

# MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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**A group of students at Burrows and Andrews in Winnipeg taking Bible School courses in 1920. Courses were conducted for several years in an earlier period (ca. 1919-21) under the leadership of William J. Bestvater, the first MB missionary in Winnipeg, and Peter E. Penner.**

Photo: Courtesy of CMBS, Winnipeg, MB

## MBBC Antecedents: The Winnipeg German Bible School

by Abe Dueck

The story of Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren Bible schools in Canada has not yet been told. Individual institutional histories or anniversary booklets exist for some Bible schools (e.g. Winkler Bible Institute, Bethany Bible Institute, Elim Bible Institute, etc.). However, the story of many may never be told, and the role and impact of the Bible schools as a whole still awaits a definitive analysis.

At the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the first MB Bible institute in Canada (Herbert in 1913), a pamphlet edited by Abe J. Klassen was published by the Board of Education of the Canadian MB Conference. This pamphlet gave very little detail about any of the schools but focused on some of the pioneers and listed a total of twenty-one MB Bible schools in five provinces. It also tried to give a sense of the impact of the schools by giving some indication of the number of students who were engaged in various forms of Christian service.

Many of the Bible schools were very small and existed for only very brief periods of time. One of the more obscure schools

was the Winnipeg German Bible School. According to Klassen the school functioned from 1929 to 1942. In fact, it seems to have existed only from 1930 to 1939, although some informal instructional classes may have existed both before and after. In some respects it might even be considered to have been a forerunner of MBBC, since some of the same individuals were involved in the governance and instruction of both schools. One notes, for instance, that Cornelius A. DeFehr chaired the Board of the school during most of the years of its existence. He would become a leader in establishing MBBC as well.

Very few references to the school can be found in any of the literature pertaining to the period. Several brief references occur in Anna Thiessen's, *The City Mission in Winnipeg*.<sup>1</sup> William Neufeld, in his history of the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Church, devotes several paragraphs to the school, apparently based on an interview rather than on any primary written sources.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible school appears to have begun sometime in the fall of 1930.<sup>3</sup> The first

reference to it in the Northend MB Church minutes occurs on January 1, 1931. They state that Abram B. Peters and F.F. Isaak informed the church about the organization and work of the Bible School. The church responded affirmatively and agreed to provide its basement rooms as classrooms. An additional note indicates that Br.H. Bartsch reported on his experience with the Winnipeg Bible Institute (later Winnipeg Bible College, now Providence College).

Although the precise nature of his comments are not reported they led to a decision by the church to make an announcement in the periodicals that the church had no connections with the institute.<sup>4</sup> About a month later, a notice did appear in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* stating, "Es wird hiermit erklärt, daß die MB Gemeinde zu Winnipeg nichts mit dieser Schule zu tun hat, sie in keiner Weise unterstützt, und sie auch nicht befürwortet."<sup>5</sup> Evidently, the comments made by Bartsch were very critical, although one can only speculate about the reasons.

The first instructor of the Winnipeg German Bible School was A.B. Peters (1860-1959), who had been a minister and teacher in the MB Church for many years.<sup>6</sup> He offered two hours of Bible instruction on Thursday evenings (6:00-8:00 p.m.), primarily for the Mennonite young women who were associated with the Mary-Martha Home. It should be noted, however, that a somewhat similar instructional program had been offered by William J. Bestvater and P.E. Penner approximately ten years earlier. According to a notebook by Anna Thiessen, these courses were offered for two months on winter mornings for a number of years.<sup>7</sup>

In 1933 some significant new steps were taken to create a more comprehensive program under more secure auspices. Frank C. Thiessen had arrived from Rosthern the previous year. He had left Rosthern because of the difficulties which that school was experiencing. He already had a vision for a Bible school and no doubt was instrumental in prompting various individuals to organize a society.<sup>8</sup> In any event, on March 22, 1933, an organizational meeting was held to create a society to support and operate the Winnipeg German Bible School.

(cont'd on p.5)

## The Bergthaler / Chortitzer Church Registers

by John Dyck

### Conclusion

#### Chortitzer Gemeinde Buch 1887 (East Reserve) A and B:

When about two-thirds of the Bergthaler members moved to the West Reserve between 1879 and 1881 the church there received its own Ältester, Johann Funk (1836-1917), in 1882.<sup>1</sup> Controversy related to issues like higher education ruptured the group in 1892 and brought the Sommerfelder Gemeinde into being. Now it became more practical to start a new register on the East Reserve than to bring the 1878 books up-to-date.<sup>2</sup> These registers, dated 1887, include fewer families but provide additional data on those who remained on the East Reserve.

