brick and were larger and more expensive than the other types of mills. They could have as many as eight floors whereas most smock mills had four or five floors and post mills had only two. This design was used by the Mennonites in Russia. The mills in Blumenort, Blumstein and Alexanderkrone in Molotschna and at Spat in the Crimea were all tower mills.⁴

Mills in Manitoba

One can trace the beginnings of milling in Manitoba to the early days of settlement.

Endnotes

such a situation an experienced miller would usually run the maximum amount possible of grain through the stones. Next he would have to uncouple the fantail (which kept the sails faced into the wind) and then, by hand, crank the mill around ninety degrees to face it out of the wind. The mill could then be stopped with the brake.

In approximately 1895 a mill was built in the village of Reinfeld. This mill was a departure from European windmill design. It did not have sails, but rather a large fan with many smaller sections attached to it. Each of these sections had many small metal blades to catch the wind. When one wanted to stop the mill these sections could be folded forward mechanically. If the mill was faced into the wind it would cease turning. The fan could be manually turned into the wind.

This mill was quite distinctive although it is possible that either the Gnadenthal, Neuhorst or Neu Bergthal mills (of which no known photographs exist) used a similar design. The Reinfeld mill bears a strong resemblance to mills advertised in the van Allen and Agur implements catalogue at the turn of the century.

Finally it should be noted that there were several other windmills about which we know little besides the fact that they existed.⁹ The mill in Gnadenthal was set up in 1898 by Johann Wall after he sold his properties in Blumenort (he had owned a steam-powered mill in the latter village). He moved the whole mill to Gnadenthal where he rebuilt it as a windmill which he used for grinding animal feed.

The Neuhorst windmill did not follow the traditional designs. It had a fan with metal blades, but whether or not it had any of the features of the Reinfeld mill is not certain. The mill was in use from about 1895 to 1921 and was used only for grinding feed. According to one source, a young man met his death in an accident in this mill.¹⁰ The mill stood in the community pasture allotment.

The only known windmill among the Bergthaler settlers of the West Reserve was located in the village of Neu Bergthal. Ray Hamm says the following of it:

A windmill helped ... [the villagers] meet more of their own needs. George Hamm was ... one of the technicians in the village and he had the windmill. He crushed grain for cattle feed and apparently also ground flour for household use. It was a great relief when he acquired a stationary engine to power his grinder: he no longer had to wait for the wind. Later Mr. Gerbrand bought this whole unit.¹¹

It is interesting to note that each Mennonite group which settled in Manitoba, whether Old Colony, *Kleine Gemeinde* or Bergthaler, accepted a broad range of milling technology. All of them used both steam and wind-powered mills. In this area, at least, the terms conservative and progressive lose their meaning.

¹ William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1974), p. 22.

² For photographs and illustrations see Gerhard Lohrenz, *Heritage Remembered* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1977), pp. 6-8, 35, 197, 247.

³ J.F. Galbraith, *The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Morden, Manitoba: *The Chronicle Press*, 1900), p. 34. Some of the mills were more than thirty feet tall. It should also be noted that not all smock mills were eight-sided. They could also be six, ten or twelve-sided.

⁴ See Lohrenz, pp. 188-189, 245.

⁵ Aubrey Fullerton, "Flour Centennial in Western Canada," *Northwestern Miller*, (September 8, 1926), p. 978. See also A.S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973); and Barry Kaye, "Flour Milling at Red River: Wind, Water and Steam," *Manitoba History*, Vol. II (1981), pp. 12-20.

⁶ John Warkentin, "The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1960, p. 157.

⁷ Peter Abrams, *Mennonitische Rundschau*, Vol. VII (December 15, 1886), p. 1.

⁸ For the whole section on the Reinland mill I have relied heavily on Peter D. Zacharias, *Reinland: An Experience in Community* (Reinland, Manitoba: Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976), pp. 122-123, 129-130.

⁹ Because the factual base on windmills is very limited and because any "facts" which are discovered are unrelated to what is already known and cannot usually be confirmed by any independent source, writing about windmills of southern Manitoba is very problematic.

¹⁰ Zacharias, p. 130, says this accident occurred in Reinland; however, in an interview of Jacob Rempel by this writer, Rempel maintained that it happened in Neuhorst. On the basis of existing information one cannot determine what was in fact the case.

¹¹ Ray Hamm, ed., *Neu Bergthal: Heritage and Cookbook*, (Transcona, Manitoba: Gateway Publishing, 1980), p. 15.

