

MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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Aeltester David Toews, Rosthern, Sask., Harold S. Bender, Goshen, Indiana, USA, and C.F. Klassen, Clearbrook, B.C. were deeply involved in the emigration of the Mennonites from Russia/Ukraine to Canada in the 1920s. Photo credit: Heritage Remembered, p. 266.

Canadian Mennonites and The Anabaptist Vision

by *Abe Dueck*

December 28, 1993 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Harold S. Bender's epochal address entitled, "The Anabaptist Vision." The address was delivered to a small group of academicians gathered at Columbia University in New York City for the fifty-fifth meeting of the American Society of Church History. The address was published in several major journals in the following year and has been republished many times in various formats in subsequent years.² No one could have imagined the impact which that address would have on Mennonite self-understanding and identity in the next generation, and beyond as well as on Anabaptist and Reformation historiography as a whole.

Harold Bender and a number of his colleagues and students soon became known as the "Goshen school" of Anabaptist historiography. Essentially these scholars interpreted Anabaptism as an evangelical, Protestant movement which carried the Reformation to its logical conclusion in terms of its radical biblicism and its

attempt to recover the New Testament pattern of the Church. Its main characteristics, as defined by Bender, included three major points of emphasis: 1) a new conception of the essence of Christianity as discipleship; 2) a new conception of the church as a brotherhood, i.e. a community of believers, and 3) a new ethic of love and nonresistance.³

Variations of interpretation and elaborations of these principles became the focus of much scholarly activity for the next generation.⁴ Many theses and dissertations were directly or indirectly inspired by the new direction in Anabaptist studies that resulted from Bender's work. His perspective was "revisionist" in the sense that it articulated a much more positive interpretation of Anabaptism than the one which had prevailed for most of the centuries since the Reformation. Revolutionaries and spiritualists, such as the Thomas Muentzers and the Anabaptists of Muenster, were placed outside the parameters of Anabaptism. As Bender saw it, essential Anabaptism clearly had its origins in Switzerland in 1525, and all other Anabaptists

emanated from there. Finally, Mennonites in the twentieth century could now feel proud of their ancestry, realizing that some of the revered values of modern democratic societies could be traced to the Anabaptist movement.

The impact of the "Anabaptist vision" was felt most directly and immediately in the predominantly Swiss (Old) Mennonite Church and, to a lesser extent, by others such as the General Conference Mennonites, who also had reputable Mennonite scholars. Most of the scholars were from the United States and taught in US institutions.

The impact on Canadian Mennonites was not as immediate and intense, although it was nevertheless significant. The differences can be traced to several factors. One was the fact that the majority of Canadian Mennonites outside Ontario were of Dutch/Prussian/Russian background and therefore didn't feel as close a kinship with the Swiss Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, or the Swiss Mennonites of the twentieth century. Furthermore, Canadian Mennonites were not yet as deeply immersed in academic pursuits as their American counterparts. Most of those who had immigrated prior to the 1920s did not promote higher education, and those who immigrated in the 1920s or later were still involved in establishing themselves and becoming culturally adapted. The English language was still a barrier for many until at least 1950.

Nevertheless, as already stated, Canadian Mennonites were also significantly influenced by Bender's Anabaptist vision. Bender was known to some of the leaders of the Canadian Mennonites at least as early as 1939. On 15 May 1939, Bender was present at an inter-Mennonite meeting in Winkler to discuss problems related to military service. He was the guest speaker and was also authorized to represent the Old Mennonites of Ontario. He expressed himself in opposition to any service, such as the medical corps, which would aid the conduct of war.⁵

Some Canadian Mennonites studied at Mennonite Biblical Seminary, a General Conference school located in Chicago until 1954. Its proximity to Goshen undoubtedly helped to establish communication. When MBS was moved to Elkhart, Indiana in 1954, such contacts became much more frequent. Conference of Mennonites in Canada students who graduated from Elkhart often caught Bender's vision and promoted it as pastors when they returned to Canada.

Other Canadian students proceeded to graduate studies, and frequently this involved Anabaptist studies. Some remained in the US, while others returned to teach in Canadian church institutions such as the Canadian Mennonite Bible College and Conrad Grebel College. Among

(cont'd on page 2)

Canadian Mennonites

(cont'd from page 1)

the many who were influenced by Bender's view of Anabaptism were Henry Poettcker, Walter Klaassen, William Klassen, Adolf Ens, John Friesen and Rodney Sawatsky. Sometimes, however, these individuals also offered significantly new interpretations.

The emergence of the *Canadian Mennonite* in 1953, with the shift in language from German to English, focused the need to develop a religious language appropriate to Mennonite piety. Since North American evangelicalism lacked a vocabulary adequate to express Mennonite pacifism and discipleship, the new English media increasingly adopted "Anabaptist vision" language. There was, however, also a significant adaptation to the Canadian Mennonite reality. Canadian Mennonites tended to be much less separatistic than their Swiss counterparts in the US. Their history was one of considerable political activism, and therefore those on the cutting edge of Mennonite scholarship often reflected this in their writings.

The impact of Bender's vision on Canadian Mennonite Brethren was generally mediated via different channels. Most of it focused on the work of several individuals. The most important of these was John A. Toews. During World War II Toews was active in ministry to the young men in alternative service camps and, no doubt, this compelled him to reflect on issues of Mennonite identity. Still, his ministry was initially primarily in the area of evangelism. His academic and teaching career pushed him inevitably into an examination of Anabaptism. While he had written about nonresistance before 1950, his Bachelor of Divinity thesis in that year was entitled "The Anabaptist Concept of the Church." His master's thesis (1957) and his PH.D. dissertation (1964) also dealt with Anabaptism. Several books and many articles, lectures and sermons dealt with Anabaptism.⁶ Most of these were very heavily dependent on Bender's interpretation of Anabaptism.