The title page is inscribed: "*Kirchenbuch der Gemeinde zu Chortitz; Im Jahr 1887 im Monat Januar angefangen aufs neue zu schreiben, Um die jenigen Familien in diesem Buch wegzulassen welche von dieser Gemeinde weggezogen sind. Ist umgeschrieben worden vom Kirchenlehrer Frans Dyck in Schoensee*".

Entries begin with the family of Ältester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), as usual, with the date of his election as minister and as Ältester and the date of his resignation in 1882.<sup>3</sup> This is followed by the families of ministers Franz Dyck, Kornelius Stoesz, David Stoesz (1842-1903) elected as Ältester 4 April 1879 - Kornelius Friesen, Johann Neufeld, Peter Giesbrecht, Heinrich Friesen and Peter Toews.<sup>4</sup>

This set of registers also includes a list of those families who stayed in Russia, those who went to the United States and a list of baptismal candidates in 1858. Included as well are annual statistics for some of the years from 1886 to 1899 and senior citizens' lists for 1885, 1922 and 1926.

These records have previously been available only on microfilm. A photocopied set is now available in the Steinbach Bible College library, and will shortly be copied for MHCA as well.

#### Chortitzer Gemeinde Buch 1907 (East Reserve) A and B:

By 1907 many more changes had taken place. A large number of people had moved to the Hague and Swift Current

areas in Saskatchewan, and soon many more would be going to Paraguay. These volumes give the year in which families moved to Paraguay and indicate also which ones returned.

The title page is inscribed: "*Kirchenbuch der Gemine zu Chortitz; Im Jahr 1907 im Fruehjahr umgeschrieben von die Kirchenlehrer Corn. Friesen u. Joh. Neufeld*." A later note adds: "*In diesem Buch sind 1917 - 227 Familien u. 23 Familien ohne Nummer*".

This list begins with the family of Ältester Peter Toews - followed by the families of ministers Cornelius Friesen, Johann Neufeld, Peter Giesbrecht, Heinrich Friesen, Heinrich Doerksen, Peter P. Wiebe and Johann K. Dueck. The next two families are those of the two sons of Oberschulze Jakob Peters (1813-1884). Volume "A" has three hundred families and Volume "B" lists three hundred and ninety-eight.

These records have previously been available only on microfilm and a photocopied set is now open to the public at the Steinbach Bible College library.<sup>5</sup>

#### West Reserve Continuation

The above mentioned East Reserve Chortitzer church registers have their counterpart in the West Reserve Bergthaler and Sommerfelder church registers which are the records for those Bergthal Gemeinde Buch 1843 (Russia) families who moved to the West Reserve. Like the East Reserve records, these also include people from Chortitza and Molotschna who had joined the Bergthal migration.<sup>6</sup> In addition, they include many families formerly part of the Reinländer (Old Colony) Mennonite Church, as well as later immigrants that kept coming in the 1890s and past the turn of the century.

Particularly significant to researchers on the West Reserve are two sets of records that have had very little exposure. One is a preliminary set of registers of the Bergthal Church and the other is the set of early Sommerfelder Church registers.

The preliminary Bergthaler church records have been dated by an unidentified researcher as having been in use from 1885-1895. (The dates may need to be reviewed). These are recorded in four segments in two ledgers, each of which includes some ministers: 1) Wilhelm Harms and Franz Sawatzky at Hoffnangsfeld,<sup>7</sup> 2) Johann Funk at Altberghal and

Hochstadt,<sup>8</sup> 3) Heinrich Wiebe, Johann Friesen and Benjamin Ewert at Edenburg, and 4) Jacob Hoepfner at Schanzenfeld and Rosenthal. A total of two hundred and twenty families are recorded. Some families, however, appear in more than one list.

While many of the families recorded in these temporary church registers also appear in the later permanent Bergthal records, a larger number had by that time joined the Sommerfelder Church. A few had joined Mennonite Brethren congregations and some had transferred to non-Mennonite churches.<sup>9</sup> Many families had moved to Saskatchewan by the time the permanent Bergthal register was started and do not appear in any other Manitoba church lists.<sup>10</sup>

Early temporary Sommerfelder records have not yet been made public. When they become accessible they will no doubt help clarify some of the transfers of families between different lists. One of the significant aspects of these two lists is the fact that they include families which later moved out west and do not appear in any other lists in Manitoba. For some of those families this may be the only record available in Manitoba.

#### Reinländer Mennonite Church

This register includes about two dozen families who had at one time been recorded in the Bergthal *Gemeinde Buch* (Russia). Some of these were families who had returned to the Chortitza Colony in Russia before the emigration and subsequently came to Canada with those emigrants. Others were, no doubt, influenced by ties to close relatives among the families who came to Canada from Fürstenland and Chortitza.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>This date of ordination is based on an entry in the Ältester David Stoesz diary, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA), Volume 1559.