Jake E. Peters, Winnipeg, Manitoba, is completing a one-year project at the Heritage Centre where he has been compiling a guide to and inventory of the Centre.

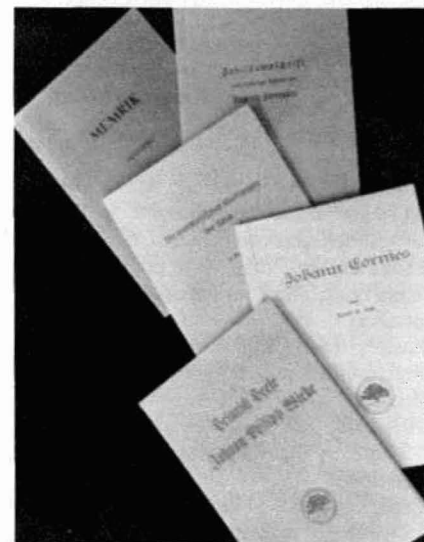
Echo-Verlag Series to be Translated

A joint translation and publication of the fourteen historical monographs of the *Echo-Verlag* has been agreed upon by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and CMBC Publications. These monographs deal with various aspects of the Russian Mennonite experience under such titles as *Die Tereker Ansiedlung* [The Terek Settlement], *Sagradowka*, and *Templer mennonitischer Herkunft* [Templer of Mennonite background]. The volumes were authored by members of *Echo-Verlag*, all former students of the *Chortitzer Zentralschule*. Written in the German language, the monographs were originally published from 1945 to 1965.

The volumes will appear in English over the next five years at the rate of approximately three per year. Elizabeth Peters is already at work translating *Die Flucht Über den Amur* [the story of those Mennonites escaping from the USSR via China] and *Unser Auszug nach Mittelasien* [the Klaas Epp story].

The translation project is under the direction of an editorial committee consisting of Victor Doerksen (Head of the German Department at the University of Manitoba) as series editor, Harry Loewen (Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg) representing MMHS, and John Friesen (Associate Professor of History at Canadian Mennonite Bible College) representing CMBC Publications.

The translation and publication of these fourteen monographs will make a valuable resource available to a generation of Mennonites whose language of study is English.



These are five of the fourteen titles in the *Echo-Verlag Historical Series* which will be translated into English and published during the next five years by CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

The Red River settlement had a functioning windmill in 1826.⁵ As agriculture developed, ever increasing numbers of mills were built, with new mills being constructed in the settlement until at least the 1860s.

The Mennonites of Manitoba built or rebuilt eleven windmills in the period between 1876 and 1906. Not all of these mills were of the same type. Three were reconstructed mills from the Red River settlement, four were smock mills built by Mennonite carpenters, and several were of contemporary North American mill design.

The documentation on these mills is rather scanty. Seemingly there are no extant records regarding either their design or operation. Everything that can be deduced about them is drawn from several old photographs.

East Reserve Mills

In Manitoba the Mennonites first ventured into windmill construction in 1876, when several East Reserve villages bought three Red River windmills. The mills essentially followed the smock mill design. Neither the locations from which these mills originated nor their condition at time of purchase is certain. They were moved to the villages of Grünfeld, Tannenau and Eigenhof. The latter two were reconstructed by Peter K. Barkman, who had been involved with windmill building in Russia. None of these windmills lasted long. According to John Warkentin, they "all disappeared without a trace."⁶

In 1876 a steam-powered mill was constructed in the village of Reinfeld. This meant there were four mills within a three-mile radius of Tannenau. Competition in the milling business further increased when a well-constructed steam-powered mill was built in Steinbach in 1880. The final blow to this saturated industry came in the late 1870s and early 1880s when many people moved from this area to the West Reserve. It is not surprising that these mills all disappeared in a short time. What is surprising is that they lasted even a few years.

West Reserve Windmills

In the West Reserve the development of milling followed a somewhat different course. The reserve quickly became one of the most densely populated areas in the province.

Four service centres sprang up in the area in the first quarter century after settlement. In addition to this there was a host of small agricultural villages whose people wanted feed ground for their animals and flour for household use, and they wanted these services as close to their village as possible. Distance was a greater obstacle when one travelled by ox and cart.

