

MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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Kanadier and *Russländer*: Tensions on the Prairies

by Ben Doerksen

North American Mennonites are often viewed as a homogeneous group by those not too familiar with them. However, nothing can be further from the truth. Not only did Mennonites have differing European roots, but they also developed distinct life-style differences in their historical pilgrimage. This was especially true of the two large groups of Mennonites migrating from Russia to America in the 1870s and the 1920s. The time lapse between their coming was sufficient to allow for distinct worldview developments. These differences became especially pronounced on the Canadian prairies where most of the second wave immigrants settled. Tension between these two groups soon reached crisis proportions. The earlier arrivals were designated as *Kanadier*, and the later arrivals were designated as *Russländer*.

Cultural Differences

It is generally believed that the earlier wave of immigrants consisted primarily of the more conservative Chortitza colonists, who settled in Manitoba, and the somewhat more moderately conservative Molotschna colonists who settled in the U.S. midwest. By and large they were all poor and not really interested in American culture.

The second wave consisted of more culturally progressive Mennonites who chose to remain in Russia and gradually embraced the modernizing trends sweeping Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century. They actually developed their own sophisticated system of education and wittingly accepted the Russian language into their village schools after 1897. But then came the political, social, and economic upheavals. The Bolshevik Revolution, coming on the heels of World War I, suddenly left these enterprising Mennonites bereft of all material possessions and struggling for survival. Many lost both property and family, and were too emotionally exhausted to attempt another beginning in Communist Russia. Emigration for them became the only hope for survival and 21,000 made their way to the Canadian



Russländer welcomed by *Kanadier* in Rosthern, Saskatchewan on 23 July, 1923.

prairies from 1924 to 1930.

Points of Tension

Despite their abject poverty, the *Russländer* brought with them a social sophistication that greatly hindered their assimilation into the established *Kanadier* Mennonite community. The *Russländer* anxiously pursued all possible educational opportunities in Canada, while the *Kanadier* continued their apprehension about public education. Consequently, the *Kanadier* regarded the *Russländer* as arrogant, worldly, and unwilling to engage in manual labour. Actually many *Russländer* knew little about farming and the *Kanadier* had to show them how to saddle and harness their horses. It is therefore not surprising that the *Kanadier* scorned the new comers as "*De domme Russlaenda*" (those stupid Russians).

The *Russländer*, on the other hand, considered the *Kanadier* as simple-minded, uncultured, afraid of education, and too satisfied with tradition.

A second factor that appears to have alienated the two groups was the large

(cont'd on p.2)

In Search of Wilhelm Schroeder I

by William Schroeder

In 1830 a 14-year old orphan boy, Wilhelm Schroeder, together with his younger brothers and married sister Helena Fast, migrated from Rosenort, Prussia, to Fuerstenau, Molotschna Colony, in the Ukraine. Before he died at age 88 in nearby Petershagen, Wilhelm had regaled his bright 10-year old grandson and namesake with stories of the great trek and had impressed upon him: "You and your father and grandfather are all called Wilhelm Schroeder. So were my father and grandfather."

In 1927 little Willie became my father in Manitoba, Canada. On the strength of his grandfather's story-telling I have always confidently regarded myself as William Schroeder VI and, based on my father's notes and sporadic further research, I constructed a family-tree in chart-form headed by Wilhelm

(cont'd on p.6)

Tensions on the Prairies (cont'd from p.1)

Reiseschuld (debt) incurred by the *Russländer*. Over half the *Russländer* held refugee status and came to Canada entirely on credit. When the depression of the early 1930s made payment of the debt impossible for the *Russländer*, the *Kanadier* felt obliged to assist them. The *Reiseschuld* issue was not resolved until the mid 1940s.

A third factor that contributed to *Russländer-Kanadier* alienation was the Isaac Braun scandal. Braun arrived in Rosthern from Russia with his wife and two children in July, 1924. Henry P. Friesen, a *Kanadier* farmer and businessman, supposedly loaned Braun \$5000.00 to get started. Friesen also tried to sell Braun some land, a deal which apparently was never finalized. Braun then moved to British Columbia in August, 1924, from where he filed suit against Friesen for the \$5000.00 which Friesen allegedly had borrowed from him.

Using false witnesses and trickery, Braun won the first round of a protracted court case in Saskatoon. The witnesses, however, confessed to producing false evidence and were given suspended jail sentences. So Braun fabricated letters as evidence against Friesen. But handwriting experts detected the fabrication and Braun was deported to Russia in 1933 after serving a five-year sentence in the Prince Albert penitentiary. The above episode may have been an isolated case, but nevertheless, added fuel to the ill-will that the *Kanadier* held towards the *Russländer*. Braun was declared to be the "*gratzia hehunk*" (biggest Scoundrel) that had ever entered Canada.

Impact on the Mennonite Brethren

Since many of the *Russländer* belonged to the Mennonite Brethren Church, the Mennonite Brethren Conference of North America was seriously affected by their arrival. In Manitoba the *Russländer* Mennonite Brethren started twelve new congregations. The total membership of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Church more than doubled during the next six years from 1,763 in 1924 to 3,870 in 1930. The number of trained ministers tripled during that same period, from 31 in 1924 to 97 in 1930.

Assimilation Problems

Since there were only two Mennonite Brethren congregations in Manitoba when the *Russländer* arrived (i.e., Winkler and Winnipeg), the latter started new settlements and functioned more or less independently.