<sup>2</sup>For details on the controversy and the schism cf. Henry J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*. (Altona: Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1970), pp.78ff. The Sommerfelder Church is celebrating its centennial this year.

<sup>3</sup>On Gerhard Wiebe's views cf. Gerhard Wiebe. *Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to*

## FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

by Alf Redekopp

## Queries

**Esau** - I am interested in information on the descendants of Peter P. Esau (1820-1880) and his wife, Maria Wiebe (b.1816). Their children included: Katharina Esau (1851-1920, who married Jacob H. Teichroeb (1844-1907); and Margaretha Esau (1857-1929), who married Wilhelm J. Wiebe (1857-1904). A grandson was Dietrich Peter Dyck (b.1872), who married Helena Krahn (1872-1946). The Esaus lived in Blumenhof, Manitoba and their children moved to Saskatchewan and Mexico. Contact: *Richard Thiessen, 781 Kildonan Drive, Winnipeg, MB, R2K 2G1.*

**Fast** - Looking for the maiden name and parents of Maria (or Anna?), the wife of Aron Cornelius Fast (ca.1828-?) from Friedensdorf, Mol. Aron and Maria married ca.1847 and were original settlers in the new village of Hierschau. Their children were Johann (1848-1889), Peter, Gerhard (1862-1906) and Maria. Her second marriage was to Isaak Bärg of Hierschau. They both died sometime after the turn of the century. Contact: *Arnold V. Fast, 41 Jefferson Dr., St. Catharines, ON, L2N 3V3.*

**Franz** - Looking for the parents of Helena Franz (ca.1827-?). Helena was born in the Kulm region of West Prussia and married Adreas Plenert (1826-?) in 1850. The couple moved to the Crimea in the 1850s. Contact: *Arnold V. Fast, 41 Jefferson Dr., St. Catharines, ON, L2N 3V3.*

**Goosen** - Looking for the parents of Maria Goosen (1833-1874). Maria was married to Heinrich Peter Dyck (1832-1870). Both died young and left behind two small children, Elisabeth (1869-1960), and Sara (1870-1920) who were then adopted by a Bestvater family in Wernersdorf, Mol. Contact: *Arnold V. Fast, 41 Jefferson Dr., St. Catharines, ON, L2N 3V3.*

**Harder** - Looking for the parents of Aganetha Harder (1800s). Aganetha first married a Loewen (?) with whom she had four children. Her second marriage ca. 1857 was to Peter Abr. Riediger (1810-1872) of Lichtfelde, Mol., and they had two children, Justina (1859-1941) and Susanna (1861-1925). Contact: *Arnold V. Fast, 41 Jefferson Dr., St. Catharines, ON, L2N 3V3.*

**Janzen/Kroeker** - Looking for information about Franz Heinrich Janzen and wife Maria Kroeker of Lichtfelde, Mol. Their children were Maria (grandmother of Bernard or Louise Mamm); Peter (Elizabeth Fast), Pragenau; Heinrich; Martin; Jakob (Agatha Neufeld) Gnadenfeld Mol. and Aulie Ata, Turkestan, father of Johannes Janzen minister and teacher, died in Brazil; Helena (Jakob Konrad); and Elizabeth (Kornelius Funk). Contact: *John Konrad, 4805 Meadfield Road, West Vancouver, BC, V7W 3E6.*

**Klassen** - Johan P. Klassen b. 6 July 1868 in Russia, father Peter Klassen, mother Anna Wolfe. Mother died 28 February 1874, father remarried to Helena Buhler 11 July 1874. Johan came to Plum Coulee area of Manitoba around 1875 or 1876. For approximately eight years he lived with a Peter Neufeld family, then following Mrs. Neufeld's death, lived with a Niebuhr family. Johan married Susana Klassen (b. September 1872) daughter of Abraham Klassen and Elizabeth Kauenhoven, on 16 July 1891. Would like to hear from anyone who knows of Johan's life with the Neufeld and Niebuhr families. Contact: *Gladys Christensen, 970 Sanderson Cr., Prince Albert, SK, S6V 6L4.*

**Koop** - Searching for information about Jacob Abram Koop, b. 15 June 1827. Father of Jacob Jacob Koop, 1864-1923, possibly Omsk, married 1) Susanna Harder; 2) Anna Wiens. Grandfather of Jacob Jacob Koop, born 1888, came to Leamington, ON, via Batum and Ephrata, Pennsylvania. Contact: *Walter R. Koop, RR#5, Leamington, ON, N8H 3V8.*

**Martens/Pauls** - Anyone with information about Agatha Martens/Pauls, died about 1888, wife of Franz Pauls (b.1821 d.1911), of Kronsweide. Children were Franz (Katharina Janzen); Heinrich (Maria Martens); Agatha (Peter Froese); Susanna (Jakob Unrau). Contact: *Irmie Konrad, 4805 Meadfield Road, West Vancouver, BC, V7W 3E6.*

