

# MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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

Volume XV, No. 4, December 1989



This is a recent photo of the former Fuerstenwerder Mennonite Church building in northern Poland. It is being considered for development as a museum.

Photo: Courtesy of Peter J. Klassen, Fresno, California

## The Vistula Mennonites Revisited: Some Footsteps Remain

by Peter J. Klassen

In very few parts of Europe has there been a Mennonite presence as long as that in Poland and Prussia. Events in 1945 brought to an end an involvement that had spanned four centuries, and that had seen Mennonites in various relationships with Polish and Prussian political rulers, Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox religious patterns, and agricultural and commercial systems. At the same time, Mennonites often found themselves at the mercy of national and international forces that reflected the pressures of power politics. The partition of Poland in the late 18th century, when the area of Mennonite settlement came under Prussian rule, was only the most dramatic illustration of the way in which life along the Vistula reflected political realities elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The role the Mennonites played in the history of this region is still discernible today. Perhaps the most obvious reminders of earlier contributions are the church buildings and farms that stand in many of the villages along the Vistula.<sup>2</sup> They are especially numerous in the delta between Gdansk (Dan-

zig) and Elblag (Elbing). These marshy lowlands, once known as *Werders*, and today called *Zulawy*, provided a homeland and opportunity for Mennonites in the 16th century and in later years. Polish kings and local authorities allowed these refugees from religious persecution to settle on and transform these marshlands into what one observer described as a "garden."

Even though Mennonites were allowed to settle here, they were still restricted in many ways, such as religious expression, occupation, and economic activity. Only in 1768, for example, did they gain permission to build churches in the Werder. Even then, size and style were severely limited. One of the churches built in that year still stands. It served the Fuerstenwerder congregation, and can be seen just outside the village of Niedzwiedzica. Although its exterior dimensions were strictly prescribed, an imaginative "Bauherr" designed it with three interior levels, thus greatly increasing the number of persons it could hold.

Today, efforts are being made to preserve this structure and perhaps transform it into a museum.<sup>3</sup> Local officials have already indicated their support of such historical preservation efforts. There has also been some discussion of moving this former church, now vacant, to the largest, fairly well-preserved Mennonite cemetery in the area, located near Stogi, formerly Heubuden.

The cemetery at Stogi still has many grave markers with legible inscriptions. Efforts are currently underway to fence the cemetery and identify it with an appropriate historical plaque or other marker. In recent years numerous visitors to this area have helped to make Polish authorities aware of both the historical significance and the tourist possibilities of the cemetery.

Several other church buildings and cemeteries are to be found in the delta as well as along the Vistula. Former Mennonite church buildings in Gdansk, Elblag, Rozgart (Pr. Rosengart) and Matawy (Montau) now serve Catholic and Protestant congregations. In some other instances, as at Lubieszewo (Ladekopp) and Orłowskie Pole (Orloffferfelde), churches have been removed, but a significant number of grave markers can still be identified.

Certainly Mennonites in this region made an especially noteworthy contribution to the prosperity of their adopted country by excelling in agriculture. Drainage systems they built still function; farm homes and barns they constructed still stand. In a number of instances, Mennonites built homes with the distinctive front arcade; often the name of the builder, chiselled into the door frame, is still legible.

Few Mennonite markers in Poland and Prussia became as widely known as the "Nickelstein," the granite monument erected in Schoensee (Sosnowka) in 1911 to commemorate an event during the Napoleonic wars.<sup>4</sup> In 1806, on behalf of the East and West Prussian Mennonites, Deacon Abraham Nickel presented "30,000 Taler" to King Friedrich Wilhelm III to assist "widows and orphans of soldiers." Today, this marker stands on the east side of the Catholic church in the village of Szynych (Schoeneich).

Researchers interested in examining various aspects of the Mennonite story in this region will find hundreds of documents in several archives. Holdings in Gdansk are especially rich, with numerous contracts, village charters, tax agreements, incorporation papers, local government regulations, etc., providing insights into civil and economic arrangements. Here too may be found some

(cont'd on p. 2)

## The Early Letkemans

by Henry Schapansky

The unusual Mennonite surname "Letkemann" has provoked some authors to speculate that this name is derived from "the little man" or "the little Luedtke." Be that as it may, the idea of Dr. H. Penner that the Mennonite Letkemans are descendants of one Jacob Lindtkeman, resident at Altendorf, in the Vistula delta, in 1727, appears to be correct. It seems the Lindtkemans were among the original German settlers of the Vistula delta and joined the Mennonite church in the 1700s. The earliest written form of this name in the Mennonite church records is that of Jacob Litckemann (1781), later written as Jacob Lettkeman (1807).

The early Letkemans had close ties to the village of Altendorf. The *Konsignation Liste* of 1776 shows only two Letkemann families, both resident at Altendorf. Jacob (1737-30.1.1807) and Peter (1756-12.9.1796) may have been brothers or otherwise related, as Jacob's daughter Agatha, married (7.4.1799) Peter's son Heinrich. Peter Letkemann married a Sara Goosen, likely the daughter of Heinrich Goosen, also resident at Altendorf (1776). As late as 1840, the birth of a great grandson of Jacob is recorded at Altendorf. A Maria Letkemann (Mrs. Johann Rahn) from Halbstadt, Russia, visited the ancestral village in 1861, where she passed away (12.8.1861) and was buried.

There is good evidence to indicate that all the later Letkemans are descendants of Jacob Letkemann's sons Nicholas (Klaas) (1781-1830) and Jacob (1788-?) or of Peter Letkemann's sons Heinrich (1779-1885) and Jacob (1792-?). Heinrich, his brother Jacob, and Jacob, the half-brother to Agatha Letkemann and possible cousin of Heinrich, emigrated to Russia in 1818. Jacob Thiessen, the father of Heinrich's second wife also emigrated to Russia in 1818. Heinrich and his mother had originally enlisted for emigration in 1803. Possibly the ill-health of Heinrich's brother Peter, who died 2.12.1804, annulled these plans. Heinrich's first wife, Agatha Letkemann, died 19.2.1816 at Petershagen, Prussia, and he re-married (6.10.1816) Elisabeth Thiessen of Petershagen.

