

# MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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The Chortitzer Mennonite Church of the East Reserve in Manitoba, Canada, constructed its first church building at Chortitz in the late 1870s. They built a second building (seen above) in 1896. This building has been extended to include Sunday School rooms and a fellowship hall, and is still in use today.

Photo: Courtesy of Gus Dueck, Mitchell, MB.

## Bergthaler / Chortitzer Church Registers - An Overview

by John Dyck

Christian churches have for centuries recorded births, baptism, deaths and marriages in their church families. Later, governments requested state churches to not only maintain such records but also make them available to governments. Mennonites in Prussia were required to submit such data to a state-recognized church in their communities. In Russia, Mennonites became part of such a state information recording system. Church records have much to tell about the story of Mennonite families, their dispersal and their migrations.

### Bergthaler/Chortitzer Registers

Ten volumes of Bergthaler/Chortitzer church registers combine to form one of the longest continuing Mennonite church records from the post-Prussian era that are available today. These Bergthaler/Chortitzer books are patterned after those used in older Mennonite churches in Prussia and Russia. Their method of cross-referencing makes tracing parents and children relatively

easy. One page is devoted to each family. Opposite each parent's name is the page number of his or her parents' family. As each child married, a page number was assigned to them and entered opposite their name.

The total collection is divided into five pairs of two ledgers each. The ledgers are identified as Litter (book or volume) "A" and "B". In the Russia period a third volume was started as Litter "C". These books themselves are large, heavy duty ledgers which have been well preserved. Entries are in a neat and legible hand writing. The Chortitzer Mennonite Church has reason to be pleased with the quality of its historical records.

The five sets of church registers which make up this ten-volume collection include the following:

*Bergthal Gemeinde Buch (Russia) 1843, Vol. A, B and C; Bergthal Gemeinde Buch 1874, Volumes A and B; Chortitzer Gemeinde Buch 1878, Volumes A and B;*

*Chortitzer Gemeinde Buch 1887, Volumes A and B; Chortitzer Gemeinde Buch 1907, Volumes A and B.<sup>1</sup>*

In order for researchers to make the best use of them it is helpful to know what they contain, how they differ from each other, and what to expect from them.

### Bergthal Gemeinde Buch 1843 (Russia) A, B, and C:

The Bergthal Colony was established in 1836-1839, Jacob Braun was elected *Ältester* in 1840, and family records were started in 1843.<sup>2</sup> While volumes "A" and "B" of this set are in two separate ledgers, "C" was started on the bottom half of the pages of "B" and then continued in a separate ledger. This third ledger is not extant but has been reconstructed through the efforts of Ed Falk of Winkler and researchers of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society.

Ledgers frequently name the colony and sometimes even the village from which Bergthal settlers came and, for those who left the colony, where they went. They also provide information about family members outside the colony, e.g., they usually list all the immediate members of a family and identify those married children who stayed in Chortitza or Molotschna.

Not only families residing in Bergthal are recorded but also included are some living outside of the colony who were part of the Bergthal *Gemeinde*. That includes some in the cities of Mariupol and Berdjansk and on estates as far away as Belosirko west of Molotschna and Silberfeld between Chortitza and Molotschna. Entries were continued in this ledger till the last emigrants had left Bergthal in 1876 under the leadership of *Oberschulze* Jacob Peters.<sup>3</sup>

Volume "A" has 216 families on 211 pages and Volume "B" has 408 families on 391 pages (another 18 entered in "B" are included in "C"). With another 76 families in volume "C" the total comes to exactly 700 families. Of these 700 families, 157 were closed out before the migration to Canada - that is, the parents had either both died or one had died and the other had remarried and been entered on another page in the *Gemeindebuch*. That leaves at the time of migration a balance of 543 families. The

title page of Volume "A" is inscribed:

"Kirchenbuch der Gemeinde zu Bergthal, Anfangen im Jahr 1843, Im Januar Monath." While a scribe is not identified on A, the title page on B, also started in 1843, says:

"Kirchenbuch der Gemeinde zu Bergthal, Anfangen im Jahr 1843 Im Januar Monath Vom Kirchlehrer Peter Epp.", and C says: "Kirchenbuch der Gemeinde zu Bergthal, Anfangen im Jahr 1851 im Januar Monath Vom Kirchenlehrer Abraham Friesen."

The BGB (Bergthal Gemeindebuch) Russia is available on microfilm and photocopy at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and more recently has been obtained in photocopy by most Mennonite college libraries, including Steinbach Bible College.<sup>4</sup>

Computer entry of the 1843 volumes was started by Ed Falk of Winkler and has recently been completed by researchers of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society. The Society expects to publish these after supplemental information has been added.

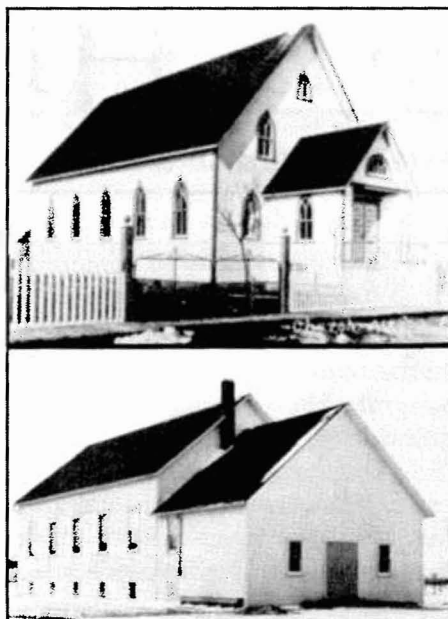
#### Bergthal Gemeinde Buch 1874 (East Reserve) A and B;

This record was started shortly after the first Bergthaler families landed in Manitoba in 1874 and before Ältester Gerhard Wiebe and the Bergthal Gemeinde Buch 1843 arrived.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the immigrants from Bergthal it includes families from Chortitza and Molotschna who joined them in the migration to Canada.