Mennonite Brethren young people who attended the Mennonite Brethren Bible College (MBBC) in Winnipeg often gained an appreciation for Anabaptism not only from Toews, but from others like Frank C. Peters.⁷ During the 1950s and 60s, Peters frequently lectured and preached on Anabaptism-related themes. It was also, no doubt, partly through the influence of these men that Bender was invited to be one of the guest speakers at the large Mennonite Brethren Centennial celebration in the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium on 22 May 1960. In the 1970s and 1980s, professors Henry Krahn and Abe Dueck were committed to continue raising questions of Anabaptist identity and related issues at MBBC. In the larger MB constituency, John H. Redekop of Wilfred Laurier University and Harry Loewen of the University of Win-



Dr. John A. Toews (1912-1979).

nipeg wrote and spoke extensively on topics related to Anabaptism, much of it sharing the perspectives held by the "Goshen school" scholars.

In the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (formerly *Kleine Gemeinde*), a number of individuals studied at Goshen Biblical Seminary under Bender and later became leaders in Canada. These included Archie Penner, Harvey Plett and Edwin Plett. Penner's book, *The Christian, The State, and the New Testament*, grew out of his Master of Arts thesis at Wheaton College.⁸ Bender's assistance was acknowledged in the Preface and Bender also wrote the Introduction. For all three men, the Goshen experience became a watershed and they became committed to communicating the Anabaptist vision to their constituency.⁹

Bender died on 21 September 1962, and his last major public appearance was in Kitchener, Ontario at the Seventh Mennonite World Conference held earlier that same year. The Kitchener body reflected the mix of the three largest North American Mennonite denominations and the mix of Swiss/South German and Dutch/Prussian/Russian Mennonites better perhaps than any other Mennonite centre gathering ever held in North America. On that occasion a special tribute was given to Bender, who also gave the keynote address entitled, "Who is the Lord?"¹⁰ Many Canadian Mennonites remember that occasion very well.

Bender's view of Anabaptism has been challenged and significantly modified in recent

decades. There is less consensus now about the nature of "definitive" Anabaptism. Nonetheless, Bender's thesis still remains the starting point of most discussions about the nature of Anabaptism. Many aspects of the vitality of Mennonite life and thought today can be understood only with reference to the work of Harold S. Bender.

Endnotes

¹ The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Adolf Ens, Associate Professor on History and Theology at CMBC, in assessing the impact of Bender's vision on the Conference of Mennonites in Canada constituency.

² See, for example, Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision" in *Church History* XIII (March 1944): 3-24; and in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* XVIII (April 1944): 67-88; also Guy F. Hersherberger, ed., *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender*, (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1957), 29-54.

³ Bender in *Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, 42.

⁴ The *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, which Bender edited for many years, became a major vehicle through which Anabaptist research and writing were disseminated. Another important project which Bender spearheaded was the publication of the four-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia* which was completed in the 1950s. A fifth volume published in 1990, included some of the new interpretations of the "Anabaptist vision".

⁵ See Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada 1920-1940: A People's Struggle for Survival* (Toronto, ON: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), 572 ff.

⁶ The most important of Toews' publications were *True Nonresistance Through Christ: A Study of Biblical Principles* (Winnipeg, MB: Christian Press, 1955); *Alternative Service in Canada During World War II* (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, 1959); and *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975).

⁷ The topic of Frank C. Peters' MTh thesis was, "The Ban in the Writings and Life of Menno Simons," Toronto Graduate School of Theological Studies and Emmanuel College, 1953. Peters gratefully acknowledged the help and counsel of Cornelius Krahn and Harold S. Bender of Bethel College and Goshen College respectively.

⁸ Archie Penner, *The Christian, The State, and the New Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1959).

⁹ This was substantiated by a recent interview with Harvey Plett, currently teaching church history at the Steinbach Bible College in Steinbach, Manitoba.

¹⁰ See Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *The Lordship of Christ: Proceedings of the Seventh Mennonite World Conference, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, August 1-7, 1962*, (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite World Conference, n.d.).

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GENEALOGY AND FAMILY HISTORY

by Alf Redekopp

QUERIES

Hiebert or (Huebert): I am researching the genealogy of my grandfather Peter Huebert b. 1856, Molotschna, Ukraine. I am particularly looking for the descendants of his siblings Jacob, b. 1858, Johann, b. 1864, Margaretha (Huebert) Thiessen, b. 1860, Agatha (Huebert) Berg, or Baerg, b. 1866, Maria (Huebert) Eidzen, b. 1871, d. 1959. We expect some relatives may be in the Kansas area. Contact: Elsie Dodds, 1701-375 King Street, Waterloo, ON, Canada. N2J 4L6.

Loewen: Heinrich Loewen b. Jan. 2, 1923 d. Jan. 8, 1908 (Gretna, MB) married to Sara Toews, b. Dec. 19, 1927, d. Dec. 28, 1889 (Gretna, MB), came to Canada in July 1876 with 5 children. They lived in Blumenort, Grossweide and Heinrichsfeld in Russia before moving to Canada. More information is needed. Contact: Dolores Harder, 1000 Kilkenny Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T 5A5.

