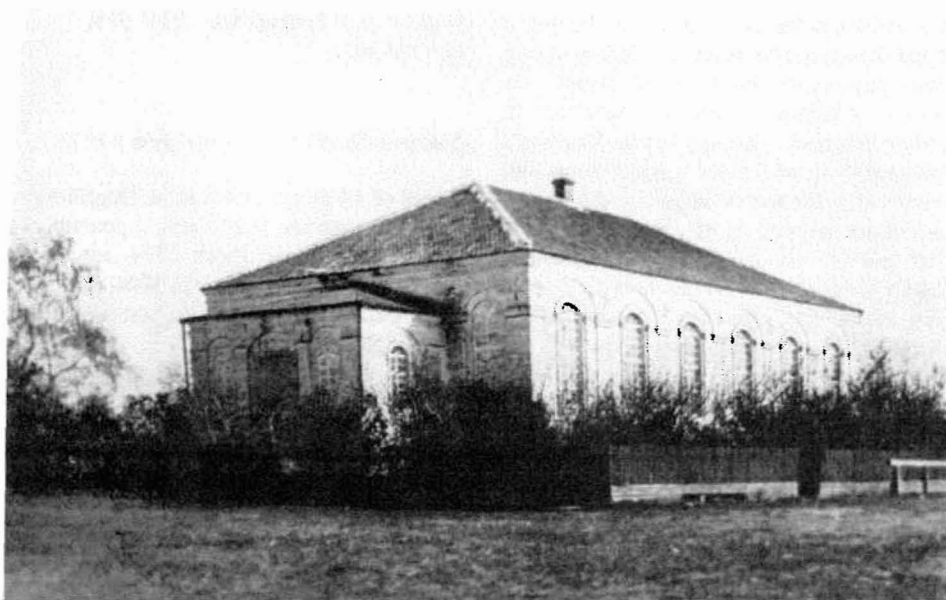


# MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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

Volume XVIII, No.3, September, 1992



Köppenthaler Church in the 1860s

## Historical Background of the Martin Klaassen Family

by Esther Bergen

According to available records, my grandfather Martin Klaassen's family history dates back almost to the Reformation and the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement. My Klaassen ancestors were among the many other Anabaptists (Mennonites) who made their way to the marshy lowlands of the Vistula delta, in the mid-sixteenth century. The first-known Klaassen ancestor was **Behrend Klaassen**, born in Schönsee at the turn of the century, ca.1598. His descendants lived in various villages as Schönsee, Petershagnerfeld, Fürstenwerder, Schönberg and Tiegenhagen. The names of my **Klaassen** forebears were as follows: Behrend Klaassen; Hans Klaassen (1658-1734); Ida (Klaassen) Andres (1688-1734); David Klaassen (1700-1780), son of Hans Klaassen, married Anna Andres, daughter of Ida Andres; Dirk Klaassen (1765-1843); Jacob Klaassen 1793 - 1879); Martin Klaassen (1820 - 1881) and Michael Klaassen (1860 - 1934), (my father). After my father, there are five more

generations, beginning with his oldest daughter, Helena (Klaassen) Dalke (1889 - 1978), — (of his first family), to her great-greatgrandchildren. From Behrend Klaassen to the latest member of my father's first family there are therefore, 13 generations. I am the youngest daughter of Michael Klaassen's second family.

In our Klaassen history we have many accounts of the living conditions, vocations and faith of our ancestors. Records tell us that Behrend Klaassen was a teacher and active in educational work. David Klaassen had 16 children, of whom only 4 survived to adulthood, the last son being Dirk. Dirk Klaassen, who inherited an estate from his father, was elected as minister of the Fürstenwerder congregation in 1800. The photo of the Fürstenwerder Mennonite Church appeared in the *Mennonite Historian* (Vol XV, No 4, Dec., 1989). Unfortunately, fire destroyed this building in 1991. Dirk Klaassen's son Jacob served as a minister for well over 50 years, first at Ladekopp, then Tiegenhagen, W. Prussia, and finally at the Köppenthal Church, "Am Trakt", Russia. Jacob and Helena (Hamm) Klaassen also celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at Köppenthal.

My grandfather Martin Klaassen was born

(cont'd on p.2)

## Johann Bartsch, The Deputy

by Henry Schapansky

The activities and adventures of the two deputies Jacob Höppner and Johann Bartsch during the early period of the immigration of the West Prussian Mennonites to Russia in 1786-90 are well-documented by Höppner's son-in-law, Peter Hildebrandt. However, rather little is known about the deputies themselves. Jacob Höppner is the better known of the two, partly due to his relationship with Peter Hildebrandt, but also owing to his own energetic and outgoing nature. Johann appears to have been a quiet, reflective man, later becoming somewhat withdrawn after his humiliation at the hands of the *Lehrdienst*.

Johann Bartsch was born in 1757, likely a son of Jacob Bartsch and his wife Kristina (nee Phillipsen). The family held membership in the Frisian *Gemeinde* at Neugarten, Danzig. If this speculation is correct, then he was the brother-in-law of Jacob Wiens, the first minister elected by the immigrants during their stay at Dubrovna (Russia) in 1788. He was elected by the largest number of votes. Johann's sister was apparently admitted to the Flemish *Gemeinde* at Danzig without any formalities, prior to her marriage on December 26, 1787 to Jacob Wiens. Likewise, Johann Bartsch's brother Jacob (b. 1761) later became *Lehrer* (minister) of the Danzig Flemish *Gemeinde* at Neunhuben, apparently before the union of the Flemish and Frisian *Gemeinden* at Danzig. It was this Jacob Bartsch who was a signatory to the letter of authority given to *Ältester* Kornelius Regier and *Lehrer* Kornelius Warkentin for their visit to New Russia in 1794, to resolve the conflict between the factions led by Jacob Höppner and (*Ältester*) David Epp.

