

# Mennonite Historian



Volume XIII, Number 1  
March 1987

Published by the Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Centre for MB Studies in Canada.



The premises of the Raduga Publishing printshop in Halbstadt. Photo: Courtesy of Centre for MB Studies in Canada (Winnipeg).

## Mennonite Publishing in Russia: The Raduga Press of Halbstadt

by Ken Reddig

The Raduga (Rainbow) Press was one of the more influential and important institutions the Mennonites created in Russia.

Its beginnings can be traced to Peter J. Neufeld (1823-1909) of Halbstadt, Molotschna. After a successful, 44-year career as a teacher, Neufeld left that profession and, in his own home, began the first Mennonite printing establishment of Russia in 1887. Earlier he had been the first "Mennonite" photographer, popularizing photography among the Mennonites, and creating for himself a secondary source of income.<sup>1</sup>

In 1897, Abraham J. Kroeker, a young former teacher and missionary, began editing and publishing the **Christlicher Familienkalender für die Deutschen in Russland** in Halbstadt.<sup>2</sup> After several years Kroeker changed presses and utilized the A. Schultz press in Odessa. At this time Kroeker was living at Station Sarabus in Spat, Crimea.

Kroeker was a minister and a graduate of the Hamburg Baptist Seminary. He had taught for several years and also spent some years as an itinerant minister in Dobrudscha

(1891-1894), then as a pastor of the Baptist Church of Katauli in Romania.<sup>3</sup>

In 1903, Neufeld sold the printing shop to Heinrich Braun, Abraham Kroeker and others. It seems that Kroeker moved to Halbstadt at this time, to become the manager of the press. Braun was a wealthy land-owner and a leading minister of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Braun was also a graduate of the Hamburg Baptist Seminary.<sup>4</sup> He must have been the major partner since the company was now known as "H. J. Braun and Company".

Abraham J. Kroeker began another publication, the **Friedensstimme**,<sup>5</sup> in 1903. This Mennonite Brethren Church paper was first published in Berlin, due to czarist censorship. It was not until 1906 that the editorial office was moved to Halbstadt.<sup>6</sup>

Kroeker began the **Friedensstimme** with his cousin Jakob Kroeker (1872-1948) also a graduate of the Hamburg Baptist Seminary.<sup>7</sup> Jakob continued his work as a travelling evangelist and only settled in Halbstadt in 1906, when the **Friedensstimme** operation was transferred here. In 1910 Jakob moved to Germany where he

## The New Mennonite Historian

by John Friesen

This issue marks the launching of a new *Mennonite Historian*. The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies and the Mennonite Heritage Centre have agreed to merge their two newsletters into one, and to continue publishing as a joint publication.

Although the paper is now published by the archives centres of two conferences, its aim will be to reach the entire Mennonite community. The newly-formed editorial board is convinced that interpretations of the Mennonite experience should include the interests and concerns of the larger Mennonite community. A designated portion of the paper will however be utilized to serve the denominational needs of the two centres.

In general the new *Mennonite Historian* will hope to meet the needs of people who are interested in Mennonite history genealogy and related areas. To accomplish this objective the paper will seek to carry popular articles, genealogical information, reviews of recent books about the Mennonite experience, and other information of general interest.

Beginning with this issue, the *Mennonite Historian* will be distributed in bulk to all congregations of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, and the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, a total of nearly 400 congregations. In addition there are about 500 individuals and institutions on the current subscription list of the paper.

Some additional changes in the format are being considered for future issues of the *Historian*. The joint editorial committee which is heading up the new venture consists of Ken Reddig and Neoma Jantz for the Centre for MB Studies, and Lawrence Klippenstein and John Friesen for the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

distinguished himself as a biblical theologian, and also became the co-founder of a mission organization known as **Licht im Osten**.<sup>8</sup>

In 1904, the company acquired Jakob Loetkemann's well-established bookstore in Halbstadt and this same year brought David P. Isaak and his bookstore in Schoenwiese into the partnership.<sup>9</sup> (cont'd on page 2)

**Raduga** (cont'd from page 1)

The company was reorganized in 1908 under the name "Raduga Publishing Company". Heinrich J. Braun, Abraham J. Kroeker and a Russian evangelical preacher, Ivan S. Prokhanov became the leaders of this venture.<sup>10</sup>

Prokhanov's involvement signalled a closer working relationship with Russian evangelicals, among whom he was a leading figure. Prokhanov, a Molokan who joined the Evangelical Christians of St. Petersburg, held an engineering degree. Following theological studies in England, Germany and France, he devoted himself to writing, publishing and distributing Christian literature in Russia.<sup>11</sup>

It is not known just when a branch office in St. Petersburg was begun for the Raduga press. It has been noted though that in 1912, Kornelius Martens moved to St. Petersburg and there operated a Raduga bookstore, selling mainly Bibles and religious books.<sup>12</sup>

Raduga Press by this time was a flourishing establishment. It published such works as *Gusli*, a Russian Baptist hymnal and, in 1911, the well-known historical work by Peter M. Friesen, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland (1789-1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte*.

Its demise, as that of many contemporary Mennonite institutions, resulted from the turmoil in Russia during the latter half of the decade. The *Friedensstimme* and possibly the *Familienkalender* were still published as late as 1920.<sup>13</sup> After that, all of Raduga's work appears to have terminated.