In Saskatchewan, however, the majority of the *Russländer* settled in existing Mennonite communities. Mennonite Brethren first settled at Brotherfield in 1898 and at Main Centre in 1904. Most of these homesteaders had developed their own distinct regional traditions and class distinctions during three decades of pioneering in the United States. But assimilation of the *Russländer* added a whole new dimension to church and conference activity. The Main Centre Mennonite Brethren Church accepted 78 immigrant members from 1924 to 1926. But by 1927, 32 of them had left again to start a new congregation.

The Brotherfield constituency, after intensive efforts to accommodate the new arrivals, envisioned better church relations between *Kanadier* and *Russländer* if the two groups lived and worshipped separately. Consequently, local church leaders transported several *Russländer* to Glenbush by Model T Ford and assisted them in starting a new settlement.

Educational Emphases

The Mennonite Brethren had started a Bible School in Herbert, Saskatchewan, by 1913, but with the coming of the *Russländer* similar institutions soon sprang up across western Canada.

By 1947 the Canadian Mennonite Brethren were sponsoring thirteen Bible Schools and five private high schools. Most of these schools were originally staffed by *Russländer* and challenged the *Kanadier* to become more culturally oriented. The most striking example of *Russländer* educational influence was evidenced by the founding of the Pniel Bible School in Winkler, Manitoba, in 1925. Pniel actually represented a relocation of the Tschongrow Bible School from Russia to Canada together with teachers and students.

The Hepburn Bible School, although also staffed primarily by *Russländer*, held strong *Kanadier* ties. Directors of the Western Children's Mission, founded by the school, hesitated appointing *Russländer* to teach in their Vacation Bible Schools. *Russländer* communities in Alberta and British Columbia held the school suspect for several decades. Young people from the *Russländer* community of Glenbush by-passed Hepburn to attend the *Russländer* school at Coaldale as late as the mid 1950s.

Conference Tensions

The tensions generated by the coming of the *Russländer*, actually extended far beyond

the Canadian prairies. Their presence soon precipitated a north-south polarization as well. For more than a decade after their arrival in Canada, the *Russländer* were denied representation on the Board of Missions and their young people were not accepted for cross-cultural ministries.

Henry Bartsch, for example, joined his *Kanadier* relatives in Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, upon arrival in Canada. An uncle promptly offered him partnership in a farming operation which guaranteed a good livelihood and held the promise of prosperity. But when Bartsch determined to pursue a cross-cultural ministry, both church and relatives abandoned him. And when the Bartsches finally left Dalmeny for Africa independently, they did so without financial or moral support. There was no farewell for them.

In 1935, while on furlough, Bartsch personally visited Hillsboro to seek acceptance and support for his cause. But to no avail. Therefore, partly out of necessity, but probably more out of defiance, Winkler friends officially incorporated as the "*Afrika Missions Verein*," a rival missions board. Seven months later they launched *Der Kleine Afrika Bote*, a monthly periodical which continued circulation until the Board of Foreign Missions took full responsibility of the Bartsch ministry in July of 1943.

The North-South polarization at times became so intense that it threatened the very unity of the North American Mennonite Brethren Conference. The legacy of those differences still survives to the present day, although the roots are often not recognized.

KEY SOURCES

- Doerksen, Ben, "Mennonite Brethren Missions: Historical Development, Philosophy, and Policies," Doctor of Missiology Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986.
- Epp, Frank H. *Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940*. Toronto, ON: Macmillan of Canada, 1982.
- Francis, E. K. *In Search of Utopia*. Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen and Sons, 1955.
- Lohrenz, J. H. *The Mennonite Brethren Church*. Hillsboro, KS: The Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1950.
- Toews, J. A. *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*. Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1975.
- Personal Interviews

Ben Doerksen is instructor at Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn, SK.

FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

by Alf Redekopp

BOOK NOTES - Family Histories

Derksen, Mary Hiebert and Anne Hiebert Neufeld. *A Tribute to Isaak F. and Susanna Doerksen* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 1992) 365 pp.

This book begins by tracing the descendants of Isaak Doerksen (1900-1974) and Susana Wiens (1904-1985) of Steinbach, Manitoba. It continues by providing many photographs, biographical articles and maps. It also contains the pedigree charts of Isaak Doerksen and Susana Wiens back to their great-grandparents and includes sections tracing the descendants of these eight ancestral couples, namely the following: Solomon D(o)erksen (1832-1890), Jacob Giesbrecht (1810-1867), Peter Funk (1805-1866), Klaas Krahn (1799-1848), Jacob Wiens (1817-1867), Peter Hoepfner (1827-), Kornelius (1806-1866) and Dirk Wiebe (1814-1855). Contact: Anne Neufeld, 290 Emerson Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2G 1G4.

Hoepfner, Mary Wiens and Herbert and Justina Peters. *Wiens and Enns Genealogies* (Saskatoon, SK : Private publication, 1992) 84 pp.

This book is a continuation of the facts in *Genealogy of Johann Janzen 1752-1977* compiled by K. Peters for Ernest Klassen in 1977. Specifically it makes significant additions to the sections tracing the descendants of Justina Janzen (1850-1926) who married Peter Johann Wiens (1848-1927) and the descendants of Maria Janzen 1793-) who married Jacob Enns. Contact: Herbert and Justina Peters, 1420 Faulkner Crescent, Saskatoon, SK S7L 3R4.