**Mathies** - Looking for the wife and in-laws of Aron Abr. Mathies (1818-1907) of Pordenau, Mol. Their children: Abram, Anna (1859-1916), Aron (d.1911), Franz, Tina, Jakob, Margareta, Liesa, Cornelius, Peter, Heinrich, Agata, Johann, Sara and David. Contact: *Arnold V. Fast, 41 Jefferson Dr., St. Catharines, ON, L2N 3V3.*

**Penner** - I am looking for any information on the ancestors or descendants of Ältester Abram P. Penner of Orenburg, who died in

1933. Contact: *Richard D. Thiessen, 781 Kildonan Dr., Winnipeg, MB, R2K 2G1.*

**Plenert** - Looking for the parents of Andreas Plenert, b. 1826 in the Kulm region of W. Prussia. Andreas married Helena Franz and the couple moved to the Crimea in the 1850s. Contact: *Arnold V. Fast, 41 Jefferson Dr., St. Catharines, ON, L2N 3V3.*

**Wiens** - Looking for the wife (d.1851) and in-laws of Johann David Wiens (1800-1887). The couple lived in Schoenau, Mol. and one child was named Maria (1844-1920). Contact: *Arnold V. Fast, 41 Jefferson Dr., St. Catharines, ON, L2N 3V3.*

**Yurtke-Jung-Young** - I am looking for information on the name of Jacob Yurtke-Jung-Young (b.? d.1926), burial in Melville, Saskatchewan, who married 1) Catherine Elizabeth Redenbach (b.? d.1910), burial in Melville, SK; and 2) Rosalia Rusch. This family is believed to have roots among the Schwaben Anabaptists of Switzerland and to have come to Canada from Russia. Contact: *Renee Averitt, 1736 Thomas Dr. N., Highlight, CA, 95660, USA.*

## New Publications

Hildebrand, Ed D. *Hildebrand. A Family History.* (New Westminster, BC: By the author, 1992). Hdc., 231 pp. The story begins with Heinrich Hildebrand (b.1752) and his wife Cornelia Neuman (b.1756), resident on the outskirts of Danzig. For more information, contact the author at 1901-612 5th Ave., New Westminster, BC, V3M 1X5.

### JUST RELEASED!

*A Man of His Word:  
A Biography of John A. Toews  
by Elfrieda Toews-Nafziger.*

Pb., 183 pp., \$13.95 CAN.  
(plus \$1.00 postage and handling)

#### Order from:

CMBS, 1-169 Riverton Ave.,  
Winnipeg, MB, R2L 2E5

*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.*



## Thanks to Viktor

For three weeks in June we were assisted by Viktor Hein, a volunteer who came to us from Bielefeld, Germany. A few years ago, Viktor and his family emigrated to Germany from Dzhambul in Kazakhstan, then in the Soviet Union.

Viktor arrived on May 4 and spent a total of six weeks in Winnipeg, working in the CMBC library and the MHC archives during that time. His long-term goal is to become a teacher. He also visited several Mennonite schools and tried to practice his already well-developed English-language skills while staying in Canada. Viktor returned to Germany on June 19.

## New Acquisitions - The Mexico Files

With the help of Bruce Wiebe, of Winkler, Manitoba, the archives has secured the loan of fifty Manitoba Old Colony village ledgers taken to Mexico in 1922. These ledgers may provide several thousand pages of data on the history of about fifteen villages initially settled by Reinländer (later Old Colony) Gemeinde families when they came to the West Reserve in 1875 and later. The materials will be copied and returned. They are already available to researchers.

The large church registers listing Old Colony Mennonite families in Mexico have been photocopied and also placed in the archives. Indexes have been typed up by Bill Harms and Bruce Wiebe.



Dr. Serhei Plokhij of Kiev, Ukraine, checked the Slavic holdings of the Mennonite Heritage Center during a visit on June 18. Dr. Plokhij has till recently been professor of history at the Dnepropetrovsk University. He directed research on Mennonites and other Germans in southern Ukraine while working at the University.

Photo: Courtesy of Erwin Strempler, Winnipeg, MB



William Heinrichs is the person on the far left of the photo. He had a son Jacob. Nothing else is known about this group. Can you provide more information? Write to MHCA, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB, R3P 0M4. Photo: Courtesy of Viola Andres and Kathy Martens.

### BC 50th Anniversary CO Reunion Celebrating B.C. Reforestation (1942-46)

Friday, August 7, King Road Church  
Tuesday, August 11, Black Creek MB  
Church, Vancouver Island

**Registration:** \$42.50 or \$32.50 if  
prepaid before July 15.

**Mail to:** 50th Anniversary CO Reunion,  
King Road MB Church, 32068 King  
Rd., Abbotsford, BC, V2S 4N5.

**For further information call:** [604]  
853-6338 or 854-5210.

### A Date to Hold Open

Jack Dueck, a well-known story teller and heritage promoter will be in Winnipeg on Friday, October 2. His special dramatic production titled "Mysteries of Grace and Judgement" will be presented at the Jubilee auditorium on the Concord College (formerly MBBC) campus.