In 1921 Abraham J. Kroeker left Russia and moved to North America. Residing for a year in Winnipeg, he eventually settled down in Mountain Lake, Minnesota where he established and operated a bookstore.<sup>14</sup> He died in 1944.

Heinrich J. Braun left Russia in 1922, and moved to Germany. He passed away in 1946. Prokhanov remained in Russia, working with the Russian evangelicals until his death in 1935.<sup>15</sup>

**NOTES**

<sup>10</sup>*Zur Erinnerung an das 25 Jaehrige Bestehen der Ersten Mennonitischen Druckerei in Russland*. (1912). The dates cited as the period covered are 14 April 1887 to 14 April 1912. Cf. also P. M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, 1789-1910*. (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1980), 728.

<sup>11</sup>Die Familie, "Abram Jakob Kroeker", *Der Bote*, XXII (17 January 1945), 4. The



Peter J. Neufeld (1823-1909)

*Christlicher Familienkalender* continued at least to 1918. All issues except 1913 and 1917 are available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba. <sup>12</sup>Friesen, 835.

<sup>13</sup>Cornelius Krahn, "Braun, Heinrich Jacob", *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, (Hillsboro, Kansas, Newton, Kansas, and Scottsdale, PA, 1955), I, 407.

<sup>14</sup>John B. Toews, "A Voice of Peace in Troubled Times", *Mennonite Life*, XXVII (September, 1972), 93-94.

<sup>15</sup>In 1902, Abram and Jakob Kroeker had also begun to publish annually the *Christliches Jahrbuch für Belehrung und Unterhaltung*. After three issues the name was changed to *Fürs Christliche Haus, Belehrendes und Unterhaltendes für Jüng und Alt*. The first three issues came from the publishers in Spat, and the fourth volume from the Braun press in Halbstadt. Whether *Fürs Christliche Haus* continued is not clear. These volumes are all available in the MHC archives.

<sup>16</sup>Christian Neff and Cornelius Krahn, "Kroeker, Jacob", *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, III, 246.

<sup>17</sup>Friesen, 838.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. also "Abram Jakob Kroeker", 4. This article adds the names of Jakob Friesen, David Isaak and Kornelius Klassen as partners.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid*. Here it is stated further that Kroeker bought the Halbstadt press, together with his partners, in 1905.

<sup>20</sup>The best study to date of the life and work of Prokhanov is Wilhelm Kahle, *Evangelische Christen in Russland und der Sowjetunion: Ivan Stepanovich Prochanov (1869-1935) und der Weg der Evangeliums*



Abraham J. Kroeker (1863-1944)

*Christen und Baptisten* (Wuppertal; Oncken Verlag, 1978).

<sup>21</sup>Helmut Hübert, *Kornelius Martens; Our Skillful Advocate*. (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 6 Litz Place, 1986), 4.

<sup>22</sup>The *Friedensstimme* had begun to appear again right after the end of World War I, though at first under several different names. Toews, p. 94. All extant issues are available, either in microfilm or as originals (some duplicates), at the Centre for MB Studies, Winnipeg, and the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg.

<sup>23</sup>J. H. L(ohrenz), "Kroeker, Abraham Jakob", *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, 245-246.

<sup>24</sup>Braun's major contribution is held to be in the area of literature distribution among Mennonites and others in Russia. Krahn, 407.



Heinrich J. Braun (1873-1946)

# The Russian Mennonite Bicentennial: Some Pertinent Dates

by Lawrence Klippenstein

The "bicentennial" of Mennonites in Russia and the Soviet Union can bring to mind a wide field of reflection - the two-century old past, all the complexities of present-day realities, and the unanswered questions of what may still happen in the years ahead.

The story has its roots, one could say, in the offices of the eighteenth century tsarina of Russia, Catherine II (the Great), her Vice Regent of New Russia, Prince Grigori Alexandrovich Potemkin, and the ambitious "caller of colonists", Georg (von) Trappe. It began as well, of course, in the homes and churches of Polish-Prussian Mennonites in the 1780s, all those families which decided to emigrate to the Dnieper Valley to establish new communities on the Russian steppes.

These notes, and perhaps a short sequel or two, will recall very briefly some of the moments that formed the birthing matrix of the "Russian experience" for the Mennonite community of the world.

