

# MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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Jacob D. Epp (1820-1890) and his second wife, Judith Epp, nee Dyck (1832-1906). The photograph was taken around the mid-1860's.

Photo: Courtesy of W.H. Roth, Rosthern Museum, Rosthern, Saskatchewan

## Mennonite Community in an Age of Troubled Change: The Diaries of Jacob D. Epp, 1851-1880

by Harvey L. Dyck

"Out there you'll find only God's blue sky and Epps."

"Out there" is Eigenheim, a crossroads on flat prairie six miles west of Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Established in the 1890s as a pioneering Mennonite community, Eigenheim today is not even on the local travel pamphlet maps, but its church, the "pearl" of Eigenheim, is there.<sup>1</sup> Despite renovations you can still recognize its 1902 shape.<sup>2</sup> Off to one side of the white, clapboard church, separated from grain fields by a mature treed windbreak, lies the graveyard.

I have come here with Bill Roth, retired Rosthern entrepreneur, civic leader and lay historian. "They're all here," he says. "I mapped the cemetery, and found every one." He is talking about the Eigenheim Epps. An Epp offspring himself, he points out several polished granite markers, and we dig among the dry prairie grasses looking for small steel medallions. Eventually we identify the graves of all the Epps, of matriarch Judith Epp and her ten children and their spouses. The focus of the churchyard, the obelisk marker for the mother Judith (born 11 March 1832; died 15

July 1906), is engraved in German with a verse from Isaiah, "Lo, I was in dire want of consolation, but thou hast heeded the distress of my soul."

Bill Roth and I trade anecdotes, he about the pioneering Epps in Canada, who as farmers, tradesmen, entrepreneurs, churchmen and teachers were community builders, and I about their communitarian life and roots in Russia. The events leading up to this visit go back eight years to a day when Lawrence Klippenstein, archivist of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, handed me a recent contribution, diary volumes by a certain Jacob D. Epp (1820-90), then a complete unknown to me: the paterfamilias of the Eigenheim Epps. Captivated, I decided, in a moment of rashness, to edit, translate and analyze the diaries. Now, with that job almost done, I was in Rosthern and Eigenheim looking for illustrative material for the book.

In 1851, Jacob Epp, a young, one-eyed, 30-year old school teacher on the Island of Chortitza, Old Colony, in the Southern Ukraine, started keeping his diary. Though poor, he came from a prominent and well-connected

Old Colony family of church and lay leaders. His grandfather, David Epp (1750-1802), "Ohm Doaft" in the Mennonite vernacular, negotiated the Mennonite Charter of Privileges of 1800 as a controversial elder of the fledgling church.<sup>3</sup> His clerical father, also David Epp (1781-1843), the most renowned Old Colony churchman of the day, was well-read and deeply pious.<sup>4</sup> Of his brothers, one served as government supervisor for Jewish agrarian settlements, another was secretary of the Old Colony administration and a third, Heinrich (1827-1896), was first head teacher of the Chortitza *Zentralschule* and then a beloved elder of the Chortitza church.<sup>5</sup> His sisters married well. One brother-in-law became the first Old Colony medical doctor while a second founded a thriving farm implement firm in Chortitza.<sup>6</sup>

Jacob Epp was a quintessential insider/outsider. His illustrious Old Colony family bonded Jacob Epp tightly to his community and was a source of ready information for his diaries. Yet he himself was less of a "success" than most of his siblings, sharing the poverty, uncertainty and part of the outlook of numerous less fortunate Mennonites, who were not at the centre of things. In 1852, landless and in need of a living for his growing family, he left the Old Colony, joining about fifty other Mennonite "model agriculturalist" families in the *Judenplan*, a state-sponsored Jewish agricultural settlement of six villages about 50 miles west of Chortitza.<sup>7</sup> Here, for twenty-five years, he farmed (supposedly teaching agriculturally unlettered Jews farming by example), buried his first wife and several infant children, remarried, plunged into community life and travelled back and forth to Chortitza. Elected a minister, he devotedly pastored his community of about 600 "landed" and "landless" Mennonites through difficult times.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, to alleviate the landless crisis, Old Colony daughter settlements sprang up close to the *Judenplan*, and Jacob Epp helped his married children acquire land and pioneer new villages in these settlements. He also helped them organize their religious life. In 1874 he himself took up a virgin farmstead in the village of Gnadenenthal, one of five villages of the nearby, recently-founded daughter settlement of Neu-Chortitza.<sup>8</sup> Except for a brief stint as minister in a new alternative service forestry camp, he remained there as landowner and minister until his death in 1890, his 70th year.

He likely continued his diary almost until his death, filling seven substantial volumes over a forty-year span. Following his burial in the village cemetery of Gnadenenthal, his diar-

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ies were sold at family auction. Treasured keepsakes, stuffed in crates and wicker trunks, they reached Eigenheim as settlers' belongings with his immigrant widow and children in the 1890s. Only three diary volumes<sup>9</sup> and a family journal<sup>10</sup> are known to survive, the others having presumably been lost in family clean-ups and moves. Penned in a neat, uniform Gothic script in the colloquial Russian Mennonite High German of the time, the existing volumes cover the years 1851 to 1853 and 1859 to 1880. In Russian Mennonite life, this was a quarter century of troubled change.

I found Jacob Epp's unfamiliar hand difficult at first, but once I started reading, I became engrossed, continuing through that first night at the Heritage Centre. Slowly I began to sense that what I held in my hand was probably the single most important record regarding Imperial Russian Mennonite life in existence after the great source collection of P.M. Friesen, printed in 1911.<sup>11</sup> That compilation had always left me vaguely dissatisfied. With its official sources of decrees and petitions, its focus on the great confrontations over land, piety or emigration, and its stage crowded with fractious and often sour individuals, I thought it conveyed an extremely one-sided picture of Mennonite life in Imperial Russia.

Missing in P.M. Friesen's history was the immediacy of daily life, the routine, cycle and heart-beat of the family and the village and the yearly rhythm of field work and of worship. There was little pattern of detail regarding social life, including sexual mores, or popular religion. Largely missing, too, were the kinds of people of Russian Mennonite background I had known growing up: individuals with a simple personal faith, who laughed heartily, forgave easily, helped readily and seemed possessed of a natural instinct to pitch in when things in the community needed to be planned and done. The diaries of Jacob Epp seemed to fill in significant missing pages of this great communitarian story, capturing first-hand impressions of that world as no existing history could. The diaries seemed to revolve around the theme of community, the dominant theme in the history of the Mennonites of Russia, their value as a major source enhanced by the fact that important records of Russian Mennonite life have been lost in the twentieth century through revolution, war and the Stalinist upheaval.

Keeping a diary served several purposes for Jacob Epp. Recording daily events each evening, or in moments snatched from field and pastoral work over four decades, was a conscious act of filial identification with his revered late father, who had kept a diary. (Two of Jacob Epp's sons and one of his sons-in-law kept their own diaries.) On the level of his household economy, the diaries

are an illuminating record of the gnawing uncertainties of agriculture in a pre-modern era: the variable and often mercurial weather, with its uncertain rainfalls; the up's and down's in the lambing, shearing and marketing of sheep; the recurring cycles of hope and despair in the plowing, seeding and harvesting of grain fields; and the sheer misery of frequent pest infestations, crop failures and epidemics among cattle, sheep and horses.