Heinrich Letkemann settled at Insel Chortitza, Russia, where his youngest son, Jacob, was born (25.1.1834). Another son Jacob had died previously. A grandson, Heinrich (27.3.1854-3.2.1900), later may possibly have resided at the original homestead at Insel Chortitza. Other sons of Heinrich moved to Osterwick in the Old Colony.

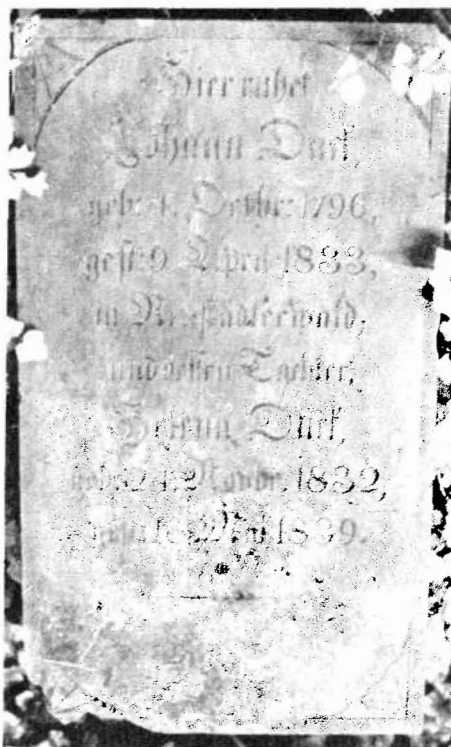
Although there is some uncertainty as to which Jacob moved to Nieder-Chortitza in 1818, I believe it was the brother-in-law (born 11.12.1788) and his wife, Helena Pauls. The Letkemans of Nieder-Chortitza appear to have been well-known, since references to them appear in the semi-fictional works of I.P.

## Vistula Mennonites Revisited

(cont'd from p. 1)

episcopal letters granting permission to build churches, and specifying obligations of Mennonites if they wished to live on land belonging to the church.

One of the more remarkable documents is that of King Wladyslaw, dated 22 December



A grave marker that has survived in the cemetery of the former Fuerstenwerder congregation.

Photo: Courtesy of Peter J. Klassen, Fresno, California

Klassen and Arnold Dyck.

Jacob (born 4.8.1792, baptized 1808), the brother of Heinrich, seems to have settled at Halbstadt, Molotschna, in 1818. Later Letkemans resident at Halbstadt included Jacob, the bookstore owner, and Peter, the Kommerzschule teacher killed 18.2.1918. Some of the Molotschna Letkemans later wrote their names as Loetkemann.

Nicholas Letkemann (1781-1830) remained at Altendorf where he died (7.1.1830). It appears that his widow, Anna (nee Hein), together with the children, Anna, Agatha, Jacob and Martin, emigrated to the Molotschna in 1836. There seems to be some doubt as to whether the oldest son, Nicholas (Klaas, born 25.11.1811, Altendorf), also emigrated, since the births of two of his children are recorded in Altendorf in 1840 and 1842.

### Sources

Petershagen (Tiegenhagen) Church Records, 1782-1831. MHC Archives microfilm 73.

1642, in which the king granted broad privileges to the Mennonites.<sup>5</sup> In a cryptic comment, he refers to his royal grandfather as having granted similar rights earlier. Whether Sigismund Augustus actually did so or not remains uncertain. Thus far, historians have been unable to find the corresponding letter or statute. Perhaps other students of Mennonite history will take up the challenge.

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>A recent sketch of backgrounds is part of this author's new book, *A Homeland for Strangers. An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia*, published earlier this year by the Center for MB Studies, Fresno, California. Cf. also P.J. Klassen, "Faith and Culture in Conflict: Mennonites in the Vistula Delta," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LVII (July, 1983), 194-205.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. illustrations found in Horst Gerlach, *Bildband zur Geschichte der Mennoniten* (1980), 21ff.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. news release by Mennonite World Conference dated September 6, 1989, for a summary of information on Polish cemetery restoration and development provided by the Hans Denk Fellowship of West Germany. Helmut Reimer and Horst Heidebrecht direct the work of the Fellowship.

<sup>4</sup>A "Nickelstein" photo is found in Gerlach, 55.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. John Friesen, "Mennonites in Poland: An Expanded Historical View," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* IV (1986), 94-108, for materials related to understanding the Polish Privilegia of the 17th century.

Tiegenhagen Church Records, 1796-1944. MHC Archives microfilm 73, 289.

Grosses Werder Baptismal Records, 1782-1840. MHC Archives microfilm 174.

B.H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der Mennonitischen Osterwanderungen im 16. 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. 1955.

H. Penner, *Die ost- und westpreussischen Mennoniten*. 1978.

V. Peters and J. Thiessen, *Mennonite Names*. 1987.

J.S. Postma, *Das niederlaendische Erbe der preussisch-ruslaendischer Mennoniten in Europa, Asien, und Amerika*. 1959.

I.P. Klassen, *Die Insel Chortitza*. 1979.

A. Dyck, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3. 1988.

*Mennonite Historian* XIII, 1 (March, 1987). Unpublished notes of Peter Jacob Letkemann.

Alfred H. Redekopp, *Jacob Thielmann and Helena Kroeker: A Family History and Genealogy of their Descendants*. 1987.

## FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

by Alf Redekopp

### Queries

**BERGEN** — Katharina, b. 30 Nov. 1819, d. 11 Feb. 1856, m. 12 Nov. 1842 to Kornelius Ens, all most likely in Chortitz Colony. Children: Kornelius C. Ens and Katherina (Ens) Wolf emigrated to Canada; Isaak Ens to Kansas. Also, Jacob and Elisabeth (Bergen) Neufeld, whose daughter Katharina Neufeld (1847-1921) married Kornelius C. Ens. Anyone with information on Bergen family, please contact: Verne Ediger, Box 701074, West Valley City, UT, USA, 84170.

**EDIGER** — Research underway on Ediger surname, regardless of when families emigrated from Russia or Prussia. Please contact: Verne Ediger, Box 701074, West Valley City, UT, USA, 84170.

**ENNS** — Wishing to be in touch with the family that sent in the information regarding the Johann Enns Family, pages 270-275, in the Johann Janzen 1752-1977 Genealogy book, compiled by K. Peters. Contact Mary Hoepfner, Box 16, Morden, MB, R0G 1J0.

**KOOP** — Benjamin A. Koop, b. 12 Nov. 1891, d. Apr. 1965, Vancouver, BC. Married on 3 Oct. 1922 to Margaretha JANZEN, b. 19 Dec. 1896, lived in Gnadeneheim, Molotschna, and immigrated to Canada in 1925, living at Drake and Colonsay, SK. Looking for place of birth and marriage, and the siblings of Benjamin A. and Margaretha KOOP. Contact Margaret Siemens, 24307 — 68th Ave., RR „6, Langley, BC, V3A 4P9.

### Recently Published Genealogies

Gunter, J.G., comp. *Franz and Anna Guenther & Descendants (1761-1989)* (Saskatoon, SK: Private Publication, 1989). 233 pp., hdc., \$17.00 plus \$1.50 postage. Contact: Jac. G. Gunter, RR 4, Box 72, Saskatoon, SK, S7K 3J7.

This book consists of two parts. Part I presents the lineage of the late Gerhard, Peter and Aron Guenter up to 1989. Part II, entitled "Collections and Reflections," recalls the images of bygone days. The book contains over 1600 names of the family, some of whom have been born in Russia and immigrated to the Americas and homesteaded in southern Manitoba and central Saskatchewan. It also includes a diary of the author's recent trip to Ukraine.

Dueck Album Committee. *"Our Fathers Have Told Us." The Heinrich B. Dueck Family* (Winnipeg: Private Publication, 1989). 126 pp., \$50.00. Contact: Dave Dueck, 295 Wallace Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2E 0B1.

This book contains the history of descendants of Heinrich B. Dueck (1877-1968) and Maria Dueck (1877-1921) and Katharina Dyck (1884-1980). The Dueck ancestry is traced back to Bernhard H. Dueck (1849-1898) and Helena Wiebe (1852-1912) of Waldheim, Molotschna. From the Arkadak area in Russia, the Heinrich B. Dueck family emigrated to



The first documented German settler in Canada was Hans Bernath who arrived on May 1, 1664.

This image was produced by the German-Canadian Congress, which has its Manitoba Office at 16-1110 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, Canada, R2G 1L4.

Canada in 1926, and settled in south-western Manitoba, farming near Manitou, Ninga and Minto, and eventually retiring to Boissevain.

Driedger, J. *Driedger Family History* (Steinbach, MB: Henry Driedger, 1986). 124 pp., hdc., \$30.00. Contact: J. Driedger, Box 203, Roland, MB, R0G 1T0.

This book traces the Driedger family of David Driedger, 1858-1918 (son of Johan Driedger, 1826-1918), and Anna Hildebrand, 1862-1937. It has the valuable addition of a name index and is well supplied with photographs.

Janzen, Russell H., comp. *Janzen, 1780-1989. A Family History and genealogy of Jacob F. and Susanna (Baerg) Janzen — their ancestors and their descendants* (Bountiful, UT: Family History Publishers, 1989). 271 pp., hdc. Contact: Russell H. Janzen, 37-3351 Horn Rd., Abbotsford, BC, V2S 4N3.

The family and descendants of Jacob F. Janzen, son of Cornelius Jantzen, who emigrated from Reinland, West Prussia, in 1817 to Lichtfelde, Molotschna, is the focus of this book. Cornelius was the son of Johann Jantzen, 1752-1823, and Marie Bergmann, 1758-1808(?). The book is well supplied with photographs, maps and an index. A chapter is included with a chronology of the Berg/Baerg families.

### Germans from Russia Symposium

July 10-12, 1990  
North Dakota State University  
Fargo, North Dakota

Featuring well-known, international speakers on various topics related to Germans from Russia.

For more information contact: Michael M. Miller, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University Library, Fargo, North Dakota, 48105-5599, USA.

Toews, Ida. *A Short Illustrated Narrative of the Family of Abraham Heinrich Toews and Susanna Martha Friesen* (Winnipeg: Private Publication, 1989). 35 pp. Contact: Ida Toews, 133 Fraser's Grove, Winnipeg, MB, R2K 0E6.

Abraham H. Toews (1885-1976), born in Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, to Heinrich Isaak Toews and Katharina Klassen, is the primary subject of this book. In addition to the story of this man's family, this book contains numerous photographs, several maps, and two genealogy charts. The Toews family ancestry is traced back to Abraham Toews (1781) and Elisabeth Warkentin (1783) of Heuboden, West Prussia. The Friesen ancestry is traced back to Johann von Riesen (1768-1835) and Helene Schwarz (1763-1845) of Krebsfelde, Prussia, who immigrated to Muntau, Russia.

Friesen, Ted E., comp. *Genealogy of Margaretha Klippenstein, 1842-1909, and Martin Friesen, 1838-1910* (Altona, MB: Private Publication, 1989). 87 pp., pb. Contact: Ted Friesen, Box 720, Altona, MB, R0G 0B0.