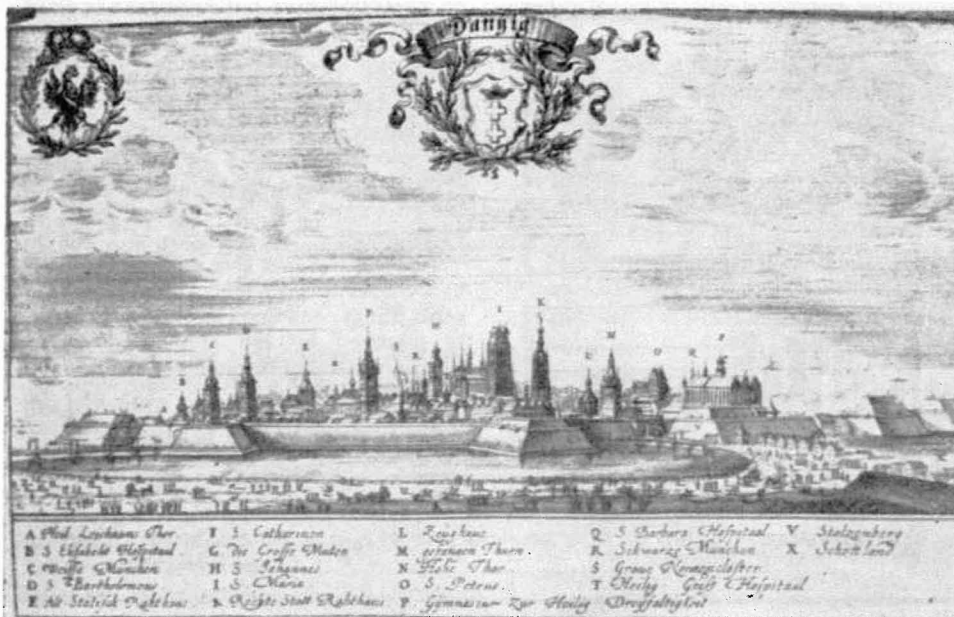
## 3 January 1772

Hans von Steen wrote to his colleague Dr. Johann Cuperus in Utrecht that the Mennonites of Prussia were under greater duress from Lutherans than Catholics, hence preferred to live in Catholic jurisdictions.

## 13 September 1772

Frederick the Great annexed the western and some other portions of Poland. Mennonites in this sector now came under Prussian rule.

A scene from the settlements of Stolzenberg and Alt Schottland, suburbs of the city of Danzig ca 1684. Many Mennonites lived in these communities from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Photo: Courtesy of Mennonite Heritage Centre.



## 20 June 1774

Mennonites of West Prussia and Lithuania were informed that they had to pay 5000 Thalers annually in support of the Kulm military academy in lieu of military service from which they were otherwise exempted.

## 30 January 1780

The minister Peter Epp was ordained as *Aeltester* of the Danzig city Mennonite congregation. It meant that he needed to move away from the country congregations, which he had served till then, and settle in Danzig proper.

## 27 March 1780

The *Gnadenprivilegium* of Frederick the Great was now formally handed over to the Mennonites. The terms of it had been shared with the Mennonites soon after the 1772 annexation.

## 14 July 1785

Catherine the Great had begun to advertise her interests in foreign colonists through special manifestos issued in 1762 and 1763. To what extent these were published in Polish areas and the Free City of Danzig on the Baltic Sea is uncertain. Thousands of German colonists from the German states further west and south did respond, and moved to Russia. Some settled near St. Petersburg, but most of them moved to the Volga River region further east.

The new manifesto of July 14, 1785, carried an invitation for more settlers, this time to colonize the Caucasus area particularly. It gave Potemkin, the energetic Vice regent

of New Russia, a legal basis for extending the colonization efforts of Catherine to his own region, a good deal of it recently conquered from the Turks.

## 5-7 June 1786

The manifesto of 1785 then led Potemkin to engage the services of Georg von Trappe, a "procurement agent" who was anxious to hone his skills at procuring settlers for his Russian homeland — and to reap the resultant rewards for himself. He saw special opportunities among the hard-working Mennonites of Danzig, who were known to be under pressure economically, and whose Low German dialect he spoke quite well.

The contract for this arrangement carried the date of June 5, 1786 on the obligations which Potemkin promised to carry, and the date of June 7, on the part signed by von Trappe.

## 7 August 1786

The von Trappe colonization appeals were read in both Mennonite churches of Danzig. Mayor Pegelau called *Aeltester* Peter Epp and Isaac Stobbe to account for this, and asked them not to have anything to do with the Russian representatives supporting this appeal.

## 17 August 1786

Frederick the Great passed away. By this date von Trappe had managed to recruit nearly 250 families in Danzig and environs. Thirty-five of them were Mennonites. He had very quickly secured the enthusiastic support of the leading minister in the Danzig Mennonite congregation, *Aeltester* Peter Epp. The Danzig authorities, on the other hand, opposed him vigorously, doing their utmost to frustrate his emigration designs.

## 22 September 1786

In September, 1786, von Trappe signed an agreement with two young Mennonites, Jakob Hoepfner of Bohnsack and Johann Bartsch of Neugarten. By this they contracted to visit New Russia to investigate more carefully the settlement opportunities which von Trappe was promising the Mennonites.

The agreement made this an all-expenses paid trip, and added promises of "generous rewards from the tsarina" if the investigation would lead to the emigration of 200 families during 1787.

## 31 October 1786\*

Hoepfner and Bartsch began their survey trip on October 31, 1786. They were the only Mennonites in a group of 141 which left Danzig to settle in New Russia at that time. This group is usually referred to as the "Danzig colonists". By the end of 1786 their number had risen to nearly 1,000. Bartsch and Hoepfner would be away for about a year.

\*This would have been October 19, 1786, by the old Julian calendar still used in Russia. There was a twelve-day difference between it and the newer Gregorian calendar at this time. (to be continued)



## The Agony And The Accessioning

by Peter H. Rempel

Last fall the Mennonite Heritage Centre received a substantial grant from the Canada Council of Archives for accessioning accumulated materials. Material - ranging in scope from single documents to collections in several boxes - had been acquired over several years but these acquisitions had yet to be recorded and then placed into permanent storage. I was hired to accession these materials and now have the pleasure of reporting on the accomplishments and insights attained.