As a lay minister, Jacob Epp records the details of his religious office: sermons, weddings, deaths, the great celebrations of the church calendar, and the sorrows and triumphs as well as peccadillos and moral transgressions of his parishioners that involved church counselling or discipline. Jacob Epp was acutely aware of the fundamental changes occurring around him and expressly wrote that his diaries were intended as a family remembrance of a world that was partly disappearing. Here they are a veritable mine of information. Conversely, as a man of unfeigned devotion, subject to bouts of despondency, his diaries revolve around the central motif of God's mysterious ways and untiring faithfulness in an inconstant world.

But what gives the diaries perhaps their greatest force is their unalloyed humanity, the fact that they were Jacob Epp's vital private outlet to vent his otherwise often repressed feelings and to digest the experiences of his cramped ministerial profession. He felt the need to write, to express his sentiments and to interpret the events of his daily life. Also, he felt compelled simply to record and to craft stories out of his own experiences and those of his community. Through his diary, which was at times like a confessional, Jacob Epp appears to have found the intimate expression of his personal pilgrimage, which he craved, and which was often denied him in his public life.

Jacob Epp is a writer of honesty, great feeling and considerable skill. With little formal schooling but with an artist's eye for the unique or typical detail, he composes often lengthy entries that overflow with naive, workaday minutia. He records a number of poignant and haunting dreams, including a tender reunion with his recently deceased first wife. Some of his sketches revolve around horse-drawn cart or carriage trips to Mennonite settlements, market ports on the Dniepr River and provincial capitals. A memorable entry is about a river and lake steamer voyage down the Dniepr into the Black Sea to the boom-town of Odessa.

Jacob Epp kept his diary during an age of sweeping economic and social change in southern Ukraine that deeply affected his Mennonite community. Grain growing became king, rail lines were built and towns and foundries sprang up. Much that had been familiar suddenly became strangely new.<sup>12</sup> Modern agricultural technologies and education combined with new religious currents,

changes in the political environment and demands for reform to provoke widespread questioning and uncertainty. The upshot among Mennonites in the 1860s and 1870s was bitter conflict and a generation-long crisis.<sup>13</sup> At mass public meetings and in petitions to the courts and to the government, disputes raged over the question of authority in the community, widespread landlessness, the use of community pastures and access to the franchise in village and district elections. At the same time, newer, more personal forms of religious experience shattered confessional unity. Filling the cup of uncertainty to the brim in the 1870s were military reforms and assimilative policies of the Imperial government. Interpreted as an attack on the autonomy and pacifism of the Russian Mennonites, they triggered a mass emigration to Canada and the United States of about a third of all Mennonites.

In his diary, Jacob Epp captures firsthand impressions of many sides of this troubled world with an immediacy no third-person history can match. From his writings also emerge the indelible traits of Jacob Epp as a symptomatic figure of his day. Although Jacob Epp was a religious moralist in his basic outlook, like his grandfather and father, he became a man of compromise, of the "golden mean," on many of the great questions facing his brotherhood. By choosing a middle ground, he tried to temper conflict and encourage progress, and by skirting extreme positions while defending traditional values and practices, he became an advocate of gradual change. This was reflected in his support of a more modern agriculture, administration and schools. He strongly championed a personal and deeper piety, without joining the break-away Mennonite Brethren church. He favoured a more elevated moral tone in family and village life, and greater freedom and experimentation in personal expression in all areas of life. Jacob Epp pursued these goals with considerable tenacity, while trying hard to avoid major upsets and sharp break within his community.

Jacob Epp can perhaps be best described as a man with one foot in the world of his communitarian immigrant forebears of the early eighteen hundreds and another in that of his more individualistic Eigenheim grandchildren of the early twentieth century. He appears as a typical figure, a figure of transition among Russian Mennonites par excellence. Like the pendulum of a "Kroeger Uhr," a Russian Mennonite wall clock, the moods of this personally modest, kindly, deeply devout, vulnerable and often depressive man swung back and forth between hope and disappointment. Yet by adapting selectively to change personally and in his family, village and larger Mennonite brotherhood, a cautious, sometimes ambivalent man like Jacob Epp, straining for his own authentic voice in an unstable era,

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## GENEALOGY AND FAMILY HISTORY

By Alf Redekopp

### Genealogy Workshop Report

Over 60 participants attended a genealogy workshop on 15 October, 1988, entitled, "Sources for Prussian Mennonite Roots," at the CMBC campus in Winnipeg. The workshop was sponsored by the Genealogy and Family History Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

Featured speaker, Alan Peters, of Fresno, California, gave three presentations. The first session dealt primarily with the 18th and 19th century Prussian Mennonite church records. Participants received an alphabetical listing of Prussian place names indicating in which Mennonite Church register their family connections may be found.

In the second session, Peters focused on the published family lists of B.H. Unruh and Karl Stumpp, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. He pointed out that variations in spellings of names, and various calendars and dating methods, have often confused the genealogist. He cautioned against drawing conclusions too quickly, if spellings and dates do not agree.

The most significant contribution of this session was Peters' compilation of a comprehensive index of all persons recorded in the family lists and other documents in Unruh's *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderung im 16., 18., und 19. Jahrhundert*. It included a computer diskette of the data, so that it may be arranged and searched in various ways.

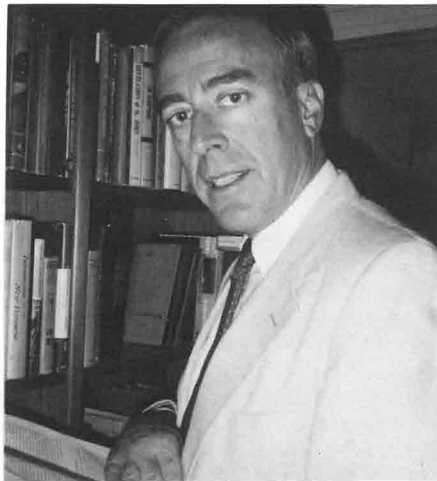
The final session focused on a dream for Mennonite family research, using computers, collaboration between family researchers and communication between research centres, in order to avoid duplication of effort and to share information more efficiently.

Not only did the participants of the workshop benefit from the excellent presentations. Much was also gained after the sessions from formal and informal discussions, around the displays and at the coffee and lunch breaks.

### Recently Published Genealogies

Wiebe, Edith (compiler), *The Ancestry and Descendants of Jakob Johann Wiebe and Aganetha (Agnes) Goerz, also including the Descendants of Jakob's Brothers Johann Wiebe and Abram Johann Wiebe*. Winnipeg, MB: Private Publication, 1988. (Contact: Edith Wiebe, 1213-160 Hargrave St., Winnipeg, MB, R3C 3H3.)

Jakob Johann Wiebe was born in Ohrloff, Zagradovka, in 1885, moved to the Kuban settlement around 1890, to Canada in 1925, and died in Yarrow, B.C., in 1966. His Wiebe ancestors left W. Prussia in 1828 and lived in Rudnerweide, Molotschna, from 1828-1871. The book also includes sections on the Von Riesen, Goerz and Martens family ancestors.



Alan Peters, Fresno, California.

Photo: Courtesy of Anne Unruh

Born, Esther (compiler), *Genealogy of My Great Grandparents Johann and Aganetha (Nickel) Thiessen*. Clearbrook, BC: Private Publication, 1987. (Contact: Esther Born, c/o Columbia Bible College, 2940 Clearbrook Rd., Clearbrook, BC, V2T 2Z8.)

