# ENNONITE HISTORIAN

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The beautiful weather and the crowd of 1,200 made the 50th anniversary celebrations of the EMMC a great success. The Bergfeld location and large tent were reminders of the EMMC roots. See also the article on page three and book review on page eight.

## Conferences of Bergthaler, Chortitzer and Sommerfelder Mennonite Churches, 1952-1957

Excerpted from The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan by Leonard Doell (1987), with permission from CMBC Publications, pp. 71-75.

#### 1952 Meeting

In July of 1952 an historic meeting took place in the Saskatchewan Bergthaler churches. The Älteste, ministers, and deacons of the Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church, the Manitoba Chortitzer Church and the Sommerfelder churches from Swift Current, Carrot River, Manitoba, and Vanderhoof, British Columbia, held a joint conference. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for these elders to share their concerns with each other and to discuss solutions to problems confronting them. Their aim was to work at uniformity in church practise.

One of the specific issues discussed related to what kind of dress was appropriate for baptismal candidates and bridal couples. It was decided that dark clothing would be best. Ministers and deacons would also continue to wear their dark suits. They also resolved that in keeping with I Corinthians 2 and Genesis 20, married women should have their heads covered with a dark kerchief. Women were also encouraged not to cut or perm their hair. The ministers were concerned that current styles and fashions in the world should not become the measuring stick for the social conduct of church members.

Some very difficult issues were also dealt with at the conference. Should a minister marry a couple where a divorced person was involved? It was decided that this could not be done unless the divorced party repented. They also agreed that those people who had left the Church and had been rebaptized elsewhere would be reinstated only if they repented for this and considered their first baptism as the true baptism.

Several other resolutions were agreed upon at this 1952 meeting. No marriages were to take place during the time of catechism instruction, and baptism and communion ser-

vices. Evening services would be permitted if agreed to by an Ältester. The practise of keeping three holidays at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost was to continue. The brotherhood was instructed not to take part in military training or in any service pertaining to war.

## 1955 Meeting

A second series of leadership meetings took place in 1955 at the Swift Current Sommerfelder Church. This conference dealt mainly with issues related to the ministry of the church. All of the participants were anxious to pass the faith on to their children. It was decided that Sunday Schools were a useful vehicle for doing this, and that all churches be encouraged to develop their educational programs further. It was recommended that churches actively encourage their young people to consider membership. The questions of faith should also be explained to them in a way which would be understandable for them. The church agreed that they had to accept a large part of the responsibility of preparing the youth for church membership. They also struggled with the question of how to deal with those members who had married a person from another church but had not requested a transfer. It was decided that they would not be regarded as church members.

New settlements of Bergthaler, Sommerfelder and Chortitzer members were springing up in many parts of the west and a concern was raised about how these groups could be nurtured spiritually. One group was considering a move to Buffalo Head Prairie, Alberta, but church leaders felt that St. Laurent, Manitoba, would be a more suitable location.

At this meeting Ältester Abram Buhler was also commissioned to serve communion to members at Fort Vermillion and La Crete, Alberta, A small group of Bergthaler had settled at La Crete when the Peace River settlement was begun in the 1930s. Altester Buhler visited them in 1955 to serve communion and used the opportunity to discuss with members the possibility of organizing a local church. He returned two years later to conduct an election of local leaders. Sommerfelder and Bergthaler members initially had services together but tensions resulted from differences in practise and emphases (on such matters as Sunday Schools, Bible study and prayer meetings, the use of

(cont'd on page 2)

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English, and understanding regarding the assurance of salvation).

In 1964 the Sommerfelder formed their own group with eleven families. By 1974 they had grown to 202 families (848 souls including 353 baptized members) under the leadership of *Ältester* Jacob S. Kroeker. At that time the Bergthaler, led by *Ältester* Isaac Dyck, numbered twenty-five families of whom sixty-four were baptized members. In the separation the Sommerfelder group retained the church building while the Bergthaler received the treasury and the church books.

#### 1957 Meeting

In July of 1957 the Manitoba Sommerfelder hosted a third church leadership conference. A wide variety of issues were discussed. Sunday Schools were again on the agenda. By now Sunday Schools were operating in nearly every church but it was difficult to find enough teachers for every class. Until now only men had served as teachers. The possibility of women teaching was discussed and it was decided that in those cases where there were not enough male teachers women should be encouraged to teach.