This set is a guide towards identifying which families lived in the various villages at the time since the scribe appears to have entered communities in rotation. Since there was a fair amount of relocation within the East Reserve this list is not complete and the village identification frequently changed.

The title pages are simply identified as "A" and "B" and the first entry in "A" is Johan Schwarz and in "B" is Jakob Friesen. Those were probably the scribes. "A" has 325 pages and "B" has 130 pages; 39 of those pages list a second family. The family register is followed by a list of children born in 1855, showing the village where they were born.

This set is available on microfilm at Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and in a photocopy at the Steinbach Bible College Library.<sup>6</sup> An alphabetical index of heads of households showing birth dates of both



The first Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church building (top) was built in 1912 and the first Sommerfelder Mennonite Church building was constructed in 1918. Photo: Courtesy of Esther Epp-Tiessen. *Altona: The Story of a Prairie Town*, pp.135-136.

parents was published in *Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories* by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society in 1990.<sup>7</sup>

#### Bergthal/Chortitzer Gemeinde Buch 1878 (East Reserve) A and B:

Two years after the last Bergthal immigrants arrived from Russia with the church books a new Canadian register was started. This one was in use while settlement on the East Reserve was at a peak and is the most complete record of Bergthal people resident in Manitoba at the time and shows the year of immigration for many families. While the people were still referred to as Bergthaler, the church adopted the name Chortitzer that year.<sup>8</sup>

Village groups reflect the well-established villages that existed just prior to the relocation of many families to the West Reserve.<sup>9</sup> Dates may be more accurate because the registers from Russia were available for comparison. It includes Chortitza and Molotschna immigrants who had joined the Bergthal/Chortitza Church and already shows transfers between Kleine Gemeinde and Chortitzer.

The title page of this set is inscribed:

"Kirchenbuch der Gemeind zu Chortitz

Anfangen im Jahr 1878 Im Monath Januar vom Kirchenlehrer Frans Dyck."

Farther down on the page, evidently written at the time it was replaced:

"1887 Januar 1 sind in unserer Gemeinde befindlich 246 Familien und enthalten 1339 Seelen Alt u jung zusammen wovon 562 Abendmahlsfaehige Glieder sind."

(To Be Concluded)

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>On the early history of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church cf. Dennis Stoesz "A History of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1874 - 1914", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1987.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1986). Revised edition.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. John Dyck. *Oberschulze Jakob Peters 1813-1884. Manitoba Pioneer Leader.* (Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 1990).

<sup>4</sup>Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA), Volume 2222 and Microfilm #184.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Gerhard Wiebe. *Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America.* Trans. by Helen Janzen (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981). Cf. also MHCA, Volume 989 for the Quebec passenger lists which include the Bergthaler families who arrived in Manitoba from 1874-1880.

<sup>6</sup>MHCA Microfilm #184. A photocopy will be available at MHCA in the near future.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. John Dyck, ed. *Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories 1874-1910.* (Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc., 1990).

<sup>8</sup>The changes in church organization from 1880-1900 are discussed in Henry J. Gerbrandt *Adventure in Faith. The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in Manitoba.* (Altona, MB: The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1971), 63-188.

<sup>9</sup>For developments related to the shift of Mennonite population from the East to the West Reserve cf. Gerbrandt, *op. cit.* and documents like the David Stoesz diary. MHCA, Volume 1559.

John Dyck is an independent researcher and historian working with the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society. He resides in Winnipeg, MB.

## FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

by Alf Redekopp

## Queries

**Regier/Regehr** - Michael Röger b. 22.6.1747 in Scharfenberg, Danzig, arrived in Fürstenau, Molotschna, on 15.4.1806. Does anyone have further information about his ancestors or descendants? Gerhard Regier b. ca.1838, m. Sara Janzen. Does anyone have further information about this Sara Janzen? Peter Regier b. 7.7.1871, d. 9.4.1919 in Klontarovka, had two daughters Tina b. 16.9.1894 and Sara b. 20.11.1900 who migrated to Canada from Russia in 1924, and a son Johann b. 23.6.1902 (who migrated to Paraguay after 1926. Anyone with further information about any of these, contact: *Adina Reger, Jaupstr. 21, D-6100, Darmstadt, Germany.*

**Reimer** - Aron Reimer b. 4.11.1775 in Kleinmausdorf, West Prussia, d. 21.9.1849 in Russia, m. Elisabet Gräwe b. 11.11.1774 near Kleinmausdorf, W. Prussia, d. 28.19.1833 in Russia. Where did this family live in Russia? Aron Reimer b. 17.1.1814, m. Anna Warkentin b. 31.12.1818, d. 1891 in USA. Anyone who has further information, contact: *Adina Reger, Jaupstr. 21, D-6100 Darmstadt, Germany.*