Family chronicle of the family Van der Smissen (trans. by Christiane Blouw)

This book is an english translation of a book printed for the family members living in the year in 1875 Danzig. The original printing was done by Edwin Groening and a reprinting was done in Hamburg in 1981. This book traces the family ancestors back to about the year 1400, but focuses on the life of Hinrich Van der Smissen and Jacob Gysbert Van der Smissen of the 18th Century. Among the descendants are the Mannhardts of Danzig.

BOOK REVIEW

Hermann Thiessen, Breslauer Str. 3, W-3169 Burgdorf, Germany, has published the following five comprehensive genealogies

of Mennonite families in West Prussia, including data on a large number of descendants who migrated to the Russian Empire around 1800 and then to the United States and Canada, mostly in 1874-75:

- (1) *Martin Thiehsen und seine Nachkommen, 1737-1977*, 427 pp. (1977; DM 52)
- (2) *Bartholomaeus Tiessen -- 350 Jahre Familientradition*, 613 pp. (1986; DM 100)
- (3) *Familiengeschichte der Familie Bench*, 48 pp. (1989; DM 22)
- (4) *Peter Heydebrecht und seine Nachkommen*, 426 pp. (1990; DM 60)
- (5) *Die Familie Mekelburger*, 582 pp. (1992; DM 68)

All of these books have some material translated into English, although this is limited to a few abbreviations in the Martin Thiessen book, which also has several photos of the Vistula-Nogat delta, where most of the Mennonite families lived prior to emigration. There is also a Part 2 to this book, which is a box containing a map and 14 genealogical charts (5 of which are actually double charts) for 43 families.

The Heidebrecht and Meckelburger books also have the introductory material translated and contain one or more maps, tracing the migration trails.

The Martin Thiessen book begins with his birth in 1737. The Bartholomaeus Thiessen book was written in the hope of establishing a relationship between the two families, but proof of any connection is still lacking.

The Heidebrecht book records the descendants of Peter Heydebrecht (died 1770) and his second wife, Catharina (1721-1782), who was the widow of Abraham Braun. The introductory material, however, contains references to this name (with various spellings) going back as far as 1385 in Pomerania and 1571 in the Danzig (Gdansk) area. The earliest Prussian Heidebrecht records refer to marriages in the Reformed and Lutheran churches, but it seems probable that these were ancestors, with one or more family members joining the Mennonite church, most likely during the course of the seventeenth century. The Meckelburger genealogy begins with Hans Mekelborger, who was born in West Prussia in 1721. Thiessen's research suggests that the Meckelburgers may have originated in the village of Mecklenburg near Wismar. He suggests that they fled to the Danzig area, and probably became Mennonites in the seventeenth century.

Thiessen also has a card index file containing data on about 35,000 Mennonites who were born in Prussia before 1820 and correspondence in German.

Submitted by Ed Brandt, Minneapolis, MN

QUERIES

Esau - Wanting to know what happened to Johannes Esau b. Feb. 17, 1881 in Hohendorf, Am Trakt and his sister Renate Esau b. Oct. 27, 1882 -- the children of Jacob Esau (b. July 3, 1857 in Broeskerfelde, W. Prussia d. 1933) and Maria Loewen (b. June 26, 1826 in Koeppental, Am Trakt d. ca. 1935). Johannes married Maria Unger (b. June 30, 1886). In 1930 Johannes was exiled for 3 years, first to Ural Oblast, then to Icauckae or Ycacka, and later to Euadunck. In 1933 he was released and he and his wife moved to Neu Hoffnung, Neu Samara. In 1937 the last letter was received by his brother, Edward Esau (b. Nov. 27, 1887) who immigrated to the USA in 1908. Contact: Elma Esau, Apt. 305, 3001 Ivy Drive, North Newton, KS 67117.

Janzen - Seeking information about the parents of Cornelius Jakob Janzen (1864-1942) and his wife Anna Boschmann (1864-1945) who moved to Rueckenau from Rosenort, Molotschna in 1914. Contact: David L. Janzen, 2097 Indlewood Avenue, West Vancouver, BC V7V 1Z5.

Dueck - Seeking information about the Rev. David Dueck, miller who lived in Davlekenovo, Ufa. He had a daughter Tina Dueck (1895-1983) who married David Janzen (1890-1965). Contact: David L. Janzen, 2097 Indlewood Avenue, West Vancouver, BC V7V 1Z5.

Reimer - Seeking information about Heinrich and Elisabeth Reimer of Rueckenau, Molotschna who had a daughter Katharina Reimer (d. 19 Sept. 1922) who was married to David Janzen (1890-1965). Contact: David L. Janzen, 2097 Indlewood Avenue, West Vancouver, BC V7V 1Z5.

Neufeld - Seeking information about the ancestry of Katherine Neufeld born in Waldheim, Molotschna, moved to Crimea in 1862, possibly lived in Johannesruh and Marianruh, and left for America from Karazan in June 1874 with her husband Johann Goertz (b. Aug. 22, 1826 in Obergruppe) and 6 children. She died aboard the Silesia on July 3, 1874. Her brother Diedrich Neufeld migrated to Dakota aboard the S.S. Hammonia on Aug. 15, 1873. His wife was a Marie Nickel. Diedrich and Marie Neufeld joined the Seventh Day Adventists and eventually settled near Waldheim, Saskatchewan. Contact: Reuben Goertz, Box 129, Freeman, SD 57029.