The first windmill in the West Reserve was



This mill is of hollow post mill (Wipmolen) design and was located at one of the Mennonite settlements in Prussia. The sails were faced into the wind by means of the tail pole which can be seen extending from the rear of the cap. This mill was likely used for pumping water, that is, for drainage, and not for grain milling. (Photo courtesy Mennonite Heritage Centre)

built in Reinland in about 1879. There is some question regarding the identity of the builder of the Reinland mill. John E. Veer wrote in a letter that he himself was the carpenter who built the first flour mill in the West Reserve. The reference is vague and might also refer to the Blumenort mill. Since Veer lived in Reinland, however, and was closely associated with many people there, it was probably a reference to the Reinland mill. It is certain that its original owner was Johann Bergman, a wealthy Reinland resident. In the 1881 tax roll the mill was assessed at three hundred dollars, although the building costs may have been almost as great as those of the Steinbach mill.

In December 1886 Johann Bergmann died and Jacob Giesbrecht, formerly of Michaelsburg (Fürstenland), South Russia, purchased the mill for seven hundred seventy-five dollars. A letter in the *Rund-*

schau announced that he was planning to add another set of millstones for the purpose of producing flour.⁷ Until this time the mill had been used only for animal feed. For flour-milling the people had relied on the steam-powered mills in Walhalla, North Dakota, and Blumenort.⁸

In June 1888 a near disaster was experienced at the Reinland windmill. A continuous back-and-forth shifting of the wind between north-west and south-west markedly increased the wind velocity. The miller became aware of the fact that his sails were rotating at far too great a speed. He applied the brake but found that the force of the wind was too great for the brake to stop the mill. The application of the brake heated the brakeshoes so that the whole upper story was filled with smoke. By the time neighbours arrived to help, the windmill had begun pitching badly.

How the mill was stopped is uncertain. In



The Menno Simons memorial in Witmarsum, The Netherlands. On May 25th, some two thousand Doopsgezinde (Dutch Mennonites) celebrated the 450th anniversary of Menno's leaving of the Roman Catholic Church at Witmarsum. A highlight of the celebration was the presentation of the drama, "Strength in Weakness." A few days earlier, May 20th-24th, an international ecumenical group of sixty academics met in Amsterdam at a "by invitation only" symposium on Menno sponsored by the University of Amsterdam and the Mennonite Seminary. Included among those who presented papers were Walter Klaassen and Werner Packull of Conrad Grebel College, G. K. Epp of the Mennonite Studies Centre and C. J. Dyck of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries. (Photo courtesy of Lawrence Klippenstein)

1986 CMBC Mennonite Studies Research Projects

Every year, students of Mennonite history at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College are asked to submit a copy of their final research paper to the archives. These papers are based largely on primary sources and cover a wide range of topics and interests.

These unpublished works, as well as other unpublished essays at the Centre are available for research purposes to visitors. Most are also available in photocopied form at 20¢ per page plus mailing costs to researchers not able to visit the Centre.

Biographies and Family Histories

Kevin D. Boldt. *The Boldt Family History*. 27 pp.

Susan Culp. *Mennonite and Amish Migration from Switzerland to America and to Southern Ontario with Reference to the Culp, Cressman, and Gerber Families*. 28 pp. & 10 pp. appendices.

Viola Enns. *The Enns Family*. 43 pp. & 20 pp. appendices.

Audrey Falk. *Experiences of the Russian Revolution: A Personal Account*. 26 pp. & 40 pp. appendices.

Helga R. Goetzke. *Bruno Albert Götzke 1895-1962. A Short History*. 31 pp. & 60 pp. appendices.

Fred Kopeschny. *Travels of the Kopeschny Family*. 16 pp. & 19 pp. appendices.

Steven Pauls. *John Buhler: An Interview with a Mennonite Businessman*. 13 pp.

Paul Reesor. *Biography and Genealogy of Pauline F. (Short) Reesor and John A. Short and Joseph B. Short*. 42 pp.

Sherry Sawatzky. *Abram Olfert Family History*. 22 pp.

Brenda Shantz. *The Descendants of Jacob Shantz and the Swiss Mennonite Movement*. 15 pp. & 20 pp. appendices.

Conference and Mission Studies

Ray Boehm - *Ministerial Shifts: MCOQ and WOM*. 18 pp.

Rudolf Arno Heinrichs - *Die Geschichte der Mennonitengemeinde in Brasilien*. 28 pp.

Randy Hildebrand - *Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization*. 60 pp.

Don Paetkau - *Mennonite Congregations in Winnipeg (with map)*.

Sharon Schwartzentruber - *Mennonite Congregations in Ontario (with map)*. 22 pp. & map.

Cindy Wiebe - *General Conference Mennonite Missions in Columbia*. 25 pp.