The issue of whether three holidays should be kept was raised again. Till now three days were set aside as holidays at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, but with people working at jobs in the city this created problems. Many employers did not appreciate their workers taking these holidays. Church leaders, on the other hand, felt that it was important to retain all of them but agreed that each participating church should have the freedom to celebrate them as they chose to do.

A request for help from the new settlement at St. Laurent, Manitoba, was also discussed. It was decided to help these people get settled as soon as possible with volunteer labour and financial support. Members in the churches were becoming involved in diverse activities such as sports and 4-H clubs and some were even taking part in politics. It was discovered that some ministers, Vorsänger and Sunday School teachers were also participating in sports. The leaders felt that such activities would not help build up the church. Television was one invention which, it was generally agreed, did not have a positive influence. The third chapter of James was quoted in support of this position.

There was discussion as to whether members could vote and take part in politics. They decided that it was not appropriate and quoted the following biblical story. In I Samuel 8, Samuel counsels the people of Israel not to desire a king like the people around them. Samuel encourages his people to follow God rather than earthly kings who will oppress them and lead them to fight wars and battles. The message God gave his people Israel was that he was all-sufficient for them. If they desired to follow the ways of other peoples they would also suffer their fate.

A report was presented on a mission that had been set up in an Aberdeen, Saskatchewan, home. Church leaders suggested that the group use only the King James Bible, and if another version was chosen they should be especially cautious about what they read. If possible Bible studies should be led by a minister. Church leaders also felt that it was best if their members would not participate in the tent meetings which were being held in many communities.

Another major issue discussed at the 1957 meeting was whether the Sommerfelder, Chortitzer, and Bergthaler Churches could all operate under one name. It was agreed that it did not seem possible at this time.

This ended the third meeting. Many issues had been discussed and worked through, yet many issues were left for a later time. Most

leaders felt good about these meetings and agreed that they would all do their best to see that they would follow these decisions as closely as possible.

Another meeting was planned for 1959 at the Chortitzer Church on the East Reserve, Manitoba. This latter meeting did not come to pass because the unity created by the first three conferences was broken by two church splits. The Reinlaender Church broke away from the Manitoba Sommerfelder group in 1958, and a small group broke away from the Swift Current Sommerfelder Church in 1959 to affiliate with the Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

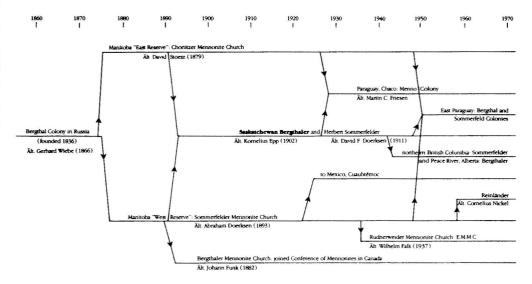
The original intention of these leadership meetings had been to unify the various church groups in their church practises. A good start had been made despite the effect of the church splits.

It was to be some twenty-five years later before some of these churches met again. In November of 1982 the Bergthaler from Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Sommerfelder from Manitoba and British Columbia, and the Old Colony from Manitoba met in the Manitoba communities of Reinland, Altona, Sommerfeld and Winkler to discuss church policy once again.

This section was based primarily on the records of Johan M. Reddekopp, minister in the Saskatchewan Bergthaler Mennonite Church from 1933 to 1963. The book is available from CMBC Publications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Man., R3P 0M4 for \$8.00 (Discount on bulk orders from bookstores).

Leonard Doell is from Warman, Saskatchewan. He has worked in native communities and researched native land claims. He has written extensively on local history, including relations between Mennonites and native people.

#### The Bergthal Colony and its Descendants



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# Nostalgia and Vision Meet at EMMC 50th Anniversary

The pace of change in the 20th century and its impact on Mennonites has been headlong and restless. But for a few hours on July 4, in the sleepy prairie village of Bergfeld, under blue Manitoba skies, the march of time slowed to a halt.

There, under the flapping canvas of a vast striped tent in the company of meadowlarks and swaying half-century-old poplars, the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference celebrated its 50th anniversary.

It was in Bergfeld that the fledgling conference - then known as the Rudnerweide Mennoniten Gemeinde, born of revival and a painful separation from the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church - built its first meeting place in 1937. In the 1940s and 50s, it was in Bergfeld that a circus tent was erected each spring and fall to host conference-wide missions and thanksgiving festivals. The tent became a symbol and a rallying point for Rudnerweide identity.

And it was to Bergfeld that the conference members returned in 1987 to once again pitch a tent and sing God's praises in the open air. The setting and the three-hour service were steeped in nostalgia, yet the spirit of the event was forward-looking and full of optimism.