Thimm: Looking for information regarding Catharina(1752-1810), the widow of Franz Thimm, who married Aron Thiessen in 1805 and lived in Zeyersvorderkampen, West Prussia. Contact: Dolores Harder, 1000 Kilkenny Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T 5A5.

Siemens: Looking for information on Peter Siemens(1823-1912) and his wife Helena Peters who came to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, from Schoenwiese, Chortitza in 1879. Contact: Jeffrey Salter, 812 Grant Ave. S, Renton, WA 98055.

Penner - Wiebe: I would greatly appreciate any information about the descendants of Peter Penner, b. Aug. 8, 1770 Ellerwald, Elbing, Poland and Gerhard Wiebe, b. Dec. 5, 1806 Chortitza, married to Anna Redekopp, b. Aug. 1, 1814. I have 15 years of research to share. Contact: William Funk, 3852 170 Ave. SE, Bellevue, WA 98008.

BOOK NOTES

Margaret Maier, ed., *John Peters Family Tree 1863-1993* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 1993) pb., 96 pp.

This book traces the descendants of John Peters (1863-1944) who was born in Odessa, Russia and died in Lowe Farm, Manitoba. Included are the descendants of the 10 children from his first wife, Katherina Falk (1868-1915) and the descendants of the 9 children from his second wife, Nettie Wall (1891-1971). For more information contact: Margaret Maier, 16-1899 St. Mary's Rd., Winnipeg, MB R2N 2H6.

Walter Dueck, ed., *Dueck Genealogy beginning with Johann Dueck 1831* (Stoney Creek, ON: Private publication, 1993), pb., 16 pp.

This genealogy consists of a descendency chart computer print-out starting with Johann Dueck (1831-?) and his wife Katharina Froese (1831-?). It is most complete for the descendants of Johann's son Peter J. Dueck (1862-?) and Susanna Pettker. Information included consists of year of birth if known and occupation. Contact: Walter Dueck, 42 Bing Crescent,

Stoney Creek, ON L8E 3Z4.

Margaret, Anne and Agnes Dueck, eds., *Who am I, O Lord? And What is my House...1895-1988; Whence Camest Thou? and Whither... 1831-1988* (Lethbridge, AB: Private publication), pb., 271 pp.

This book includes much family history in biographical notes with each generation. Charts are included which show the descendants of Johann Dueck (1831-1988) and Katharina Froese (1831-1910), Heinrich Petker (1831-1889) and Aganetha Janzen (1839-1898), Cornelius Warkentin (? - 1871) and his sister, a Mrs. Dellesky and his brother Franz Warkentin, as well as Herman Wiens whose son Peter Wiens (1855-1928) married Maria Abrams and emigrated to Canada in the 1870s.

Memoirs and Family Book of Johann B. Toews - 1993 (Rosenort, MB : PrairieView Press, 1993), pb., 83 pp.

This book contains the writings of Johann B. Toews born March 30, 1865, in Margenau, Molotschna who came to Canada with the *Kleinegemeinde* immigrants in 1874 and settled in Blumenort about three and one-half miles north of Steinbach. He was a well-known figure in the Church of God in Christ (Mennonite) and died at the age of 102 on July 8, 1967 in Steinbach. The book also traces the descendants of Johann B. Toews including the descendants of his step-children. Contact: PrairieView Press, Box 160, Rosenort, MB R0G 1W0.

George R. Wiebe, ed., *Heinrich Fast Reimer and Margaret Warkentin Family Book* (Rosenort, MB: PrairieView Press, 1991), pb., 319 pp.

This book begins with Duerck Reimer (1767 - ?) and his wife Susanna (1763 - ?) of Plattenhof, West Prussia. Specifically the descendants of the grandson Heinrich F. Reimer (1818-1876) and his third wife, Margaret Warkentin (1841-1900) are traced. This family emigrated to Canada with the *Kleinegemeinde* 1875 and settled in Blumenhof, Manitoba, on the East Reserve. Contact: PrairieView Press, Box 160, Rosenort, MB R0G 1W0.

Russel H. Janzen, ed., *Baerg 1777-1992: A Family History and Genealogy of Johann and Catrina (Newman) Baerg, their ancestors and their descendants* (Bountiful, Utah: Family History Publishers, 1993), pb., 355 pp.

This book begins with Jakob Berg (1777-1845) who was an immigrant to South Russia and died in Nikolaidorf, Molotschna. Specifically it traces the descendants of Jakob's son Johann Baerg (1813-1892) and his wife Catrina Neumann (1817-1890). Contact: Russel H. Janzen, 37-3351 Horn Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 4N3.

NOTEWORTHY ARTICLES

Kenneth G. Aiken, "Records of the American Invasion: Canadian Border Entry Records for People Entering Manitoba," *Generations, XVIII* (Sept., 1993),: 16-17. This article gives a brief history of the development of record keeping at some prairie border crossings during the period 1896-1920. It provides an alphabetical list of the Ports of Entry and the corresponding microfilm number for the records preserved by

the Public Archives of Canada. Places such as Bannerman, Emerson, Gretna, Killarney, Morden, Snowflake and Sprague are in the list. Access to the microfilms can be arranged through inter-library loans with public libraries.

Edward R. Brandt and David F. Schmidt, "Genealogical Spring in the Former Soviet Union," *East European Genalogist Vol. 1* (June, 1993): 7-13. Attempts to help genealogists dealing with people who have roots in the former Soviet Union. Gives addresses of people in those countries who are available for giving research assistance. For information on this rather new journal contact *E.E. Genealogist*, P.O. Box 2536, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4A7.