**Neufeld** - Searching for information about Johann Neufeld, Ohrloff, Molot., father of Isaak Neufeld (1849-1922) (I.I. Neufeld & Co., Waldheim, Molot., farm machinery manufacturer), grandfather of Isaak Neufeld (1871-1948), owner of flour mill in Waldheim, Molot. Contact: *Irmie Konrad, 4805 Meadfield Road, West Vancouver, BC, V7W 3E6.*

**Dirks/Dueck** - Looking for information about David Dirks of Volhynia who emigrated to Waldheim, Molot. David's son Johann Dirks (1846-1921) married Anna H. Dueck (1846-1921), sister of Bernhard H. Dueck, Waldheim. Johann and Anna Dirks had the following children: Johann (Lena Fast), Heinrich, David (Adelgunde Fast), storeowner in Gnadenheim, Jakob (Liese Penner), bookkeeper, Katharina (Abram Konrad), Kalantarovka, Anna (Johann Siemens), Margarethe (Gerhard Braun, Heinrich Voth), and Justina (Heinrich Voth). Contact: *John Konrad, 4805 Meadfield Rd., West Vancouver, BC, V7W 3E6.*

**Lepp/Siemens** - Looking for information on the ancestry of Aron Lepp (1827-1913) and Katharina Siemens (1829-1907), daughter of Johann Siemens (1806-????) and Maria Dyck (1806-1912). Contact: *Irmie Konrad,*

*4805 Meadfield Road, West Vancouver, BC, V7W 3E6.*

**Martens/Fehr** - Looking for information on descendants of Jacob Schwartz b. 30.3.1864 in Berghal Colony, Russia, son of Johann Schwartz & Agatha Rempel, m. 29.11.1885 to Margaretha Braun, daughter of Peter Braun & Helena Funk. Jacob & Margaretha farmed near Hochstadt/Altona, Manitoba and children were: Johann (1887-1908, Peter J. (1889-1910), Agatha (1892-????), Helena (1894-????), and Margaretha (1897-????). My wife is a descendant of Peter. Contact: *Donald Carney, 20 Riddle Ct., North Bay, ON, PIB 8S6.*

**Dircks** - I am interested in information relating to David Dircks, 1699, who married Sarcka Schmidt, daughter of Kasper Schmidt. They belonged to the Gronigen Old Flemish Anabaptist Society, Wintersdorf along the Vistula. In 1765 a few families moved to Neumark and lived in Brenkenhoffswalde and Franztal. A later move took these people to Karlswalde, Volhynia and in 1874 they emigrated to the USA. David Dircks had two sons, Hans and David. If anyone has historical data relating to this branch of the Dircks family, contact: *Reuben Dirks, P.O. Box 525, Dalmeny, SK, S0K 1E0.*

**Fritzler** - I would like to obtain information about the ancestry of any Fritzlers who lived in Crimea, Russia, as well as names and addresses of any Fritzlers whose ancestors lived in Russia. Contact: *Myron G. Fritzler, 7202 W. 94th Place, Broomfield, CO, 90021.*

## Book Notes

Albrecht, Henry. *Our Heritage. The Descendants of Franz (1850-1895) and Heinrich (1845-1911) Albrecht.* Winnipeg, MB: The Family, 1991. Pb., 104 pp. This book covers the events of an Albrecht reunion held on August 11, 1991 in Minto, MB. Included are the biographies of Franz and Heinrich Albrecht, some of their immediate descendants as well as the family registers of all descendant families up to the present. Contact: *Henry Albrecht, c/o Whitewater Mennonite Church, Box 715, Boissevain, MB, R0K 0E0.*

Born, Wilhelm J. and Jacob W. Born. *To Be Born. Episodes in the Life of the Born Family.* Matsqui, BC: The Family, 1991. This is a collection of experiences from the life of Wilhelm Jacob Born (1897-1969) and his son, Jacob William Born (1927- ), who were both pioneer farmers. Illustrated with photographs, the book includes family registers of the descendants. Contact: *Jacob Born, Box 3, Matsqui, BC, V0X 1S0.*

Abram Braun Reunion Committee

**Abram and Anna Falk Braun. Family Reflections (1860-1991).** Altona, MB: The Braun Family, 1991. 196 pp. This is a genealogy of Abram and Anna (Falk) Braun and their descendants. Included are pictures, maps, and biographical information and data dating back to 1750. The text is both in German and English. Contact: *Ken Braun, Box 257, Altona, MB, R0G 0B0.*

Braun, Walter F. *A Biography of Peter A. (1890-1971) & Lena (1893-1991) Braun.* 82 pp. This book is a narrative of the life of Peter and Lena Braun, with excerpts from Peter Braun's diary. Examples of their favorite hymns, as well as a family tree are included. Contact: *Anne Wiens, Box 584, Grunthal, MB, R0A 0R4.*

Froese, Margaret, et al. *Peter R. (1893-1954) & Maria Penner Froese (1875-1959).* This book includes pictures of most of the descendants, short descriptions of their lives, and dates of births and deaths. Contact: *Mrs. Helena Giesbrecht, Steinbach, MB, R0A 2A0.*

Neudorf, Jake P. *Genealogy of the Peter D. Neudorf Family Dating Back to the Early 1600s.* Winnipeg, MB: By the author, 1989. Pb., 29 pp. Contained in this book are lists of the descendants of Peter D. Neudorf, including dates and maps. Contact: *Anne Wiens, Box 584, Grunthal, MB, R0A 0R4. Ph. 434-6658.*