Ben Sawatsky, a senior EMMC leader, recounted the events which led to the formation of the new Rudnerweide Church in 1936-37. Our history is marked by an emphasis on soul-winning and renewal, he noted. It was a movement of new-found freedom. "The heritage to be remembered and carried on is the heritage of revival."

The EMMC story, like that of so many other Mennonite groups, is a tangled tale of migration, revival, economic development, progressive young leadership and the persistent urge to renew church structures.

In the fall of 1936, tensions within the conservative Sommerfelder Church and the impact of a revival movement sweeping through southern Manitoba led to a split. About 1,100 members were forced to leave the Sommerfelder; they decided to regroup under the leadership of four young ministers. They took the name of Rudnerweide Mennonite Church after the home village of the first elected bishop, Wilhelm H. Falk. In 1959, that name was changed to the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference.

Today there are about 3,100 members in 24 churches. The EMMC has a strong missions program in South America, a radio broadcasting program, a Bible school in Aylmer, Ontario and church connections which extend into Texas, Belize and Bolivia. EMMC members take an active part in inter-Mennonite projects like the Mennonite Central Committee and Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission.

Relations with the Sommerfelder Church are now cordial, but the Sommerfelder

leadership declined an invitation to participate in the anniversary events.

Those events included a bus tour through the early settlements, the release of a new history of the conference by Jack Heppner, and the unveiling of a commemorative cairn in front of the Bergfeld Church.

For many, one of the most touching moments came when the Hochstadt Quartet mounted the platform. These men have been singing together since they were teenagers, over 55 years ago.

Henry Dueck, appointed in 1986 as the first executive secretary of the EMMC, described the celebration as an important statement of confidence. "I guess you could say that we've come through childhood and adolescence. This event is a way of saying to each other: 'Here we are. We have something good to contribute'."

The full history of the EMMC is recorded in Heppner's book, a four-year labour of love entitled, **Search for Renewal.** Heppner is a former missionary and presently the registrar at Steinbach Bible College. (The 350-page book is available for \$25 from the EMMC office, Box 126, Winnipeg, Man., R3C 2G1.)

Article by Allan Siebert and reprinted from Mennonite Reporter (July 27, 1987, pp. 4 and 12) with permission.



The Mennonite Genealogy birthday cake was cut on April 22 by President Hanna Rempel and Vice-President Gordon Thiessen. It commemorates 20 years of work in this program. Mennonite Genealogy Inc. was established as a research centre for genealogists in 1967. Abram A. Vogt of Steinbach was the founder and its president for the first year. He passed away in 1968.

Hanna and her sister Margaret Kroeker staff the Centre which is located now at 790 Wellington St., Winnipeg. Its mailing address is Box 393, Winnipeg, Man., R3C 2H6.

## German-Canadian History Project Looks For Family Documents

A longstanding project about "German-Canadian Contributions to Manitoba, 1670-1914" has reached an intermediate stage of publication and will be published in the German-Canadian Yearbook X, 1987.

In the light of this research, the German-Canadian Historical Association is looking for: Family photos of an earlier date with briefs on names, dates, origin, immigration, location; photos of old buildings (residential, churches, farm buildings), old household objects, clothing; copies of old passports, letters, old publications, paper clippings, books, diaries, short stories, poems, etc., as long as they can be copied and mailed. Do not forget your address and phone number for further contact.

Since our Association is also responsible for the preparation of historical material for the school project of the German-Canadian Congress "Auf den Spuren der Geschichte", your documents would serve a very welcome double purpose. Please contact Prof. D. Roger, German-Canadian Historical Association, 193 Wildwood Park, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T OE2 if you have anything you would like to share.

## Heritage Centre Acquires Album Collection

by Kenlay Friesen

This April, the Mennonite Heritage Centre was given an extensive collection of rare record albums by Mrs. Suzanne Wiebe. The albums had been collected by Mrs. Milan who was an avid listener of a wide variety of music.

The albums date back to the eve of the recorded music industry, when one side of an album was left blank due to technical difficulties involved in cutting groves into both sides of the disk. If that sounds familiar to those who own a C.D., let me assure you the comparison ends there. The delightful sounds of Gilbert and Sullivan, and the original sound scores for Broadway musicals are captured here with the technology of their day.

As impressive as the collection of contemporary performers is the vast collection of classical works by Beethovan, Bach, Mozart, and Haydn. These are just a few examples from a list of over 300 albums, spanning forty years of recording history, and almost as many musical styles. It is indeed an extensive and valuable collection.