**mhc**  
MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE  
600 Shaftesbury Blvd. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3P 0M4

## Sioux Falls Heritage Events

The CMC sessions at Sioux Falls, SD, will be held on July 20-22. Several heritage activities are planned.

1. CMBC Publications and MHC heritage books will be for sale.
2. A Heritage Centre report will be included in the regular presentations to the delegates.
3. An exhibit of related literature will be available with pick-ups free of charge.
4. The Historical Committee of the General Conference will mount its own exhibit for the GC sessions held there July 22-26.

## Bergthaler/Chortitzer Church Registers (Concl. from p.2)

*America.* Trans. by Helen Janzen. (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981).

<sup>4</sup>Franz Dyck and David Stoesz travelled to the West Reserve for the ordination cited in Note 1 above.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Microfilm #184, MHCA.

<sup>6</sup>An attempt to identify the various origins of early Bergthaler members in Manitoba is in Sandra Bergen, "The Bergthal Church in Southern Manitoba: A Statistical Analysis of Origin and Settlement", unpublished paper, CMBC, 1987.

<sup>7</sup>On Hoffnungsfeld, cf. John Dyck, "Hoffnungsfeld Influences", unpublished paper read at a history workshop in Altona, MB on April 25, 1992.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Esther Epp, "Altester Johann Funk: His Life and Work", in Mary Jeffery, ed. *Altester Johann Funk. A Family Tree.* (Winnipeg: By the editor, 1980), pp. 1ff.

<sup>9</sup>On Mennonite Brethren beginnings in Manitoba cf. Arnie Neufeld, "Canada's First Mennonite Brethren Church at Winkler, Manitoba", *Mennonite Historian*, XIV (June, 1988), pp.1-3; (Sept., 1988), p.3.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Leonard Doell. *The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan, 1892-1975.* (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1987).

John Dyck is research director for the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society with offices at Steinbach Bible College. The society has published two of John's books, *Oberschulze Jakob Peters 1813-1884: Manitoba Pioneer Leader and Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories 1874-1910.*

## Winnipeg German Bible School

(cont'd from p.1)

Twenty-four persons were present at this meeting where C.A. DeFehr was elected chairman. H.S. Rempel and F.F. Klassen were elected as assistants, J.F. Isaak as treasurer, and H.F. Klassen as secretary. Most of these men would remain active in the Board for the duration of the school. At the first Board meeting about a month later the official name of the society was worded "Society of the Winnipeg German Bible School".

The minutes of the spring and summer Board meetings of 1933 reveal fairly ambitious plans. Courses were to be offered every night and three teachers were to be appointed. A.B. Peters and F.C. Thiessen were appointed almost immediately. There was to be special emphasis on proficiency in the German language because of the need to continue to foster worship and instruction in the German language in the churches. Other German speaking groups were also to be invited to participate in the venture. The dangers inherent in adopting English were referred to repeatedly in later discussion. Nevertheless, an English language instructor in the person of Esther Horch was soon appointed as well.

A pamphlet entitled, *Die deutsche Bibelschule zu Winnipeg* (nd), (probably issued fairly early), states three main purposes and target groups for the school: 1) to satisfy the desires of young people to know the Scriptures; 2) to prepare teachers for Sunday School; 3) to serve the young women who are working as domestics in various households in Winnipeg and who are generally free on Thursdays. This prospectus envisioned a three-year program following the model of other Canadian Bible Schools. A total of eight courses were projected for Thursdays to enable the young women to complete the equivalent of one year in two. Other sessions were to be held in the evenings. Fifteen specific subjects were listed. F.F. Klassen was listed as a teacher in addition to the other three already referred to. At the August meeting A.B. Peters resigned as principal (he was already seventy-three years of age) and F.C. Thiessen was appointed to that position.

In the fall the Society reported a membership of thirty-four and a student enrolment of thirty-nine. Twenty-six of these were from the Northend MB Church and thirteen from the Southend Church. By the time of the March meeting of 1934 a weak enrolment of fifty-eight was reported



**Rev. Abram B. Peters (1860-1959) was the first principal of the Winnipeg German Bible School.** Photo: Courtesy of CMBS, Winnipeg, MB

for the year. But the report to the Society in May also injected a more realistic note by stating that the number of courses had had to be reduced.