Neufeld, Anne H. *Kornelius Hiebert and his Descendants 1833-1991.* Winnipeg, MB: Anne Hiebert Neufeld and Mary Hiebert Derksen, 1991. Hdc., 471 pp. This book traces the history of the descendants of Kornelius Hiebert (1833-1890) who lived and died in Gandenthal, S. Russia. He married four times and had eight children, of which seven attained adulthood. Contact: *Anne Neufeld, 290 Emerson Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2G 1G4.*

Neufeld, Anne H. *Gerhard Abram Teichroeb and his Descendants 1841-1991.* Winnipeg, MB: Anne Hiebert Neufeld and Mary Hiebert Derksen, 1991. Hdc., 418 pp. This book traces the history of the descendants of Gerhard A. Teichroeb (1841-1923) and Maria Wiebe (1845-1897) who were married in Schoenhorst, S. Russia in 1870, where they then lived and had eleven children born to them, of which seven attained adulthood. Contact: *Anne Neufeld, 290 Emerson Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2G 1G4.*

*If you wish to announce any genealogical research in progress that you are involved in, or ask questions about items on this page contact: Alf Redekopp, Centre for MB Studies, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2L 2E5.*



## Friends of the Archives

About four years ago we launched a special support program for the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. We invited persons to pledge a donation of \$100.00 or more per year for a period of five consecutive years. It provides a significant base of funding that has really helped to sustain and develop the archives to date.

We called the donors *Friends of the Archives*. About forty individuals have signed up so far. For 1991 that meant a contribution of over \$4,000. This included some help from persons who were not formally in the plan but donated over \$100 each.

We are very grateful to each of these persons who stood behind us in 1991. In 1992 we expect to give five-year certificates to a number of people who will be completing their commitment this year.

If you would be interested in joining *Friends of the Archives* let us know and we'll send more details. Contact *Mennonite Heritage Centre*, 1-(204)-888-6781.

## Book Donors

We appreciate donations of used Mennonite books that come our way from time to time. Our processing includes checking first to see if the library needs them. Then we offer the rest for sale to anyone interested - at strongly discounted prices. The proceeds help to support the archives program.

On of our most recent donations came from Helen Janzen of Winnipeg, recently deceased. It is a valuable contribution and we thank also Nettie and Abe Neufeld of Winnipeg who helped to move the collection - over one hundred books in all. A major portion of Helen's library went to CMBC.

Two other collections came in, one from Heidi Koop of Winnipeg who donated some of her father's books, and from the Glenlea Mennonite Church library, via Nettie Rogalsky.

If you would like to dispose of old newspapers, used Mennonite books (both German and English), or other materials such as personal papers, photos, etc., please contact us and we will arrange the deposit. Call the Archives at 1-(204)-888-6781 and ask for Kimberly or Lawrence.



Another exhibit of painting was mounted at the Heritage Centre recently. It is expected to run through April. The artists are Henry Fehr, Steinbach, MB (left above) and Bruce Boehr, Morden, MB (see photo below). The exhibit includes the two paintings (see above) exchanged by Henry Fehr and Terry Widrick (top right) at the Conference of Mennonites in Canada sessions held at Saskatoon last summer.

Photo: Courtesy of Marg Franz, CMC editor, Winnipeg, MB.



These persons were introduced as special guests at the annual banquet of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. The meeting was held at MBBC on January 25, 1992. The guests (l-r) include Gilbert and Susan Brandt, representing Mennonite Books, Bruce Boehr, an artist from Morden, MB who had set up an exhibit of his paintings in the dining hall, Ron Loeppky, representing CMBC Publications, and Elsa Redekopp, a Winnipeg author who recently published *Two Worlds for Jash* (cf Book Notes on p.8 of this issue). Lawrence Klippenstein, currently chairperson of MMHS, introduces the guests.

Photo: Courtesy of Erwin Strempler, *Der Bote*, Winnipeg, MB

### MHC Books for Sale

New and used. For free book list call the Heritage Centre at 1-204-888-6781, or visit the premises at the Centre, Mon., to Fri., 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., to take a look for yourself.

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### New Book Available

*Cultivating Dreams*: A heartwarming book about growing up in the dirty '30s, written by Alan Warkentin. Order from: *Willow Creek Pub.*, RR #2, Box 284, Morden, Manitoba, R0G 1J0. Cost: \$7.00 CAN. Note: A review of the book appeared in *MH*, December 1991, p.12.

## Herbert Giesbrecht Passes: A Tribute

by Abe Dueck

On January 12, 1992, Herbert Giesbrecht, a long-time librarian at MBBC and archivist for the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, died after a brief illness. Herb and his wife Margaret had returned from Akron, Pennsylvania a few weeks before Christmas because of health concerns. They had been involved in a voluntary assignment with MCC Self-Help Crafts.

The early story of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies has been very much connected with the efforts of Herb Giesbrecht, as a previous article in the *Mennonite Historian* (March, 1990) marking Herb's retirement in the summer of 1990 indicated. Herb began his assignment as librarian of MBBC in 1955 after graduating with a B.Th. from this institution.