NEWS FROM THE CENTRE...

by *Peter H. Rempel,*
Acting Archivist

Recent Acquisitions

This is a partial listing of archival materials received at the Heritage Centre since fall 1992:

- 92-188 Mennonite World Conference - Assembly 12 radio reports (1989-1990) by Robb Nickel (Winnipeg, MB)
- 92-195 Helen Janzen (Winnipeg, MB) - Photographs and diary - from Nettie Neufeld (Winnipeg, MB) and MCC Canada
- 92-205 Peter Regier (Saskatchewan) - Sermons - from Bernice Regier, (Rosthern, SK)
- 93-3 Nikolai Bahnman - Diary (transcript) from Marvin Bahnman (Fort Worth, Texas)
- 93-5 Katherina Regier (nee Wiens) - Memoirs from Kimberley Epp (Saskatoon, SK)
- 93-16 William Falk, (EMMC) - Sermons from Elisabeth Falk, (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-18 Schoental School District (MB) - Registers, cash book, minute books from Jacob Heppner (Altona, MB)
- 93-33 Abraham Enns - Letters in *Mennonitische Rundschau* (1893-1911) translated by Ed Enns, (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-37 Jakob Dyck (Kronsgarten, Chortitza) - Memoirs translated by Ernst Dyck, (Saskatoon, SK)
- 93-38 History of Russian Mennonites (in Russian) typescript by Johann Reger, (Fulda, Germany)
- 93-62 Abraham Stobbe - Autobiography from Anne Schmidt, (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-65 Chortitzer Mennonite Church - Register (1887) (photocopy) via Hanover Steinbach Historical Society
- 93-66 Martin Klaassen - Diary (1852-1882) translated by Esther Bergen, (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-68 Gerhard Schroeder - Memoirs as teacher on Bergmann estate (1907-1912) translated by Irmie Wiebe, (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-70 Menno Klassen (Winnipeg, MB) - Memoirs

- 93-71 Sommerfelder Mennonite Church - Church register (photocopy) from Peter Bergen (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-72 Abraham Wiebe (Reinlaender Church elder) - Autobiography from Eva Dyck (Swift Current, SK)
- 93-74 Klaassen Family - Stories for children by Esther Bergen (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-75 *Der Bote* (Winnipeg, MB) - Photographs (1980-1990)
- 93-76 David Schulz (Bergthaler Church) - Sermons from Linda Neufeld and Menno Schulz (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-77 Peter Toews (Kleingemeinde) - Sermons (1850-1900) (photocopies) via Delbert Plett, (Steinbach, MB)
- 93-79 Velikokamisk Forestry (Ukraine) - Photograph of servicemen (1905) from Elsa Krahn (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-80 Johann Mueller (Neuendorf, Chortitza) - Manuscript copy of Heinrich Donner's history of Hutterites (1783) from Elaine Harder, (Saskatoon, SK)
- 93-81 Franz Letkemann (Graysville/Winkler, MB) - Sermons from Jacob Letkemann, (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-82 I.I. Friesen (Winnipeg, MB) - Papers and photographs from Elsie Friesen (Winnipeg, MB)
- 93-85 Native Ministries, Conference of Mennonites in Canada (Winnipeg, MB) - Executive Secretary's files (1990)
- 93-86 Agatha Dyck (nee Froese) (Kronsgarten) - Memoirs (1918-1923) from Ernest Dyck (Saskatoon, SK)



William Hespeler: Immigration agent for Canada en route to Russia, in Karlsruhe, Germany, 1871. Photo received from Elspeth Newton, Guelph, Ontario (93-41)

- 93-87 Bethesda Mennonite Church (Langham, SK) - Ledgers, minute books (1908-1947) from Henry Peters, (Saskatoon, SK)
- 93-91 Faith and Life Communications, (Winnipeg, MB) - Program Recordings (1988-1991)
- 93-95 Canadian Women in Mission -Minutes, reports, correspondence (1978-1990)

Molotschna School Attendance Reports

Among the 2142 files in the Peter J. Braun Russian Mennonite archives for the period 1850-1920 there is one set of files which will be of particular interest to genealogists. These are the attendance reports for the schools in the Molotschna villages for several school years between 1857 and 1888. Unfortunately many reports are missing but for some years, such as 1861/62 and 1882/83, almost all attendance lists are available. The names of the pupils, their ages (between 6 and 13) and their fathers' names are provided as well as the number of days attended and absent.

A list of available reports as well as photocopies of the reports themselves can be requested from the Heritage Centre.

Updated Acquisition Policy

A new acquisition policy for the MHC Archives was approved by the General Board of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada at the end of April. The document recounts the previous mandates given by the conference to its archives and outlines the scope of the archival records it may acquire. Copies of the policy are available upon request.

"Plains of Reality:" Art Exhibit by Irene Peters

On May 18 a new exhibit of art opened in the Heritage Centre Gallery. This is the first exhibit by Irene Peters, an artist born in Saskatoon and now living in Winnipeg. She has studied at CMBC, the School of Fine Art at the University of Manitoba and the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in Vancouver. The art will be on exhibit until mid-September - during office hours only during the summer months.

An exhibit of wood-carvings by Jack Sawatzky and Ron Boese of Winnipeg is scheduled for the coming fall.