In the course of six months, about 400 units of material were accessioned. Most of these were single items — sermons, letters, books, student papers, diaries, genealogies, etc.

There were also several large collections: those of institutions such as the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and its counterparts in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and those of individual persons such as David D. Klassen, David P. Neufeld, and Gerhard J. Lohrenz. After ordering, culling and storing, these materials filled about 260 boxes (of varying sizes), extending for 21 meters of shelf space.

I concluded that once the acquisitions are identified in terms of their content and provenance. Accessioning is organizing the materials in the way the institution or individual would have wanted to organize them, but never got around to doing.

This requires familiarization with the materials and the context of their source - an immersion which sometimes made a reconnection to the present difficult, as my co-workers will attest. Each collection embodied the peculiar traits of the institution or individual who created or gathered the materials.

Institutions such as Mennonite conferences do indeed have personalities which are reflected in the papers they generate. Their records are configured by their unique nature and structure and by the persons who read, write and, of course, file its documents. (An administrator may have his or her peculiar scheme for categorizing their responsibilities but often it is the secretary's intuition which determines the order and accuracy of the filing. The archivist has the challenge of explaining the outcome to the researcher.)

As valuable and interesting as they may be, institutional records often disguise the tensions and dynamics which shaped its actions and decisions in polite correspondence, obtuse reports and concise minutes. It is in the correspondence of individuals that one finds the human traits and dynamics which

shaped the official and public developments.

Idiosyncrasies and sensitivities are more apparent. The particular and peculiar causes of individuals become obvious through the recurring topics or tone of their correspondence. Friendships and antagonisms find expression in personal papers. Even phobias and passions about trends and personalities can be discerned.

Any community needs to retain these materials, not as artifacts to be cherished because of their antiquity, but as avenues for understanding the humanity which we share with our predecessors and contemporaries.

The researcher has the challenge now of analyzing these records and making them comprehensible and relevant to their contemporaries. In other words, now that we have accessioned the materials, we await the researchers who will explain them to us.



*Rev. David Toews died in 1947. The plaque notes the naming of a lake in Saskatchewan after him. A plaque was donated to the Heritage Centre by the Toews family. A cairn plaque memorial for Rev. Toews is being considered.*



## Jottings - the Diary of an Archivist

by Lawrence Klippenstein

**2 January, 1987 -**

One of our first visitors in the New Year was Johann Giesbrecht, a business administrator from Loma Plato in the Menno Kolonie, in Paraguay. He hoped to secure copies of Berghthal, Chortitzer and Sommerfelder church books for his community in South America. Many people there would like to trace contacts with their relatives and ancestors in Canada. We were able to secure microfiche copies for Mr. Giesbrecht and also ship a large consignment of Mennonite newspapers to the Mennonite archives in Paraguay.

**6 January -**

Ursula Froese, of Heidelberg, West Germany, deposited an interesting autobiographical manuscript of a friend who had come to Germany with the "Great Trek" from the Soviet Union in 1943.

**20 January -**

Henry Funk, pastor of the North Star church in Drake, stopped in to locate some information on his early period of pastoral service in the Carman Mennonite Church (ca. 1952).

**28 January -**

I worked out the final details of articles designed for a newsletter called "Klippings". It went out to all persons who were present at the Klippenstein reunion in Altona last July.

**6-7 February -**

Council of Boards time brought with it opportunities to meet the people who work with us in the General Board. The History Archives Committee is directly responsible to this Board for its reporting at various times of the year.

**8 February -**

The Heritage Centre hosted a group sponsored by the Manitoba Multicultural Resources Centre, situated at the University of Winnipeg Campus in Winnipeg. We were very pleased to have a number of CMBC students provide a musical presentation for the program.

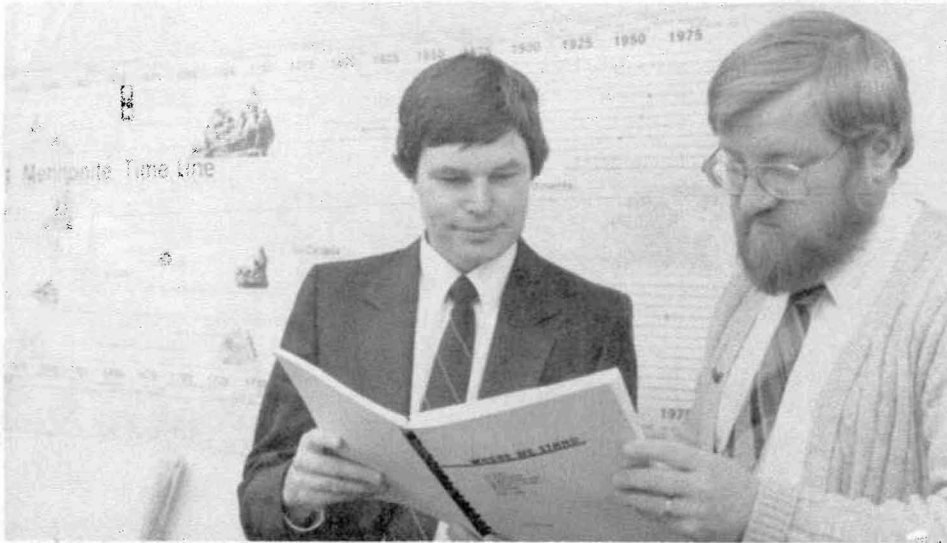
**16 February -**

This was Heritage Day in Canada. It gave us a chance to "celebrate" a little. Among other things, we saw an audio-visual recently prepared by the Mennonite Village Museum - **Settling Manitoba - the Mennonite Way.**

(cont'd on page 6)

**Canadian Mennonite Symposium, Winnipeg, Man. May 21-23, 1987**

For registration, or further information, write to John Friesen, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Man. R3P 0M4. (For program details see **MH**, December, 1986).