He soon began collecting archival materials, although these early efforts did not constitute the formal beginnings of an archival centre. This did not become a reality until 1969 when Herb was appointed by the Canadian Conference as Archivist on a quarter-time basis. He was encouraged in his efforts particularly by Dr. John A. Toews, who was President of MBBC for a number of those years and who taught the Mennonite history courses.

It was Toews who was also involved in the next stage of development when he was invited to become Director of the Centre for MB Studies in 1978. Toews, however, did

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not presume to be an archivist and Herb carried on with most of the activity relating to the collection and organization of archival materials until Ken Reddig was appointed full-time archivist in 1979, shortly after John A. Toews' death. Although Herb's formal responsibility for the archival centre discontinued, he was still always very much involved in many ways in later years.

(cont'd on p.6)

## New Books to be Released

Two books published by the CMBS will be released in the near future. One is Anna Thiessen's *The City Mission in Winnipeg*, which has been translated from the German by Ida Toews. It includes the story of the well-known Girls' Home, the Mary-Martha Home, as well as the beginnings of MB missionary efforts in Winnipeg. The other is entitled, *A Man of his Word: A Biography of John A. Toews*, written by Elfrieda Toews-Nafziger. Toews was President and faculty member of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College for a number of years, and was also a well-known leader among Mennonite Brethren in North America. He was the author of *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Pilgrims and Pioneers*.

Both books can be ordered from the CMBS at a special pre-publication price as follows: *The City Mission in Winnipeg*, \$8.95; *A Man of his Word*, \$11.95.

There is an additional charge of \$1.00 for postage and handling.

## Mennonitische Rundschau Indexing Project on Hold

Two additional volumes of the *Mennonitische Rundschau Index* have recently been completed. One is the subject index for the years 1900 to 1909 and the other is the author index for the years 1880 to 1909. This brings the total number of volumes to four and brings the indexing project to a temporary halt until funding becomes available. The project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada which terminated the program for such projects last year. Bert Friesen was the indexer. It

is hoped that private donors can become interested in carrying the project to eventual completion.

In the meantime, Volume 5 (1920-29) is being prepared for publication based on work done by students during the years 1983 to 1988 and funded under government job creation grants. The format of this volume is different and is patterned on the *Zionsbote Index*. Volume 6 may also be produced in this format, although considerable work remains to be done.

Orders for the volumes (\$50.00 CAN each plus postage of \$5.00 per book) should be sent to the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg.

## Recent CMBS Accessions

1. Seven books relating to Mennonite life and experiences. Courtesy of Heidi Koop, Winnipeg, MB. This donation includes Heidi's own book entitled, *The hell of God's call - one woman's pilgrimage from "commitment to" through "uncommitment from" church ministry*.
2. Personal files (9 linear inches) of Franz C. Thiessen. Courtesy of Victor Thiessen, Abbotsford, BC.
3. Twenty books relating to Mennonite life and experiences. Courtesy of Anne Schmidt and the MCC Self-Help Store in Winnipeg, MB.
4. Three books relating to Mennonite life and experiences. Courtesy of G. Huebert, Saskatoon, SK.
5. Six photographs relating to Mennonite Brethren conferences. Courtesy of G. Huebert, Saskatoon, SK.
6. Additional genealogical data for the compilation entitled "Retzlaff Roots from the Scroll". Courtesy of C. Hamm, Kingsville, ON.
7. Personal papers of MB minister Johann Kliever (1872-1959) consisting of one book of sermon notes. Courtesy of Lillian Stobbe, Winnipeg, MB.
8. Minutes of the first meeting of the Sports Committee of MBBC students (April 26, 1946). Courtesy of C. Wilbert Loewen, Winnipeg, MB.
9. Three photographs - one of a class of eleven Bible students meeting in a private home in Wohldemfuerst, Kuban, in 1924, the other two consisting of conference delegates meeting in Winnipeg during the 1960s. Courtesy of Susan Unruh, Winnipeg, MB.
10. Postcard dated 28. IV. 1932 written by minister Johann Toews, most likely to his sister, while a prisoner in Soviet exile. Courtesy of Erica Voth, Clearbrook, BC.



Herbert Giesbrecht 1925-1992

## Giesbrecht Passes (concl. from p.5)

One of the recent projects which took up much of Herb's time in the first year of his retirement was the sorting and classification of the Ben and Esther Horsch Music Collection. This is a large collection of hymnaries, choral books, cantatas, oratorios, manuals, scores, sheet music, tapes, etc. The task, largely funded by government grant, required the meticulous attention to detail which Herb so characteristically gave to his assignments.

Herb was very knowledgeable concerning Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite history and theology, and this became evident in many ways. He was always very helpful to College students and other researchers who were seeking information on particular topics. He also published a number of articles and booklets relating to Mennonite Brethren history. The first MB bibliographic guide in pamphlet form appeared in 1973. This was expanded and updated and published in a book of ninety-nine pages in 1983. In 1989 the book, *The Kuban Settlement*, which Herb translated from the German original, was published by CMBC Publications. Herb himself was born in the Kuban area of southern Russia.

In addition, Herb co-edited a number of books in honour of significant leaders in the Mennonite Brethren Conference. The first was *People of the Way* (Historical Committee, Board of Higher Education, 1981), a collection of writings and addresses by John A. Toews. The second was *The Bible and the Church: Essays in Honour of Dr. David Ewert* (Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 1988), for which Herb also wrote the introductory biographical essay. Herb also assisted in the editing of many manuscripts before they were submitted to the press. His meticulous attention to stylistic and other matters was often very much appreciated.