Johann P. Braun, 1885-1959

Johann P. Braun Collection and Grant

The CMBS has recently completed the accessioning of the personal library of Johann P. Braun (1885-1959). Braun was a leading minister of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Morden from 1935 to 1943. He then moved to Arnold, BC in 1943 and continued serving the church there for most of his life until his death in 1959. The sizeable collection included 91 volumes which were added to the J.A. Toews Historical Collection as well as a number of periodicals.

An initial grant of \$3,000 in honour of Braun has been received by the Centre from members of the family which is designated for equipment and furnishings.

The Centre is particularly grateful to William J. Riediger of Vancouver, BC, who was instrumental in having the materials transferred to the Centre and in establishing the grant.

Recent Mennonite Brethren Publications

Several new publications have recently been released. The first is an autobiography by David Ewert, entitled **A Journey of Faith: An Autobiography** and was co-published by the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg and Kindred Press. Ewert was on the faculty of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College for many years and was President for six years prior to his retirement. He also served the broader Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren constituency in a variety of positions.

The second publication is entitled,

Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation, edited by Paul Toews and published by Kindred Press. The project of publishing such a book was initiated by the Historical Commission of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America. It features eleven chapters by Mennonite and Baptist authors. Most deal with relationships of the two groups in various countries, but there is also a chapter on Augustus Hopkins Strong and his impact on Mennonite Brethren and a final chapter comparing the Baptist and Mennonite visions.

A booklet entitled, **40 Years (1952-1992): Redbury Bible Camp**, by George Geddert and Rod Willems, chronicles the history of Redbury camp. The story of Redbury intersects significantly with other important institutions in Saskatchewan, such as Bethany Bible Institute and Western Children's Mission. The book contains a great deal of factual information about the history of the camp and the people involved in it. Several appendices give lists of Board members, Directors, statistics as well as the present vision statement of the camp. Copies are available for \$10.00 from Central MB Church, 809-32 St., Saskatoon, SK S7L 0T5.

Coaldale Revisited

A very successful event called, "Coaldale Revisited" took place in the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church from May 21-23. The church was filled to capacity for most of the sessions and an overflow crowd had to be accommodated by closed-circuit television on Sunday morning. Hundreds of guests from throughout Canada and the United States came to reflect on the significance of Coaldale's past and to renew friendships. The presentations were of excellent quality and the response to the event was overwhelming. The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies co-sponsored the event with the Coaldale church. Some consideration is being given to publishing some of the papers presented at this occasion.

Recent Accessions

1. 20 books related to Mennonite life and history. Received courtesy of Anna Regehr.
2. 8 coloured photo prints (15cm X 10cm) and 5 black & white prints (15cm X 10cm) taken at the Mennonite World Conference Assembly 12 in Winnipeg in July 1990. Received courtesy of Harold Jantz.
3. 16 books pertaining to Mennonite life and history. Received courtesy of John

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Rademaker.

4. 6 files of the secretary of the Manitoba M.B. Conference executive (3 cm); Correspondence (1987-88), Centennial Committee minutes (1986-88). Dropped off at the Centre.
5. One CD recording of 24 hymns sung by The Riverton Singers, a select choral group in Winnipeg under the direction of William Baerg, accompanied by Reg Kliewer (organ) and Irmgard Baerg (piano), recorded in the Gordon King Memorial United Church. Received courtesy of M.B. Communications.
6. Files related to Higher Education Task Force and the Higher Education Commission of the Canadian Mennonite Brethren Conference, 1985-90. (7 linear cm.) Received courtesy of Dr. Abe Konrad.
7. Twelve items (books and pamphlets) related to Mennonite life and history. Received courtesy of Anne Schmidt.
8. Twelve music books received courtesy of Olga Dueck.
9. Records of the Brandon Mennonite Brethren Church from the period 1973-1993. (14 cm textual records) Received via Shirley Bergen.
10. Personal effects, correspondence and memorabilia of Miss Susan B. Peters (1899-1992) of Linden, Alberta. (10 cm textual records) Received courtesy of Arnie Neufeld and Dorothy Ratzlaff.
11. One folder of textual records (2.5 cm) related to the activities of the Board of Publication of the Canadian MB Conference, 1962-64. Received courtesy of Vic Schmidt.
12. Additional personal papers of Franz C. Thiessen, Heinrich F. Klassen and Catherine Klassen. Received from the family via Leonard Neufeldt.

Historical Commission Meetings

The Historical Commission of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America met at Columbia Bible College in Clearbrook, BC on June 4 and 5. In addition the members of the Commission and representatives of the various Centres (Hillsboro, Fresno, Clearbrook and Winnipeg), Beulah Hostetler was present as a fraternal delegate of the

(cont'd on p.7)

In Search of Wilhelm

(cont'd from p.1)

Schroeder II, 1761- 1827. One Christmas our daughter Sandra presented me and her brother William James with T-shirts respectively imprinted William Schroeder VI and William Schroeder VII. After retirement I finally had time to undertake more concentrated research in an attempt to unearth some formal documentation on Wilhelm Schroeder I to crown my chart. He has proven to be elusive. But even without him I sent excerpts from my chart to a cousin to help her get certain official documentation when she emigrated from the USSR to Germany.