The next year again showed how difficult it would be to establish a strong school. Adequate financial support was difficult to secure and tuition fees were kept low very deliberately to encourage students to enrol. Esther Horch declined to teach a further year for personal reasons, although she returned again in later years. Whereas courses had earlier been conducted in three centres (Northend, Southend and Kildonan),<sup>9</sup> this declined to only two. In later years each of the three centres appointed its own representatives to the Board in addition to the regular members.

Student enrolment and Society membership remained fairly constant in the next several years. The participation of the Southend Church seemed to decline somewhat whereas Kildonan's increased. It seems that the day courses never really became viable and must have been discontinued very soon after. Most references to the school refer to it as an "Evening School."<sup>10</sup>

By 1939 the school seems to have accepted its ultimate demise. A memo to the women of the Women's Society of the Northend and North Kildonan churches on January 5, 1939, reveals a note of despair.

**C Centre for  
M Mennonite  
B Brethren  
S Studies in Canada**  
1-189 Riverton Ave. Winnipeg, Canada R2L 2E5

It invites participation in an evening course offered by A.B. Peters in the Northend church as well as a separate course for Sunday School teachers by F.C. Thiessen. This, it states, is a continuation of the Bible school of previous years. It then appeals for financial help from the Women's Society, concluding with the following comments: *Steht diese Arbeit unter den Mädchen den älteren Schwestern und Müttern nicht besonders nah? Wie und wann würde Ihr Frauenverein Willig sein beizusteuern?*<sup>11</sup> The memo was signed by C. DeFehr and H. Klassen.

Some classes may have been conducted in subsequent years but clearly the vision of a Winnipeg Bible school was gone. It suffered the fate of many other Bible schools, although the context was very different from most of the others that failed. Winnipeg had a growing Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren population and might have been expected to have been able to support such a school both financially and in terms of student enrolment. Why did it fail? Was it that it focused too much on the needs of the young women who were working as domestics in the city and could only attend on Thursdays? Did the emphasis on evening courses and the lack of an identifiable institutional base make it too difficult to appeal to a broader potential base of students? Was the urban environment not suitable for such a project? It was perhaps the only school to have the term "German" in its name. Does this suggest that Winnipeg became the testing ground for the attempt to preserve the German language and tradition, and that such a venture was destined to fail?

Whatever the reasons, the Winnipeg German Bible School never became what its founders had hoped it could be. A new institution, named the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, emerged in 1944, with a strong mandate from the Canadian MB Conference, with well-known and respected teachers, and with a program more suited for an urban context. Some continuity with the previous school did exist, however, in that C.A. DeFehr once again became one of the leading forces in the new institution. Ben and Esther Horch both became involved in its instructional program.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Anna Thiessen. *The City Mission in Winnipeg*. Trans. by Ida Toews. (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1991), pp. 35, 86. The original German edition is entitled, *Die Stadtmission* (concl. on p.7)

## The Polish Mennonite Friendship Association

A Polish-Mennonite symposium held at CMBC in 1990, the interested support of many individuals, and above all, the vigorous leadership of Dr. Peter J. Klassen of Fresno, California, helped to bring the PMFA into being. It has a board consisting of members from Germany, USA, Canada, Poland and the Netherlands. The Poland tour in the summer of 1991 helped to give this organization further visibility and impetus during the past year.

To become a member, simply send \$25.00 CAN (or \$20.00 US) to *MHCA, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3P 0M4*, or to *Dr. Peter Klassen, 1838 S. Bundy Ave., Fresno, CA, 93727*. You will then receive regular information about planned projects, related publications, and other news of interest to people working in this field.

P.S. The membership of the Society currently totals seventy-seven. Of these, forty-seven are from Canada, twenty-four from USA, three from Poland, and three from other countries (Germany, Netherlands, Mexico).



**Helmut Reimer, of Duesseldorf, Germany, and co-founder of the Hans Denk Fellowship, was actively involved in promoting Mennonite contacts with Polish communities in areas once inhabited by Mennonites. He passed away last summer while participating in a cemetery restoration work camp in Stogi (formerly Heuboden), Poland.**

Photo: Courtesy of Dick H. Epp, Saskatoon, SK



**Members of the Board looking after the Memorial Menno Simons Cottage at Bad Oldesloe near Hamburg, Germany. (Back l-r): Helmut Enss, chairperson, Horst Bergmann, Rudi Fieguth. (Front l-r): Otto-Fr. Dörwald, Ulrich Wiebe, Gerhard Janzen. Persons wishing to send donations to help support this project may contact: Helmut Enss, Hainholzweg 22, 2408 Hemmelsdorf, Germany.**

Photo: Courtesy of the Board



**The church building of a Pentecostal congregation in Gdansk (Danzig) Poland that formerly housed a Mennonite congregation. Members of the Polish Mennonite Friendship Association placed a plaque in this building on June 25, 1991. It recalls the earlier presence of Mennonites and seeks to encourage friendly relationships between Mennonites and those who have come to live in this community.**

Photo: Courtesy of Barbara Toews, Fresno, California.