Margaretha Klippenstein, grand-daughter of Berend Klippenstein, 1781-1841, married Martin Friesen, born in Bergthal, south Russia, son of Abram Friesen, on 14 January, 1861. Johann M. Friesen, the first of their children to survive infancy, later went on to play an important role in Mennonite education and Canadian Conference organization.

### Genealogy Workshop

Hear Adalbert Goertz of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, on July 21, 1990 in Winnipeg on the topic: "Tracing Mennonite Roots in Prussia and Eastern Europe." Goertz was born in 1928 in West Prussia, fled to Germany in 1945, and emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1960. He has authored a number of articles on the topic of church records from Prussia in such journals and periodicals as *Mennonite Quarterly Review* and *Mennonite Family History*. Further details about the workshop will be published in the March, 1990, *Mennonite Historian*.

Address queries, etc. regarding items on this page to: Alf Redekopp, CMBS, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, Canada, R2L 2E5.

### Polish/Prussian Mennonite Symposium Coming

A symposium on the experience of Mennonites in the city of Gdansk and the Vistula delta is being planned for July 21-24, 1990. It will be held in Winnipeg, immediately prior to the Mennonite World Conference. The symposium will feature presentations on various themes, as well as displays of maps, paintings and photos. The symposium is designed to be a "peoples' event," including both scholars and other interested persons. A full program will be published in the March issue of the *Mennonite Historian*. For further information contact John Friesen, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Canada, R3P 0M4, or phone (204) 888-6781, ext. 230.



## REFLECTIONS ON COLLECTIONS

Gerhard Lohrenz Collection MG XX 62

by Jim Suderman

Gerhard Lohrenz (1899-1986) was born in Friedensfeld, Zagradovka. He married Anni Harder in 1922. They immigrated to Canada in 1925 where he farmed, attended MCI and later became involved in teaching and ministry in Springstein, Manitoba. In 1947 Lohrenz became principal of the newly-founded Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute where he remained until 1952 when he became a professor at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College. He joined the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church and was ordained in 1954 and became an elder in 1959. He concluded his teaching career in 1964 and his direct involvement with the Sargent Church in 1969. During the 1970s he maintained his Conference involvements and led many tours to the Soviet Union.

The Lohrenz collection consists of approximately 2.3 metres of material in German and English. The earliest correspondence dates from 1936 although most of it is dated 1965 and later. This is a valuable record for almost every endeavor of the last 25 years of Lohrenz's life and includes some of Lohrenz's own letters as well as those he received.

Topical files make up the bulk of the collection, including substantial sections on Lorenz's many tours, publications, historical work, sermons and theological notes. Here too are valuable clues to the personal projects undertaken by Lohrenz — especially evident is his passion for Russian Mennonite history. The topics covered give one a sense of how Lohrenz perceived his role as a minister and a teacher.

Notes and monographs by authors such as Frank H. Epp, Benjamin H. Unruh and many others are also included in the collection. These materials range from personal biographies and memoirs to commentaries on political and church-related issues.

There are significant gaps in the collection. Record of his involvement in the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and with CMBC is absent. Only a thin file of materials directly related to the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church.

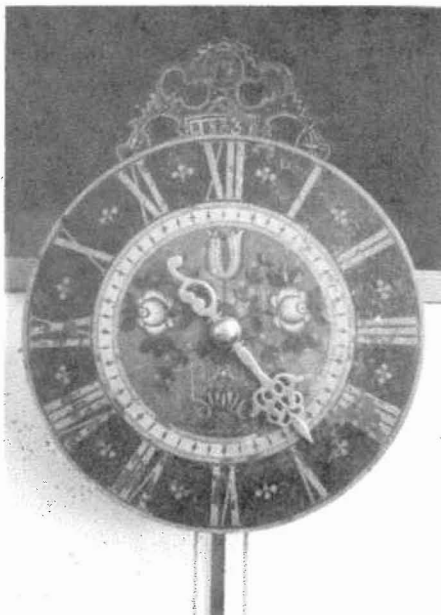
His historical work is also poorly supported in this collection. In every case but one there is little indication in the files relating to his publications as to what the main source or inspiration for his books was. The one exception of *The Lost Generation*, the source of which lies in manuscript form within the collection.



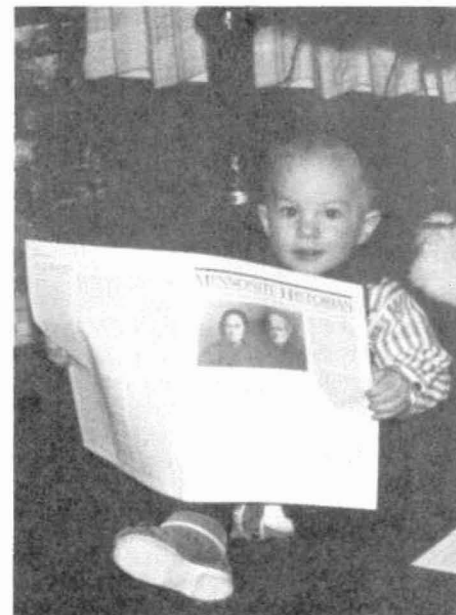
Students and teacher of the Halbstadt School Division #886 in a photo of April 28, 1909. Halbstadt was a district in southern Manitoba east and somewhat south of Altona.

Back row (l-r): Jacob G. Voth (teacher), Jacob Hamm, Agatha Heinrichs, Mary Heinrichs, John J. Heinrichs, Peter P. Heinrichs, Peter A. Friesen. 2nd from back: Helen Neufeld, Mary J. Heinrichs, Helen P. Heinrichs, Mary W. Heinrichs, Margaretha Friesen, Anna J. Heinrichs, Susan J. Heinrichs, Sara Hamm. 3rd from back: Mary H. Heinrichs, Margaretha Friesen, Margaretha P. Heinrichs, Willie A. Friesen, Dietrich A. Friesen, Anna Hamm, Bernard J. Heinrichs, Willie J. Heinrichs, Anton Heinrichs, Cornelius Friesen. Front row: Susie W. Heinrichs, Mary Janzen, David Heinrichs, Cornelius Heinrichs, Peter G. Friesen, Willie W. Heinrichs.