Wandering Volhynians is a genealogy periodical of the descendants of Germans from Volhynia and Poland. It can be ordered for \$15.00 CAN. a year from Ewald Wuschke, 3492 West 39 Ave., Vancouver, B.C. V6N 3A2.

The following articles in Vol. 6 No. 4, December, 1993 may be of interest to MH readers.

Adolf Kreft, "The Royal Prussian Settlers Commission for West Prussia and Poznan (1886-1918)", 14-17.

Ed Brandt, "New Addresses for German Resources Centres for Eastern Europe," 20.

Paul Koring, "Germany Flooded with New Citizens, 21-22. Tells the story of Emma Enns, possibly of Mennonite background, as it deals with leaving Kazakhstan to reside in a new settlement for Russian German emigres at Salzwedel in what was once East Germany.

MGS PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Manitoba Genealogical Society, Inc. can provide the following:

Index of Marriage and Death Notices From Manitoba Newspapers 1859-1881. \$25.00.

Index of Birth, Marriage and Death Notices from Manitoba Newspapers, 1882-1884. \$35.00 (pre-publication price).

Index to Obituaries in Winnipeg Newspapers - 1976 to 1991. Unbound. Approximately 200 pp/year - \$20.00 per year.

To order contact: Manitoba Genealogical Society Inc., 855 Notre Dame Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3E 0M4.

Inquiries may be directed to Alf Redekopp, CMBS, 1-169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5.

Available for Genealogists

Bergthal Gemeinde Buch including *Bergthal Gemeimde Buch 1843-1876*, *Chortizer Gemeinder Buch* indexes, Quebec Passenger Lists 1874-1880 and the 1881 Federal Census Data. Edited by John Dyck. Pb, 439 pp. \$20.00 CAN plus GST and shipping. **Order from:** Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB. Canada, R3P 0M4

The Tragic Trek Remembered: A Memorial

by Gerhard Ens

The article below is adapted from a sermon given on October 11, 1993, by Rev. Gerhard Ens at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba. It was part of a memorial service held in remembrance of Mennonite victims of violence, with a focus on the sufferings of those who were connected to the trek of Mennonites from Ukraine to Germany in 1943, and those who were forced to return to the Soviet Union immediately afterwards.

In his Nobel Laureate lecture of 1970, Alexander Solzhenitsyn included these words: *"Our twentieth century has turned out to be more cruel than those preceding it."* Because of political pressures, Solzhenitsyn was not able to accept his prize in person at that time. Nobody could know then that this churlish refusal by the U.S.S. R. government to allow their own Nobel Laureate to leave the Soviet Union for Stockholm, would come so close to the end of that very difficult era in Russia's history. As many have pointed out, the twentieth century has been the most cruel and destructive in all of human history.

But this is not to be so much a philosophical reflection on human history, rather a brief sketch of the background pertaining to our memorial service today. For the Mennonites of Eastern Europe and Middle Asia the twentieth century has been in fact something akin to a holocaust. Mennonites of the Russian Empire began to experience these difficulties already in 1914 when thousands of young men went to serve, not only in forestry camps as an alternative to military service, but also on the front lines as green untrained medics and stretcher bearers.

This was followed a year later by two Duma edicts legalizing the confiscation of all land held by German-speaking citizens. Then followed the February and October revolutions of 1917, the rise of the Bolshevik government and two and a half years of civil war. In between there were breathing spaces, such as the German occupation of Ukraine in 1918, but much more often periods of utter anarchy and senseless destruction of life and property. To this day the name of Nestor Makhno from Gulai Pole in Ukraine conjures up scenes of violence and death. It has been estimated that between 1914 and 1921 about 2% of all Mennonites (perhaps 110,000 persons) in Russia and the Soviet Union had become victims of war, violence and disease engendered by war and violence.

From 1923 to 1930 more than 23,000 Mennonites were able to leave the Soviet Union, either as regular emigrants or stateless refugees. Of these about 21,000 found their way to Canada, while the remaining 2000 or more moved on to Paraguay and Brazil after the Canadian borders closed. The remaining eighty five to ninety thousand Mennonites in the newly-constituted U.S.S.R. now had to endure ten to twenty years of almost unmitigated hardship and suffering.

The end of Lenin's NEP (New Economic Policy) and the beginning of Stalin's first Five-Year Plan brought on the forced "resettlement" of all "kulaks" i.e. those considered to be the more affluent farmers, and the collectivization and centralization of all agricultural endeavours. Hundred of thousands, indeed millions died in the process. We have surely heard about the government-induced famine of 1932-33 calculated to break the spirit of not only the Mennonites but also Ukrainian nationals, who resisted these policies. It is thought that six million or more people did not survive this period.

This was also the time of systematic closing of most churches and of the arrests and deportation of almost all clergymen, in spite of the so-called constitutional freedom of religion. By 1937 virtually all Mennonite churches had been closed on one pretext or another, and the great majority of ministers of religion had been banished to Siberia.

With the second Five-Year Plan and its objective to industrialize the U.S.S. R. almost overnight, came the infamous Gulag, the forced labour camps of utter secrecy and silence. "Schweigelager" was the German term for them. The years 1937 and 1938 will forever remain a horrid memory of those whose fathers, husbands, brothers and sons were arrested at night - the "black raven" systematically making its stops on village streets and taking possessions of helpless, innocent victims - on some trumped up charge of sabotage, espionage or some other excuse to fill the Gulag with slave labourers.