### Polish Symposium Papers Available

Most of the papers presented to a Polish Mennonite Symposium at CMBC in July, 1990 are available in a special issue of *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (April 1992, Pb., 288 pp.)

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*Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB, R3P 0M4*



## Winnipeg German Bible School

(conc. from p.5)

in Winnipeg (Winnipeg, MB: Selbstverlag, 1955).

<sup>2</sup>William Neufeld, *From Faith to Faith: The History of the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Church*. (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Press, 1989), p.180.

<sup>3</sup>One pamphlet (nd) explicitly stated that it was begun in 1930 and the 1934 and 1935 Annual Reports (released in the following years) state that the school had operated for five and six years respectively. Winnipeg German Bible School files, Centre for MB Studies, Winnipeg, (hereafter cited as WGBS Records).

<sup>4</sup>Minutes of Northend MB Church, Canadian MB Church Records, CMBS, Microfilm 91, pp.2160-61.

<sup>5</sup>*Mennonitische Rundschau*, 54 (11 February 1931), p.11.

<sup>6</sup>It is interesting to note that Peters was born in the year of the birth of the MB Church in Russia and lived almost long enough to celebrate its 100th anniversary.

<sup>7</sup>WGBS Records.

<sup>8</sup>Kaethe Klassen, the daughter of F.C. Thiessen, comments on these events in a biographical essay about her father, "Franz Thiessen: Lehrer und Prediger," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 102 (29 August 1979), p.10.

<sup>9</sup>See Minutes of October 1, 1934, WGBS.

<sup>10</sup>See Annual reports of the Northend MB Church, CMBS Archives.

<sup>11</sup>WGBS Records.

Abe Dueck is the director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, MB.

## Events and Other News

\* On October 11, 1992, Prince Albert Grace Mennonite Church will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Contact E. Richert for more details. Ph: [306] 764-2051.

**LOST:** The address of a person who ordered these books: B. Harder's *Gelegenheitsgedichte*, Johann Cornies (D.H. Epp), *Onsi Tjedils*, and *Die Geschichte der Whitewater Mennonitengemeinde*. If you ordered these titles, please write us. The books can still be had here.

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PUBLICATIONS

## Book Reviews (concl. from p.8)

Grenke, Arthur. *The German Community in Winnipeg, 1872-1919*. (New York: AMS Press, 1991). Hdc., 334 pp.

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Published works on German Canadians still do not comprise a very long list. The fact alone makes this book (originally a doctoral dissertation) a noteworthy item. Its contribution is further enhanced by its approach - we get an indepth look at a local community.

The study is most interesting and useful where its sources are most adequate. Those are the sections on the German language press of the period studied, and a discussion of political views among Germans in the city. Where primary sources were not accessible, the author sometimes needed to make more general observations. This would apply to such themes as religious institutions and secular formal voluntary groups.

If some have wondered why German Canadians have not taken stronger community initiatives it will help to realize, as this study makes clear, that Germans in Canada came from a number of different countries. They had their differing internal views in areas like politics, as happens in any group. In religious areas, denominational differences existed, as elsewhere.

The author contends also that the settlement pattern affected the kind of communities that emerged. Internal migration within the country kept the German population somewhat on the move. World War I brought significant new pressures that would have long-term effects for Germans in the city, and the country as a whole. Questions related to German Canadian identity had to give way much of the time to dealing with problems concerned with settling down, and relating to a somewhat alien society.

A good foundation for further research has been made as well. One discerns a number of themes which ought to be followed up: the views and broader contributions of the German-language press, church community life, the contribution of leading individuals in politics, the arts, business, etc. Perhaps a way can be found to further clarify the settlement patterns as well.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Sawatzky, H. *Mennonite Templers*. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1990, Echo-Verlag, 1955). Trans. by Victor G. Doerksen. Pb., 103 pp., \$9.00 CAN.

Goerz, Heinrich. *Mennonite Settlements in Crimea*. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1992, Echo-Verlag, 1957). Trans. by John B. Toews. Pb., 65 pp., \$9.00 CAN.

*Reviewed by Richard Thiessen*

Two more books from the Echo Historical Series have been recently translated and made available to an English-reading audience. Like the first title in the new series, *The Kuban Settlement*, (reviewed in *MH*, December, 1989) these recent publications are translations from the original German, with the addition of more recent maps and illustrations, reading lists, and occasionally, material not appearing in the original volumes.

Heinrich Sawatzky was a member of the Temple Society ("Friends of Jerusalem") who migrated from the Molotschna to the Kuban, and later to Palestine in 1902 before passing away in Australia. Thus, this is a first-hand account of the events surrounding the formation and development of the Mennonite Templer movement.