Photo: Courtesy of Kathy Martens, Winnipeg, Manitoba



This Kroeger clock, manufactured in 1833, was recently donated to the MHC by the members of the Johann Giesbrecht family: Anne, Mary and the late John Giesbrecht. It was given to the Centre as a "thanksgiving to God for His goodness in leading our Mennonite people to Canada." Photo: Courtesy of Artur Kroeger



We like to think that *Mennonite Historian* has something for all ages. Here is Luke Janzen, age 1, being introduced to this fine newsletter (at Christmas time last year). Luke is the son of Ron and Noreen Janzen of Winnipeg.

Photo: Courtesy of Ron Janzen



Looking over the Ben and Esther Horsch Music Collection are (l-r): Ken Reddig, Centre Archivist, Esther Horsch, Ben Horsch, the donors, Irmgard and William Baerg, MBBC music faculty.

Photo: Courtesy of Ron Geddert, MB Herald

## Major Music Collection Received

In November, 1989, Ben and Esther Horsch donated their extensive music and hymnal collection to the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. Consisting of choral and orchestral musical scores and numerous hymnals, both German and English, the collection in many ways represents a composite of over 60 years of music-making and education among Mennonites in Canada.

Ben and Esther Horsch have been part of the Mennonite Church community in Winnipeg from the beginning of the first Mennonite congregation in Winnipeg, then the North End Mennonite Brethren Church. Both have taught and worked in a variety of positions, including responsibilities on the faculty of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. As early as 1934 Ben began a long career as a music workshop leader (*Kurseleiter*), eventually becoming the leading Mennonite Brethren *Kurseleiter* in Canada.

A finding aid to this large collection is being prepared. The Horses, prior to donating the music and books, had sorted the collection, placing it into a very usable state. Therefore, students and scholars can make immediate use of the collection.

As a token of appreciation for this collection, the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies held an afternoon reception for the Horses on December 6. Expressing appreciation were William Baerg of the MBBC music faculty, and Ken Reddig, director of the Centre.

Anyone interested in viewing this collection is invited to visit the Centre.

## Hymn Book Collection Donated

Another significant collection of hymn books recently received in the Centre has come from Mr. William Neufeld of Winnipeg. William, long involved in music-making both as a cellist and a singer, donated some 44 hymn books, two hand-written books as well as two older periodicals concentrating on church hymnody.

A number of the books in this collection were entirely new to the large hymnal collection housed in the Centre. The addition of these books, together with those in the Horsch Collection, brings the number of items on this theme to more than a thousand volumes.



## Canadian Mennonite Archivists Meet

Four Mennonite archives of Canada were represented at the annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC) on December 2. The four were David Schellenberg of the EMC archives, Steinbach, Manitoba, Sam Steiner, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, Ken Reddig, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Lawrence Klippenstein, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Marlene Epp and Ted Regehr, working on *Mennonites in Canada* Vol. III, as well as Bert Friesen, who chairs the Data Base Committee of MHSC, were present at the archivists' meetings which took place at this time.

Besides hearing reports from the archival centres, those present discussed putting together a "union" directory of serials, held in the various centres. CGC Archives, MHC Archives and CMBS have computerized listings of all the periodicals, newspapers, etc., held in their respective holdings.

Marlene reported that many congregations have sent information which forms a valuable resource now for further research on Mennonite congregations in Canada.

For the future Canadian Mennonite archives will contribute to a new edition of the Mennonite World Conference directory of archives and historical libraries to be published in 1990. A gathering of North American Mennonite Archivists and Librarians (NAMAL) representatives is being planned as well. It will be held in Winnipeg during MWC sessions time in July, 1990.

Note: An audio-visual dealing with archives entitled, "It's News to Me" is available from the Centres mentioned above.

## Films and Videos

The following films and videos are available for purchase or rental from the Centre for MB Studies, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2L 2E5.

16 mm

*The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Missionary Movement.* Rental fee: \$25.00/film (3 in series).

*The Hutterites: To Care or Not to Care.* Rental fee: \$75.00 for one-hour film.

Video (VHS)

*The Mennonite Brethren Church: A Missionary Movement.* Rental fee: \$7.00/video (3 in series); purchase: \$60.00 for the set.

*The Birth of Anabaptism* (with Dr. Abe Friesen). Rental fee: \$7.00; purchase: \$32.00.

*Archives: The Inside Story* (Introduction to Using Archives). Rental fee: \$7.00; purchase: \$40.00.

## Reflections on the Russian Mennonite Bicentennial Symposium

by Peter Rempel

1989 will surely be regarded as the beginning of a new era in Russian Mennonite studies. The Russian Mennonite Symposium held in Winnipeg, November 9-11, 1989, will be included, with the publication of several major summative books [*None But Saints. The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789-1889* by James Urry (Hyperion Press) and *Mennonites in Russia. Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*, edited by John Friesen (CMBC Publications)] and with another symposium in this field held in West Germany, as an harbinger of the new era.

The Winnipeg symposium was sponsored by the several Canadian centres for Mennonites studies. Through presentations of excellent historical research, with serious attention to the Russian context, and with startling observations and fresh perspectives even impassioned appeals, a challenge was issued for a new approach to Russian Mennonite historical studies and publications.

Mennonite social and economic developments in the pre-revolutionary period were placed into their national context by Len Friesen. The Soviet context for Mennonites as a religious community was elucidated by Walter Sawatsky. James Urry's prolegomena of a study of Mennonite society 1860-1914, based on a review of available records, and George Epp's initial summation of original research of oral and informal sources on the 1930s and 1940s provided significant new insights and information with the promise of more to come. The presentations of three recent emigrants from the USSR, Johannes Dyck, Johannes Reimer and Anna Janzen, introduced alternative historical perspectives as well as critical evaluations of the Russian Mennonite community, shaped as it has been by the traumatic experiences of the Mennonites who have remained there until the present.