A special edition of *Der Bote* was published on October 13 as a memorial to the 1943 "great trek" experience. An English translation by George K. Epp will appear as well. The special issue may be purchased for \$2.00 from the *Bote* office at our address.



Solzhenitsyn writes about these camps of silence as follows:

"In agonizing moments in camp, in columns of prisoners at nights in the freezing darkness through which the little chains of lanterns shone, there often rose in our throats something we wanted to shout out to the whole world, if only the world could have heard one of us."

But as we now know only too well that the world did not want to hear about the Gulag in the 1930s.

Solzhenitsyn went on to say:

— both accepted and excused are prison terms of twenty five years, solitary confinement in cells with ice-covered wall and prisoners stripped to their underclothings, insane asylums for healthy men, and border shootings of countless foolish people, who for some reasons, keep trying to escape. The heart is at ease with regard for that — land about which nothing is known, from which no events ever reach us except the belated and trivial conjectures of a few correspondents ...

Then in 1941 came the German invasion and for some 35,000 Mennonites in Ukraine a two-year period under German occupation. On the surface this occupation was a relief and a breathing space. When it began, however, nobody knew how short-lived it would be, and what dire consequences it would have for about two thirds of them. The Mennonites in other parts of the Soviet Union, those not under German occupation, were deported to northern and eastern Siberia or parts of Central Asia east of the Ural Mountains. Those living in the Orenburg and the Altai settlements were not deported en masse, but all able bodied males and females between the ages of 15 and 45 were drafted into the so-called *Trudarmia*, the forced labour colonnades.

In January, 1943, remnants of the German Sixth Army capitulated at Stalingrad. This was the signal for an escalating German retreat, and by mid-summer the front had been rolled back to the Dnieper River. The local German administration now evacuated all ethnic Germans from their occupied territories before scorching the earth in the army's own retreat.

About 35,000 Mennonites embarked in October, 1943 on what seemed like an endless trek westwards toward German-held territory. For about twelve thousand this troubled trail would eventually lead to a new home in North or South America. For the rest, nearly twice that number, it meant being caught up by the relentlessly pursuing Soviet Army and being sent back East - not to their former homes in the villages of one-time Mennonite settlements, but to Siberia and the coal mines of Karaganda and other

(cont'd on page 5)

The Vistula-Nogat Delta Revisited: Mennonites Welcome

by Peter J. Klassen

In recent years, Mennonite contacts with Poles and Polish organizations in cities such as Gdansk or Elblag, as well as with Poles living in the lowlands of the region, have dramatically increased. At the same time, a remarkably improved climate of cooperation is developing.

When I first visited this area in 1979 Mennonites were still often viewed with suspicion. "Official" interpretations tended to depict all those who had fled or been expelled at the end of World War II, or soon thereafter, as enemies of Poland. Thus, when Mennonites came back to see homes where they had been born, or where their ancestors had lived, they were often received with hostility.

Today Mennonites are warmly welcomed anywhere in Poland. Poles now recognize the contributions Mennonites made to the development of their country, especially in the Vistula delta and valley. This past summer, a group of 35 visitors had the pleasure of being the first large Mennonite group to be invited to visit the new Mennonite exhibition in the Elblag Museum (Museum w. Elblagu). A large room in the museum has been set aside for Mennonite exhibits. An impressive number of artifacts depict life in the environs of Elblag, especially in the "Werder," or Zulawy, as it is called today.

This warm, friendly attitude was evident elsewhere. Dr. Roman Klim, director of the Maritime Museum in Gdansk housed in the "Old Crane," has started a small museum in Tszew. Its purpose is to depict Mennonite cultural contributions to the region. Similar interest in the Mennonite story is reflected in places such as Stogi (Heubuden), where the former Mennonite cemetery is now completely fenced. When I first saw it in 1980, it was a cow pasture. Dr. Arkadiusz Rybak, former director of the Experimental Agricultural Farm in Stare Pole (Alt-felde) has provided leadership for this endeavour, while the MPFA (Mennonite-Polish Friendship Association) has provided most of the funding (ie.\$2000.00).

Some readers may be interested in helping to expand the Mennonite exhibition in the Elblag Museum. Designated gifts may be sent to the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg or the Centre for MB Studies in Fresno, California, 4824 East Butler, Fresno, California, 93727-5097.

If you would like to become a member of the Mennonite Polish Friendship Association write to Peter J. Klassen at the above address.

Trek Remembered:

(cont'd from page 4)

areas of extreme hardship and privation.

For the next ten years the fate of these



At the Elblag City Museum (l-r) Peter J. Klassen, Fresno, the assistant director of the Museum (name unavailable), Director Kazimierz Solak, and Paul Toews, Fresno. The closet comes from a former Mennonite home in the area. An anonymous donor has recently provided \$1,000.00 for the development of the Museum. It has been forwarded through the Mennonite Polish Friendship Association. Photo: Courtesy of Peter J. Klassen, Fresno, California.

"repatriates" defied all attempts of description. "The first year we subsisted on nettles and frozen potatoes which we were able to glean from the fields", my wife's aunt told me, when I met her in Riga in the summer of 1971. There were countless other experiences like it.

Again one of the most frightening things was the awful silence. No word could reach outsiders, except if sent secretly, often reaching a destination simply by chance. Only gradually, very gradually, did the fate of these troubled people become known to their loved ones, frequently far away, separated by a continent and an ocean.