## Recent MHCA Acquisitions

by Jim Suderman

The following is a selection from our acquisitions list for the period March 15 to August 31. We would like to thank all donors for their assistance in preserving our Mennonite heritage.

#### Manuscripts & Books

Peter Rempel, Photocopy; In the Flame of Russia's Revolution. N.I. Saloff-Astakhoff, 1931.

Mrs. Katherina Krüger, "Familiengeschichte" (K. Krüger is an emigré to W. Germany).

John G. Penner, 1986 Yearbook: Church of God in Christ, Mennonite.

L. Klippenstein, Genealogy of the third branch (Abraham R. Reimer) of the third generation of Klaas and Helena Reimer.

MCC Canada, Where We Stand (index and 3 m'films).

John P. Dyck, Peter J. Dyck diaries, 1911-1926 (Ladekopp, Molotschna).

Jacob Funk, "Vorträge Gehalten auf einer Prediger - und Diakonen Konferenz am 25. und 26. Juni, 1958, Kleefeld, Kolonie Menno" (Paraguay).

Agnes Wall, "My Mother Remembers" (manuscript).

Dr. Victor Peters, Misc. books, mostly European history.

Mrs. Katherina Schmidt (Bechterdissen), "Heinrich Schmidt memoir".

Trudy & Bill Harms, "At the Ordination of a Bishop"; "Leichenrede - David M. Stoesz".

Provincial Archives of Manitoba (photocopy) Interview transcripts between Roland Penner (Manitoba Attorney-General) and his father, Jacob Penner, 1965,

Paul T. Friesen, "'Ukrainian Lands' Maps in the University of Alberta Map Collection: A Cartobibliography".

"Fernheim, Fernes Heim?" Johann Sjouke Postma thesis.

Gerhard Ens, Paul J. Schaefer paperssermon notes, correspondence, etc.

John Dyck, Workbook of Johann Doerksen, Chortitz (1824-25).

N.N. Friesen, his correspondence and papers (including CMC Board of Missions materials, 1960s).

Egon Burow, Correspondence, photos, Walter Burow's memoirs from World War I, Russian front.

Eric V. & Dave Klaassen, Jacob Klaassen diaries.

Glenn Penner, "Index to the Sommerfelder Church Records of Manitoba", 1987.

Erica Koop, Johann Epp diary (ca. 1890). **Tapes**, **Slides**, **Photos**, **Maps** 

Harry J. Voth, "Der Zigeunerbube im Norden" (cassette).

CMBC, Dr. Peter Erb on Anabaptist Mennonite Spirituality - 4 lectures on cassette.

CFAM Radio, Altona, G. Ens Low German program tapes (11), reel-to-reel.

Rudy Regehr, Photo of Conference delegates of Alberta, ca. 1960.

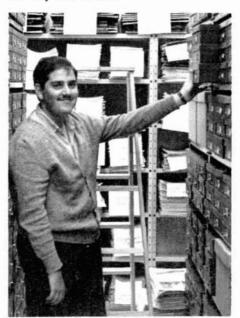
Ray Hamm, 6 cassette tapes of Family Klippenstein reunion, July, 1986.

Map showing Mennonite colonies around Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 1987.

## MHCA Receives Early Steinbach Post Issues

by Jim Suderman

The Mennonite Heritage Centre would like to make a special acknowledgement of their gratitude to Mrs. Gertrude Friesen of Steinbach for her gracious donation of the first ten volumes of the **Steinbach Post** - called **Der Volks-Bote** for its first year of publication. Mrs. Friesen's father, Jacob S. Friesen, edited the paper from its founding in 1913 until 1924 when Arnold Dyck became editor. The issues are in quite good condition and are very rare indeed.



We appreciate the work that Marcelo Gutierrez could do for us in the archives earlier this year. Marcelo, from Argentina, South America, served in Canada under the MCC trainee program. Among his duties at CMBC was a "day a week in the archives". Thanks again, Marcelo! Photo by Rob Nickel, Winnipeg.





The Mennonite Heritage Centre gallery will feature a new paintings exhibit beginning October 15 and running to December 31, 1987. It's entitled "Africa to Canada From the Life and Mind of Ray Dirks". The opening night, with program, will take place from 7-10 p.m., October 15.

Ray is an artist from Winnipeg who did a visual for the CRB report at the Clearbrook Conference sessions in July.