Johann Bartsch married Susanna Lammerts (bpt. in 1773), a daughter of Jacob Lammerts of Tiegenhagen, of the Orloffferfelde *Gemeinde* (Frisian) in 1779. Jacob Lammerts is listed in the census of 1776 as of middle-class economic status, with two sons and three daughters. In the *Bauernverzeichnis* of 1772, he is listed as the

(cont'd on p.2)

**Martin Klaassen Family** (*cont'd from p.1*)

at Schönsee, then lived at Tiegenhagen, W. Prussia with his parents, until he moved to Russia in 1853, settling at the Trakt. In 1855 he married Maria Hamm, great-granddaughter of Martin Hamm (1690-1750). Martin Klaassen served as school teacher, first in the village of Hahns-Au, then in Köppenthal until 1880. We are very privileged to have his personal diary of 1852-70, and again 1880-81. Martin Klaassen's father began a family register, which Martin continued. This contains many accounts of the ancestors and their activities, as well as the total family register.

Martin Klaassen was a man of diverse interests and talents which is very evident through his diary. When he arrived at the



**Tiegenhagen Church, Prussia**

Trakt, he was employed as a surveyor, measuring off land for the new settlers, and drawing the plans. He was also somewhat of an architect and carpenter when buildings needed to be constructed. As teacher he found many ways to interest the children, writing his own textbooks and lessons in various subjects: Russian History in both German and Russian, World History, Church History, Russian Grammar, German Grammar, an Atlas for Nature Study, a chart of the stars and planets. He made his own globe. Evenings he taught the Russian language to adults. The study of botany fascinated him so he made many trips to a ravine to collect plants and flowers for his school. His students enjoyed the nature hikes he took with them. He was artistic in many ways: musically, poetically, linguistically and in the fine arts. He led the church choir, taught singing in harmony, and sang solos for special occasions. In his diary he made use of four languages: German, Russian, Greek and some French. A booklet of 49 pencil

drawings of the Holy Land has been handed down to us, as well as a painting of the village of Tiegenhagen, W. Prussia. This painting hung on our diningroom wall as long as I can remember.

Above all, Martin Klaassen loved to write. He wrote five notebooks of poetry, one of which has been preserved. His reflections and prayers in his diary show that he was a deeply devoted man of faith. He had strong convictions in the principles of peace. At various occasions he was a mediator in settling a dispute. Through Martin Klaassen's 400-page diary we feel we learn to know him as a person. He shares his faith and his inner convictions, as well as his longing to serve God and the community. Unfortunately, Martin Klaassen died on the Trek to Central Asia, at the early age of 61, but he left his descendants a wonderful legacy through his writings.

Martin Klaassen's wife, Maria and her two children Jacob and Helena, together with a number of other families, migrated from Central Asia to the USA in 1884, settling first in Nebraska, and later in Oklahoma. My father Michael Klaassen and his wife Margarethe Jantzen came a year later, also settling in Nebraska and Oklahoma. He taught German school in Oklahoma for 17 years, and also served as minister and elder of the Herold Mennonite Church at Bessie. After Michael's wife Margarethe died, he married Katherina Dalke. Towards the end of World War I, his only son was imprisoned as CO in Leavenworth, KS, where he died of pneumonia in October 1918. The peace position held by the Herold Mennonite Church prompted a number of families to move to Canada. The Michael Klaassens settled at Morden, Manitoba, while Michael's brother, Jacob, also a minister, settled at Rosthern, Saskatchewan with his five sons. Jacob and Helena (Klaassen) Jantzen, (Michael and Jacob Klaassen's only sister), and their family, stayed in Oklahoma. Jacob Jantzen continued to serve the Herold Mennonite Church at Bessie. Michael Klaassen organized a church at Morden, (Herold Mennonite), serving as elder until his death in 1934. His brother Jacob Klaassen served the Eigenheim Church at Rosthern.

The records of our Klaassen family history cover almost 400 years. Their paths led from Holland to W. Prussia to Russia, to Central Asia to the USA to Canada. Their experiences demonstrate an unshakable faith in God, as well as a practical application of

the principles of nonresistance. May the descendants learn from them and follow in their footsteps.

*Readers are advised to consult the "Klaassen" historical material stored in the Archives at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba and Esther C. Bergen, at 514-445 Stafford St., Winnipeg, MB R3M 3V9, Ph: 284-3902*

**Johann Bartsch** (*cont'd from p.1*)

owner of 14 *Morgen* of land in Tiegenhagen. Franz Lammerts (Lambert), apparently a brother of Susanna (born 1774, bpt. 1790) immigrated to New Russia in 1804, settling at Rosenthal (Old Colony), the home village of Johann Bartsch.

The Johann Bartsch family appears to have had no particular economic problems. His wife Susanna seems to have been a capable manager of the family affairs and very able to handle their dairy enterprise during the long absence of her husband on the first trip to New Russia in (1786-87).

Among the talents of Johann Bartsch was the ability to make shoes. It was he who made a pair of boots for *Ältester* Bernhard Penner, prior to the first baptismal service in the Old Colony.