This compilation traces the descendants of Johann Thiessen (1877-1926) born in Burwalde, Chortitza and who died in Nikolaijevka, Ignatievo, Russia. His wife, Aganetha Nickel (1849-1910) was the daughter of Jacob Nickel (1817-1908) and Justina Driedger (1815-1872). She was a sister to John D. Nickel (1852-1936) who migrated to America in 1874 and died in Kansas, as well as Peter Nickel (1854-1945) who migrated to America in 1903 and died in Saskatchewan.

Bergen, Peter, *Genealogy of Peter and Maria (Hiebert) Bergen*. (Winnipeg: Peter Bergen Family, 1988). 124 pp., hdc., \$25.00. Available from Peter Bergen, 1238 Lorette Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3M 1W5.

Rempel, Hermann, *Johann S. Rempel and Family, 1830-1899*. (Morden, Man.: Herman Rempel, 1988). 215 pp., hdc. or pb., \$29.00 or \$23.00, respectively. Available from Herman Rempel, Box 901, Morden, Manitoba, R0G 1J0.

### Heidebrecht Descendants — Research Report

Hermann Thiessen of West Germany reports that for over a year now he has been in the process of researching and compiling information on all the descendants of Peter Heidebrecht (?-1770), who he believes to be the common ancestor of all Heidebrecht families among the Mennonites of Dutch-Prussian origin. An outline of the first three generations, covering approximately 1770-1815, has been received by the *Mennonite Historian* and may be of interest to some readers.

Also received recently from Delbert F. Plett of Steinbach, Manitoba, was a working copy of the *Descendants of Jakob Heidebrecht*, some of which were prominent Kleingemeinde members.

### Jacob D. Epp Diaries (cont'd)

became an example to his fellows. He was able to help preserve essential facets of a religious-communitarian way of life while adjusting to the opportunities, and avoiding many pitfalls, of the larger Imperial Russian and modern world.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>"The Saskatchewan Valley News Visitors' Guide," Supplement to *The Saskatchewan Valley News*, June 30, 1988.

<sup>2</sup>H.T. Klaassen, *Birth and Growth of Eigenheim Mennonite Church, 1892-1974*. (Rosethorn, Sask., n.d.).

<sup>3</sup>D.H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*. (Odessa, 1889), 97-101.

<sup>4</sup>James Urry, "The Closed and the Open: Social and Religious Change Amongst the Mennonites in Russia (1789-1889)," Diss., Oxford, 1978, 241, 510-17; Diary of David D. Epp, 1837-1843, mss., Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Vol. 1017.

<sup>5</sup>H. Epp, ed., *Heinrich Epp, Kirchenältester der Mennonitengemeinde zu Chortitza (Südrußland)*. (Leipzig, 1897).

<sup>6</sup>D.H. Epp, "Aus der Kindheitsgeschichte der deutschen Industrie in den Kolonien Süd-Rußlands," *Der Botschafter*, Aug 1, 5, 12, 15, 1911.

<sup>7</sup>D.H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*, 95-99; Julius Elk, *Die jüdischen Kolonien in Rußland*. (Frankfurt a.M., 1886); K. Slychevskii, "Evreiskia kolonii," *Russkii Vestnik* (April, 1890), 201-28.

<sup>8</sup>Jakob Redekopp, *Es war die Heimat... Baratow-Schlactjin*. (Filadelfia, Paraguay, 1966).

<sup>9</sup>The three cover the following years: Vol. 1 (1851-53), Vol. 4 (1859-71) and Vol. 5 (1871-80).

<sup>10</sup>Contains a record of his service as minister, family genealogical information, harvest yields and occasional poems.

<sup>11</sup>P.M. Friesen, *Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Rußland (1789-1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte*. (Halbstadt, Ukraine, 1911).

<sup>12</sup>V.E. Postnikov, *Iuzhno-russkoe krestianskoe khoziastvo*. (Moskva, 1891); Patricia Herlihy, *Odessa: A History 1794-1914*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 168-232.

<sup>13</sup>David G. Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia: A Sketch of its Founding and Endurance, 1789-1919," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (1974), 23-54.

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# A Letter From Hoepfner And Bartsch To Potemkin

Translated by Edwin D. Hoepfner.

Dr. David G. Rempel discovered the original of this letter in the State Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. in 1962. Rempel provided a copy to the late Peter M. Hoepfner, Winkler, Manitoba, some time around 1970. The letter is in a form of Gothic script which is quite difficult to read. Subsequently Rempel provided a not-quite-complete transliteration to this translator, who deciphered the remainder in September, 1978.<sup>1</sup>

Most Serene High Prince,<sup>2</sup>  
Most Gracious Lord!

Since our community<sup>3</sup> gave us the mission to provide it with a detailed report, not only on the nature of the lands and soil, but also on the waterbodies, herbage and other natural products essential for trade; and to select low-lying areas for the Colony, primarily, however, lands along the Dnieper between Jekaterinnoslaw and Cherson or along another [stream] in the vicinity of Saint Elizabeth,<sup>4</sup> we venture most humbly herewith to suggest to your Most Princely Serene Highness that it would be far more advantageous for us to undertake the journey there in spring when there will be more snowcover<sup>5</sup> and everything will be dry. Therefore we petition your Princely Serene Highness to permit us to remain in this city until the end of March and for our greater personal security commit ourselves to the protection of Your Princely Serene Highness. We petition further that until that time our money<sup>6</sup> may either be paid to us in advance, or that a responsible man be appointed from whom we could receive the same each month without the slightest<sup>7</sup> delay.

Since we already have experienced the most adequate evidence of Your Princely Serene Highness' grace, it might serve to promote the undertaking of our community: that in the meantime someone in the service of Your Princely Serene Highness would go to Dantzic with a letter from us in order to encourage it concerning our project; and to provide it with news concerning the benevolent attitude of Your Princely Serene Highness. Since all this does not constitute a considerable expense to the Crown, we, therefore, anticipate the fulfillment by Your Princely Highness Grace: of the most humble petition of those remaining in the greatest possible respect

Your Princely Serene Highness.

Our most gracious Lord's  
most humble servants.

Anno 1786 the 12 December

Jacob Höpner<sup>8</sup>  
Johan Bartsch



Vice Regent G.A. Potemkin.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Near the top right hand corner of the letter there is a stamp (*Stempel*) which, according to Rempel, reads *Gosudarstvennyi Archiv M.I.D.* [State Archive Ministry of Foreign Affairs]. The contents of the letter do not specifically indicate either its place of origin or its intended destination. We do know, however, that Bartsch and Hoepfner spent most of the winter of 1786/87 in Kherson (Peter Hildebrand, *Erste Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus dem Danziger Gebiet nach Südrußland*, republished in Victor Peters, *Zwei Dokumente*. Winnipeg, 1965, 15). It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the letter was written in Kherson. It is also recorded that the delegates departed Dubrovno 1 December, 1786, destination Kremenchug, for the purpose of discussing the object of their journey with Potemkin (D.H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten - Versuch einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges derselben*. Odessa, 1889, 19). Consequently it is reasonable to conclude further that Potemkin was present in Kremenchug in December, 1786, and that the letter's destination must have been this city.

<sup>2</sup>In the German original the delegates address Potemkin as *Durchläuchtigster Fürst*. The term *Durchlaucht* was a form of address originally restricted to princes of the Holy Roman Empire German Nation. Catherine II of Russia obtained this title for Potemkin from Emperor Joseph II of Austria in 1776 (Theresia Adamczyk, *Fürst G.A. Potemkin - Untersuchungen zu seiner Lebensgeschichte*. Neudruck der Ausgabe 1936, Osnabrueck, 1966,

17). There is no simple English equivalent of *Durchlaucht*.