## Summer Staff Farewells

by Jim Suderman

On June 3 Sheila Klassen Wiebe began her duties at the MHCA by rearranging the bound periodicals in the Reading Room. Over the summer she completed her main task - that of cataloguing the backlog of accessioned materials. This invaluable service complemented and completed the work done by Peter Rempel a few months previously. In addition to her cataloguing work, Sheila organized several collections including the Esther Epp-Tiessen Altona book materials and the History/Archives correspondence, 1974-1986. Her work has greatly increased the accessibility to researchers of many new materials.

Sheila has returned to the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary to continue her graduate work for her Master's degree. Her employment at the Heritage Centre was made possible by a Manitoba Career Start grant.

Ken Friesen, another summer-time addition to the Heritage Centre staff, also gave very valuable assistance in a number of projects. He began by cataloguing a huge record collection (see article on page 3). He also took many jobs involving photoduplication, sorting and organizing periodicals and some long-overdue cleaning chores. He typed up standardized labels for the volume boxes in the vault which will ensure easier accessibility and an improved image. Ken has registered for classes beginning this September at the University of Winnipeg.

We thank both Sheila and Ken for their cheerful presence and hard work on the behalf of the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

## MB Historical Society Annual Meeting

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of The M.B. Historical Society of Canada Three Hills, Alberta July 5, 1987

#### **Public Presentation**

Some three hundred delegates were present as Abe Dueck and Harry Loewen both made presentations on the theme, "What's in a Name?" They presented various views concerning the suggestion that the present name of the conference should be changed, particularly with respect to dropping the name Mennonite. Unfortunately, the discussion was halted since previous arrangements had been agreed upon, with the Board of Spiritual and Social Concerns, not to discuss the contents of the book, A People Apart, which one of the presenters had done. The BSSC was concerned with the fact that this was an issue which they, due to lack of time, had not as yet been able to bring before the convention. Nevertheless, John Redekop, writer of the book, took considerable time to respond to the evaluation of his book.

#### Society Meeting

Following the public meeting a smaller group, of some 15 people, remained for the annual business session.

- 1. Conference Archivist Ken Reddig reported on the years activities of the Centre for MB Studies. Highlights were the symposium "Dynamics of Faith and Culture," conducted in November, new accessions such as the MEDA records, and the successful merger of the Newsletter with the Mennonite Historian.
  - 2. Plans for the future were noted:
  - 2.1 A possible symposium for 1989
  - 2.2 An H.H. Janzen evening
- 2.3 An A.A. Kroeker evening (November 20, 1987)
- 3. The minutes of the July, 1986 Annual meeting were read and approved.
- 4. Elections of officers were conducted. Elected were the previous years officers. They are: Helmut Huebert Chairperson, Abe Dueck Vice Chairperson, Bill Schroeder Secretary, Neoma Jantz Member, Harry Loewen Member.
- 5. Future ideas for events were briefly discussed. They included:
  - 5.1 Mennonites in Latin America
  - 5.2 The History of MB Missions
  - 5.3 Mennonites and the Nazi Movement
  - 5.4 The Mary-Martha Home (Winnipeg) Meeting was adjourned.

Recorded by Ken Reddig

## Abram & Elizabeth Kroeker Evening





The MB Historical Society is planning an evening commemorating the life and contributions of Abram and Elizabeth Kroeker. This pioneer Mennonite businessman was not only widely recognized for his achievements in Canadian agriculture, but gave of himself in various facets of church work such as camping, Sunday School, Bible School education and College education.

The event is planned for November 20, 1987 at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, 7:30 p.m. Scheduled are short presentations on various aspects of Kroeker's church and community involvements. The public is invited to attend.

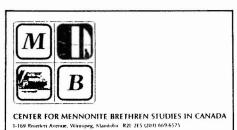
## Evening Hours For Archives

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 169 Riverton Ave., will be open to the public every Tuesday evening beginning September 8, 1987. Hours will be from 6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. Genealogists, historians, students and persons interested in browsing through old periodicals and newspapers are invited to avail themselves of these additional hours.

## Rundschau Index Nears Completion

The first section of the index for the Mennonitische Rundschau is nearing completion. Entering the index on computer and producing camera-ready printouts was Joanne Klassen of Winnipeg, funded by the Challenge '87 Jobs Program. Completed is the author index and most of the subject index for the years 1920-1929.

This coming fall Joanne, a music student at MBBC, will be completing the index on a part-time basis. It is hoped that the index will be available for purchase sometime this winter.