Mel Wiens - *The Amalgamation of Menno Bible Institute and Swift Current Bible Institute*. 13 pp. & 30 pp. appendices.

Lorie Yantzi - *A Study of the Northern Light Gospel Mission*. 43 pp. with photos.

Congregational Histories

Gerald Friesen - *Elim Mennonite Church of Grunthal: 1979-1985*. 19 pp.

Audrey D. Heinrichs - *Rosenfeld Berghaler Mennonite Church*. 13 pp. & 8 pp. appendices.

Gerald Krahn - *The Story of the Graysville Mennonite Church*. 20 pp. & 7 pp. appendices.

Michael Peak - *History of the First Mennonite Church of Reedley, California, 1981-86*. 16 pp. & 28 pp. appendices.

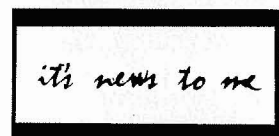
Martha Penner - *Die Gemeinde zu Blumenau: In a missionary's perspective*. 19 pp.

Kim Rempel - *The Native Christian Church of Winnipeg*. 17 pp.

New Audio-Visual for Mennonite Archives

"It's news to me!" is the title of the new audio-visual presentation commissioned by the three major Mennonite archives in Canada — Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Waterloo; Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg; and Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg. The 17-minute presentation, consisting of slides and cassette tape, is designed to both promote the archival institutions and to educate the public about the work of an archives. It stars a snoopy reporter who stumbles upon the Mennonite Heritage Centre, and realizing a good story when he sees one, seeks out the other two major archives in the Canadian Mennonite world.

Using shots from all three archives and featuring the real-life staff of the three archives as well as their researchers, writers/photographers Gareth Neufeld and Allan Siebert have developed an entertaining and informative look at the world of an archives. For information regarding use of "It's news to me" contact any of the archival centres. The set is available for a nominal rental fee to cover postage and handling costs. It makes a good starter for a discussion on Mennonite heritage.



Tim Sawatzky - *The Story of the Home Street Mennonite Youth, 1958-86*. 18 pp.

Tamara Toews - *A History of the Arnaud Mennonite Church and its changes from 1924-1986*. 22 pp.

Mennonites in Society

Paul Bergen - *References to Russian Mennonite Immigration & Colonization in Manitoba in Canada: Sessional Papers 1873-1883*. 112 pp.

Deb Dyck - *Abortion: The Mennonite View*. 49 pp.

Monique Enns - *A History of the MCC Ottawa Office*. 25 pp. & ca. 50 pp. appendices.

Mark Epp - *Mennonites in Military Service during World War II*. 41 pp. & 36 pp. appendices.

Debbie Hoepfner - *Mennonites and Jury Duty*. 12 pp. & 19 pp. appendices.

Valerie Peters - *Mennonites in the Canadian Armed Forces in World War II*. 7 pp.

Rhoda Stoesz - *Responses to the Portrayal of Amish in the Movie "Witness"*. 12 pp. & 51 pp. appendices.

Miscellaneous

Kathy Dahl and David Ediger - *Mennonite Congregations in Manitoba and Winnipeg (maps)*.

Byron Neufeld - *The Umsiedler*. 10 pp.

Ed Toews - *Warum Mennoniten Ihre Gemeinden Verlassen*. 14 pp.

Book Reviews

Brown, Isaac "Ike". **From Russian Steppe to Canadian Range**. Three Hills, Alberta: EMF Press Ltd., 1985. 110 p. Available from Ike Brown, Linden, Alberta T0M 1J0 for \$11.00.

Reviewed by Vera K. Fast.

Family history, like local history, is of great interest to those familiar with the terrain. Isaac Brown traces "four generations of Jacob Braun," from 1834 to the present, and from Europe to Manitoba and Alberta with several points in between. He presents his research in genealogical tables and photographs, in prose and occasional poetry.

Without doubt those related to the Brauns will benefit from these sketches and reminiscences, and this, after all, is the purpose of the slender volume. Brown explicitly states, "Now my grandchildren can read about their great great grandfather." That they can. But they will learn nothing about their great great grandmother, or the other grandmothers for that matter, for they are barely mentioned. While the book has other problems, the chief disappointment is this patriarchal approach. It reduces the genealogy to the Jacob Braun story instead of a Braun family history. Perhaps this is all the author intended. In that case, he has succeeded.

In spite of these criticisms, the reviewer applauds "Ike" Brown. He has preserved a piece of anecdotal history valuable not only to his family but to the whole Mennonite community. Would that more of our older people had the courage and vision to follow his example.