Susanna probably died before 1792. The writer is unaware of the name of the second wife of Johann Bartsch, who was a certain Helena, born in 1770. Johann Bartsch originally settled at Insel Chortitza, but very shortly thereafter moved to Rosenthal where he is found in the official and unofficial lists of 1793, 1795, 1802, 1803, and 1808. This was also the village of *Lehrer* Jacob Wiens (his brother-in-law?).

The children of Johann Bartsch include the following: Susanna (born 10.2. 1782, d. 2. 1809) who married 1) Heinrich Epp (b. 1775, d. 25.11.1805); 2) Jacob Isaac (b. 1.8.1784, bpt. 1803); Maria (b. 1783); Sara (b. 1786); Margaretha (b. 1794) who married Abraham Krüger (1791-1872) in 1815; Jacob (b. 1798). Heinrich Epp was a son of *Ältester* Peter Epp of Danzig and was an immigrant of 1796-98. He had previously married 1) Anna Penner on 30.10.1775 (b. 19.3.1757) 2) Margaretha Epp (b. 13.3.1777, d. 1800) a daughter of *Ältester* David Epp of Chortitza.

Jacob Isaac was a son of Jacob Isaac (1756-7.7.1798) of Milentz (Heubuden

(*cont'd on p.3*)

## FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

by Alf Redekopp

## Queries

**Martens** - Seeking information on Paul Martens (1812- ) married to Helena Fehr (1812- ), and their family. Four sons are known to have come to Canada in 1875 -- Kornelius (1835-1905) homesteaded in Schoenfeld, MB; Peter (1837-1910); Johann (1843- ) and Jakob (1853- ). Jakob Martens later moved to the Swift Current Reserve. Contact: Queenie Martens, 4435 Cascade Drive, Vernon, BC V1T 8J7.

**Remple** - Anna Remple married Jacob Hoepfner, a watchmaker, and came to Canada in 1874/75. They left Canada and settled in the United States, most likely in the 1880s. Looking for any information about the relatives of Anna Remple. Contact: Elmer Dyck, Rt. 1, Box 329, Stapleton, GA 30823.

**Abrams - Krahn** - Searching for the birthplaces and ancestry of Peter Abrams and his wife Margarethe Krahn, who were the parents of Peter (1827-1874), Jacob (1829- ), Heinrich (1837- ) and Reinhard (1840- ). The latter three sons appear in the Schoenhorst Church Register. The sons married, respectively, Sarah Penner, Elizabeth Neudorf, Katherina Ensz and Elizabeth Rempel. In 1892 some members of the family are believed to have moved to Ignatewo. Contact: Clifford E. Schink, 300 Santa Rita Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301.

**Cornies** - Wishing to make contact with the relatives of Philip David Cornies (1884-1961/62?). Philip D. Cornies was the son of David Cornies and Anna Dueck. He was a school teacher and lived in Rosenort, Molotschna 1911-1922. He died in the city of Dokshetow, Kasachstan, USSR. Contact: Heinrich Cornies, Nelkenweg 6, 4937 Lage-Kachtenhausen, Germany. (in German)

**Bergen** - Wishing to make contact with the descendants of our Bergen family which left the Ukraine for Canada during the 1920s. Isaak Bergen was born in Schonhorst, Abram Bergen was born 1858 in Schoneeburg. From 1864 to 1920 they lived in Kronsgraben, Chortitza. Abram's children were: Heinrich b. 1884, Maria, Abram, Susanna, Johan, Anna, Jakob and Sara. Contact: Andreas Bergen, Anleser-str. 26, 6400 Fulda, Germany. (in German)

**Molotschna Village Maps** - of Landskrone, Sparrau, Steinfeld, and Elisabeththal wanted. Contact: Donald M. Norrie, 2259 Mills Road, Sidney, BC V8L 2C3

## New Publications

Janzen, John, William Janzen and Ruth Hildebrand. *The Heinrich F. Janzen Family Record 1849-1992*. (Saskatoon, SK : Private publication, 1992). \$15.00 plus mailing.

This book begins with Heinrich F. Janzen (1849-1920) of Einlage, known as *der kleine Janzen*, who married 1) ? Kehler (1848-1886), 2) Elizabeth Dyck (1864-1895) of Gruenfeld, 3) a Mrs. Giesbrecht (1845- ) and, 4) Katharina Letkemann (1865-1955) who was born at Osterwick and died at Aberdeen, Saskatchewan. Contact: John J. Janzen, Box 207, Hague, SK S0K 1X0.

*The Descendants of Ohm Abraham Wiebe 1831-1991* (Winkler, MB : Wiebe Family History Committee, 1992) 304 pp. \$35.00.

This book traces the family history of the descendants of Abraham Wiebe (1831-1900) who was born in Neuhorst, Russia, moved to Fuerstenland in 1864 and then to Canada in 1876, where he died in the village of Reinland, Manitoba. The book contains valuable background information on Abraham Wiebe's parents, grandparents, siblings and uncles and aunts. Abraham Wiebe was a brother to the *Aeltester* Johann Wiebe of the Fuerstenland Colony and later of the West Reserve in Manitoba. Contact: Wiebe Family Book, P.O. Box 367, Winkler, MB R6W 4A6.

*The Muensterberg Hueberts. A family history and genealogy of the descendants of Claas Huebert (1785-1853)*. (Winnipeg, MB : Private publication, 1992) 429 pp. \$30.00 plus mailing.