During the mid-19th century, the founders of the Temple Society believed that the people of God should be gathered from every nation to be a holy people. Focusing on the Biblical prophecies concerning the Kingdom of God, the Templers believed that as a holy people they were to have their own land in order to develop a model society. Palestine was seen as the obvious location - hence they were also known as the "Friends of Jerusalem". By 1869 the German Templers had established two colonies in Palestine.

Mennonites in the Molotschna were introduced to the Templers' teachings through Johannes Lange from Gnadenfeld, who attended the Templers' school in Wuerttemberg. Soon others in Gnadenfeld also became Templers. Resistance from the larger Mennonite community resulted in the secession of twenty members of the Gnadenfeld congregation in 1863, and their resettlement in the Caucasian area. Here the Gnadenfeld Templers helped establish

the colony of Templehof. A Mennonite Templer church was later established in the Kuban among the Mennonite Brethren.

Several Mennonite Templers from the Kuban, including Heinrich Sawatzky, established the colony of Wilhelma near Lydda in 1902. These settlers joined other Mennonites who had already settled in Palestine in the 1870s.

Sawatzky argues that those Mennonites who joined the Templer movement "did not want to deny their Mennonite principles; rather they wanted to realize them..." (23). He also states that there was sorrow on the part of many Templers as well as other Mennonites like P.M. Friesen over the fact that a separation had taken place.

In reading the book one catches a hint of the Templers' movement in theological thinking from a Pietistic faith to a rationalistic or humanistic way of thinking about the Christian life. Unfortunately, there is very little personal reflection by Sawatzky on the Templers' history in Palestine, and how their apparent lack of success affected their theological thinking and spiritual life as a society. The book concludes with Sawatzky's essay on the Kingdom of God, which did not appear in the original German edition.

*Mennonite Settlements in Crimea* was written by Heinrich Goerz and has been translated by John B. Toews. Goerz sought out former inhabitants of Crimea to recollect their stories. Thus, the book is a collection of eyewitness accounts of everyday events in Crimea, including agriculture, commerce, church life and education.

Goerz's book serves as a good resource for those who are interested in descriptions of the various Mennonite settlements in Crimea, which by 1926 numbered seventy settlements encompassing fifty-five thousand dessiatins of land and forty-nine hundred Mennonites. It also contains information about the various Mennonite congregations, and is a good source of information about several important figures in Mennonite history, such as Heinrich B. Unruh, his sons B.H. and A.H. Unruh, and also the cousins Abraham J. and Jacob Kroeker.

This account of the Mennonites in Crimea basically concludes with the decade of the 1920s. The years from 1930 onward are summarized in a few pages. Overall, the book is brief but informative, and would be a good place to begin for anyone interested in reading about the Crimean Mennonites.

*Richard Thiessen is head librarian at Concord College (formerly MBBC) in Winnipeg, MB.*

Hildebrandt, Georg. *Wieso lebst Du noch. Ein Deutscher im Gulag*. (Stuttgart: Abend, 1990).

Krueger, Katharina. *Schicksal einer Russlanddeutschen. Erlebnisbericht*. (Goettingen: Verlag Graphikum, 1991). Pb., 194 pp., \$15.00 CAN.

*Reviewed by Peter H. Rempel*

"Comrade, you were our brother in suffering. Now you live in freedom. Write, even if you only write what you have experienced. That will suffice." Charged with this request, Georg Hildebrandt, born as Isaak in the Mennonite settlement of Borisov in 1911, has written a gripping account of his sojourn under Stalinist oppression. Hildebrandt spent much of this quarter century in prisons and labour camps. His experiences are similar to those recorded in the many other memoirs of lives spent in the GULAG. The distinguishing feature of Hildebrandt's account is the transparency in his re-telling of his stratagems for evading and then surviving the cruel prison system. That a basically decent man resorted to deception in order to survive reveals the fundamental distortion of moral values in the Soviet state as directed by Stalin.

Katharina Krueger was separated from her husband of seven years soon after Germany's invasion of the USSR. David Krueger, a teacher in Halbstadt in the Ukraine was banished to a northern labour camp along with all other German men in the fall of 1941, never to be reunited with his wife. She experienced the German occupation and witnessed the extinction of Jewish neighbours and the dying of young German soldiers. She fled to Germany with the German retreat and experienced refugee life there. After a desperate but brief relationship with a German refugee from Yugoslavia, she bore a son and was "repatriated" by the Soviet authorities and deported to northern Russia. The care of her child became the sole purpose of her life amidst the harshness of the labour camp and the persecution of Germans. Her book is an admirable account of a mother and widow struggling to survive, to care for her child and to maintain her German identity in the USSR during and after a war which pitted her homeland against her ancestral home.

*Peter H. Rempel is assistant archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. concl. on page 7*