Then after West Germany was accepted into the family of nations once more, years after the end of hostilities, the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, succeeded in making diplomatic advances to the Soviet Union that resulted in a slight opening of the Iron Curtain and the beginning of family reunification.

By the early 1960s it would even become possible actually to leave the Soviet Union and emigrate to the west. As the Soviet Armed Forces steamrolled across eastern Germany the Prussian Mennonites also had had to be evacuated. By land and by sea they fled westwards, amid hardships which defy description. By the end of 1945 there were no Mennonite settlements left between the Vistula and the Volga. On this memorial day we want to ponder the meaning of that frightful judgment, and mourn the loss of what was once our beautiful homeland in Eastern Europe.

FOR FURTHER READING

- Epp, G.K. and Hans Rempel, eds. *Waffen der Wehrlosen. Ersatzdienst der Mennoniten in der UdSSR* (Winnipeg, 1980).
- Friesen, John, ed. *Mennonites in Russia - Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg, 1989).
- Toews, John B. *Czars, Soviets and Mennonites* (Newton, 1982).
- Winter, Henry H. *A shepherd of the oppressed. Heinrich Winter, the last Aeltester of Chortitza* (Wheatley, 1990).
- Woelk, Heinrich and Gerhard Woelk *A Wilderness Journey. Glimpses of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia 1925-1980*. (Fresno, 1982).

Gerhard Ens retired recently as editor of *Der Bote* but remains involved in translation and writing on Mennonite themes.

Film Available

Otto Klassen of Winnipeg, Manitoba has produced a film entitled "The Great Trek 1943-1945." If interested in more information or renting it to show in your community, contact: Faith and Life Communications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MN R3P 0M4, or call (204) 888-6781.

Personalities and Happenings

Jake Wiens and **Ed Enns** continue their work as volunteers at the Centre. This includes translation work, organizing materials, archiving documents, etc. We warmly invite others to join our volunteer staff.

Peter Rempel, MHCA assistant archivist, began a three-month leave from the Archives on December 1, 1993. He expects to be back on March 1, 1994.

John Dyck (Coral Cres., Winnipeg). continues to be one of our most frequently present researchers. He is working on several projects dealing with the local history of the former Mennonite East and West Reserves.

Anna Ens is continuing her writing on the history of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba. An intriguing question remains: Did the Conference begin in 1933 or 1936? Any data available on that will be gratefully received. She can be reached at the Centre via 888-6781.

Bruce Wiebe and his father **Peter Wiebe** have helped organize an important collection of letters related to their family history. The letters are part of the Jacob E. Friesen collection here.

Dr. Peter Hilkes of the Osteuropa Institut of Munich, Germany presented a lecture at CMBC on October 14 dealing with emigration of Germans from Russia to Germany. He was here under the auspices of the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, Fargo, North Dakota, and with the assistance of its director, Michael Miller.

Bruce Guenther of Saskatoon, doing PhD work at McGill University in Montreal, has been spending a number of days in the archives researching the historical development of a Bible school movement in Western Canada in which the Mennonites played a significant role.

The descendants of **Martin Klaassen** (1820-1881) gathered at the Corn Bible Academy in Corn, Oklahoma, on July 23-25 for a family reunion. Esther Bergen one of these descendants, has done extensive transliteration and translation work on the diaries of Martin Klaassen.

Correction: All references to **John K Schellenberg** on p. 4 of the September, 1993 issue of MH should read **John B. Schellenberg**. Our apologies to the family and friends of John.

The Peter J. Braun Collection

The full set of microfilm reels (78) holding the Peter J. Braun Archives is now available at MHCA. This includes most of a large collection of Molostchna settlement records dated 1804-1920 which were moved to Odessa, and microfilmed there under the direction of Dr. Harvey Dyck of the University of Toronto. (See Harvey Dyck, "Odyssey to Odessa: fresh sources and perspectives in Russian Mennonite Studies," *MQR* Vol 65(4), 1991, pp. 437-49).

An English language inventory for the materials is also available. Files listing persons in an 1835 census of the settlement, (in Russian script), and lists of school register names for 1862 (in Gothic German script), have been printed out for easy access to researchers. A further comment on these materials is found elsewhere in this issue.

Recent Acquisitions

Another portion of the Aeltester C.J. Warkentin papers and library. Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. John Loewen, Calgary, Alberta. Includes a large collection of sermons.

Cassette tape recordings of the Peter Hilkes lecture on Germans emigrating from Russia to Germany held at CMBC on October 14, 1993. Courtesy of Peter Paetkau and George K. Epp, both of Winnipeg, MB.

Cassette tape recording of the 40th Anniversary Great Trek *Dankfest* held at the Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, October 17, 1993. Courtesy of Gerhard Ens, Winnipeg, MB.

A collection of LP and other recordings of music by Mennonite groups. Courtesy of Anne Schmidt and MCC Thrift Shops in Winnipeg, MB.

Copy of the First Conference Minute book (Conference of Canada and Ohio), 1855-1869. From the MLA, Bethel College, N. Newton Kansas. Courtesy of Peter H. Rempel, MHCA.

Photo of a group of Mennonite *Forsteier* from the Anadol Foresty Camp, ca 1900. Includes Rev. A. Hamm as administrator and chaplain. Courtesy of Art Rempel, Winnipeg, MB.