<sup>3</sup>*Gemeine* has been translated as community. This community would, in the strict legal sense, appear to refer to the Mennonite population of the territory of the city-state of Danzig, under Polish sovereignty until 1793. Peter Hildebrand (*Zwei Dokumente*, 15) states that 60 Mennonites signed the document which gave power of attorney to the delegates to represent the community in this undertaking. He also states (14) that no Mennonite of the adjacent areas of West Prussia, under the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Prussia, could dare to sign the power of attorney.

<sup>4</sup>St. Elizabeth, founded in 1754 as a border fortress, was renamed Yelizavetgrad in 1775, and after a succession of name changes during the Soviet period, finally became Kirovograd in 1939.

<sup>5</sup>Eighteenth century Russia was notorious for the paucity of its roads and their poor state. Overland travel was easiest while the ground and water surfaces were frozen.

<sup>6</sup>"Their" money refers to their travel and living expenses, which, by prior agreement with Potemkin's representative, Georg Trappe, were to be paid by the Russian Crown. (*Zwei Dokumente*, 17-18).

<sup>7</sup>As the subsequent Mennonite immigrants' experience was to confirm, the eighteenth century Russian bureaucracy's efficiency left much to be desired, partly due to endemic and persistent corruption. This will have become apparent to the delegates almost immediately.

<sup>8</sup>Although Jacob Hoepfner's signature appears first, the letter was most likely written by Johan Bartsch. Peter Hildebrand remarks that Hoepfner was the speaker, whereas Bartsch was the writer (*Zwei Dokumente*, 16). It is interesting to note that the spelling of the name in the signature is "Höpner," although the latter's son-in-law, Peter Hildebrand, consistently uses the form "Höppner."

## The Oregon Trail of Manitoba Mennonites

by John Dyck

### Conclusion

Most of the Mennonites from Manitoba had been members of the Sommerfelder or Reinlaender churches. The exceptions were the Ungers and Isaacs, who had been with the Kleine Gemeinde and the Elias Bergens, who may have been Mennonite Brethren before their arrival in Canada.

Shortly after the Manitoba Mennonites arrived in Dallas, the *Schraggengemeinde* moved, building and all, to Fern Ridge, 70 miles west of Dallas. That prevented any assimilation into that body.

During the first half of June, 1891, Ältester Heinrich Voth and Rev. Gerhard Wiebe of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Minnesota and Manitoba, respectively, ministered to the

(cont'd on page 8)



## REFLECTIONS ON COLLECTIONS

### The J.M. Pauls Collection

by Jim Suderman

Jacob M. Pauls was born on November 11, 1903, in the village of Grigorievka, Ukraine. He married Maria Funk on January 31, 1926. They emigrated to Canada in the same year, settling in the area of Morden, Manitoba.

Pauls took on the role of choir conductor soon after his arrival in Morden's small Berghthaler congregation, then led by Rev. P.P. Epp. In 1932 he was elected and ordained as the first minister of the Morden Berghthaler congregation, serving alongside Rev. Epp. Pauls first became active in the work of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada in 1949. Ten years later he succeeded J.J. Thiessen as chairman of the Conference.

The Pauls collection contains about 1.5 metres of material (not including 64 books). It is dominated by sermon notes and conference materials. However, his involvement with Sunday School and youth activities, which span his career within the Berghthaler community, is also reflected in the collection.

1951 was his last year as minister in the Morden congregation. He subsequently became more involved in Winkler, as illustrated in the files relating to the Salem Old Folks Home and the Winkler Berghthaler Church. Unfortunately, his involvement with the Eden Mental Health Centre is not well documented within the collection, nor is his service on the board of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna, where he served for fifteen years.

The personal papers of the collection include family correspondence and a short story written by Pauls and his wife about their lives in Russia and Canada. They also include a diary Pauls maintained during his emigration to Canada. Rev. Pauls died of cancer on November 20, 1961.

The collection was donated to the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives by Rev. Jacob F. Pauls of Winnipeg. Since the Heritage Centre is making a special effort to collect the papers of Conference leaders, this acquisition is a step toward that goal.

### Friends of the Archives

We want to warmly thank the people and groups who have supported our donor drive for 1988. These gifts will help to pay for some extra projects undertaken, and also to come out "in the black" with the regular program.

Our new "Friends of the Archives 100" plan has appealed to a number of people also. Donors give at least \$100.00 to become a member. About twenty-five persons responded this way to the introductory mailing sent out in November.



The homestead mapping of the former East and West Reserves of Manitoba Mennonites is an important project in progress. Here Bill Harms (centre) and John Rempel (right) are presenting the first completed volume (on the East Reserve) to the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

Photo: Courtesy of John and Tina Rempel, Altona, Manitoba.

### Recent Projects Completed

A third backlog reduction project was completed by Peter Rempel in November. It included a revised listing of all Manitoba school registers on file here (Mennonite schools from southern Manitoba), and organizing recent deposits from MCC (Manitoba). The grant was provided by the Canadian Council of Archives, as were the earlier two.

Peter also completed an index to the *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, published in Ukraine from 1903 to 1913, and a manuscript for *Bote Index, Vol. II, 1947-1963*. The *Jahrbuch Index* can be obtained here for \$5.00 a copy plus postage. Work has begun as well on *Bote Index, Vol. III*.

This brought to completion Peter's involvement as special projects archivist. He terminated employment with the MHCA on November 4. His work has been greatly appreciated and represents significant progress in the total program of the Heritage Centre.



## Some Recent MHCA Acquisitions

### Southern Manitoba Coop files

A great source for local business history are the records of the coops of southern Manitoba (at least for the West Reserve villages). Deposited by Henry Dyck of Winnipeg, they comprise almost two linear metres of files and include materials of the Federation of Southern Manitoba Cooperatives, the Manitoba Farmers' Union, the Women's Cooperative Guild, the Altona Coop Hatchery and the Winkler Credit Union Society. There are considerable materials on the various Coop Colleges and the *Community Builder*, a cooperative periodical, as well.

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### Mennonite German Society of Canada, Inc. Collection

Recently, the files of the Mennonite German Society of Canada, Inc., also known as the *Mennonitischer Sprachverein*, were donated to the MHC Archives. About one-third of the five linear metres of material is sheet music used by the Society. The complete financial records of the group are included as well as miscellaneous photographs, cassette tapes and a box full of black bow ties! Executive correspondence and *Protokolle*, 1952-1970, form the remainder of the collection.

### Mennonite Heritage Kit

In January all CMC Sunday Schools will be receiving the first part of a new Mennonite Heritage teaching kit. It has been funded by MHC receipts from the Sunday School Project Calendar sent to all congregations every year.



### MHC Gallery

The Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery has hosted two exhibitions recently. One is "Pen and Ink Drawings — Man's Best Friend" by Amanda May Klippenstein, and the other is "Paintings" by Peter von Kampen. Both are Winnipeg artists.

These exhibitions will run till early January. A new paintings exhibition, prepared by Herman Rogalski of Domain, Manitoba, is being planned for January through March, 1989.

## Mary-Martha Home Reunion

Over the past two years there has been a resurgence of interest in the story of the Mennonite *Mädchenheime* (Girls' Homes) in Canada. Cities such as Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Calgary were locations of these homes. The homes became the focal point for several thousand young Mennonite women who worked in these cities as domestic servants from 1925 to 1959.