My case has generated some interesting side-stories. Several of them involve being mistaken for "the other Bill Schroeder", author of a history of the Berghthal Colony in Russia, coauthor of a Mennonite historical atlas¹ and guide for a number of tourist groups visiting the former Soviet Union. Sometimes if the other party still knows Low German, I cite the old saying, "Bie de Menniste jefft daut fael bunte Hunj waut Mopps heeti." (With the Mennonites there are many spotted dogs named Mops). In true Mennonite fashion I am invariably asked, "Are you two related?" And I reply, "Probably seventh cousins, but I cannot yet prove it." Bill's clan of Schroeders also has an extensive family tree. My thesis is that if only I could "find" Wilhelm I, we could combine the two family trees.

There is some almost tangible, if not documentary, evidence for my hunch. Several members of the two clans, both men and women, bear striking physical resemblances. Two Schroeder men in opposite clans have reported being mistaken for each other, before they became acquainted. Having had much exposure to Russian Mennonites of the 1920s immigration and descendants of those from the 1870s, and also to Mennonites in Paraguay and elsewhere, I have developed something of an eye for facial resemblances at first sight. Frequently that has helped to identify or at least remember the names of new students in my classes, to their great surprise. On at least three occasions in Paraguay in the 1950s I correctly guessed the family name of people I met, by their resemblance to someone in Canada, though the ancestors had separated in Russia in the 1870s. Uncannily, in one case even the first name was the same as that of an elderly acquaintance in Canada with the same family name. The Russian Mennonite tradition of perpetuating ancestors' first names here doubled the likelihood of kinship. But I digress; they were not Schroeders.



William Schroeder VII, VI, V

I recall when I first met the other Bill Schroeder. It was at the Sunday morning service in the Domain (Manitoba) Mennonite Brethren Church in 1959 or 1960. The worship leader had looked in Bill's direction and announced (in German): "Now William Schroeder will bring the message." Bill froze in his seat until the man right behind him (myself) got up and went forward. In my recent search for Wilhelm Schroeder I, I got some promising clues from an article by science professor and amateur genealogist Glenn Penner.² Already as my Grade XI history student Glenn had done an extensive research project on Mennonite genealogy. He is a member of the other Schroeder clan. I couldn't escape the suspicion that one of his motives at the time was the potential joke of being able to announce that he and the teacher were cousins. But he couldn't find our hoped-for common ancestor either. The Mennonite census of 1776 ordered by Frederick II of Prussia, lists 18 Schroeder family-heads, but no Wilhelm, and no Schroeders in Rosenort where Wilhelm Schroeder II died in 1827. The existence of a Wilhelm I is not ruled out however. Born in 1761, Wilhelm II would have been 15 at the time of the census, and therefore not listed. Also he might have been the son of one of the four Schroeder widows listed, whose deceased husband had had the name Wilhelm. But I can't prove that, at least not yet.

Rosenort church records from before 1858 have been destroyed by fire and flood. In any case, by that time my ancestors were already successfully growing wheat on the steppes of Ukraine, not in Prussia. So my next step was to research church records of other congregations in Prussia, in the hope of finding a Wilhelm who might later have

moved to Rosenort. I even tried some neighbouring Lutheran and Catholic churches in the vicinity, since for a while it was obligatory for Mennonites to register births with these churches. Many a register, microfilm, document and published list have I pored over at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, M.B. Archives (both in Winnipeg), Bethel College, Newton, Kansas, and in two libraries of the Latter Day Saints. But so far to no avail. Moreover extant Prussian church records are known to be incomplete. My hopes rose recently when I discovered Microfilm # 174 in the Mennonite Heritage Centre, labelled "Grosswerder Baptisms", naming Rosenort, Tiegenghagen, Fuerstenwerder, and Ladekopp, with promising dates.³ The records of the named churches were quite easily, but alas fruitlessly, perused. Schreders, Schroders, Schroeters and Schroeders galore, but nary a Wilhelm. Lots of Simons though. But those four churches comprise only a small fraction of Microfilm #174. There follow voluminous records of dozens of other Prussian Mennonite churches, including, births, marriages, deaths, and family registers, as well as baptisms suggested the title. Some of these records hark back to the early 1600s. A goldmine of information? Perhaps, but unfortunately many entries, especially headings at the edges of pages are blacked out or otherwise illegible. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack, parts of which are not accessible. It reminded me of hauling hay during my teens from stacks imbedded in ice and snow.

One day with that microfilm has confirmed that lucky hit-or-miss efforts will probably remain the only hope of ever discovering any documentation for my long-

(cont'd on p.7)

In Search of Wilhelm

(cont'd from p.6)

lost ancestor. However, I still believe that when my great-grandfather talked about his grandfather to my late father 90 years ago, he knew what he was talking about. If there ever was a grandfather's clock that ticked for 90 years, I can well understand that my ancestors were unable to lug it along on their migrations. And in my researching I came to appreciate how tenuous the line of succession actually was. Several cousins perished at the hands of Machno bandits in the Russian revolution. One of the Wilhelms was 47 when he got married. Whatever I might otherwise think of his marrying a 19-year old girl, I realize if he had married someone of his age, I might not have made it onto that family tree.

Wm. Schroeder, March, 1993 832
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P.S. There are indications that William Schroeder VIII may be on the way. As insurance another grandson with different first and family names has already been given the middle names William Schroeder.