Bert Friesen, left, and Ken Reddig, right, examine the first copy of the index to the Conference statements published by MCC (Canada). See review on page 7. Photo: Courtesy of G. Bruce Hildebrand, MCC (Can.).

## Projects Finished - Ewert Biography and Photo Index/Inventory

For the past year, retired school teacher Ida Toews of Winnipeg, has been at work in the Centre translating the biography by Paul Schaefer, *Heinrich H. Ewert: Lehrer, Erzieher und Prediger der Mennoniten*. The book was originally published in German in 1945.\*

Heinrich H. Ewert served the Mennonite community in three major areas. Initially he was called from Kansas to serve both as inspector of Manitoba Mennonite schools and as principal of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna. In addition he became a well-known minister among the congregations in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Providing a thorough account of this well-known Mennonite educator, the translation is certain to be of great use to students for whom the original German is a barrier.

Miss Toews completed the translation in February. It is now being typed, edited and prepared for publication.

\*Still available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

\* \* \* \* \*

This fall a grant was received from the Canadian Council of Archives to assist the Centre for MB Studies with the arrangement and description of backlog materials. Application was made by the Centre specifically for its photographic collection. Hired to work on this project was Erica Fehr of New Bothwell.

The project is now completed. A 200 page inventory/index is now available describing

and to some extent placing in subject categories the 5,000 or more photographs of the Centre. Placed on computer, this inventory/index can now be easily updated as new photographs come into the Centre.

Special thanks are extended to the Manitoba Council of Archives for their assistance in obtaining this grant.

## Recent Accessions (CMBS)

*Family Record of Abraham and Aganetha Bornn, 1977*, by Tina Klassen.

*Our Wiens-Wiens Heritage, 1986*, by the children of Johann J. and Helena J. Wiens. Donated by John Wiens, Morden.

Photographs from the C.F. Klassen collection (MCC Europe). Donated by Catharine Klassen, Winnipeg.

Photographs and papers of missionary Helen L. Warkentin. Donated by Esther Enns, Winkler.

*John Warkentin and His Descendants: The Lineage of Wilhelm Janzen*. Compiled and donated by Marianne Janzen, Winnipeg.

*Die Schulen in den Mennoniten-Kolonien an der Molotschna im suedlichen Russland dargestellt von dem Kirchenaeltesten Abraham Goerz, 1882*. Photocopy.

Minutes and Reports of: MB Communications, Canadian Board of Publications, MB Historical Commission, Board of Christian

Literature. Donated by Dr. Helmut Huebert, Winnipeg.

*History of Turkey Hard Wheat in USA*, by Herbert Friesen. Donated by Lorina Marsch, Winnipeg.

Papers related to the Martens family. Donated by Gert and Kathy Martens, Winnipeg.

Sermons (German & English) of the late Rev. H. G. Thielman, pastor and missionary. Donated by Mrs. H. L. Thielman, Clearbrook.

*The German Colonies in South Russia*, by Rev. P. Conrad Keller. Donated by James Urry, New Zealand.\*

\*Still available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

## MB Centre Receives Oral History Grant

In January the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies received word that its grant application for an Oral History Program had been approved by the Manitoba Provincial Government. This program is funded by the Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation. The grant is for \$6,500.

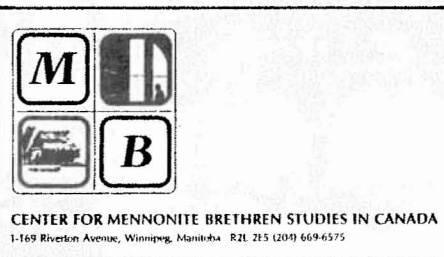
Specifically, the grant will be used to interview Mennonite women who were involved with either of the two "Girls Homes" in Winnipeg; the Mary-Martha Home (Mennonite Brethren) and the Ebenezer Home (Conference of Mennonites in Canada). The second portion of the grant will be used to interview Mennonite conscientious objectors in Manitoba during WWII.

Upon receiving word of the proposals' acceptance, the Centre hired Frieda Esau, presently of Winnipeg, to conduct the interviews.

Frieda is no stranger to working on projects of an historical nature. She has worked as a researcher and as a guide for Parks Canada: Lower Fort Garry National Historical Park, written a "Cultural Theme Study of Hecla Island Provincial Park" and worked as a journalist for the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions/Services. This latter project took her on assignments to India, Indonesia and Japan.

The duration of the project is for six months only. Women involved with either of the two "Girls Homes" or men who were conscientious objectors in WWII should feel free to write to Frieda at the Centre for MB Studies, indicating their involvement and willingness to be interviewed. While an initial list of individuals to be interviewed has already been prepared, one must assume that there are many more people who could and should be interviewed. Please inform the Centre of who these people are.