For Mennonite Brethren the Mary-Martha Home in Winnipeg, with its matron Anna Thiessen, became known throughout the Canadian Conference. A combination of factors were responsible for this. Firstly, Winnipeg was often the final stop for thousands of Russian Mennonite immigrants in the 1920's. Secondly, the Mennonite Brethren had a vibrant, though small, city mission under the capable leadership of C.N. Hiebert. He took it upon himself to do his utmost to aid the poverty-stricken immigrants who disembarked in Winnipeg. The task was enormous.

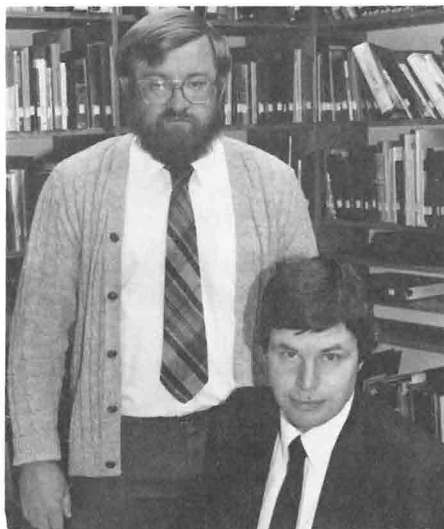
A major problem in assisting these immigrants was to locate jobs for them. It wasn't that they did not want to work. The problem was that there were so few jobs available. Often the only available job opportunities were for women willing to work as domestic servants in the homes of Winnipeg's upper class. But this meant families had to leave their young daughters alone in the big city, living with and working for English-speaking strangers. The only reason a family would tolerate such a situation was because the conference had a Girls' Home, with a matron who acted as counselor, employment agency, pastor and nurse, to look after the well-being of their daughter.

A reunion of women involved with the Mary-Martha Home, as well as those interested in the story of such Girls' Homes, is being planned by the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada. The date selected for this event is March 17, 1989 in the MBBC auditorium.

The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. Speakers at this event include Frieda Esau Klippenstein, who conducted interviews several years ago with women involved in the Girls' Home in Winnipeg, as well as Mrs. Martha (Thiessen) Schulz, who assisted her sister Anna in the operation of the Mary-Martha Home for several years.

Everyone interested in attending this event is cordially invited. A reception will follow the program.

NB: You will find additional information on this theme in "The Mennonite Girls' Homes — New Research," in *Mennonite Historian* XIII (June, 1987), 3 also by Frieda Esau Klippenstein.



Ken Reddig, MB archivist, with Bert Friesen, *Rundschau* indexer.

Photo: Courtesy of MCC Canada, Bruce Hildebrand, in Winnipeg.

## Grant Received to Complete Indexing of *Rundschau*

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies received word in late October that it was the recipient of a grant to complete the indexing of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. The grant was received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under its "Canadian Studies Research Tools Program." The grant is for a total of \$85,850, spread over the next three years, and includes monies for new computer equipment.

The majority of the funds are for the hiring of an indexer to complete the index. The Centre board has met and has appointed Mr. Bert Friesen, of Winnipeg, an independent researcher, who recently completed the *Index to Statements by Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in Canada, 1787-1982*. Bert began working on the *Rundschau* project in late November. It is expected that it will be completed in November, 1991. As the project progresses, copies of the index will be marketed to the general public.



## Accessioning MCC (B.C.) Files

In early November, MB Conference Archivist Ken Reddig, met with the Mennonite Archives Association of B.C. The meeting had a dual function. The first was to discuss the matter of jurisdiction. Since the Mennonites in B.C. are now beginning an inter-Mennonite archives, clarification was necessary in order to avoid duplicating the gathering of archival material being done at the two archival centres in Winnipeg.

The second purpose of the meeting was to assist the B.C. archivist, Mrs. Esther Born, in beginning the selection, sorting and description process of the extensive records recently deposited by Mennonite Central Committee (B.C.).

The Mennonite Archives of B.C. is located on the campus of Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford. Already the Archives has a nice collection of family histories, books and periodicals, besides the MCC files. Over the next few years the collection is certain to grow and become an important centre for the study of B.C. Mennonite history.

## New Book on Soviet Union

John B. Toews, ed., *Letters from Susan: A Woman's View of the Russian Mennonite Experience (1928-1941)*, (North Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1988).

Susan Toews of Ohrloff, Molotschna, began writing to her brother Gerhard in Canada before Russia's new political order was ten years old. In the wake of 1917 she and other Germans in Ukraine had experienced the fury of revolution and civil war. From 1928 to 1941 Susan wrote regularly to her brother in Canada describing the process of collectivization and dekulakization as it affected her and her family. She describes the destruction of ecclesiastical leadership and confiscation of churches which effectively ended the religious life of Mennonite colonies after over a century in Russia.

The hardships suffered by the Russian people under Stalin are detailed in an intimate fashion not found in scholarly works on the period. When the German armored divisions entered the Soviet Union in 1941, citizens of German background were deported eastward. Susan Toews, weakened from over a decade of malnutrition, was sent with others to Kazakhstan. They were given little food and only shovels to dig their own shelters which soon became their graves. Susan perished and her dreams of escape to Canada went with her to the grave.

Dr. John B. Toews, author of *Czars, Soviets and Mennonites* (1982), until recently has been Professor of History at the University of Calgary, Alberta. The book sells for \$10.00 (8.00 U.S.) in paperback and \$18.00 (15.00 U.S.) in hardcover. Order through your local bookstore.





Garry Enns, co-author with his wife Gaile, of the Gretna history book.

Photo: Courtesy of Abe and Margaret Loewen, Gretna, Man.

## Heritage Workshop in Gretna

The Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society sponsored a heritage preservation workshop in Gretna, Manitoba on November 5. About 40 persons registered for the morning and afternoon sessions which were held at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in town.

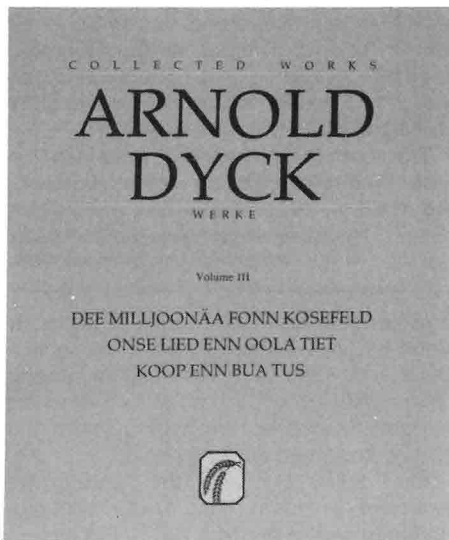
The main presenter of the first session was Dr. William Thompson of the University of

Manitoba Faculty of Architecture. He spoke on what to keep in mind when planning restoration of old buildings. Several such projects are underway in the area.

The afternoon session was devoted to four presentations dealing with local history. Garry Enns, Winnipeg, shared some "inside information" related to gathering data for the recently-published history of Gretna. Reflections on the diaries of J. Linscheid, teacher in the MCI during WWI, were given by Elizabeth Bergen of Altona. John Rempel and Bill Harms, also of Altona, commented on their projected atlas of homesteads in the West

Reserve (they have done the East Reserve already). Finally, Dr. Rhinehart Friesen, a retired physician from Winnipeg, spoke about his return to a hometown, i.e. Gretna, and read excerpts from his new book *A Mennonite Odyssey*, also on that theme.