This book includes the descendants of Claas Huebert who settled in the village of Muensterberg, Molotschna in 1804 where all 25 of his children were born. (from 3 marriages) The book devotes one chapter to each of the 12 children who are known to have had descendants. As these children married they established themselves in other villages such as Altonau, Liebenau, Marienwohl, Lichtenau, Waldheim and Lichtenau, in addition to Muensterberg. The most prominent son, Heinrich Huebert (1810-1895), first *Aeltester* (elder) of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia eventually settled in the Kuban. One daughter, Mrs. Elisabeth Thiessen, and her family settled in Kansas in 1877. Another grandson Klaas Huebert son of Jacob Huebert settled in Kansas in 1876. The children of son Peter settled in Nebraska in 1874. Many other families remained in the Soviet Union or came to America at various times. Contact: Alf Redekopp, 229 Home Street, Winnipeg, MB R3G 1X2.

## Genealogical Research in ex-Soviet Union

FAMILY HISTORY SERVICES, Moscow, Russia is now in place and can search genealogical and historical materials in Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, and all other parts of the former Soviet Union. To place an order, or to enquire about costs, contact URBANA TECHNOLOGIES, 2011 Silver Ct. E., Urbana, IL 61801. If you have electronic mail you can contact the Moscow office directly using the following address: "rebrova@labtam.msk.su". The basic fees are \$12 per hour and \$1 for photocopies. Where specific local archives charge substantially more for photocopies, these fees are passed on. Often the local archives do not have photocopying machines, in which case, a professional photographer is hired to make a special trip to the archive. The copying charge is then \$13.00 per page. For certified copies, notarial fees are also passed on.

## Johann Bartsch (cont'd from p.2)

*Gemeinde*) and immigrated to Russia in 1804.

Abraham Krüger (also Kröger) was a son of Johann Krüger, an immigrant of 1804. The Krügers were members of the Frisian church of Orlofferfelder in West Prussia. Descendants of this family produced the famous Kröger clocks in the Old Colony.

It is interesting to note that the main protagonists in the disputes during the early years were Jacob Höppner and *Ältester* David Epp. Petitions signed by supporters of Höppner particularly mentioned David Epp. Peter Hildebrandt, while avoiding all mention of David Epp, is somewhat unsympathetic to the latter in his narration concerning the delegation of Gerhard Willms (and David Epp) to Petersburg in 1798-1800, to obtain the well known *Privilegium*. It has been speculated that David Epp was also a relative of Peter Epp, a supporter of the immigration to Russia. This does not however, seem to be the case. The parents of David Epp were Kornelius Epp and Sara Andres (according to the *Danzig Familienbuch*). The Danzig church records also indicate that Sara Epp (nee Andres) d. on Oct. 23, 1764.

*Ältester* Peter Epp did have a brother Kornelius (b. 6.8.1723, d. 19.10.1805) who married Kristina Fast (b. 27.10.1739, d. 9.12.1796) on 22.10.1758, per the *Danzig Familienbuch*. It therefore follows that David Epp's father was not the brother of Peter Epp. It is of course possible that some other relationship existed.

This is worth mentioning because, despite the humility of Johann Bartsch, the

(cont'd on p.7)

## Au Revoir - on to Moscow

by Lawrence Klippenstein

It was a very sudden decision. Early in July, LaVerna and I received an invitation to become MCC's country representatives in Moscow - to begin in early October (1992 not 1993). We decided it was a most interesting opportunity - even for the one-year duration proposed in the invitation. We are asked to open an MCC office there and to direct the new programs in Russia from that site.

When Peter Rempel, the MHCA assistant archivist agreed to become acting director for the period of my absence, one major question was answered. A second one was dealt with when we were able to rent our home to a suitable family for the period of our absence.

We will have a little time, we hope, to look for new archival sources and perhaps to get copies for our holdings. An address of our new location in Moscow will be available, we hope for the December issue.

Thank you for your support and encouragement along the way!

## Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba (CMM) History Project

by Anna Epp Ens

The end goal of this undertaking is the writing and publication of CMM's history,

hopefully by 1995. It was approved by the CMM executive in February, 1989 and is directed by an advisory committee.

My assignment, begun this September, is to continue the collecting of materials, to do further research, and to prepare a written manuscript of the story.

The following are solicited from readers:

1. Photos of CMM events, institutions, persons (leaders and others) and the necessary identification.
2. Minutes of interchurch ministerial or other meetings (i.e. *Protokolle*). Very few of these are on hand from before 1947 and some files after 1947 (e.g. that of the Education Committee) are incomplete.
3. Other records: diaries, personal notebooks/papers, correspondence by persons (leaders and others, both men and women) involved and acquainted with interchurch/conference concerns and activities.

These latter, often incidental and unobtrusive records can be particularly significant since they often give dimensions that are not found in officially recorded minutes or proceedings. They will be particularly helpful where no minutes are available as for the period before the CMM, known as the period of Bible conferences and ministers' meetings (the late 1920s to 1937). Similarly, very few official records are available for the four-year period (1937-41) when a provincial conference was in operation, and the years (1941-47) when things were in limbo again.

Often these not so obvious records are

disregarded or considered unimportant by family members. They can be a gold mine for researchers. Here is an example. In one F.F. Ens (*Ältester* of the *Whitewater Gemeinde* and *Reiseprediger*) collection are found among others, a very distinct though brief excerpt from the minutes of the ministers' meeting held January 21, 1932 in Winnipeg<sup>1</sup> and a decision of the ministers' gathering held in Altona June 7-8, 1932.<sup>2</sup> These items are not initially obvious but found scattered among lists of addresses, expenses incurred, *Reisedprediger* itineraries, baptismal candidates, and numerous miscellaneous notes. For the researcher and writer all of this helps to form a sense of the day to day life of this leader and the context of his ministry.