# Alfred Redekopp Joins M.B. Centre Staff

Replacing Erica Fehr, who resigned from working in the Centre this past June, is Alfred Redekopp of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Alfred hails from Virgil, Ontario where he was a member of the Virgil MB Church. He graduated from MBBC in 1975 and since that time has received his certificate of education from the University of Manitoba and has been teaching in the public school system in the areas of Band and Math. He is presently employed on a part-time basis at the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute.

Besides his professional interests, Alfred has pursued a long-time interest in family history and genealogy. At the early age of 14 he began compiling a family history of the Thielmann family. In early August of this year he published this history which is entitled: Jacob Thielmann and Helena Kroeker: A Family History and Genealogy of their Descendants. Copies are available from the Centre for MB Studies for \$22.50 plus \$2.50 postage.

Alfred is employed on a part-time basis at the Centre involved in accessioning materials, creating indices and most directly is in charge of further care and development of the Centre's large genealogical collection, donated several years ago by Katie Peters of Winnipeg. Persons interested in genealogical information should feel free to write Alfred addressing their letters to the address of the Centre.

Ben Horch Jubilee Sängerfest 8 p.m., Friday, Oct. 2, 1987 Portage Avenue MB Church

## Biography of Menno Simons Begun

The first full-length biography of Menno Simons will be begun this fall in Winnipeg. Writing the biography is Dr. Abraham Friesen, formerly of Oak Bluff, Manitoba, and presently professor of Renaissance and Reformation History at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Dr. Friesen has taught at the University for the past twenty years and besides his many publications has most recently completed a book entitled: Thomas Muentzer: The Intellectual Development of an Inadvertent Revolutionary.

Dr. Friesen, together with his wife Gerry (nee Schafer), will be spending fall and early winter in Winnipeg on sabbatical leave. Most of his time will be spent in research, with three weeks in Europe locating Dutch and German sources. Office space has been provided at the Mennonite Studies Centre on the University of Winnipeg campus. The Friesen's son Eric is a student in the department of Environmental Studies at the University of Manitoba.



In August the Centre for MB Studies was notified by the Manitoba Arts Council that MBBC professor of music theory and composition, Linda Schwartz-Trivett, had been awarded a grant of \$1,500 for a composition commemorating the Mennonite Brethren centennial in Canada. Linda, together with the Centre, and supported by MBBC, made application in spring for this grant.

The composition will be a musical/dramatic worship service celebrating Mennonite Brethren faith identity in Canada. Intended for use both by the MBBC A Capella Choir, under the direction of Dr. John Martens, and for use at the local congregational level, it is dedicated to the "Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren on the occasion of the Centennial Celebration of the Mennonite Brethren Church (1988).

In commenting upon the composition, Linda notes that "this is an opportunity for me to give something back to the MB Conference - and particularly MBBC - in gratitude for allowing me the opportunity to exercise my gifts freely." The composition will be premiered in January of 1988 in the River East Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg.



St. Jerome M.B. Church, in the room above the garage. It was the first M.B. Church in Quebec and was founded in St. Jerome in 1964.

## Quebec Church Records Microfilmed

During the month of July, M.B. Conference Archivist Ken Reddig together with his family travelled to Quebec where they began the task of copying records of the Quebec Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches for deposit in the Centre for MB Studies. The need for these records has become more acute since each academic year MBBC has a number of Quebec Mennonite Brethren studying at the College. This fall these students will be better able to research and write upon the Mennonite Brethren Church in Quebec.

Copied were a variety of records. They divide into three main catagories: Quebec Association, Institut Biblique Laval and congregational records. The first two groups were copied in their entirety from their beginning up until June of 1987. In the last group only the records of three of the ten congregations in Quebec were copied. It will require another trip and a week's work, for those records to be completed.

Some impressions of the Quebec Association remain from this record-gathering trip. First of all, the Quebec Association and the Quebec congregations must be commended for their impeccable records. They were neat, tidy, well-written and carefully ordered. Perhaps no other provincial Mennonite Brethren Conference can match their completeness.

Secondly, the pastors, church secretaries, Association executive, were most cooperative. Hospitality of the Quebec people was outstanding. It was a real pleasure to work among these brothers and sisters in Quebec and it was most encouraging to see their real interest in preserving the records of their congregations and Association for historial purposes.

It is projected that sometime in early 1988 a return trip to Quebec will complete the copying of their records. What has been copied so far is now being sorted, microfilmed and copies will be sent to Fresno and the IBL in St. Laurent.