Endnotes

1. The Bergthal Colony William Schroeder, CMBC Publications, Winnipeg, 1974 Mennonite Historical Atlas, William Schroeder and Helmut Huebert, Springfield Publishers, Winnipeg, 1990
2. "West Prussian Church Records at the Mennonite Heritage Centre", Glenn Penner, October 1990 Mennonite Family History.
3. Based on the work of Dr. Adalbert Goertz, of Pennsylvania, physics professor, born in Prussia, noted Mennonite genealogist, contributing editor of MFH, publisher of numerous articles; e.g. Menn. Quarterly Review, 1981, pp.372-382, Menn. Geschichtsblätter, 1981, pp.52-65, Menn. Family History, 1986, pp.138-143, and others.

Historical Commission

(cont'd from p.5)

Mennonite Church Historical Committee.

One of the significant decisions was to launch a "Congregational Heritage Preservation" program. A resource book will be prepared and workshops will be conducted in various regions to encourage better preservation of congregational records. Approximately fifteen years ago a major microfilming project was conducted whereby most of the congregational records to 1978 were microfilmed. The Commission felt that additional steps need to be taken to ensure that original records, duplicates, or microfilm copies are deposited in archival centres.

A tour of some of the significant congregations of the area was also enjoyed by the Commission. Agatha Klassen gave an excellent overview of the history of Mennonite settlements in British Columbia.

A permanent place for B.C. Mennonite Archives

by Esther Born

The British Columbia Mennonite Archives have finally found a permanent home.

They are safely settled in Columbia Bible College's new Resource and Administrative Centre. The fully accredited college has just undergone a \$1.8 million dollar renovation and expansion. Provision was made for one thousand spare feet of floor space for the archives. It is now possible to both preserve and access a large quantity of data. At present, this is the only Mennonite archival collection in British Columbia.

Featured in these archives are the periodicals of the Mennonite people. Materials date from 1800 to the present. The collection of music texts and music records, family records, letters, diaries and stories grows every year. Oral history tapes, videos, photographs and other memorabilia are of great interest and value to future scholars and researchers.

All of the valuable historic records of the Mennonite Central Committee's beginnings in British Columbia are kept here. They were gathered five years ago in preparation for the publication of the book 'Footprints of Compassion'. This book commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of this world wide charitable organization's local roots.

Recently, a project to organize a collection of 1,000 music items was completed. Music recordings, photos of music groups and clippings were identified, labelled and housed in archival quality storage containers. Again, the Canadian Council of Archives kindly supported this project with a grant from the federal government.

Archivist Esther Born and volunteers have been working together many hours to itemize the many donations from family, church and community sources.

The earliest attempts to salvage treasured Mennonite materials were made by the Clearbrook, B.C. Golden Age Society, headed by Abram Olfert. For many years these archival beginnings were stored at the Clearbrook Community Centre. However, when this space was needed for other purposes, the archives was moved across Clearbrook Road to Columbia Bible College.

Three basement rooms under a dormitory, Centennial Hall, were the display, repository and sorting areas from 1986 to 1991. With the continuing growth of the College, the archives were again crowded out when these rooms were required for student housing. Temporary quarters were hastily found and occupied. Despite these moves, the volunteers continued their workdays, helping to collate and preserve the materials.

In November 1992, the archives moved into an excellent new home. Fortunately, Columbia's new Resource Centre is providing an environmentally controlled atmosphere to preserve information for posterity.

Located inside the library and beside the bookstore, these archives are now available to students and the community for research and reference.

The Mennonite Archives Centre of B.C. is located at 2940 Clearbrook Road, Clearbrook, B.C. V2T 2Z8. The Centre's telephone number is 853-3358.

Esther Born is the archivist at the Mennonite Archival Centre of B.C.

Book Notes

cont'd from p.8

emigration to Canada in 1924. (The book is available at 870 E. 58 Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5X 1W5)

The doctoral dissertation (Göttingen, 1959) of Victor Peters was recently published under the title *Die Hutterischen Brüder 1528 - 1992* (Marburg: Elwert, 1992), 223 pages, paperback. Peters, of Moorhead State University, is well known in Canada for his earlier study of Hutterites, published as *All Things Common* in 1965 by the University of Minnesota Press in 1965. The present volume, translated from the English original by Jack Thiessen, gives much more attention to the early development of the Hutterian communities in Europe (almost half of the book) than the format of *All Things Common* allowed.

Books from CMBS

David Ewert, *A Journey of Faith: An Autobiography*. Ewert was an important figure in Mennonite Brethren education and conference leadership for over forty years. \$13.95

Elfrieda Toews-Nafziger, *A Man of His Word: A Biography of John A. Toews*. Toews was the Mennonite Brethren historian of his generation, and was very active in MB education and in inter-Mennonite concerns such as MCC and MWC. \$13.95

To order, send the amount plus \$1.00 per book for postage and handling to CMBS, 1-169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5

BOOK REVIEWS

John Dyck, ed., *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch* (Steinbach: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 1993). 439 pp., \$20 pb.

This volume is a genealogical gold mine for descendants of the ca. 7,000 Mennonites who immigrated to Manitoba from southern Russia in the years 1874 to 1880. Family lists from three independent, overlapping sources enable Bergthal descendants to trace their ancestors from the colony in Russia, en route to Canada and in their new location at the time of the 1881 Canadian census. For descendants from other Russian Mennonite colonies the coverage is not quite as complete, but nevertheless substantial.