(See also CMBS materials on the following page, col. 1.)



## Listing of Mennonite Villages Being Prepared

An attempt is being made to obtain a more complete listing of Mennonite villages in Polish/Prussia and in Russia. Working on this project is Winnipeg genealogist, Marianne Janzen.

A nineteen-page initial list has been prepared already. Anyone willing to help in this project is encouraged to write for the present listing and send in any corrections or additions. Copies are available from the Centre for MB Studies at a cost of \$2.00 for postage and photo-copying.

Please address your requests to Marianne Janzen. It is projected that within the next year a fairly complete listing will be available.

**Ed's Note:** A partial listing is available also at the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

## Lutheran Pietist Document Found

Recently the Centre for MB Studies was given a document of unusual historical interest. Not a Mennonite document as such, it is a report, written in 1827, by a Lutheran Minister by the name of Saltet, to his home congregation in Wuerttemberg, Germany.

This 33-page document describes one of the events of the Russo-Persian War which this Lutheran Pietist community, in the area of Tiflis, Georgia, South Caucasus, endured. Villages in this community were Alexanderdorf, Annenfeld, Elisabeththal, Helenendorf, Katharinenfeld, Marienfeld, Petersdorf, and (Neu)-Tiflis. They were founded in 1818.

In 1827 some 1,000 Kurds and Tartars attacked the village of Katharinenfeld. During the raid some 35 villagers were killed and women and children were taken captive. The captives were either sold into slavery or harems.

Written in gothic script this unique document is available to researchers interested in this period and in Lutheran Pietists. The document was donated to the Centre by Mrs. Anna D. H. Unrau of Birds Hill, Manitoba.

## New Series Underway

The Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission and the three Centres for MB Studies (Fresno, Hillsboro and Winnipeg), have entered into an agreement with Kindred Press to publish an historical book series. It will be entitled "Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought". The focus will be on important historical and current issues of Mennonite Brethren life and work.

The first volume will be forthcoming in late 1987. Projected is a new study by Dr. John B. Toews of Calgary, Alberta on the beginnings of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia. The tentative title of the study is *Perilous Journey: The Mennonite Brethren in Russia, 1860-1910*.



*Dr. Horst Gerlach at the grave of Christian Neff (d. Dec. 30, 1946) in the cemetery at Weierhof, Federal Republic of Germany. The low building (centre, with tile roof) was apparently the first church house to be used for worship by the Weierhof Mennonite congregation (ca. 1700). It is being restored in part at present. Photo: Lawrence Klippenstein.*

### Jottings (cont'd from page 4)

#### 17 February -

The staff held a "priorities" meeting - trying to lift out the main tasks we feel we should tackle in 1987. Computerization seems to be high on the list. We closed the meeting to keep the list from getting too long!

#### 18 February -

Ken Reddig of the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg, Neoma Jantz, Dr. John Friesen of CMBC and I met to discuss the final details on the plan to merge the newsletters of CMBS and MHC. The first issue of the new **Mennonite Historian** is the one you are

reading right now!

#### 28 February - 2 March -

I took a few days to re-establish contact with archives friends in Saskatchewan. Visits included persons in Saskatoon, Warman and Rosthern. A workshop on Mennonite history and archival themes seems to be in the offing, perhaps a little later in the year.

#### 4 March -

Ken Reddig and I are very busy now, trying to get the *MH* March issue ready for the printers. We plan to run 4,000 copies of this issue.

*A group of young people related to the Holdeman Mennonite community in Needles, B.C. The photo has been dated 1911, but no other details are available. Can anyone say more, and let us know?*





## Book Reviews

Friesen, Bert, *Where We Stand. An Index to Statements by Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in Canada, 1787-1982*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Mennonite Central Committee, Canada, 1986, pb., 300 pp., \$20.00.

Reviewed by Ted Regehr.

It was almost ten years ago when a decision was made to identify, copy, index and publish all official statements made by Canadian Mennonites and Brethren in Christ pertaining to peace and social concerns. At that time the publication of a relatively small collection of documents was envisioned, but research quickly revealed a wealth and diversity of materials.

The project had to be rethought and, after several delays, a large collection comprising more than 5,000 pages of material was microfilmed. With the help of a computer a 300 page index has now been prepared. The main index is arranged by conference, and within that by subject headings, giving the date, microfilm page numbers, source, and description of each document. A separate and brief subject print-out has then been added.

These documents are drawn from minute books and other official documents of the various Canadian Mennonite Conferences. Since the earliest minutes only date from 1842, various published sources were used for the earlier period.

The editor tells us that "the broadest possible definition of what constitutes a peace or social concern was used". Thus, not only military issues, but fashionable dress, union membership, the oath, drinking, dancing, gambling, use of the English language, family allowances, jewelry, movies, radio or television ownership, sports, the boy scouts, modernism, salaries for ministers, and even "bad slang" are all denounced, while a great variety of relief and welfare efforts are endorsed.

A rather curious fact should, however be noted. There were apparently no statements to guide the faithful in matters of partisan Canadian politics. Unions, the wheat pool, agricultural marketing agencies, life insurance and many other "unequal yokings" are denounced, but nary a reference to Social Credit, the CCF, Liberals or Conservatives. There is not even a subject entry devoted to Canadian politics although there is one for international politics. That raises the question: Did Mennonite conferences not concern themselves with partisan politics, or has the selection process not been as broad as it should be?