Herb had looked forward to continued involvement at CMBS. In his last letter to the Centre, barely a month before his death, he referred to his aspirations of doing research and engaging in volunteer work as needed. The Centre and the Mennonite community will continue to feel the loss of Herb for many years.

## Letters to the Editors

### Re: The HUP Airplane Project

Mr. Neufeld, in his response to my brief comments on his article misrepresent somewhat what I said. I merely wished to challenge his simplistic dismissal of Russian interest in aviation prior to 1909 and thus to

provide a little more detailed historical context to the work of Hildebrand, Unrau and Plenert. For some reason he seems to want to deny any Russian interest or involvement in aviation prior to this date.

There is no suggestion in my letter that I wished to negate the work of the young men. No one with any real knowledge of the tremendous interest created in Europe at this period by the feats of the earlier aviators, could deny, however, that the young men were probably influenced by numerous possible sources of information, German and Russian. The Mennonites in Russia at this period, and especially educated young men of their social status, were not isolated from reports from the wider world.

Nowhere did I imply that Neufeld's article was not the result of original research and I was aware of his earlier writings on the subject. I merely wished to draw the attention of readers to Kroeker's account. Kroeker was a careful and meticulous person with a wide network of correspondents who assisted him in gathering information for his book.

James Urry.

With regard to James Urry's letter concerning my "simplistic dismissal of Russian interest in aviation prior to 1909", I see no purpose in prolonging discussion over relative technological advances of Russia and Germany during the pre-1909 era.

Regarding N.J. Kroeker's 1981 account of the HUP project, I happen not to share Mr. Urry's assessment of him as "a careful and meticulous person". Attendance in CMBC Mennonite history classes last year taught me I'm not the only historian with reservations about his research, even though fascinating to read.

Note, the following quote (page 190): "Heinrich Hildebrand, a younger brother of Cornelius, still has a vivid memory of the project and its outcome, that is the trial flights. He described it to the author who recorded it in his collection of reports entitled *Prairie Vistas*. The author of this book was too young to remember the details of the flying attempts of the gliders HUP but he has a recollection of the trail flight of the plane".

*Prairie Vistas* is a book written not by Kroeker but by me, and consists of my earlier magazine and newspaper articles reprinted. Pages 93-95 carry my September 9, 1972 *Winnipeg Tribune* article "Mennonites Made Aviation History" describing the HUP glider and plane flights.

Enough said for now. Peter Lorenz Neufeld.

Many readers have been especially interested in the HUP project. We thank all who have contributed to the discussion in print or otherwise. We shall consider the printed part to be completed for now. The editors.

### Re: "Rosengard's Christmas", by Maria Lodge, (MH, Dec/1991, p.8).

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the utterly delightful description of the school's Christmas of 1946. Its vivid detail renewed my sentimental recollections of similar occasions.

One hesitates to tarnish the peaceful picture, but in the interest of historical accuracy, I feel obliged to dispute the assertion that even during the worst days of World War II "no one had molested the people of Rosengard in the use of the language which had become their own..."

I was a student in Rosengard (not to be confused with Rosengart "on the other side", south of Winkler), 1934-43, including Grade IX and X by correspondence. While I can offer no written documentation, my recollection is that the teaching of the German language had to be interrupted for a while during the war. I was personally involved in at least one unhappy episode involving a government school inspector catching students speaking Low German at recess.

It is my hope that Maria Lodge will not take offence at my one contradiction of her fine account. I sincerely thank her for it. My younger siblings must have also participated in that program, and I intend to show them the article. William Schroeder, 832 Wicklow St., Winnipeg, MB.

## PAM Receives Homestead Files

by Ken Reddig

Manitoba researchers, genealogists in particular, will be pleased to know that this fall the Lands Branch of the Department of Natural Resources has transferred the microfilm research copy of the Department of Interior homestead files to the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. In the past researchers viewed these documents at the Department of Natural Resources. Now researchers may view the microfilms, on a self-serve basis, in the microfilm viewing area of the PAM.

The homestead files were generated by the Dominion Lands Branch of the

(cont'd on p.7)



## PAM Files (concl. from p.6)

Department of the Interior, c. 1870 - 1930. They record the administration of Dominion lands made available for settlement through homestead entry as well as pre-emptions and sales. Included in these records are such documents as: application for entry, homestead inspectors' reports, notice of cancellation, naturalization and citizenship documents, application for Letters Patent and internal memoranda between Dominion lands agents, head office and other branches of the Department.

The homestead files were transferred to the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources in the late 1940s. They were re-arranged from their original numeric order to the present land description order. In 1952 the Department began microfilming the files and subsequently destroyed the originals. Unfortunately, the microfilm is not always easily read - reflecting the poor condition of the documents as well as the lower standards of microfilming at the time.

Mennonite researchers will find these files quite useful. Often copies of passports, citizenship documents as well as a wide range of related correspondence provide significant family and settlement information. But at the same time it must be acknowledged that the documentation is uneven. In some cases the documentation is relatively extensive, such as for the West Reserve, whereas in other cases, such as the East Reserve, considerably less. Nevertheless, for researchers studying the settlement of Manitoba, these homestead files are a rich resource.