The largest section of the book, approximately 200 pages, consists of a reproduction of the 3-volume Church Register of the Bergthal Church in Russia (1843-1876) with data on almost 700 families. Most of these settled in Manitoba. For many of the older families John Dyck has added quite extensive annotations, providing valuable leads for genealogical research. The index to this section supplements the usual alphabetical listing by name and surname of male "head of household" with their date of birth as well as full maiden name and birth date of spouse. This is a very helpful feature, especially if your ancestor is one of the 15 Johan Funks or 11 Gerhard Dycks.

Most of the Bergthal Church members who settled in Canada appear in one or more of the early Church registers in Manitoba. Indexes for the earliest three Chortitzer Church registers (1878, 1887, 1907) make up the second section of this book. To consult the actual registers one must visit an archive. However, like the Bergthal Register index, these include birth date and full name of spouse and are thus very helpful.

Ever since Rita Penner in 1973 identified the Quebec passenger ship lists which contained the names of Mennonite immigrants, genealogists have used microfilm and photocopy versions of them in their research—and have been frustrated. The spelling of many names on those lists was so mangled by scribes who did not understand German that intelligible transcription was often impossible. In the third section of this book Cathy Friesen Barkman provides us not only with a clear list but with helpful annotations on many of the entries. "Sweleman" is now seen to be "Sudermann" and "Grestiche" in fact "Giesbrecht." Barkman accomplished this with the help of

the much clearer, but not identical, Hamburg passenger lists and by much cross-checking with Bergthal and *Kleinegemeinde* church registers.

The final section consists of a transcript of the Manitoba Mennonite parts of the more recently available 1881 federal census data. For many genealogists this represents a new source. Jacob Doerksen is to be commended for initiating this work and for the painstaking labour he put into the project. The editors have added useful information not in the actual census data.

Perhaps the most helpful part of the entire volume is the integrated index at the end of the book. In it the "heads of household" appearing on the Quebec Passenger Lists (together with birth date and full name of spouse) are listed and cross-referenced with the 1881 census and with the various church registers in which they appear.

Genealogists will be grateful to John Dyck and his host of collaborators for a very fine piece of work. Of course, they had the benefit of computers without which the task would have been even more daunting.

Reviewed by Adolf Ens, Associate Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg

Jean Janzen, *The Upside Down Tree* (Winnipeg: Henderson Books, 1992). 77 pp.

Audrey Poetker-Thiessen, *standing all the night through* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1992). 94 pp.

These two poetry collections invite the Mennonite reader back to "the road/ we travelled on" (Poetker-Thiessen, p. 3), a road where "something still waits to be found" (Janzen, p. 66).

Jean Janzen's retracing of the journey is undergirded with faith and love and illustrated with images gleaned on travels through Holland, Switzerland and places in the former USSR where Mennonites have prospered and suffered, died or fled from. Her images shimmer and sing in poems that mourn suffering and loss or celebrate the miracle of survival. The poems are organic and, like apples, "each bite holds its histories, both/ sweet and bitter" (p. 56). They are like freshly unearthed potatoes "begging for their stories to be told" (p. 13), or like onions, "that we peel, layer after layer, our eyes smarting with the earthy fragrance, the tang of mystery" (p. 43).

Much of Audrey Poetker-Thiessen's imagery comes from poring over Thielman J.

v. Braght's *The Martyr's Mirror*, Gerhard Lohrenz's *Heritage Remembered* and the Bible. The poet searches for home, searches for her own place in the story and when she catches a glimpse of it she cries out "I have found a poetker/ I have found my name" (p. 6). Like Janzen, she insists on writing the women back into that story, and, even more than Janzen, she includes Menno's uglier side, the side that's often left out of the official record. She startles the reader by juxtaposing the language of the Bible with "the language of men" (p. 28). She is torn between longing for Menno the lover to come home and denouncing Menno the "car-dealer" Christian, the "samurai," the "tribe without samaritans/ that devours its people/ a wilderness without poets" (pp. 28, 18, 26).

Janzen's mature grace is a foil to Poetker-Thiessen's anger and passion. As tour guides, these two poets complement each other and, together, offer clear-sighted, lyric guidance in the quest for who and where we are on this "journey to another world,/ a different glory" (Janzen, p.19)

Reviewed by Sarah Klassen, retired high school teacher and poet, Winnipeg

Book Notes

by Adolf Ens

A recent publication is James R. Coggins' *John Smyth's Congregation: English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation*, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, no. 32 (Waterloo and Scottdale: Herald Press, 1991). This English congregation in Amsterdam played a significant role in giving birth to the Congregational and Baptist denominations. Coggins, well known to Canadian Mennonites through his editing work with the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, provides some particularly valuable new information in the appendixes of this book.

Two recent booklets relate to Mennonite experience in Prussia and Russia. Genealogy addict Edward Reimer Brandt's *Where Once They Toiled* (Mennonite Family History, 1992), is an interesting and informative tour report of a 1991 visit to Poland under the leadership of Professor Peter J. Klassen of Fresno.

Any Byers' *Suzanna* is an interesting and well-written "true story of a teenage girl in troubled times." Suzanna is the daughter of general store owners Jacob and Maria (Friesen) Wiens of Millerowo, Russia, and the "troubled times" are the decade of World War I, revolution, and famine up to the

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