Hitherto unresearched diaries and other original documents allowed Adolf Ens to illuminate the fascinating episode of the selection of church leaders by the first group of settlers. On the basis of the David and Jacob Epp diaries, Harvey Dyck could recount village life as observed and experienced by a teacher in the last half of the 1800s. To complete the symposium there were informative synopses of vital aspects of Russian Mennonite life: on Mennonite state service by Lawrence Klippenstein, on notions of *Gemeinde* by John Dyck, on the emerging Mennonite intelligentsia by Harry Loewen and on the unique estate-owning class (the *Gutsbesitzer*) by Al Reimer.

The new and differing academic approaches, research foci and historical critiques severely challenged the traditional history of Russian Mennonites, a challenge evident by an openness to include negative as well as positive trends and to re-appraise prevailing evalua-



The Whitewater, Manitoba, Orchestra (ca. 1929-1933). William Neufeld is the young man playing the cello.

Photo: Centre for MB Studies, Winnipeg

tions. This challenge was well received by the audience. It is supported by seemingly imminent cooperation with Soviet scholars and access to archives in the USSR, the growing study of the Russian/Soviet Mennonite experience among the immigrants from the USSR to West Germany, and the new freedom for Mennonite church life in the Soviet Union. Ironically this renaissance in Russian Mennonite studies coincides with the apparent termination of the Mennonite presence through mass emigration.

Peter H. Rempel is Program Director for Mennonite World Conference, Canada, Inc.

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### Mennonites in Russia Book Launched

*Mennonites in Russia, 1788-1988* came off the press on December 1. The following week, on December 7, about fifty people gathered at the Mennonite Heritage Centre to "launch" the new publication.

The book, sponsored by the CMC History-Archives Committee, is subtitled, *Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*. Editor Dr. John Friesen of CMBC presented the book to several members of the family of Gerhard Lohrenz, who passed away in 1986. Mr. Lohrenz spent a good deal of his life and energy sharing information about the Russian Mennonite story, and the book will, it is hoped, carry on this concern.

The launching was held on the occasion of celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Heritage Centre facilities. In his comments, Dr. David Schroeder noted the contribution of the P.W. Enns family in making the Centre possible. Mr. Lohrenz had a part to play in this project as well. Joanna Enns received a copy of the book on behalf of the Enns family.

*Mennonites in Russia* includes fifteen essays and an extensive bibliography. It may be ordered from the Mennonite Heritage Centre, or bought at local bookstores for \$22.50 per copy.





## In Memory of Aeltester Cornelius Regier

by John Dyck and Laurence Klippenstein

Here we present a final excerpt from the poem about Ältester Cornelius Regier and his 1794 visit to the New Russian colony of Chortitza, founded five years earlier.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps a fuller study of this venture undertaken by Regier and his church colleague, Cornelius Warkentin, will be undertaken in the future.

A copy of the complete German text can be obtained from the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Der dieses Amt uns lange Zeit  
Auch weit u breit Bediente  
Er war geliebt von alle Leut  
In dem nur gutes gruehnte  
Ein Mann alt zwey u fuenfzig Jahr<sup>2</sup>  
Aeltester drey u zwanzig war.

Dem schickt der liebe Gott dahin  
Mit einem wie wir wissen,  
Es war Cornelius Warkentin<sup>3</sup>  
Der sich auch thaet entschliessen  
Sie schaeuten beid in ihrem Fach  
Zum naechsten Heil kein Ungemach. . .

Es war im Maerz die abschiedzeit,  
Dem Manne zu begleiten  
Die Lehrer von der einer seit  
Kinder zur andern Seiten  
Doch erste mit viel traurigkeit  
Bis in den Wagen ihm Begleit. . .

Betraenten Wangen traurigs Herz  
Wer koennt es wohl ansehen  
Wie sehr betruet mit was fuer Schmerz  
Ist dieses wohl geschehen  
Den Vater von hir reisen sehen  
Durch Berg u Thall als sollt geschehn.

Auch unterwegs Prueft sie Gott  
Durch seine Allmachts Proben  
Er stand sie bei in ihrer Noth  
Wo fuer sie ihn stets loben  
So sind sie unter Gottes Hand  
Gesund gekommen in das Land.

Ihnen traf erblickt da jeder ging  
Die liebe Gaest entgegen  
Mit Thraenenfreud man ihn empfieng  
Die Zeit war gleich gelegen  
Nach einigen Tagen auszuruhn  
Die Oster Predigt darzuthun. . .

Nun war da Tauf u Abendmahl  
Erst Glaubenslehr muss Walten  
Hernach auch eine Lehrwahl  
In neuung dazu halten  
Allein als dieser liebe Mann  
Acht Predigten da hat gethan. . .

Zur hinreis bracht fuenf Wochen Zeit  
Grad Dreizig Tag zu fahren  
Wie uns die Nachricht hat erfreut  
Ist kaum zu offenbahnen  
Allein von krankheit er nicht meldte  
Die sich zu ihm schon hat gesellt.<sup>4</sup>

Da name die Krankheit ueberhand  
Hielt gleich schwach ihm darnieder  
Sein Mittgefaert oft beye ihm stand  
Sie beid als liebe Brueder

Stimmten mit gleichen Thonen an  
Was Gott der Herr durch sie gethan.

Bald redet er mit sein Gefaert  
Als er ihm aufgetragen  
Das Bischofsamt<sup>5</sup> Wenn er zu Erd  
Gebracht wird, sollte sagen  
Die Worte so in Roemer schoen  
Wird Acht Capitel vierzehn stehn. . .