In total, the collection contains some 1,335 reels of 16mm film and are primarily accessed by a 2-volume index. Researchers should be aware, however, that there is no nominal index to these files. The files relate specifically to each quarter-section, not to individuals. They contain documentation on those individuals who applied for a homestead and settled on a quarter-section, whether or not they were ever successful in obtaining patent.

Ken Reddig, formerly with the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg, is Head of Textual Records and Public Service at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

## Apologies - Again

1. The credit lines for the Born (p.6) and CO (p.5) photos in the December 1991 issue of *MH* were omitted. We thank *Red River Valley Echo*, Altona, MB, for allowing

us to use these photos. Mrs. Anna Born has passed away since the photo was published.

2. The correct spelling for the author of the original HUP article is Peter Lorenz Neufeld. He graduated from CMBC in 1991, not 1990 as we stated.

If anyone is interested in contacting Neufeld about this research, you may write to him at 1004 - 1080 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, MB, R2G 1H3.

### Assiniboine Travel Russia Tours in 1992

1. **Discover Your Heritage Tour - May 9-27.** This tour of the Commonwealth for Independent States (formerly U.S.S.R.) is designed for personal connections with places and people wherever we go. Host: Dr. Bernie Wiebe. *Prague, Moscow, Karaganda, Orenburg, Zaporozhye, St. Petersburg.*

2. **Mennonite Heritage Tour - June 28 - July 18.** Tour concentrating on Russian Culture, Churches and Current Issues. Host: Dr. Walter Sawatsky. *St. Petersburg, Riga, Kiev, Odessa, Tashkent, Moscow.*

3. **Mennonite Heritage Tour - July 3-22.** Host: Dr. John Friesen. *Gdansk, St. Petersburg, Orenburg, Moscow, Zaporozhye, Chortitza, Schoenwiese, Molotschna, Yalta, Kiev.*

4. **Russia and Eastern Baltic - July 11-29.** Host: Dr. David Riesen. *Helsinki, Tallin, Moscow, St. Petersburg.*

5. **Mennonite Odyssey Tour - August 1-22.** Hosts: Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein and Dr. Hugo Boschmann. *St. Petersburg, Moscow, Omsk, Karaganda, Zaporozhye, (Chortitza and Schoenwiese), Molotschna and Odessa, Kiev.*

6. **Mennonite Heritage Tour - September 1992.** Host: Anne Berg. *Moscow, Alma Ata, Tbilisi, Yalta, Zaporozhye, St. Petersburg. Option: Berlin, Dresden.*

For further information regarding our tours to the C.I.S. (formerly U.S.S.R.), Eastern Europe and to numerous other exotic destinations call: *John Schroeder, Assiniboine Travel Service Ltd., 1317 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R3G 0V3. Telephone: 775-0271, Fax: 783-0898*

## Calendar of Upcoming Heritage Events

March 27-29 - Symposium on *Immigrant Furniture Traditions: Identities in Wood*. Kauffman Museum, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Contact: *Dr. Reinhold Janzen, 1-(316)-283-1612.*

April 4 - *Mennonite Arts and Crafts Festival* at Mennonite Heritage Village. 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Contact: *Peter Goertzen, 1-(204)-326-9661.*

April 11 - Historians' workshop on local histories of the West Reserve, to be held in Altona, Manitoba. Contact: *John Dyck, 1-(204)-256-1637.*

May 21-23 - Church Historians' Conference: *The Church Historian as Interpreter*. Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. The GCMC and MC Historical Committees will meet during this time. Contact: *Levi Miller, 1-(219)-535-7477.*

June 20-21 - A 60th anniversary celebration to be held at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, SK. Contact: *Idena Thiesen, 1-(306)-244-6772.*

July 3-5 - Eigenheim Mennonite Church (Saskatchewan) will celebrate its Centennial. Contact: *Phyllis Roth, 1-(306)-232-4222.*

July 11-12 - Steinbach Mennonite Church (Steinbach, MB) will celebrate its 50th Anniversary. Contact: *Craig Friesen, 1-(204)-236-2293.*

July 21 - Sessions of NAMAL will be held at Sioux Falls (South Dakota, USA) during GCMC triennial sessions. Contact: *MHC Archives, 1-(204)-888-6781, for more details.*

June 12-13 - Historical Commission of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches meets at Columbia Bible College in Clearbrook, B.C. Contact: *Abe Dueck, 1-(204)-669-6575.*

### Family Book Available

*Our Heritage*, a private publication 1991 of Solomon Schmidt, 1818-1886 and Maria Fehr, 1829-1897 who came to Canada from Russia in October 1876. This book traces the descendants with genealogy and some family histories. It contains over seven hundred pages of genealogy with about 1450 family photos. Format: 8½" x 11" with a hard cover. Contact: *George Dyck, Box 218, Aberdeen, SK, S0K 0A0.*

## BOOK REVIEWS

Dyck, Peter J. and Elfrieda. *Up From The Rubble. The epic rescue of thousands of war-ravaged Mennonite refugees.* (Scottsdale, PA, and Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1991). Pb., 384 pp., illus. \$18.95 CAN (\$14.95 US).

Dyck, Peter J. *A Leap of Faith: true stories for young and old*, and *The Great Shalom.* (Scottsdale, PA, and Waterloo, ON, 1990). Pb., 112 pp., \$9.95 CAN; and pb., 96 pp., \$7.50 CAN respectively.