Sometimes records are withheld because of their sensitive and controversial nature. One of the purposes of the story surely is to honour the hard and sacrificial work of our pioneers in their attempts to build the kingdom of God. It is not to nurse the wounds of hurt and disagreement. We will pay tribute best to those who struggled in the birthing and nurturing of the CMM by letting their records inform and inspire our churches in our time. I commit myself to considerate and careful use of the documents entrusted to me for this history writing project.

Please send any contributions you can find to the CMM History Project, Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg R3P 0M4 or call me at 489-6044. If you have concerns regarding the materials please indicate these and whether you wish them to be returned or to be deposited at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Thank you!

<sup>1</sup>"Auszug aus Protokoll der Predig. Konf. in Win-peg [sic] am 21. Jan. 1932." Where is the Protokoll (Minutes)?

<sup>2</sup>"Beschluss der Predigerversammlung in Altona... 7-8 June"[1932]. Just the kind of thing I'm looking for!

## Corrections

RE: the March issue of *MH*

According to one reader's comment, the photo of the Sommerfelder church building (p.2) may not show the very first building put up in Altona. Can anyone provide a photo of the very first Sommerfelder meeting house in Altona?



Conference of Mennonites in Canada staff assembled at the end of July on the occasion of Kimberly Epp's last day as secretary-receptionist at the Heritage Centre. Representing the archives were Linda Ens, summer staff (2nd in front row), Kimberley Epp (3rd in front row), Jake Wiens, volunteer (3rd in back row), Lawrence Klippenstein, archivist (5th in back row) and John Friesen, Archives Committee chairperson (10th in back row).

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

## A TRIBUTE TO BEN HORCH

by John Martens

Since the sudden passing of Ben Horch this summer, my mind has travelled over 45 years of memory trails. Already as a child, I was acutely conscious of Ben as a conductor, partly, I realize now, because I was subconsciously making comparisons with other Mennonite conductors, particularly with K.H. Neufeld. K.H., as he was known in the rural communities of southern Manitoba, was a family friend and so stories about him abounded in our home. We had no family stories about Ben except one, and that one about Ben's father and his piano playing. Perhaps we got that story from Ben's younger brother, Albert, who in 1942 married my father's step-sister.

So for me, Ben had to create his own stories, and create them he did. I remember hearing him "finesse" his way through familiar church hymns and gospel songs -- songs he called "Kern-lieder". They were well-known to us and I was both surprised and elated at the magic he worked into these songs with MBBC's A cappella choir. I was also, dare I say it, slightly annoyed at the thought that congregations would never again, after hearing this, be able to sing these songs as they had until this point. What a loss, I thought, as a sentimental eleven year old.

Ben's work in oratorio is a magnificent memory for me. I was 18, attending the Manitoba Normal School in preparation for a life of teaching. I heard Ben was forming a "Liebhaber" Choir for the purpose of singing Haydn's "Die Schöpfung". I do not remember where the rehearsals took place but I remember going for an audition. And I remember his wide smile when he said, "You're a singer. I want you in the choir." It was my first experience singing a major work and my enthusiasm has been rewarded in that I still know the complete work from memory to this day.

Not only was Ben great fun at rehearsals, he was also a perceptive musician, presenting insights into music-making that I have not heard elsewhere. His clarity of perception was evident many years later when as conductor of the Winnipeg Singers I received several notes from him which were not only encouraging, but also analytically instructive.

Today, regrettably, much of amateur community music-making is either abandoned or relegated to the professionals. Ben's work with the Mennonite Symphony Orchestra, as it was called in the forties, was his expression of the importance of getting instruments into the hands of amateurs -- teenagers and

**C Centre for  
M Mennonite  
B Brethren  
S Studies in Canada**  
1-169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, Canada

adults. The *Mennonitische Rundschau* from this era carries numerous advertisements and some pictures of this ensemble which at times had approximately 100 players. A former friend tells of playing a Beethoven symphony as a member of this ensemble. To his concern about the complexity of this piece, Ben had simply said, "Play the notes you can." The effort and energy Ben expended in giving community people a chance to play and sing was enormous; we, today, still owe him many thanks for that. And of course Ben was centrally involved in reviving the Mennonite Community Orchestra in the mid seventies.

Ben never lost his touch with and his heart for young people. While music program director of new-born radio station in Altona in 1957, he immediately set about forming the Southern Manitoba Choral Society. Fittingly, this past spring that organization honoured Ben and Esther Horch at their 35th anniversary. Ben's pioneer efforts have brought lasting benefits to a whole generation of music lovers.

As producer at the CBC, Ben gave opportunities for young musicians like Irmgard Braun-Baerg and myself in recitals on that network. In such endeavours, his humour was unfailingly present. A well-timed joke from behind the glass released impending tensions. Particularly I remember his play on the word "Horch" when I was about to sing Schubert's "Horch, horch die Lerch". Years later, in the fall of 1987, as we approached Ben's 80th birthday, I invited Ben to come to an MBBC A cappella rehearsal (I conducted the choirs that year). The two Mennonite college choirs had been asked to join a community choir in a birthday celebration for Ben at Portage Avenue Mennonite Brethren church. It took some coaxing but Ben came to the rehearsal. Most of the college singers, of course, did not know Ben. Yet in his casually interesting yet intellectually stimulating conversation with the choir, it was as if the 60-year age gap evaporated. This is my favourite memory. Here was a man in a body that had slowed down but whose heart and mind had kept growing! The celebrations over, I watched with a chuckle as Ben and George Wiebe did wonderful impersonations of favourite characters including K.H. Neufeld, Robert Shaw, and J.B. Toews.