Besides that, the program included award presentations to two history book committees, the Gretna book group and the persons who prepared and published a history of Horndean several years ago. Histories of Gnadenthal, Altona, Reinland, and Winkler, all in the former West Reserve region, have been published as well.



## Arnold Dyck's Collected Works

The third volume of Arnold Dyck's *Collected Works/Gesammelte Werke*, edited by Dr. Al Reimer, appeared in print earlier this year. It contains the author's Low German works, including the early "Koop enn Bua" sketches, and such plays as "Dee Opnoam," "Dee Fria" etc.

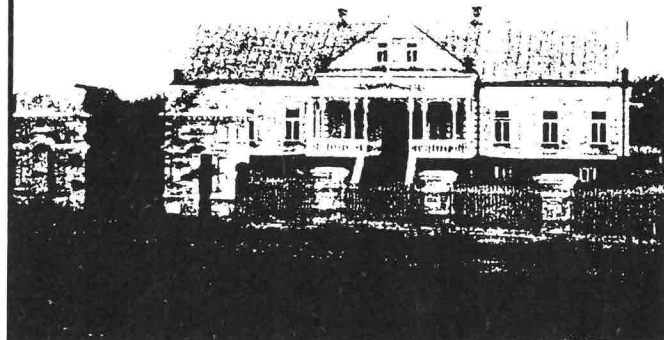
This hardcover volume of 604 pages, as well as the earlier two volumes, may be ordered from Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3P 0M4. Each volume costs \$30.00. Postage and handling are extra. Do not send money. You will be invoiced.

The fourth volume is scheduled for publication in 1989.

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## The Oregon Trail (cont'd)

Mennonite community in Dallas. On 7 June, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Hiebert were baptized in a river near Dallas as was a daughter of Franz Kliever, on 14 June. Later that year Elder Voth helped to organize these members of the Mennonite Brethren church into a loosely structured congregation. He sensed, however, that they might be returning to Manitoba shortly.

Soon the MB group also included Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Beier, Mr. and Mrs. Elias Bergen, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Friesen, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Bergen, and Mr. Jacob Bergen. Henry Voth was appointed leader of this group. By spring of 1892 the membership of this group had risen to 17.

The growth of this church was halted already the following year as several families left the community. On 23 October, 1893, Peter Bergen sold his property. He was followed next spring by Elias Bergen, and two years later by Henry Voth.

In 1895 missionary Peter Wedel came to Dallas. He served this congregation for several weeks during which time a few more families were added to the congregation. Then some other Mennonite Brethren families moved into the area. However, as the emigration continued, this group dissolved in 1896. Some of the remaining members worshipped for a while with the Polk Station Mennonite Church but then joined the German Baptists over a disagreement regarding baptism. It was not until 1904 that there were again enough Mennonite Brethren in the area to form a stable congregation.

The remaining larger body of Manitoba Mennonites met in a school for worship and edification. They alternated the language of service between German and English. Without a pastor or lay minister this group was frequently served by travelling ministers and itinerant evangelists.

On those Sundays when they had no minister they would have Sunday School classes. These were sometimes conducted in the home of Peter Toews and possibly in other homes. The attendance declined here also as the move back to Canada went on. Those Mennonites who remained were divided among the loosely-structured Mennonite and Mennonite congregations and the local German Baptists.

By 1895 there were still 40 Low German-speaking Mennonite families in the Dallas area. Although most of these had come from Manitoba, and included a number of descendants who had married in Oregon, this number also included families who had come directly from Russia, and some who had come via Kansas.

Attendance at services in the Mennonite church was also affected by the decreasing number of outside speakers who were available to serve here. By the fall of 1895 the Sunday morning church services had been discontinued and the children were joining other Mennonite children for Sunday School at the Polk Station schoolhouse, three miles

north-east of Dallas. Here a group organized primarily as a Sunday School. When the first session of the Pacific District Conference was held in this area on 30 May, 1896, this Sunday School had representation at that conference. However, the congregation which it represented did not affiliate with the conference until 38 years later.

On 12 April, 1896, Gerhard Rempel wrote to his brother-in-law, Isaac Loewen in Gretna, Manitoba,

In the spiritual realm we are being served very poorly. Ministers from our communion visit us seldom at best. Today, as I have heard, a certain Gerig, a minister from our communion will be conducting services at Polk Station. Because it has been raining all week and is still raining today, we won't be able to go there. We trust that when Br. Baer will arrive here, congregational conditions will become more organized again and that in the future we will be in a better position in the area. God grant that.

Participation at the district conference in the spring of 1896 evidently put new vitality into this small fellowship. Perhaps it also drew the attention of conference leaders to the plight of this struggling congregation. During that same year, Rev. J.J. Balzer of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, gave Bible instruction to a group of young people there. They were subsequently baptized by S.F. Sprunger of Berne, Indiana.

On 4 October, 1896, Gerhard Rempel wrote,

Since the conference in spring we have gone to the Polk schoolhouse practically every Sunday to attend Sunday School or church services and congregational meetings for which purpose Br. P. Gerig from Enger came over repeatedly to lead our discussions until last Sunday when we finally organized a congregation . . . We have not yet elected a minister. However, we have elected two congregational leaders who are D. Peters and G. Braun. The dear Lord grant them strength and wisdom to fulfill the responsibilities of their office as required by Scripture. We have also decided to meet every second Sunday in the Polk schoolhouse in order to study God's word and to build up one another as well as we are able.

Evidently P. Gerig was called as their first minister. Subsequent information indicates that he may have served another congregation as well.

On 10 July, 1898, Rempel reported that they had organized the *Jugendverein der Mennoniten Zions Gemeinde bei Dallas*. This Christian Endeavor of the Zion Mennonite Church at Dallas was to present an evening program on the first and third Sundays of each month. On the first Sundays Rev. Gerig came regularly to preach and then the Christian Endeavor program was followed by a Bible study and prayer meeting.

In 1897 this congregation, the Zion Mennonite Church, built its own church building



This is a 1945 baptismal group of persons at Bethel Mission (later Bethel Mennonite) Church in Winnipeg. The photo was taken at the church on the corner of Sargent and Sherbrook. Persons identified include: [front row, l-r] ?, Ethel (Funk) Petersen, Susan Neufeld, Nettie Fehr, Anne (Reimer) Penner, Bernice (Friesen) McTavish. [second row, l-r] ?, Tinie (Friesen) Funk, Annie (Zacharias) Menke, Tina Schroeder, Kathryn Dyck. [third row, l-r] Dora Klassen, Doreen (Friesen) Raymond, Annie Schroeder, ?, Rev. I.I. Friesen, Arthur Rempel, Jacob Fehr, Henry Unruh, Peter Schroeder, Abe Friesen, Norman Friesen. Can someone fill in the name gaps?

The story of Bethel Mennonite is in the recently published book *Bethel. Pioneering in Faith*, edited by Betty Dyck.

Photo courtesy of Elsie (Mrs. I.I.) Friesen and Art Rempel, Winnipeg, Man.