Gott nahm ihm aus dem Jammerthal  
Fuehrt ihm ins Reich der freuden  
Erloeste ihm aus dieser Quahl  
Nach dreiszig taegiges leiden  
Versetzte ihm in Abrahams Schoosz  
Und unter Gottes Altar blosz.<sup>6</sup> . .

Wir all zusammen stimmten an  
Stadt freuden sollens lallen  
Wehklagen fast ein jeder mann  
Die Krohn ist abgefallen  
O wahr ach, uns Oberhaupt  
Hat uns ein frueher Todt geraubt.

Da war sein Mittgefaertd allein  
Der sich sehr taedt betruenen  
Er waltet da in der Gemein  
Als Bischof wie geschrieben  
Bedient mit Tauf u Abendmahl  
Dazu erwente Lehrer wahl. . .

Ein Mensch kann wieder Gottes Rath  
Und Willen nichts anfangen  
Weil Gott es so beschlossen hat  
So ist es auch ergangen  
Herr schenk uns wieder einen Mann  
Der seine Stell betreten kann.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The first part appeared as "In Memory of Aeltester Cornelius Regier (1742-1794), Heu-

### Book Reviews

(cont'd from p. 8)

hotels and restaurants in Poland, as well as Polish consulates in the USA and Canada.

This interesting and informative booklet is an excellent introduction to an important segment of Mennonite history. Its most important function may be that it brings the Mennonite story alive by highlighting the geography of the lands and cities within which Mennonites lived.

<sup>Dr. J. John Friesen is Associate Professor of History and Theology at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba.</sup>

### Book Notes

Colin P. Neufeldt, "The Fate of Mennonites in Soviet Ukraine and the Crimea during the Soviet Collectivization and the Famine (1928-1933)," (1989, 2 volumes, 674 pp.) is a detailed study from primary sources of the Mennonite experience during Stalin's dekulakization and collectivization, including the famine of 1932-33. Neufeldt compiled this research report as part of his graduate work at the University of Alberta.

Among the publications springing from the 200th anniversary of Mennonite settlement in

buden, West Prussia," *Mennonite Historian* XV, No. 3 (September, 1989), 4. An early, detailed account of this visit was published in Johann van der Smitten, "Zur Geschichte der ersten Gemeindebildung in den Mennoniten-Kolonien Südrusslands," *Mennonitische Blätter* III (March-July, 1856), 18-21, 34-37, 49-51.

<sup>2</sup>Regier's birth year, given here as 1742, is erroneously noted as 1743 in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, IV, 273. Cf. the Heubuden Mennonite Church register which notes that Regier was 51½ years of age at the time of his death. Microfilm No. 284, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA).

<sup>3</sup>Regier commented on his work in letters to Rev. Gerhard Wiebe in Prussia, cf. G. Wiebe memoirs, unpublished, handwritten manuscript copy in MHCA (uncatalogued), 275-276. On the preaching activity of Warkentin during this visit, cf. P.M. Friesen, *Die Alt-evangelische mennonitische Bruderschaft* (Halbstadt, 1911), 134-135. Warkentin was later given a medal by Tsar Alexander I in recognition of services rendered on behalf of the new settlers at Chortitza.

<sup>4</sup>Warkentin kept a diary of this trip. It was published in *Mennonitische Rundschau*, No. 4, 1897. It is possible that Regier became sick during this arduous five-week trip (erroneously dated 1795 in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, IV, 888).

<sup>5</sup>This private ordination was confirmed a year later by the Rosenorter Mennonite Church at Tiegenhagen. Cf. Ernst Regehr, et al, eds., *Geschichts- und Predigertabelle der Mennonitengemeinde Rosenort* (Elbing, n.d.), 7.

<sup>6</sup>Regier died on May 30 and his funeral was held on June 3, 1794. Among the 451 guests was the director of the colony, Baron von Brackel.

Russia is Heinrich Loewen, *In Vergessenheit geratene Beziehungen. Frühe Begegnungen der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde mit dem Baptismus in Rußland — ein Überblick* (Bielefeld: Logos-Verlag GmbH, 1989, 94 pp.). The first volume of *Beiträge zur osteuropäischen Kirchengeschichte*, this work was originally presented as a thesis at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno. It traces relations between Mennonite Brethren and Baptists in Russia-USSR from 1837, well before the formal organization of the MB Church, through to the end of World War I.

### Books Received

Donald B. Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 304 pp., hdc., US\$ 35.00, pb., US\$ 8.95.

Theron F. Schlachach, *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth Century America* (Scottsdale/Kitchener: Herald Press, 1988). Mennonite Experience in America, Volume 2, 415 pp., pb., \$24.95.

Dr. Mary Percy Jackson, as told to Cornelia Lehn, *The Homemade Brass Plate. The Story of a Pioneer Doctor in Northern Alberta* (Sardis, B.C.: Cedar-Cott Enterprise, 1988), 215 pp., pb., \$11.00.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Dueck, A.J., H.J. Giesbrecht and V.G. Shillington, eds., *The Bible and the Church: Essays in honour of Dr. David Ewert* (Winnipeg, MB and Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1988). 277 pp., hdc., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld.

It is a pleasure to review a *Festschrift* honouring a former teacher and fellow church member. In this volume the editors have collected fourteen essays from a variety of colleagues and friends, reflecting Ewert's close ties to the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, to colleagues of other Mennonite institutions, and, in the case of Bruce Metzger, to one who shares Ewert's scholarly interest in textual history and criticism.

After an informative biographical sketch by Herbert Giesbrecht, who also furnishes an exhaustive bibliography of Ewert's writings, the essays fall into the two general categories of "The Bible" and "The Church." The two headings aptly signify the twin, inter-related areas within which Ewert has made his contribution. The essays also serve two distinct if overlapping constituencies, one being the scholarly, the other the church constituency. Ewert's scholarship has chiefly served pastors. It is the latter who are the primary constituency for these essays, it would appear.