One could continue talking about Ben's tireless efforts in the cause of bringing music into the lives of ordinary people. His efforts to have the vitality and validity of folk music recognized within Manitoba's ethnic mosaic will, I hope, someday be realized more fully than it now is. His interest in new music led him to sponsor major commissions, one of which has become very successful. His dream to see an orchestral ensemble established within the music programs of the two Winnipeg Mennonite colleges will hopefully someday be realized as well.

Some six weeks before Ben passed on, he and I had lunch together. I don't know if he was aware that an 85th birthday celebration was being planned for him, but I do know that his dreams were still there, intact, and his enthusiasm for life was still thriving. And he shared a joke with me! Thanks be to God for Ben Horch!



Esther and Ben Horch donating Music Collection to CMBS

### 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

## Forthcoming Film on Mennonites in Neodachino — Appeal for Funds

Neodachino is a village 3000 kilometres east of Moscow with less than 600 inhabitants. It looks relatively wealthy, certainly in comparison with the surrounding villages.

The only thing Russian about the village is its name: Neodachino. That means "No Happiness". The language spoken there is Low German. Almost all the inhabitants are Mennonites of German and Dutch extraction.

In 1987, the Russian Germans acquired the right to return to Germany. Of the 800 inhabitants, 200 have already left. And the exodus continues. In the end, 80 - 90 % of the inhabitants are likely to leave, for economic but also for religious reasons. Is it not written in the Good Book that the end of time is nigh and all peoples must return to their homelands?

Dozens of families in Neodachino are "waiting for a number". Those with a number can leave, although it can be months before the actual departure. But there are still some who plan to stay -- people who don't want to join the end of the line in Germany, who think that Neodachino has everything that you could ever need to lead the good life. The dividing line bisects families. Every family has at least one emigrant. Those who stay behind can dote on the video tapes they receive through the mail from Germany --

tapes bursting with all the comfort the West has to offer: luxurious houses, the new Audi standing out front, the autobahn, the supermarkets brimming with produce.

There is a second dividing line through the village, that of religion. The Mennonites of Neodachino are divided into two groups: the Kirchlichen and the Brudergemeinde. The "Bruders" are rigid and see the Bible as their only point of departure. They don't read newspapers and regard television as the talking animal from Revelation 13:5-7. The "Kirchlichen" are more open to the worldly ways. They put more emphasis on personal conscience and responsibility. The two communities have little to do with each other. They pray apart, a mixed marriage is still unusual and they celebrate their religious feasts separately.

The documentary "Geen Geluk" (No Luck) is a portrait of the Mennonites of Neodachino, in all their diversity and divergence. It is more than the story of a village. Based on the stories of inhabitants it reveals how their history symbolizes the history of Mennonites of Russia.

The film focuses on the family of the elder of the Kirchlichen, Gerhard Neufeld. Gerhard and his wife Mariechen have nine children. Much of what divides the village also divides the family. Gerhard is deeply religious and his will is law. His children won't marry Russians. That's that. And there is no question of leaving Neodachino.

The filming is proceeding and copies

should be available in VHS video format before long. It is being produced by Dutch film producer Rob Hof.

Approximately \$15,000 of a total budget of \$140,000 is expected to be raised in Canada. For more information contact Abe Dueck, CMBS (669-6575).

**Philadelphia M.B. Church is publishing  
a 65th Anniversary History Book  
"Under His Wings"**  
320 pp., inc. 665 pictures, \$55.00 CAN.  
(plus mailing, \$4[CAN], \$6[US])  
Order from: Anniversary Comm.,  
Box 748,  
Watrous, SK S0K 4T0

## Baptists and Mennonites meet in Amsterdam

by Abe Dueck

A group of Mennonites and Baptists met for a fourth and final session from August 1 to 6 in Amsterdam, the location of the first dialogue between Baptists and Mennonites almost 400 years ago (ca. 1609). The dialogue between Baptists and Mennonites is one of a number of bilateral and multilateral dialogues that have taken place between various Christian communities for several decades. Much of the initiative for this series was taken by Baptist Noel Vose of Australia, the former President of the Baptist World Alliance. His first awareness of Mennonites came around 1960 while studying in Chicago, when his professor referred him to Harold S. Bender, of Goshen Biblical Seminary.

The Mennonite team was sponsored by the Mennonite World Conference and was headed by Ross Bender of Goshen, IN. Unfortunately, illness prevented him from attending the final session. Other members of the Mennonite team included Anna Juhnke (North Newton, KS), Daniel Schipani (Elkhart, IN), Ed van Straten (Holland), Beulah Hostetler (Elizabethtown, PA), Abe Dueck (Winnipeg, MB) and staff member Larry Miller (Strassburg, France), who replaced Paul Kraybill as Executive Secretary of the Mennonite World Conference.

The discussions this year focused on preparing a final report consisting of brief summaries of the histories of the two groups, points of intersection between them and more detailed statements concerning theological issues such as conceptions of authority, and the nature and mission of the church in the world. The most intense aspect of the dialogue involved preparing concise

(cont'd on p.7)



Children playing in the village of Neodachino

**Baptists** (cont'd from p.6)

statements on convergences and divergences between Baptists and Mennonites. Mennonites were particularly interested in exploring the Baptist success in missions and evangelism, whereas Baptists showed a keen interest in Mennonite emphases on peace and service. A series of recommendations will also be part of the final report to the respective world bodies.