Vera K. Fast is an archivist at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba in Winnipeg.

Peters, Jake. **The Waisenamt: A History of Mennonite Inheritance Custom and Mennonite Private Schools in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 1874-1925**. Steinbach, Manitoba: Mennonite Village Museum, 1985. Volumes I & II of Mennonite Village Museum Historical Series. 24 p. & 36 p. \$3.00 & \$4.00, available from MVM, PO Box 1136, Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0.

Reviewed by Ken Reddig.

The Mennonite Village Museum is to be commended for beginning a series which attempts to explain various facets of Mennonite life in Russia and Canada. This series was begun out of the recognized need for information on how Mennonites dealt with inheritance matters and with the education of its youth.



Dave and Trudy Schellenberg are the creators and managers of the Christian Heritage Library. Located in their home in Winkler, Manitoba, their library holds original sermons of forty-three ministers from twelve denominations and 3700 articles or books relating to our Christian heritage. The Schellenbergs invite visitors to their library at 184-7th Street in Winkler. Their phone number for more information is (204) 325-9664. (Photo courtesy Dennis Stoesz)

In the first booklet, **The Waisenamt**, the way which Mennonites dealt with inheritance and the care of orphans is carefully explained. Tracing its roots to Prussia, the author notes the development of the principle of the village sharing in the responsibility for the less fortunate individuals within the community. What eventually came into practice was a system which attempted to be fair to all survivors in the family, and called upon the assistance of the community to help with relevant matters ranging from the assessment of an estate to becoming the guardians of an orphaned child. The **Waisenamt** system reinforced the biblical principle which the Mennonites had preached for generations: that people had to concern themselves with the well-being of their neighbours.

Illustrated with photos of numerous documents and several maps, this booklet is a good summary of the important and necessary institution of the **Waisenamt**. In our modern age of layered and complex government bureaucracies it is a fitting reminder that the simple, well-thought through principles of the past were often just as effective.

The second booklet, **Mennonite Private Schools**, describes the development of education with the Mennonite communities in Russia and Canada. Well-illustrated, with a delightful centrefold of colour photos of Fraktur pieces, this booklet reminds the reader that the education of young people and the attempt to retain them as good citizens with the community have been the historic goals of Mennonites.

While schooling was obviously more simplified then, often retaining only the Bible as the basic text, the values and goals

were essentially the same as those which we promote today. These people for whom faith and practice were to be united perceived that, outside of the home and church, the school was the major force which could deprive the village community of the resource of its youth. For this reason, any outside incursion upon the sacred right of training their youth was looked upon by Mennonites as having detrimental effects upon the future life of the community.

Both booklets are well-written. If they have any flaw it would lie in the fact that in each the Mennonite story tends to be isolated from the broader Canadian context. While Mennonites may have attempted to retain their isolation, often the systems they developed on their own were not significantly different from those of other religious and ethnic communities around them. The place of the Mennonite community within the Canadian context is important, particularly when it is being interpreted for the casual visitor.

Both booklets have been divided into brief sections which essentially outline the text, allowing the casual reader to easily find answers to questions about either subject. The booklets should find use beyond the Steinbach Mennonite Village Museum and should be placed in most school libraries. With the fine bibliography included on the back pages of both, these booklets are valuable resources for students writing essays on Mennonites.

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



The title page of Antje Brons's history of the Mennonites, the first such history.

Berlin Mennonite Centennial Year

by Lawrence Klippenstein

The Mennonites of Berlin, now meeting in both parts of that divided city, held their first Sunday worship service one hundred years ago on January 17th, 1886. Elizabeth Köhler Brons, one of the participants in that first service, described the experience in a letter a few days after that Sunday to her aunt, Antje Brons of Emden, North Germany.

This newly-discovered letter was prepared for publication by Heinold Fast, pastor of several Mennonite congregations in North Germany. It appeared in the second issue of the new German Mennonite publication, *Mennonitische Gemeindeblatt Brücke*.¹

The letter speaks eloquently of both the hardships of church life in the city and the meaningfulness of that first gathering. Elizabeth Brons's letter to her aunt is a fitting reminder not only of the occasion of the Berlin Mennonite Church's centenary but also of the dedication of all those who struggled to make the urban church a reality.

Berlin, January 23, 1886

My honoured Aunt,

Because I know you will be interested, and, in part because Justus is very busy, and may not answer your letter immediately (though he is most grateful for it), I want to share with you something of our experience at the first worship service of local Mennonites held here last Sunday.