The preoccupation of the articles in the second half of the book is thus, not surprisingly, with preaching, both as to its place and methods. Of note here are the essays by Elmer Martens, "From Text to Sermon", John Regehr, "Preaching that Delights", the late Frank C. Peters "Evangelical Preaching and Pastoral Care", and Ewert's own "Preach the Word." David Schroeder's "Discerning What is Bound in Heaven: Binding and Loosing" will be read by pastors as both prod and encouragement.

Most of the essays appear to have a didactic or an introductory intent. Bruce Metzger's "History of Editing the Greek New Testament" might well be seen as a precis of Ewert's own extensive biblical introduction, *From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations: A General Introduction to the Bible*, 1983. The exceptions might be John E. Toews' "Women in Church Leadership," an exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:11-15, and George Shillington's "Imaginative Participation in Parable Interpretation," but even there the introductory objective is clearly visible.

There is also the occasional polemical note, reflecting engagement with contentious issues in present MB life, such as the place and role of women in the church. Both John E. Toews and Herbert Schwartz, "Women and the Church: Biblical and Theological Perspectives," make a strong appeal for full participation of women in the life and ministry of the church, quite consciously going beyond Ewert's own drawing of the line at ordination. Both, however, are in my view hampered in their objective by a traditional view of Pauline authorship.

Noteworthy, finally, is Abe J. Dueck's bridging of the two sections of the volume with his

insightful "The Changing Role of Biblical/Theological Education in the Mennonite Brethren Church." One only wishes his statistics on the formal education of Canadian MB leaders had included the last thirty years, since the last three decades would surely also constitute a significant further shift, if not in kind then degree.

In conclusion, one could add that the copy-editing of the volume is generally good, although the persistent replacement of the *Umlaut* with an "e" is annoying, and, given contemporary technology, wholly unnecessary. This reviewer commends the editors for an interesting and helpful collection of essays honouring a great teacher and servant of the church.

*Tom Neufeld teaches in Religious Studies at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario.*

Toews, C.P., Heinrich Friesen and Arnold Dyck. *The Kuban Settlement*. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1989, Echo-Verlag, 1953). Trans. Herb Giesbrecht. 109 pp., pb., \$9.00.

Reviewed by John B. Toews.

At the end of World War II Russian Mennonite emigres in Canada initiated a historical series aimed at preserving the stories of the various Mennonite settlements in Russia. These researchers, led by the editor, writer and humorist Arnold Dyck, based their narratives on official documents, personal and collective memory, or even on anecdotes circulating within the community. Their task was characterized by a sense of well-founded urgency. Death was gradually depleting the emigres' community in the late forties and early fifties. Their success was our gain. The series, published under the logo "Echo-Verlag," saved our knowledge of less known Russian Mennonite settlements from extinction.

The newly-translated *Kuban Settlement* is a typical example of the series. It seeks to depict the life cycle of the settlement — founding, golden age and dissolution. The authors do so with a surprising degree of detachment and objectivity. Though amateur historians, they display a sense of breadth and maturity. The book touches upon commerce, industry and agriculture, as well as the cultural and religious life of the colony. There is an obvious pride in what once was and an obvious sadness at its passing. Short yet comprehensive chapters lead the reader through the eras of private agriculture, revolution and emigration. Those who stayed behind not only endured forced collectivization but arrest and deportation. The first line of the last paragraph in the book is a poignant ending to the narrative: "A Mennonite Kuban Colony no longer exists."

The publishers can be justly proud of this first English volume of the Echo Historical Series. Translator Giesbrecht has done a first class job of dealing with a German text that is often complex, i.e., characterized by long

sentences and varied styles, as well as a unique vocabulary and idiomatic phrases. He has preserved the spirit and sense of the original yet produced a highly readable narrative. Settlement and village maps as well as photographs further enhance the volume. This publication is an excellent resource for the English-speaking student researching a paper or English-speaking Mennonites searching for their roots.

*John B. Toews is Professor of History at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia.*

Klassen, Peter J. *A Homeland for Strangers. An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia* (Fresno, CA: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1989). 95 pp., pb., \$18.00.

Reviewed by John Friesen.

For four centuries Mennonites lived along the Vistula (Wisla) River lowlands from Thorn to Danzig (Torun to Gdansk). At the end of World War II these settlements came to an abrupt and violent end. The inhabitants dispersed to Germany, Canada and Latin America.

The story of the Mennonites who lived along the Vistula River during Polish, Prussian and German administrations has become a forgotten story, especially for English readers. For German readers Horst Penner has provided a detailed history in his two volume, *Die ost- und west preussischen Mennoniten* (Weierhof, 1978, 1987). However, very little has been published for English-language readers. This book helps to bring this story alive for them as well.

Peter Klassen's booklet is an introduction both to the story and to the lands in which these people lived. The book is not, strictly speaking, a historical study. It includes a variety of material, all of which is designed to introduce the reader to the area and to the people.

In the first half of the book Klassen provides a brief historical overview of the history of Mennonites along the Vistula from the 16th to the 20th centuries. A number of very helpful maps are included. The centre section features nine color photos of former Mennonite church buildings. Each photo includes a description of the present use of the buildings.

In the latter part of the book Klassen surveys the fate of these lands after World War II, identifies the countries to which Polish/Prussian Mennonites emigrated, and provides the reader with a tourist's view of present-day Danzig (Gdansk) and surrounding areas. The major emphasis is on this latter section. Klassen takes the reader on a detailed walking tour of Danzig (Gdansk), pointing out important historical sites, buildings, and events. In the process he tells the history of Danzig (Gdansk), Poland, and the Mennonites in the area. His tour includes the cities of Elbing (Elblag), Malbork (Marienburg), and Thorn (Thorun), as well as cemetery sites in the countryside. To complete the tourist information Klassen lists addresses of travel offices,

(cont'd on p. 7)