## Film Series Nears Completion

The three-part film series entitled **The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Missionary Movement**, featuring Dr. J.B. Toews of Fresno, California, will be completed by late March 1988. During the General Conference in August, part two of the series, "Tell it to the Nations," was premiered. Subsequently numerous congregations have called or written the Centre requesting rental of the film.

It is the intention of the three MB archival centres and the board of the Historical Commission not to release any part of the series until all parts are completed. At that time congregations will be notified via news releases in the MB Herald and the Mennonite Historian of the films' availability and cost.

The Historical Commission and the three Centres are most grateful to the many individuals and corporations who have made this film series financially possible.

## Russian Mennonite Bicentennial Dates (Part III)

by Lawrence Klippenstein

This concludes the chronological survey of events that cover the years of emigration from Prussia to Ukraine in 1787-1789. A brief list of sources is included. We have not located any photos of Hoeppner and Bartsch. Please let us know if any are available somewhere.

#### 24 June, 1788

The group led by Hoeppner arrived at Dubrovna.

## 28 July, 1788

A farewell service, including several hundred persons, was held at the church in Rosenort, West Prussia for the 152 families who were moving to New Russia at this time.

#### 20 June, 1789

Johann Cornies, later to become a leader in New Russia, was born as the oldest son in the family. His parents, residing in Burwalde, would emigrate from Prussia in 1804. 20-22 July, 1789

The first Mennonite families reached Chortitza. There was much unhappiness because it was not the place originally promised by Hoeppner and Bartsch. Potemkin had forced them to change locations.

#### 30 July, 1789

Frederick William II issued a new edict to cover arrangements with the Mennonites. While asserting its support for the pledges made by Frederick the Great, it nevertheless added further restrictions regarding landowning by Mennonite families.

#### 11 February, 1790

Hoeppner and Bartsch provide a detailed report on the progress in the settlement to date.

#### Spring, 1790

Mennonites began to establish the first permanent villages of the Chortitza colony.



The memorial set up for Jacob Hoeppner (1748-1826) on Chortitza Island, Ukraine (now located at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Man., Canada).



The age-old spreading oak tree at Chortitza was already full-grown when the first colonies arrived in 1789. Presumably it sheltered them for a time as they planned to settle in. Tourists in the Soviet Union still visit the oak tree from time to time today.

#### 29 July, 1791

Aeltester Bernhard Penner, chosen to lead the new congregation in 1790, passed away after a serious illness. Minister Johann Wiebe was elected now to replace the Aeltester Penner in that office. For a long time Wiebe refused to accept Aeltester duties. Vice-Regent Potemkin also died this year.

#### 4 April, 1793

The second partition of Poland took place. It meant that the city of Danzig also came under Prussian rule. Another wave of Mennonite emigration followed, lasting till about 1796.

## 18 April, 1794

Two Prussian Mennonite ministers, Aeltester Cornelius Regier and Aeltester Cornelius Warkentin, arrived in New Russia to help with organizing church life in the young, Mennonite colony.

#### 6 November, 1796

Paul I became the new tsar of Russia after the death of Catherine the Great some weeks



The memorial set up for Johann Bartsch (1757-1821) at Rosenthal, near Chortitza, Ukraine (now located at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Man., Canada).

earlier. He confirmed all the rights she granted to the Mennonites of New Russia, and in some cases even extended them to encourage further settlement in his country.

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## **Books**

Heppner, Jack. Search for Renewal: The Story of the Rudnerweider/EMMC, 1937-1987. (Winnipeg: Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, 1987). 348 pp. Hdc. \$25.00.

Reviewed by Adolf Ens.

The Rudnerweider Gemeinde emerged in southern Manitoba in 1937 as a result of a revival which began in the village of Reinfeld a few years before. Four ministers and about eleven hundred members together with about 1600 dependants left the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church as a result of disagreements about how to handle the expression of this new spiritual life. Heppner's very attractive book in large (8½x11 inch) format was produced for the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Church's founding.

This very readable historical account could hardly have appeared at a more crucial time in Canadian Mennonite developments. In the context of two other groups publicly questioning the value of a continuing Mennonite label for their church, Heppner's book provides EMMCers with a comprehensive source of information to establish and affirm their own identity.

Readers of Search for Renewal will appreciate the understanding of Anabaptist origins and the survey of Mennonite developments in Russia and Canada provided in Part I. The marks of a faithful church identified in this section provide the criteria by which the author will again and again evaluate developments in Rudnerweider-EMMC history.