Since no church building seemed to be available for an early Sunday meeting, it was held in a room of the City Hotel. There were some distractions, but these

were quickly overcome when Pastor Hinrich van der Smissen entered the room to address about sixty persons present on the occasion.² His text was the passage from Ephesians 2:19-22 with its central theme, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and are of God's household."

The pastor's sermon, simply delivered, nevertheless spoke to the hearts of the listeners. In a graphic way he was able to explain many a parable. For example, he used this expression: "Stone, do you want to fit into our structure? Then you must allow yourself to be cut to the right shape."

O my dear aunt, there is so much truth in these words! It's been a long time since I heard such a gripping sermon; I must admit, that is to say, that life in the city seems to alienate us from the church. When we first came to Berlin I would try again and again, visiting the services, but I gave up because I could not find there what I needed. But I did not give up the faith. Instead I tried to seek nurture at home or in the beautiful nature of God's creation. It satisfied me fully.

But Sunday was much different — one cannot say it in words; it must be experienced. What took place had in it something so moving, as one took note of the way in which this small group of fellow-believers eagerly clung to the words of the preacher. I will always remember this moment.

The 17th of January had a special significance for us because it was the date not only of founding the congregation, but was also my birthday. Never have we celebrated that occasion so solemnly as we did last Sunday.

On Monday, January 18, further discussions took place at the City Hotel, this time about the need for a seminary. You, my dear aunt, were mentioned also when in a kind way Pastor van der Smissen noted how a woman had contributed much to the writing of Mennonite history. The woman he said, was Mrs. Antje Brons of Emden who had written a book about the Mennonites.³

When such topics had been dealt with, there was time for socializing and relaxation. We were not, it seemed, people who had never met, but gathered as a large family with a sense of belonging together. It gave us a feeling of intimacy and caring. If such a feeling of togetherness continues in this group, then the first founding stone for a congregation has been laid here in Berlin. May God grant it be so!

We have been saddened to hear about the difficulties of Onkel. Justus has often told me how active Onkel Isaac has been, and now his strength too must give way. May God give him a quiet and blessed parting and provide you, my dear aunt with

strength and comfort to endure this loss. Justus and I send our warmest greetings to you and your dear ones.

Your loving niece,
E. Brons

The letter would become something more than a personal exchange. Antje Brons sent it on to Dr. Samuel Cramer of Zwolle, who subsequently played an important role in the founding of the Union of German Mennonite Congregations (*Vereinigung der deutschen Mennonitengemeinden*) in April of 1886. In his own comments on the gathering of January 17, Pastor van der Smissen wrote to Antje Brons: "We have been so encouraged by the affirmations of various participants and the wonderful blessing of God which the first worship service has left upon the group."⁴

Endnotes

¹ "Elizabeth Brons war dabei," *Mennonitische Gemeindeblatt Brücke*, Vol. I, No. 2 (February 1986), pp. 25-26. For more information on various participants and the German conference structures, see *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch 1986*.

² Hinrich van der Smissen had become the pastor of the Mennonite congregation in Hamburg-Altona the year before. He remained at the post until 1928. Cf. D.G. Lichdi, *Über Zürich und Witmarsum nach Addis Abeba*. (Maxdorf: Agape Verlag, 1983), p. 318; and *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch 1986*.

³ Cf. Antje Brons, *Ursprung, Entwicklung und Schicksale der Taufgesinnten oder Mennoniten in kurzen Zügen übersichtlich dargestellt von Frauenhand* (Norden, 1884). It was the first comprehensive history written about Mennonites and was reprinted in 1912.

⁴ "Elizabeth Brons war dabei," p. 25.

Lawrence Klippenstein, his wife LaVerna and son Jerry will be returning from their sabbatical in early July when Lawrence will return to the Heritage Centre as archivist/historian. The Klippensteins are spending the final months of their leave in Leopoldshöhe, about 400 km from Berlin, F.R. Germany.



Hinrich van der Smissen preached the sermon at the first worship service of the Mennonites in Berlin in 1886. (Photo from D.G. Lichdi, *Über Zürich und Witmarsum nach Addis Abeba*, 1983)

Book Notes

Mennonites in Canada, Vol. III: Mennonite Historical Society of Canada recently announced the appointment of Ted Regehr and Marlene Epp as writers for the third volume of the *Mennonites in Canada* series. The first two volumes of that series were written by Frank H. Epp, who died this past January. Both Ted Regehr and Marlene Epp are well-acquainted with the project, Regehr having served as president of the society for six years and Epp having worked as researcher/writer with her father for three years. The book should be published by the end of this decade.