In addition to the intense discussions around the table in the Singel Mennonite (Dooopsgezinde) Church in Amsterdam, the participants also enjoyed the warm hospitality of Amsterdam and the Dutch Mennonites. Of particular significance for Baptists was seeing the name of John Smyth on the list of names of congregational leaders in the entrance way of the Singel Church, as well as visiting other sites of historical interest relating to the English Baptists who spent some years in Amsterdam and contemplated joining the Waterlander group of Mennonites. The significance of contacts with Mennonites for the later history of Baptists is still a matter of debate among academicians.

Baptists and Mennonites have continued to intersect in many times and places over the centuries. German Baptists played a significant role in the origin and early development of Mennonite Brethren in Russia. Many Mennonites have also become involved in missions through Baptist agencies and others have studied in Baptist schools. Later this year of early in 1993 a book on Mennonite Brethren and Baptist relationships, edited by Paul Toews, will be published by Kindred Press. A growing awareness of common roots and an appreciation for each other's contributions should result in more cooperation in the future.

**Book Reviews** (cont'd from p.8)

sell only within the colony. Since the authors have singled out *Alexandertal* for their study, it would have been useful for them to check all available sources on that colony. They report (p.94) that the population of *Alexandertal* by 1909 declined from 178 families to 89. The statistics are quite different. By 1913 the colony had expanded to 236 families (see ME and ML). While the authors know of Yegorov's work, they seem to make very little or not use of Siuriukin, Kolesnikov, Bondar, and several Mennonite sources. Mennonite sources like Harder, the ME, and ML could at least have spared the authors the embarrassment of a totally useless map on page 91, where villages seem to have been thrown together at will, and the direction of the river Kondurcha changed by ninety degrees.

Finally, despite serious problems in one section of the book it deserves to be read. If used carefully it can be of considerable help for readers who are restricted to English language works.

**Johann Bartsch** (cont'd from p.3)

*Lehrdienst* was nevertheless unsympathetic to him. Bartsch's family was apparently musical, but Bartsch was required to give up his fiddle, which he was fond of. Playing musical instruments was regarded by some as irreligious.

The Bartsch family appears to have prospered in later years. A son Jacob was twice *Oberschulz* of the Old Colony (1832-38 and 1841-54). A monument originally dedicated to Bartsch's memory in Russia, now stands in the Mennonite Village Museum in Steinbach, Manitoba.

**Sources Used:**

1. Danzig Gemeinde (Flemish) Church Records (including baptism, marriages and deaths of baptised members, as well as a two-volume *Familienbuch*, begun ca.1789 by Johann Kauenhowen and Peter Thiessen), Microfilms #82 and 83 at Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA), Winnipeg, MB.
2. Orlofffelder Gemeinde (Frisian) Church Records, Microfilm #286, MHCA.
3. "Trauungen 1772-1816 in der Mennoniten Gemeinde Orlofffelder", A. Goertz, *Altpreussische Geschlechterkunde*, n.12, 1779.
4. Peter Hildebrand. *Erste Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus dem Danziger Gebiet nach Russland*. (Halbstadt, Ukraine; 1888).
5. D.H. Epp. *Die Chortitzaer Mennoniten*. (Rosenthal, Chortitza; 1889).
6. B.H. Unruh. *Die Niederlaendisch-Niederdeutschen Hintergruenden der Mennonitischen Ostwanderungen*. (Karlsruhe, 1955).
7. H. Penner. *Die Ost- und Westpreussischen Mennoniten*. (Weierhof, 1978).
8. N.J. Kroeker. *Erste Mennoniten-Doerfer Russlands*. (Vancouver, 1981). Originally published in both English and German.
9. D. Plett. *Pioneers and Pilgrims*. (Steinbach, MB; 1990).

*Henry Schapansky has done extensive studies of the first immigrants from Prussia to Chortitza, Ukraine.*

**Symposium on Mennonites and Nationalism**

Plans are well underway for a symposium on Mennonites and Nationalism to be held in Winnipeg on May 6-9, 1993. A planning committee under the auspices of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and drawing in representatives of various other Mennonite organizations has been formed and speakers have been selected. Persons who will be presenting papers include James Urry, James Reimer, Adolf Ens, Rod Sawatzky, John H. Redekopp, Rachele Reesor, Vic Toews, John Thiessen (Newton), and Helmut Harry Loewen. Some funding is anticipated from Multiculturalism Canada under the Canadian Ethnic Studies Program. For more information contact Peter Rempel or Abe Dueck.

**Corrections**

RE: the March issue of *MH*

The dates for the book *Peter R. (1893-1954) & Maria Penner Froese (1875-1959)*, edited by Margaret Froese (p.3, col.3), should read "Peter R. (1870-1949) and Maria..."



**Baptist-Mennonite Dialogue Participants in Singel Church. (Back l-r):** Daniel McGee, Waco, TX; Ed van Straten, Leidschendam, NL; Anna Juhnke, North Newton, KS; Larry Miller, Strasbourg, FR; Daniel Schipani, Elkhart, IN; J. Ralph MacIntyre, Nashville, TN. **(Front l-r):** Abe Dueck, Winnipeg, MB; G. Noel Vose, Darlington, Australia; David Scholer, Chicago, IL; Willian Brackney, Hamilton, ON.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*A Mennonite in Russia: The Diaries of Jacob D. Epp, 1851-1880.* Translated and edited, with an introduction and analysis, by Harvey L. Dyck. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1991. Pp. 456. \$ 65.00

*Reviewed by Ken Reddig*

Published diaries, while useful for research and of great interest to relatives, are most often viewed as supplementary information on broader historical themes and discourses. Whether or not such a view of diaries is appropriate is debateable. But, I would venture to say that the generally low esteem to which most published diaries have fallen has more to do with their editing and inadequate contextualization, than with their contents.