*Reviewed by LaVerna Klippenstein*

"In October, 1954, we received the news that my husband...was alive in Russia... After seventeen years of separation and absolutely no news...(it) was so overwhelming..."

It took another eleven years before Peter Guenther was allowed to leave Russia to be reunited with his wife and, by now, adult children in British Columbia. This is but one woman's reference to the heartbreak endured by hundreds of families forced apart by World War II.

Peter and Elfrieda Dyck have captured not only the riveting drama of the Berlin Exodus in 1947, but recount in fascinating detail the epic journey of 12,000 uprooted Mennonites across Europe and the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. There is suspense and courage, humour and crushing disappointment as Peter and Elfrieda direct a massive relief program, assist in reuniting families and rescue thousands of refugees and help them resettle in primitive parts of Paraguay.

The often heart-wrenching saga affirms God's faithfulness during times of discouragement, death, birth, and insurmountable obstacles. God can help people up from the rubble. And He does.

Dozens of photographs and the political setting which preface each chapter add to the historical value of this account of God at work. In *Up From the Rubble* Peter and Elfrieda Dyck have left a significant legacy to help Mennonites appreciate their heritage and tell all who read about the mighty acts of God.

*A Leap of Faith* and *The Great Shalom*, written by Peter for his grandchildren, will be enjoyed by many others. The former is a compilation of experiences, simply written, yet with a profound message of how faith and love accomplish the incredible in the lives of ordinary people.

There's the story of translating the Barclay commentaries into Russian and getting them into the USSR without deception. There is the account of the work of Klaus Froese, a Mennonite Central Committee worker on the island of Crete, and that of how the Red Cross was formed.

*The Great Shalom* is fiction. It tells of birds and animals who manage to halt destruction of a forest and their concern to establish a good relationship with the man who threatened their lives. Animal lovers and environmentalists will welcome this delightful children's book. The large, readable print and charming sketches by Sherry Neidigh make it especially attractive to young readers.

"I sow words and ideas like a sower sows grain," writes the author. "And I also pray for a harvest, like peace and love, justice and compassion..." Those who invest in these books can expect that sort of response.

*LaVerna Klippenstein is an author and homemaker who resides in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

## BOOK NOTES

A Polish/Ukrainian/North American Mennonite furniture-making tradition is surveyed by Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen and John M. Janzen in *Mennonite Furniture: A Migrant Tradition (1766-1910)*. (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1991), hdc., 231 pp. The Janzens treat furniture as a decorative art which mirrors culture.

The second volume of Donovan Smucker's annotated bibliography of sources dealing with *The Sociology of Mennonites, Hutterites & Amish. A Bibliography with Annotations. Volume II, 1977-1990*. (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1991), hdc., 194 pp., is now available. This book provides descriptive and critical comments on nearly 800 items generated between 1977-1990.

Wright, Gerald. *Steinbach: Is There Any Place Like It?* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers Ltd., 1991), pb., 292 pp. Gerald Wright, an "outsider" coming to the rural Steinbach community in the 1940s as a Canadian Sunday School Mission worker, experienced the Mennonite people as "unique" and their life as "fascinating". He later married a Mennonite girl and worked for a local newspaper, *The Carillon News*. His portrayal of the history of the people and their town is done in a sympathetic "folksy" and well-illustrated manner that makes for both informative and entertaining

reading.

Donald B. Kraybill has written *Passing on the Faith: The Story of a Mennonite School* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1991), pb., 315 pp., telling the history of the Lancaster (Pennsylvania) Mennonite High School from its founding in 1942 to the present. "It is the story of a rural people seeking to pass on its religious faith while in the throes of becoming modern" (p.3).

Phyllis Pellman Good and Louise Stolfus have compiled *The Best of Mennonite Fellowship Meals* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1991), pb., 304 pp., a collection of more than 900 recipes that come from Mennonite homes in the U.S.A. and Canada. The emphasis is on recipes that can be made without elaborate preparation for meals at home or for carry-in church suppers.

John and Naomi Lederach, co-directors of the marital-therapy program at Philhaven Hospital, Mount Gretna, PA, have written about their work by having fifteen couples recount their experiences in that counselling program. The book is entitled *Recovery of Hope - intensive counselling for marriages which seem beyond help*. (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1991), pb., 169 pp.

Elsa Redekopp, after writing two books about Mennonite life in southern Manitoba, has now written *Two Worlds for Jash*. It provides the "Old World" background and transition to pioneer life on the prairies of a family arriving from Russia in the late 1920s and settling into life in southern Manitoba. (Winnipeg, MB: Windflower Communications, 1991), pb., 166 pp.

The second volume of Peter P. Klassen's work on the history of Mennonites in Paraguay is off the press. It is titled *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay: Begegnung mit Indianern und Paraguayern*. (Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1991), pb., 376 pp.

Also received here recently was a new book on the Amish, Bernd Laengin's *Die Amischen. Vom Geheimnis des einfachen Lebens*. (Paul List Verlag, 1990), hdc., 336 pp.

The well-known study by P.M. Friesen, *Die Geschichte der Alt-Evangelischen Mennoniten Bruderschaft in Rußland* has been reprinted in its original format. The publisher is Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, Weierhof, Germany. For further details contact the Mennonite Heritage Centre (one copy available there).

*Inquiries and orders related to books reviewed or noted may be sent to the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB, R3P 0M4.*