Ship Index to be Published: An index to over 200 ships which carried nearly 15,000 Mennonites to the U.S. during the last quarter of the 19th century is being published by the Mennonite Library and Archives (Bethel College). The Index will include date of arrival, ship name, port of entry, names, ages and occupation of immigrants. *Index to Mennonite Immigrants* is available from the Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas 67117 at \$15.00 US until July 1st, and at \$20.00 US after July 1st.

New Book on Mennonite Women: A June release is planned for *Encircled: Stories of Mennonite Women* by Ruth Unrau. It includes 30 biographies of Mennonite women from several continents, from 1850 to the present. It is available from Faith and Life Press for \$9.95 US.

Bergthal Colony: A revised edition of William Schroeder's 1974 *Bergthal Colony* is planned for August release by CMBC Publications. To order, write CMBC Publications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4.

Bicentennial Books: Two books have been commissioned for the Mennonite Bicentennial and are planned to be available this summer. One is a biography of Jacob Y. Shantz by Samuel Steiner; Shantz was a significant Mennonite church and community leader who helped settle Mennonites from Russia and opened up the Canadian West. The second, by Maurice Martin, will be an illustrated composite portrayal of the Amish, Brethren in Christ and Mennonite history, life, faith and culture. Both can be ordered from the Bicentennial Commission, 50 Kent Avenue, Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1.

Reprint of *Mennonites in Ontario*: L.J. Burkholder's, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario*, originally published in 1935, has recently been reprinted by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. It is available from MHSO, Lorna Bergey, RR#2, New Hamburg, Ontario N0B 2G0 for \$25.00.



Margaret Franz is librarian of the CMBC Library and the Mennonite Historical Library.

The Collection of the Mennonite Historical Library

by Beverly Suderman, MHC Staff

Editor's Note: This article is the third 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.

The collection of the Mennonite Historical Library is an important tool for researchers at both the Heritage Centre and the Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC). The Historical Library, which today comprises approximately 2,000 titles, covers a wide range of topics — Mennonite history, theology, literature, hymnody, congregational and institutional history, genealogy and others. Researchers in nearly any area of study in the Mennonite world will find something of use in this library.

When CMBC first opened its doors in 1947, the College library was still very much in its beginning stages. However, by 1950, the College catalogue boasted a collection of over 1700 volumes and highlighted the attempt to create a library focusing on Mennonite history "so that students might be able to do further research of our Mennonite people." By 1956, when the College moved to its new campus at 600 Shaftesbury, Gerhard Lohrenz was supervising the acquisition and cataloguing of all those "books dealing with Mennonite history and Mennonite affairs in general." These books were kept in a separate section within the College library.

When the Heritage Centre was completed in 1978, the College library moved into the Centre's lower level. Increased space for the archives meant that the long-discussed possibility of creating a special area for those Mennonite books which were old and fragile, that is, rare, was now reality. The Historical

Library was then divided into two — the Rare Book section, housed in the archives, and those books for circulation, housed in the College library itself.

The Rare Book section of the Historical Library does not consist only of the very old books, such as the 1681 Dutch edition of Menno Simons' collected works. Many books are new, for example, *Diary of Anna Baerg*, a 1986 publication of the translated and edited diary of a young woman living in Russia during the 1920s. People often ask us why we collect new and readily available books. The answer to that lies in the way many books dealing with the specialized field of Mennonite history are published. Because many new books are printed in limited editions, especially family or congregational histories, they are soon out of print.

Of particular interest are the hymnbooks. Whether printed with or without staves or notes, in English, German or Dutch, these books are fascinating. The hymnbooks of the early and mid-1880s are smaller than our modern books, fitting comfortably into the palm of one's hand. Their beautiful bindings and paper make them a pleasure for the eye as well.

The Bibles of the collection also tell the story of the Mennonites through the language changes and use of different translations.

The Mennonite Historical Library offers much information and we invite researchers to come to the campus to use this valuable resource. Those books stored in the College library are available for circulation; those in the Rare Book section are for use in the Reading Room of the archives only. Two bibliographies (unpublished, 1970 and 1983) have been compiled to aid the researcher.