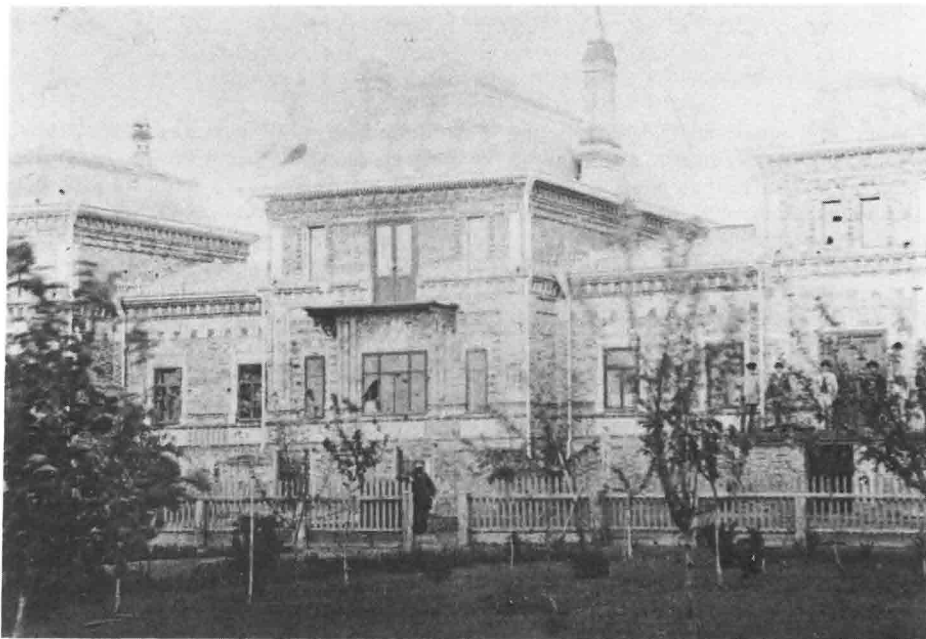
on a location four miles north of Dallas. It stood on land donated by Isaak and Agatha Dyck. In 1898 Rev. H.A. Bachman took charge of this church for two years and "under his able leadership and faithful work the church flourished and prospered."

On 7 September, 1902, the congregation extended a call to Isaac Dyck, who was ordained to the ministry on 21 December, 1903. He died of a heart attack in November of 1908. This congregation, now called Grace Mennonite Church, celebrated its 90th anniversary in 1986. Today Dallas has a strong congregation in each of three Mennonite conferences, General Conference, Mennonite Brethren and the (formerly) Evangelical Mennonite Brethren.

## Sources

*Mennonitische Rundschau*, 1890-1895; *Mennonite Yearbook*, 1932; *The Christian Leader*, 1947; LaVernae J. Dyck, "Early Mennonites in Oregon," unpublished M.A. thesis, Oregon College of Education, 1972; *Der Nordwesten*, 1891; H.D. Burkholder, "The Story of Our Conference and Churches," Letters from Gerhard Rempel to Isaac Loewen, MHC Archives, Microfilm #185; personal correspondence.





The *Waisenhaus* at Schoenau in Molotschna Colony. This building formerly belonged to Peter Thiessen, a businessman who owned a smaller factory producing agricultural machinery. See Herb Giesbrecht, "The Grossweide Orphanage in the Molotschna Colony (1906-1922)," *Mennonite Historian*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (March, 1988), pp. 1-2 and No. 2 (June, 1988), p. 8, for a picture of the children and houseparents, the Abram Harders, at this orphanage (p. 1).

Photo courtesy of Peter Friesen and J.J. Enns, Leamington, Ont.

## Book Notes

Two new German books contribute significantly to the recording of Mennonite history and experience abroad. Peter P. Klassen, *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay: Reich Gottes und Reich dieser Welt* (Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein e.V., 1988), 383 pp., pb., \$14.00, is the most comprehensive history and interpretation of Mennonites in Paraguay to date. Maps, photos, bibliography and index make this a very useful volume. Peter Epp, *Ob tausend fallen ... Mein Leben im Archipel Gulag* (Weichs: Memra-Verlag, 1988), 204 pp., pb., \$11.00, is, as the title indicates, much more of a personal story of the author's experiences in Soviet concentration camps. Both authors will be familiar to many, the former through his earlier books (including *Kaputi Mennonita*, 1975), the latter through his series of articles in *Der Bote*.

Turnstone Press, Winnipeg, has recently released three modest volumes of poetry (91-96 pp. each, pb., \$8.95): Sarah Klassen, *Journey to Yalta*; David Waltner-Toews, *Endangered Species*; and John Weier, *Ride the Blue Roan*.

Researchers of Russian Mennonite history in the decade before WWI will find Peter H. Rempel's new *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch Index (1903-13)* most helpful.

The June Booknotes mentioned a number of significant publications by and about the Hutterian Brethren. That listing should have

included *Die Hutterischen Episteln, 1525 bis 1767* (Elie, MB: James Valley Book Centre), vol. I (1967), 329 pp.; vol. II (1968), 328 pp. Volume II includes a preface by the late Robert Friedmann, who collected most of the epistles, as well as a tribute to him in the appendix. Most non-Hutterian readers would probably have preferred that Latin, rather than Gothic, type would have been used. Nevertheless, Joshua Hofer and the James Valley community are commended for making this excellent collection of early Anabaptist sources available in this form.

Just published is *Brothers Unite. An Account of the Uniting of Eberhard Arnold and the Rhoen Bruderhof with the Hutterian Church* (Ulster Park, NY: Plough Publishing House, 1988), 366 pp., hc, \$16.50 US. Based on Arnold's diary of his journey to North America in 1930-31 and letters written between 1928 and 1935, the volume makes accessible to English speaking readers the powerful testimony of this twentieth century affirmation of communal living as an expression of faithful Christianity.

Review copies received: Sam Steiner, *Vigilant Pioneer. The Life of Jacob Y. Shantz*; Leo Driedger, *Mennonite Identity in Conflict*; T.D. Regehr, *For Everything a Season. A History of the Alexanderkrone Zentralschule, 1906-41* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1988); Al Reimer, ed., *Arnold Dyck, Collected Works* Volume III, (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1988).

## Book Reviews (cont'd)

and independence." (v) Hildebrand's books contain the stuff often found missing in the authoritative versions of rural history — the spirit and life-world of their subjects.

Finally, for a man who boasts "no letters behind his name," Hildebrand writes well and imaginatively indeed!

Royden Loewen, *Blumenort, MB, is a doctoral student in history and a farmer.*

Friesen, Victor Carl, *The Windmill Turning. Nursery Rhymes, Maxims and Other Expressions of Western Canadian Mennonites*. (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1988). 139 pp., hdc., \$24.95.

Reviewed by Ted E. Friesen.

This book adds another important volume to the growing literature on Russian Mennonites of Dutch and North German extraction in general, and of their Low German (*Plautdietsch*) language in particular. Here, for the first time, we have recorded the expressions of a people in its entirety, from nursery to old age.

The author has recorded the rhymes in the Low German, using the new orthography. He has done two translations into English, a literal one, and a freer one which tries to capture "the essence of nursery rhymes, in their rhyme and metre." He has succeeded remarkably well in conveying to the English reader, the original, as well as the sense of the expression, in the free, "smoother" translation.

For those of us who grew up with Low German as a *Muttersprache*, reading this book is like being transported back into one's childhood. A good portion of these sayings we used in our daily speech. Like the author, we also learned those at our mother's knee. It evokes nostalgia. But more than that, it makes one reflect on the value and the place of folklore in a society. True, it was a simpler society then. What relevance does it have in today's more complex society?

Folklore is, properly speaking, the expression of the beliefs, traditions and experiences of a people. *Plautdietsch* so very well expresses every aspect of "that way of life as revealed in the rhymes, games, songs, riddles and maxims." Beliefs, customs, narrative, sayings and art are all illustrated in this.