It is important to emphasize that these are all official statements made by various Mennonite conferences and conference-related agencies. Anyone familiar with official pronouncements, such as the Papal Bulls of the Roman Catholic Church, should certainly know that official statements do not always

reflect prevailing practices.

There is though, one could say, still a strong tendency among Mennonite scholars to lend undue credence to these official pronouncements, and this collection might further accentuate this tendency. The collection can certainly be useful, but the evidence should be treated for what it is. These are official statements issued for the guidance of the membership, or as documents supporting Mennonite requests for special privileges, or, much less frequently, as a witness to the larger Canadian society. They document the expressed ideals, not necessarily the reality of Canadian Mennonite thought and action.

*Ted Regehr, Professor of History at the University of Saskatchewan, is currently working on volume III of Mennonites in Canada.*

Available from Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3P 0M4. Statements on three rolls of microfilm: \$55.00 CAN. Postage extra.

Redekopp, Elsa, *Dream and Wonder*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: 1986. Pb., 119 pp., \$6.75 CAN. Available from Kindred Press, 4-169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2L 2E5.

Reviewed by Heidi M. Harms.

*Dream and Wonder* continues the story of Lisa, a Mennonite girl from the southern village of Gnadenthal, which began in the preceding *Wish and Wonder*. As in the first volume, Elsa Redekopp tells her story with sensitivity, humour and a wonderful attention to detail.

The subtitle of *Dream and Wonder*, "A child's view of Canadian village life", is vague and actually a bit misleading, for this is one child's story about a very specific place and time. The simple clarity with which this place and time are evoked through young Lisa's perceptions is one of the strengths of this book.

When the reader needs to be filled in on background information, the writer inserts some storytelling by Pa (in the chapters "Stories on the Ovenbench" and "The Skunk") or Ma (in "Valentine's Day Preparations") without interrupting the flow or tone of the narrative. I felt though that this technique was less successful earlier in the book, when older brother Gerd, in a slightly contrived context, tells Lisa about the hard times they suffered in Russia.

The structure of farm/village life with its rigorous demands is a pervasive presence. But Lisa is an inquisitive, imaginative child, and she is not stifled by it: it seems rather to provide a sense of security and orderliness, with an everpresent suggestion of new possibilities. Lisa's brothers try to build a violin out of scrap lumber; by the last chapter

Arn has not only acquired a "real" violin, he is teaching Lisa to play it even though "girls don't play the violin" (p. 119).

The young girl's point of view is particularly well realized, I feel, in the chapter "Going to Church". Here Lisa is surrounded by girls and women, listening and watching. The formalities of the church service provide a kind of muted counterpoint to Lisa's musings about Mrs. Janzen, the universally respected midwife/community worker, about Mrs. Krahn, the living incarnation of the adage "cleanliness is next to godliness", about the various types of shoes in her row, about the appropriateness of praying for the hens to lay well, and about what exactly a blessing is.

The book is virtually free of typographical and spelling errors, and the ones that did creep in occur mainly in the German quotations. The most glaring one, which actually changes the meaning of the sentence, appears on page 81: "Ewig, ewig *wehret* (instead of *währet*) sie".

Perhaps due to editorial oversight, too, is the twice-recounted anecdote about Uncle Isaac's singleminded admiration for Schubert (pages 81 and 114), and occasional overwriting, e.g. "utterly mute and speechless" (p. 117). These are minor quibbles, of course.

The illustrations by Margaret Quiring enhance the story with their simple eloquence, and the inclusion of a musical score with "Ziffern" and an excerpt in Gothic script from an autograph album add further touches of authenticity to this lovely book.

*Heidi M. Harms serves on the staff of Der Bote, published in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

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Friesen, Anna, and Victor Carl Friesen, *The Mulberry Tree*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Queenston House Publishing Co., Ltd., 1985. 206 pp., h.c., \$19.95; \$9.95 CAN.

Konrad, Anne, *The Blue Jar*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Queenston House Publishing Co., Ltd., 1985. 225 pp. 19.95, h.c. 9.95, p.b. CAN. Both books available from the publisher and local bookstores.

Reviewed by LaVerna Klippenstein.

These two books were made possible with the financial assistance of the multicultural program of the Government of Canada and the Manitoba Arts Council. Lee Toews designed both attractive covers and much about the books would make them appear like companion pieces.

Anne Konrad and the Friesens (a mother and son team) have written stories about the life of immigrants to western Canada. The Friesens' book is autobiographical and deals with a Mennonite family pioneering in Saskatchewan during the early part of this century, while Konrad's is a novel about a Mennonite family that moved to Alberta from the U.S.S.R. in 1929.

Although *The Blue Jar* is not autobiographical, Konrad says that she lived in a community similar to the one in her novel and readers will recognize the authenticity of a strong autobiographical influence.

Both books describe in some detail the day to day life of a large farm family. Both are written in the first person and in both that person is a perceptive and sensitive child named Anna or Annchen. Themes in the books are similar and sometimes identical. Both detail experiences through the seasons, family relationships and those with neighbours and school teachers. Both contain the kinds of historical information one would expect to hear from observant seniors skilled in relating significant experiences from the past.