Manuscript copy of article "The Mennonites and the Russian State of Duma 1905-1914". Courtesy of the author, Terry Martin, Chicago IL, now in Moscow. Written April 1993, 89 pp.

Copy of a genealogy book with diary entries from a Chortitza resident, beginning 1880. Ca. 100 pp. Courtesy of Artur Kroeger, Winnipeg, MB.

English translation of P.H. Enns' *Mein Eden. Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben*. Ca. 100 pp. Courtesy of Ed Enns, Winnipeg, MB.

Large new map of the village of Einlage - based on photos of German intelligence taken during WWII. Courtesy of Heinz Bergen, Regina, SK. Available for purchase.

Copy of a Wallmann genealogy and other related materials written in Chortitza. Ca. 100 pp. Courtesy of Garri Wallmann, Moscow, Russia.

A major portion of the Walter Schmiedehaus papers (Mexico) - copied from originals deposited in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba by Dr. Jack Thiessen.

An index to the Turner Collection on Religious Movement edited by Stan Nussbaum, available on microfiche at MHCA.



Visitors view a part of the woodcarving exhibit provided by Ron Boese and Jack Sawatzky, both of Winnipeg. The exhibit was featured in the Heritage Centre Gallery from October 1-December 15, 1993. Photo: Courtesy of *Der Bote*.

Mirror of the Martyrs Exhibit Coming

In the spring of 1994 an exhibit, entitled "Mirror of the Martyrs", will be featured at three Manitoba locations. This exhibit has been viewed at various sites in the eastern and mid-western United States, and is now coming to Canada for the first time.

The core of the exhibit is based on the *Maertyrer-Spiegel* by Thieleman van Braght, first published in Dutch in 1685. It was illustrated with 104 etchings prepared by Jan Luyken. Thirty of the original etching plates survive, and eight, purchased by an American Mennonite interest group provide a basis for the exhibit.

Originally the visuals consisted of essentially 50 panels focusing on the story of Mennonite martyrs. The exhibit was recently expanded to include stories of contemporary martyrs from the Stalin's period in the USSR, children of the Jewish Holocaust, a Nobel Peace Laureate from Burma, a South African student assassinated by death squads, Archbishop Romero and six Jesuit martyrs from El Salvador, and victims of torture from other countries.

The exhibit will first be shown at Concord College in Winnipeg beginning in April. Then it will move to the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach for most of May and early June. A final site is expected to be named for the Winkler/Altona area (perhaps Winkler Bible Institute).

Sponsors include the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Mennonite Heritage Village and the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. The Committee is requesting additional financial sponsors to help cover costs.

A Planning Committee has been formed to oversee the Manitoba exhibitions and related events. A series of public lectures will be featured as well.

Abe Dueck,

Chairman of the Planning Committee

Recent Aquisitions

1. Three photographs from the Henry Reimer Photograph Collection consisting of family portraits of the families of Frank C. Peters, H.H. Janzen, and John Martens.
2. Twelve music books consisting of hymnals and other songbooks collected by Olga Dueck. Donated by John Martens, Concord College, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
3. Canadian MB Conference Christian Education Office Records 1980-1990, consisting of 18 cm. of textual records.
4. *Umsiedlerbetreuung* 1972-1992 Vol. 1-5 compiled by Mennonitische *Umsiedlerbetreuung*, Neuwied, Germany. Received from Hans von Niessen, Neuwied, Germany.

5. Gospel Light Hour files 1947-1949, consisting of 2.5 cm. of textual records.
6. General Conference of MB Churches Board of Faith & Life Records 1987-1993. Received from Roland Marsch, chairman of BFL till 1993 Consists of 20 cm. of textual records.
7. Namaka Mennonite Brethren Church Records 1931-1949 received from Mrs. Mary Thiessen, Calgary, AB.
8. Twelve photographs taken at the Canadian MB Conference held in the province of Quebec, July 1992. Donated by John H. Redekopp, Waterloo, ON.
9. Photocopies of the family papers of Isaac and Ella (nee Derksen) Block, Saskatoon, SK. Donated by Isaac and Alvina Block, Winnipeg, MB.
10. Two boxes of books pertaining to Mennonite life and history from the library of John B. Wiens, formerly Osbourne, MB later from Winnipeg. Donated by Margaret Wiens.
11. Two memorial albums entitled, "A man called Henry" and "My beloved son Richard" compiled and donated by Esther Mary Kroeker Unruh, Abbotsford, B.C.
12. Thirty one B & W negatives depicting college life at MBBC during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Donated by Wally Kroeker, Winnipeg, MB.
13. Nine colour 4 X 6 prints taken August 8, 1993 after the sewer backup flooded the basement and parts of the archives storage area at the Centre for MB Studies. Donated by Alf Redekopp.
14. Two boxes (60 linear cm.) of unsorted choral music and books used and collected by teacher John M. Thiessen, Winnipeg, MB.
15. Personal papers of Rev. Isaac W. Redekopp, including a sermon collection with accompanying finding aids, a B.Th. dissertation, an M.Sc. thesis, and other papers. Donated by Lottie Redekopp, Winnipeg, MB.
16. Sixteen books of choral music and 3 linear cm. handwritten manuscript music used and collected by Peter J. Wiens (1897-1987) and his wife Mary (nee Wiebe). Donated by their daughter Helga Bergen, Winnipeg, MB.