A new appreciation of this language is being nurtured by such books as this one. The author's contributions add so much to the value of the book. The chapters on a "distinct language, a rich folklore, *Plautdietsch* orthography and pronunciations," add immeasurably to understanding the text of the sayings. The historical section has numerous pictures that add meaning to the text. The rhymes, maxims and expressions are illustrated with drawings; the songs in some cases with musical notation.

The book is warmly recommended to all who have a love for and interest in the culture and preservation of Mennonite folklore and the Low German language.

Ted Friesen is a retired businessman in Altona.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Loewen, Harry, ed., *Why I am a Mennonite. Essays on Mennonite Identity* (Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1988). 350 pp., pb., \$17.00.

Reviewed by David D. Duerksen

Shortly before his death Goethe wrote to his friend Zelter: "If you want to leave something worthwhile to posterity, write confessions." History will tell whether these thirty confessions of Mennonite women and men from diverse walks of life with varying perspectives on faith and identity will influence posterity. However, the pain and the struggle, the affirmations, and the expanding vision and quest evident in these confessions have the happy potential of making readers both warmer-hearted and clearer-sighted today.

Pain and struggle in these essays are evident on at least two levels. The reader is moved to compassion, perhaps empathy, by the pain and struggle at the personal level. A number of confessions speak of the pain caused by rigid judgmental attitudes of Mennonite communities and fire-brimstone revivalists in them. Patrick Friesen speaks of "voodoo evenings of spiritual violence" and Di Brandt concludes her unconventional confession of deceptions experienced with, "I knew then that in getting lost would be my only finding." William Klassen tells of the excruciating pain of marriage breakdown and his struggle in Christian community towards restoration. Bernie Wiebe shares the deep personal pain of tragedy in family and the healing help of empathizing community.

The collective thrust of the writers is toward affirmations, in spite of the pluralism evident in these confessions. Many of these affirmations would have made Menno Simons himself rejoice.

Bernie Wiebe tells of his conversion at a revival meeting; Al Reimer relates how a renewed appreciation of his ethnic-cultural roots led him in mature manhood to come out of the cold to make the Christian faith and the Anabaptist vision his own. Numerous Anabaptist tenets of faith are also affirmed so warmly by non-ethnic Mennonite writers such as Lois Barrett and F.J. Ross. Katie Funk Wiebe, John Schroeder, and John Friesen emphasize the flow of history in helping to shape their present faith perspective. Walter Unger, after a strong affirmation of the four "solas" of the reformers, testifies that being a Mennonite to him is a way of following Christ.

George K. Epp sees "Mennonite service theology" as being the strongest bond holding a diverse community together. Hans-Juergen Goertz illustrates the wealth of Christian existence in Anabaptism in his affirmation: "with Hans Denck I could be a religious individualist, with Conrad Grebel an uncompromising biblicist, with Johannes Broetli a believing revolutionary, with Michael Sattler a pious pacifist, with Jacob Hutter a radical communalist, with Menno Simons a concerned evangelist..."

In addition to the affirmations, writers of these confessions also emphasize an expand-

ing vision and quest. Art DeFehr sees the essence of sixteenth century Anabaptism as a willingness to test new frontiers and challenges today's followers to move towards greater ethnic and racial inclusiveness, to integrate into society but challenge its values, and to retain the "goal of Christlikeness" in social reform. John Redekop envisages a separation of Mennonitism from Anabaptism in a name change for his denomination, hoping that such a separation of ethnicity and faith will help salvage and preserve the Anabaptist vision.

In the longest, for some readers perhaps the most poignant confession, Magdalene Redekop articulates in the image of the "mirror becoming an open window" into the world, the need, not of a recovery of the Anabaptist vision, but of a re-vision". A restored emphasis on the imagination, a renewed responsibility for the affirmation of life, and a liberation of women to use their gifts are three aspects of this "re-visioning." Both Hedy Martens and Katie Funk Wiebe share her view on the last aspect. Theologian Gordon D. Kaufman sheds more light on the place of the imagination and the affirmation of life by suggesting through "imaginative construction" a theology for our nuclear age — a theology with the underlying moral criterion of "humanization" to be applied in all our relationships.

Roy Vogt approaches the expanding vision by making the provocative statement that in some ways the Anabaptist vision is seriously flawed. He suggests that a theology in which perfectionism is over-emphasized can so easily lead to harsh judgmentalism on the one hand. On the other hand in our complex world such perfectionism may keep us from actually getting involved in conflicts where our presence might be very useful. At times the Christian duty to be responsible must supersede the duty to be right, when these duties conflict.

In conclusion, let me suggest three unifying strains harmonizing the polyphony of their varied voices. Theologian John Howard Yoder in the last essay of the book challenges readers to proclaim liberation from the dominion of Mars, Mammon, self, the mass, the milieu, and the moment. Secondly George Shillington affirms from the depth of his heart, "I am a Mennonite....because I have adopted the faith and the world view of my Anabaptist forbears.

Last but not least, Johannes Harder, writing shortly before his recent death at 84, makes his "re-visionist" confession: "I am content that we have been forgiven, that is, we have been forgiven so that we can give ourselves to this wicked world which God loved so much." Here lies our direction for the present and perhaps our hope for posterity.

*David Duerksen is a retired English teacher living in Winnipeg.*

Hildebrand, Jacob, *A Backward Glance*. (Crystal City, Manitoba: by the author, 1982), Pb., 136 pp., \$6.50

*The Past Sixty: 1927-87* (1988), pb., 106 pp., \$6.50

Reviewed by Royden Loewen

Here are two books containing the personal reminiscences and reflections of a Crystal City area farmer. As such, few people who do not know Jacob Hildebrand may want to read them. They outline a family history, tell of a romantic attraction, share the grief of a lost daughter and the poetic accomplishments of another. They introduce the reader to the Hildebrands' neighbours, community and farm. They are filled with interesting bits of folk wisdom. Hildebrand's running personal commentary on issues including labour unrest, ethnic block settlement, multinational corporations, modern lifestyles, the existence of God and the origin of man, local church politics and the present day farm crisis, may, as he states, "be open to controversy," but they do introduce us to a colourful personality. For those who wish to share the experiences of the Hildebrand family the books are rich, entertaining and endearing.

The books will, however have a wider appeal for they tell the story of Hildebrand's journey from boy to manhood. They trace the story of his boyhood in Andreasfeld and the city of Zaporozhe during the Russian Revolution, his early manhood as a "Greenhorn" immigrant to Canada in the twenties, and as a farmer in the Crystal City area during the depression, post war boom and present day farm crisis. The first book in particular contains so much history of the Mennonite families of the area and their General Conference church it might well have been entitled Crystal City Mennonites. The second book deals with many of the problems facing present day Crystal City area farmers — rural depopulation, high costs, overexpansion — and with the spirited attempts by residents of a small town to maintain a vibrant community.

Finally the books may prove useful to students of Western Canadian history. They contain a wealth of social history. They speak of the acquisition of farm technology, the growing number of intrusive government programs, the changing role of farm women, the process of language adaptation, the role of religious faith in farm communities. They tell the story of how an ethnically self-conscious group creates social boundaries within a wider society and maintains its identity. In the words of Hildebrand he attempts to tell the story of those "like us during the twenties, who found ourselves plunked in the midst of a sea of Anglo Saxons..." (93) and who tried to rebuild "the cultural, social and spiritual life that was familiar to us." (99) And they provide insights into the manner in which farmers entered the modern world on their

(cont'd on page 9)