*The Conestoga wagon was a major part of the story for those first Mennonites who left the United States for Upper Canada (Ontario) in 1786. Here Allen Huber, one-time mayor of Berlin (now Kitchener), Ontario and a Conestoga wagon used by Mennonites immigrating at the turn of the 19th century pose in this photo from 1912. (Photo from *Berlin, Canada*, edited by Paul Tiessen, 1979)*

1786-1986

A Canadian Mennonite Bicentennial

by Beverly Suderman, MHC Staff

How do Russian Mennonites play the Mennonite Game with Swiss Mennonites? "Good . . . but that's not a Mennonite name, is it?" "Your maiden name is Shantz, like Shanzenfeld, you say?" "Good . . . oh, like Merle Good from the States?" That's how the game is played when two segments of the Mennonite ethnic spectrum are introduced to one another.

Reg and Kathy (Shantz) Good are two Mennonite Central Committee Canada volunteers who travel the length and breadth of Canada in celebration and anticipation of the 1986 Mennonite Bicentennial. Under the direction of the Mennonite Bicentennial Commission and MCC Canada, they have been piloting their Menno-Van to small rural communities and urban centers, to northern Manitoba, eastern Nova Scotia — and points between — and west to Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. On the road since September 1984, they will end their tour in June, with the Bicentennial Sunday celebrations in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont., on July 6.

Their program features a 20-minute audiovisual telling the story of the Mennonites from Reformation beginnings to current involvements. Another major component of their visits is the over 1,500 books

on Mennonite history that they present to libraries and schools.

For many western Canadians, the Mennonite bicentennial has been a mystery. The Canadian story of most Mennonites west of Ontario originates in the migrations of the 1940s, the 1920s or the 1870s. Many western Mennonites still remember their centennial festivities of 1974. A bicentennial celebration so soon after their 100th? The origins of these 200-year-old Mennonites are fuzzy. When Reg asked the high school students of a Manitoba Mennonite educational institute from where the first Mennonites to Canada had come, the self-assured reply was "Russia, of course." Then, "Germany?" And finally, tentatively, "Holland?" Upon hearing that it was the United States, the students were abashed. That the history of the Mennonites in Canada began before 1874 was for many of those students, as it is for many western Mennonites, a surprising fact. It is this type of education that Reg and Kathy identify as an integral part of their assignment. "We acquainted the Russian Mennonites with the larger Mennonite world," Kathy remarked, "but in the process we're also acquainting ourselves with Mennonites of other cultures."

Both Reg and Kathy are of Swiss Mennonite background — "ethnic Mennonites." Many of their presentations are for those who can also be considered ethnically Mennonite. But at a program in Montreal, where Mennonites of French, Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon extraction met, where the dialogue of the audiovisual was translated into French with Spanish aides, they were told by those present that to be Mennonite meant neither borscht nor shoofly pie but faith. For those people, quiche or tortillas were as Mennonite as watermelon and rollkuchen; for them, the importance of being Mennonite lay not in dress codes, languages or culinary habits but in a living and vital faith, a faith distinct and separate from that of others.

The idea that all of us have important stories to tell and retell is significant to the concept of the Mennonite bicentennial. The stories vary from group to group: the Swiss, the Russian, the French-Canadian, Hispanic, Chinese and Native Mennonites all have their stories. And if for the Russian Mennonites part of the story is expressed in playing the Mennonite Game, that too has validity. But Reg and Kathy also place an emphasis on acknowledging the broader story. The stories of the Canadian and U.S. Mennonites have some significant differences which need to be acknowledged and accepted. Part of their goal, say Reg and Kathy, is to cultivate a "healthy nationalism." U.S. Mennonites may not be a direct part of the Mennonite bicentennial, but the lesson of varied but equally important stories is just as significant for them as for the Canadian Russian Mennonites.

As might be expected, Reg and Kathy have many stories of their own to tell when it comes to life in the MennoVan and life on the road. There was the time when a woman dressed in her housecoat ran out of her home just as they were pulling out of a parking lot. She had heard about the Mennonites and didn't want them to escape before she had a chance to talk to them. Then there was the mother and her high school daughter who chased the MennoVan halfway across town and finally knocked on their door at a stop light. "Boy, am I glad to catch up with you," and the woman explained that her daughter was doing a project on the Mennonites for school and she wanted some information. And there are those who deduce that the motor home, with its large green and white signs proclaiming it the "MennoVan", is some type of display on wheels and peer in through the tinted windows only to discover Reg and Kathy having their morning coffee.

The Goods have been pleased with the project to date. They believe that by July the Mennonites of western Canada will know that "Good" is indeed a Mennonite name, and they will have learned yet another side to the Mennonite Game.

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