There are similarities of style as well. Although Konrad has written a novel in which a plot is developed, and the Friesen book is a series of reminiscences clustered around the chapter themes, the style of both books is straightforward and simple, delightfully descriptive and suitable for reading aloud in family or classroom settings. This is Konrad's first novel, but like Friesen, she has published many articles and stories and both authors write with seasoned professionalism.

There are differences, however. Konrad's Annchen is more emotionally involved in events than Anna Friesen, and often the reader is led to interpret them from an adult perspective, with the lingering disappointments and unhealed hurts of someone who has not always come to terms with the past.

Konrad uses some Low German terms to add to an ethnic dimension of her story and religious traditions are a major part of the plot. Hers is an interpretive treatment while the Friesen's stay closer to Anna's own experiences. Konrad's book may be regarded by some as an adult commentary on the life of a Mennonite community.

*The Mulberry Tree* presents a picture of home as a place of security and contentment despite loneliness and disappointments. Readers who are past fifty will be able to identify with many of the experiences in both books and their usefulness may well lie in their historical value rather than as children's literature.

*The Mulberry Tree* would make a useful addition to school and church libraries. *The Blue Jar*, unfortunately, contains bathroom vocabulary and crude references to sexual activity in the last half of the book which makes it less acceptable as intergenerational literature for discriminating parents and teachers. These references, however, could be easily deleted when reading the book aloud in family settings, without affecting the story.

LaVerna Klippenstein is a freelance writer, as well as a regular columnist in the *Mennonite Reporter* and *Christian Living*.

### Reprint of *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (1913-1967)

The four volumes of *Mennonitisches Lexikon* are being printed.

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## Book Notes

H. J. Gerbrandt, *Postscript to Adventure in Faith*. Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1986. Pb., 30 pp., \$2.00.

When Gerbrandt's history of the Berghaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba was published in 1970, the church's dissolution was already underway. *Postscript* documents the phasing-out process of the Berghaler "Central" to the present fully autonomous local congregations.

Copies of the 1970 *Adventure in Faith* are still available from Mennonite Heritage Centre at \$10.00 a copy.

*Black Creek Fairies and other Stories* (pb., 42 pp.) is written by Henry and Eugenie Schulz. It's a book for children, with illustrations by Timothy Haley, Emma Haley and Nina Haley. Order from: Ptarmigan Press, 1372 Island Hwy., Campbell River, B.C., Canada, V9W 2E1. Price: CAN \$9.95.

A brief biography, *My Father, Franz C. Thiessen* (pb., 70 pp.) written by Kaethe Klassen, may be ordered from Martha Thiessen, 2367 Bevan Cres., Clearbrook, B.C., V2T 3Z4. It costs CAN \$10.00.

Dick Thiessen's book, *Beyond Those Mountains, In Search of Freedom* (pb., 148 pp.) recounts the story, set in the 1930s, of the Isaac Wiens family during its long migration from the Soviet Union to Canada.

The story begins in the village of Shumanovka, near Slavgorod (north-east of

the Aral Sea). It then depicts the movement of Isaac's family to the Amur River region, the subsequent disillusionment with that settlement and the decision to cross the Amur River into China. The family then emigrated to Paraguay, and, finally, to Canada.

The book is available from the author, Tofield, Alberta, T0B 4J0.

*Getragen auf Adlersflügeln* (pb., 233 pp.) by Mary Kornelsen is an autobiographical book of memories and includes much about the author's parents, Peter J. and Maria Kornelsen. The story spans a century and two continents. Mary's father attended Bible School in Berlin in 1908 and was ordained as minister in 1919. He served the Mennonite Brethren congregation in Tiegenghagen, along with Peter Görtzen and Diedrich Dörksen.

Mary's family emigrated during the 1920s to Manitoba. Her experiences in Manitoba and her subsequent travels in Europe carry the story through almost to the present day.

The book is available from the author, 609-666 St. James Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 3J6.

*Reflections of an Era that has Ended* was first printed in 1982, then reprinted in 1985 (pb., 55 pp.) It is, as its title suggests, a contemplative and introspective autobiographical sketch. The setting is in southern Ontario and includes the Amish congregation of East Zorra, of which the author, Vernon Zehr, was a member. He reminisces on some worldly events, especially the Depression and the Second World War. There are several pictures of the Zehr family included at the end of the book. Available from Vernon Zehr, Box 224, New Hamburg, Ontario, N0P 2G0 for CAN \$2.00 a copy.

Wood Lake Books has now published a book by Ralph Milton, entitled *How to Write and Publish Your Church History* (pb., 79 pp.). This volume takes a church historian or history book committee through the process of compiling the book and then actually getting it into print and selling it. It is particularly applicable to Canadian churches. (Lake Books is a Canadian publisher and works with Friesen Printers of Altona.)

*The book is free.* Simply order it from Wood Lake Books (Box 700, Winfield, B.C., V0H 2C0) and enclose \$2.00 for postage and handling.

Dennis Stoesz's historical work, *The Story of Home St. Mennonite Church 1957-1982* was placed in the *Honorable Mention* category in the 1986 Margaret McWilliams Competition for local history. This competition is sponsored annually by the Manitoba Historical Society. The book can be ordered from the Mennonite Heritage Centre for CAN \$8.00, with postage extra.