From time to time a truly exceptional published diary appears which defies even the most cynical of diary readers, and this volume is certainly one of those. Cast into its historical context by an excellent 72 page introduction and analysis, Harvey L. Dyck has gone far beyond a careful editing of one individual's diaries, and has provided the reader of Russian Mennonite History with a succinct, readable, historical sweep of the mid 19th century. Throughout this introduction he places the diarist, his family, church, community and geographic region into their broad national and international context. Written with skill and strewn with enticing quotes, the reader is led eagerly to leap into the diaries themselves.

As with many private diaries, one is let down almost immediately by the mundane and ordinary entries of a lay minister who struggles with finances, feelings of inadequacy, the heavy weight of pastoral duties, constantly having to keep his flock in line and the inevitable spectre of death at every corner. The reader is provided the rare opportunity to share in the down-to-earth debates over issues and problems of concern to the Mennonite community. The debates of the landless, the Judenplan, wealth, poverty, sexuality, immorality, church polity, religion are all seen from the eyes of someone who is moving through this passage of time and space with only his unshakeable rudder of faith to keep him headed towards a hopefully brighter future.

There are many points at which readers of Russian Mennonite history will find insights of Jacob Epp truly illuminating. One is the remarkable insight into the day-to-day life of

Mennonites living as "model farmers" within Jewish communities. The "Judenplan" was first, an attempt to give the landless Mennonites property on the one hand, and secondly, an attempt by the Russian government to relieve pressures among impoverished Jews in the northwestern provinces and to engineer a more normal social structure by turning some of them into peasants. The rub came when the two isolated communities were forced to interact with each other. Contrary to popular family myths, the interaction was characterized more by toleration than friendliness, as Epp notes in his diaries.

For anyone interested in the story of Mennonites in Russia this volume is a must to read. While the existence of these diaries has been known for some time, Harvey Dyck must be commended for making these diaries readily available to the interested public. This book is beautifully bound and attention to every detail is shown by inclusion of maps, photographs as well as illustrative watercolour paintings by one of Jacob Epp's former students, Cornelius Hildebrand.

Magocsi, Paul Robert. *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas.* (University of Toronto Press, 1987).

Pallot, Judith & Denis J.B. Shaw. *Landscape and Settlement in Romanov Russia, 1613-1917.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). Hdc., 317 pp., \$95.95.

*Reviewed by George K. Epp*

Both of these publications should attract the attention of Mennonite historians and historically minded readers. Ukraine, land of birth of what has become known as the Russian Mennonite Commonwealth, also was the centre of Mennonite cultural developments in the Russian Empire. Ukraine, more than Russia, has shaped Mennonite history, even though the territory was under Russian administration. Therefore, this atlas is very useful to historians. The average Mennonite reader, however, may not find the detail he is accustomed to. The atlas was not designed to serve Mennonite studies specifically. Furthermore, Mennonites do need to understand the larger context more adequately. The atlas helps the reader become more familiar with the Ukrainian neighbours of the Mennonites. Professor Magocsi, is known for his thorough work as holder of the Chair in Ukrainian Studies and *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas* is yet another fine publication.

Pallot and Shaw, *Landscape and*

*Settlement in Romanov Russia*, has a number of good chapters on Russian settlement policies and rural developments during the three centuries of Romanov Russia. Especially noteworthy are several chapters on peasant groupings within the class of agricultural labourers. There are also very helpful chapters on "The Stolypin Reforms", and on "The State and the Towns in the Romanov Era". However, the chapter that will be of greatest interest to Mennonite readers, "Agricultural 'Culture Islands' in the Eastern Steppe: The Mennonites in Samara Province" is disappointing due to a number of very irritating errors which inevitably raise questions about the reliability of information in other chapters.

The authors state that Mennonites lived "in the Vistula Delta in Westphalia" (p.80). On page 79, quoting Haxthausen, the authors confuse the *Volga* with the *Dnieper*. Although Haxthausen begins the paragraph, from which the quotation is taken, "*We reached the Dniepr*", clearly identifying the Chortitza settlement, they go on applying Haxthausen's comments to the Volga colonies before 1847 (p.80). These errors are especially irritating since the information of the paragraphs preceding and following the quoted section in Haxthausen leave no room for any error or excuse.

The problem in general seems to be that the authors are not too familiar with the Mennonite story or its larger context. However, one would still expect writers to guard their reputation by checking all available sources more carefully. The reader receives the impression that the early terms of settlement for Mennonites were different from the rest of settlers in Russia (pp.84-85). They negotiated carefully - yes - but the terms were the same for all. Wherever the terms of settlements are mentioned there is a vagueness that forces the reader to guess or find sources which are not always identified. On page 86, the Mennonite village "schult" is described as an autocrat, which is not quite the case since he was elected, had two elected "Beisitzer", and had to give account to the elected "Zehntmänner", and to the village assembly. Strong men could still become little "autocrats", but the system certainly was not tailored for autocrats.

Similar misconceptions prevail concerning landownership in the Mennonite colonies in Russia. On page 93 we read that only the **Alexandertal** colony had to live with a **joint landownership** arrangement, while the colonies in Ukraine had individual ownership. Whatever the terminology of arrangements, it always came to the same reality - the colony jointly owned the land, and the owner could

(cont'd on p.7)