The Rudnerweider (1936-59) and EMMC (1959-87) stories are then told in some detail in roughly equal sections. The unfolding of the Rudnerweider Gemeinde is portrayed more clearly than are the developments in the EMM Conference. In part this is because the style is more consistently narrative in the first part, in contrast to the more thematic approach in the second. The latter makes for a good deal of repetition as education, publication, pastoral models, radio ministry, missions, service, etc., are successively traced through the past quarter century.

Many EMMC readers will have hoped that the book would contain more about their local congregation. Heppner's careful adherence to his mandate to write the history of the entire Gemeinde - Conference, however, makes this a much better book than a collection of stories of the various locals would have been. He does make up for this omission by providing brief summary descriptions of individual congregations in an appendix.

Others may have wished that the author would omit some of the more painful episodes of this fifty-year history. Heppner has wisely included them, and his tactful (if spare) accounts of these incidents give the book more integrity and provide the readers with a more faithful picture of the EMMC.

Since this is a strong book, well written, thoroughly researched, helpfully illustrated with photographs, maps and charts, the reader is drawn into dialogue with the author. His rhetorical questions at the conclusion of many chapters and sections invite a response, sometimes in the form of counter-questions.

Heppner writes as "an insider" (p. iv); necessarily, because he is one; but also deliberately, because the insider perspective is especially helpful to fellow insiders as they seek their collective identity. But this approach also has its weaknesses. The insider has difficulty in seeing and portraying the other side. This weakness is especially apparent in the account of "The Separation" (ch. 3). Having already established (pp. 30-33) a negative connotation for the term "conservative" by using it in unfavorable contrast to the "progressive" elements of society - public school teachers (especially Russlaender), school board members, EMB business families - Heppner begins the chapter by evaluating the Sommerfelder church as "conservative in character." His addition that "no doubt . . . there was room for genuine faith" in it, (p. 39) then becomes a kind of faint praise which worsens rather than improves the portrayal. The stage is then set for a confrontation between "the traditionalists and the revivalists." (p. 41) A Sommerfelder side of this separation has not yet been published, but such an "insider" account would no doubt read substantially differently.

One's uneasiness with the lack of objectivity here is heightened by the author's somewhat unsure handling of factual information relating to the two groups from which most of the original Rudnerweider came: the Sommerfelder and the Reinlaender. Thus, he says that about half of the Sommerfelder emigrated to Latin America in the 1920s (p. 34), whereas the total can hardly have reached one tenth. And he suggests that Gerhard Froese (one of the "original four" ministers) joined the Sommerfelder Church, in 1921, because the Reinlaender Church had emigrated to Mexico (an emigration that did not begin until 1922).

The insider perspective produces similar uneasiness in the outsider reader at those points where, in the excitement of telling the story of marginal members of weak Reinlaender or Sommerfelder groups in Saskatchewan, Mexico, Belize, or Ontario being brought into the Rudnerweider/EMMC fold, the author does not pause to ask how this loss of members was seen from the other side. Did the vigorous EMMC church planting effort in these areas contribute to the disintegration,

or did it aid a restoration of wholeness and unity in these Mennonite communities?

At a number of other points Heppner includes very perceptive and helpful analyses of the developments he has described. For example, the retrospective evaluation of the events of World War II (pp. 138f) contribute greatly to an understanding of their impact. A similar discussion of the problems of individualism in the context of an Anabaptist-Mennonite church would have been helpful at the conclusion of the story of the first Rudnerweider venture into overseas mission (ch. 7). When this analysis does come in another context (p. 159), its application to the problems of training leaders in a variety of Evangelical/Fundamentalist schools, or of sending missionaries under a number of different 'independent' agencies, is not immediately obvious.

The number of typographical errors and other infelicities that remain in the physical production of the book suggest that at the end the pressure of time did not permit adequate attention to such details. Pity!

But these shortcomings are far outweighed by the overall strength of the book. The Conference is to be congratulated for having invested enough in this project to allow Heppner to produce a history that will serve its members and the larger Mennonite public well. Every EMMC home should have a copy.

Adolf Ens teaches history and theology at Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

## **Book Notes**

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Lynne Martin, et al, A Directory of Canadian Peace Organizations with International Concerns, 1983. (Winnipeg: Mennonite Central Committee (Manitoba), 1982), pb. Available from the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Man., R3P 0M4, for \$5.00.

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This issue edited by Jim Suderman, Peter Rempel and Ken Reddig.