P.M. Friesen History Essay Contest

The Historical Commission of the MB Conference of North America is pleased to announce the first winners of the P.M. Friesen History Essay Contest. The winner in the College/Seminary/Graduate School division is Mary Anne Isaak for her study "*A Description of the Theology Expressed in Songs of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Zaire.*" The winner of the High School division is Jakob Matties for his study "Die Russlanddeutschen in Preussen. Ihre Auswanderung nach Russland, und Ihre Rückkehr nach Deutschland am Beispiel der Familie Matthies." (The Russian Germans in Prussia:

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M Mennonite
B Brethren
S Studies in Canada
1-169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, Canada R2L 2E5

Their Migration to Russia and their Return to Germany as illustrated by the Matthies Family).

Isaak's paper was written for degree requirements at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California. Matthies' paper was written for a class at the Albert-Einstein Gymnasium in Frankenthal, Germany. Both winners will receive a \$100 US prize for their winning papers.

The P.M. Friesen History Essay Contest was established in 1992 by the Historical Commission to encourage original historical research and writing by students. Members of the Commission are the judges of the entries.

Microfilm Reader-printer purchased

The CMBS has recently purchased a new reader-printer at a cost of approximately \$8,000. The funds for the purchase were derived from a donation by the John P. Braun family, whose books and documents were donated to the Centre recently. The Centre also received a 50% matching grant from the Community Archives Equipment Grants program of the Manitoba Government. The reader-printer uses the latest technology which will also reduce the cost of making copies from microfilm very considerably. The former reader-printer is for sale as a microfilm reader at a low price. Contact the Centre for specifics.

Flood-Damaged Documents Restored

Most of the renovation work resulting from damage caused by this past summer's flood has now been completed (see *Mennonite Historian*, September, 1993, p. 5). Several boxes of documents have been removed from cold storage on a weekly basis and set out to dry. Repair work on walls and floors was completed in September and the final insurance adjustments are expected to be completed by early December.

New Book Available

Da Capo "Start once from the Front." A History of the Mennonite Community Orchestra, by Bertha Elizabeth Klassen. Many illustrations. Hard cover, 130 pages. \$29.95 plus GST and postage. **Order from CMBS**

West Reserve Stories About The Past

by John Dyck

The Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna was the location for the fourth semi-annual public meeting sponsored by the Local History Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. The all day event which took place on Saturday, November 6, 1993 drew more than forty people who had come from as far as Steinbach, Crystal City and Winnipeg.

In the first of the four presentations, John Dyck dealt with the early history of the village of Edenburg, near Gretna. Nine of the first residents who established the village in 1879/80 had earlier founded the village of Chortitza on the East Reserve in 1874. First settlers here included seven families who had come from Chortitza/Borosenko, five who had come from the Bergthal Colony, two Kleine Gemeinde families from Borosenko and one Molotschna/Puchtin family.

Most of the other families had left for Oregon, Kansas and Hague before 1900 and it was the descendants of the Bergthal and Molotschna families who became permanent residents of the village.

Edenburg built a church and a school in 1883. The latter was one of the first schools to join the public school system. The church was the first building to be completely owned by the Bergthaler Church.

Jake Rempel presented the story of the village of Neuenburg, near Winkler. Neuenburg was established in 1875, the year the first Mennonites arrived on the West Reserve. A school was built here in 1888, indicating that classes were held in a private home during the very early years.

The third presentation was by Peter Bergen on the history of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church. He is in the process of writing that history and presented an overview of his forthcoming book. The Sommerfeld church consisted largely of people who had come from the Bergthal Colony in Russia plus a considerable additional group who came from the Reinlander Mennonite Church. The Sommerfeld Gemeinde was one of the largest in the pioneer West Reserve and continues to be a significant factor in the community. The final presentation was on the village of Hochstadt. Bill Kehler, who had prepared the paper, was unable to be present and his paper was presented by George A. Braun, another long time resident of that community. Hochstadt was the home of the Hochstadt private school and the Kleinstadt public school. The community boasted one of the early public schools on the West Reserve. The Hochstadt church was the site of the founding meeting of what was to become the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

Members of the audience responded favourably to the excellent display by Mennonite Books of materials relevant to the topics discussed.



A scene from the former Bergthal settlement as one can see it today. Ksenievka is the new Ukrainian name for the old village of Schoenfeld.

Annual MMHS Meeting Notice

Where: Reinland Community Centre,
Reinland (west of Gretna), MB.

When: Saturday, January 29, 1994,
6:30 p.m.

Speaker: Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein
"Meeting Historians in Russia"
8 p.m.

**For further
information:** call Richard Thiessen at
669-6575

Refreshments will be served.
Admission is free.

Good use was also made of the display of homestead maps prepared by Rempel and Harms. These show the names of the homesteaders and the location of villages on the West Reserve. William Harms had copies of the Reinlander church records from the pioneer years and also the records of their later descendant congregations in Saskatchewan and Mexico for perusal by those in attendance.

The next public meeting in the Local History series is being scheduled for spring, 1994.

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Historical
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Mennonite Links Between Prussia and Russia

On Saturday, November 13, 1993 the Genealogy Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society sponsored a genealogy and family history workshop at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College chapel in Winnipeg. The guest speaker for the day was Henry Schapansky from New Westminster, B.C. Schapansky is an amateur historian who serves as a contributing editor for *Mennonite Family History*, a quarterly periodical covering Mennonite, Amish and Brethren genealogy and family history. He has written articles on the Old Colony villages of Einlage, Chortitza, Neuenburg, Neuendorf, Rosenthal and Schoenhorst listing the original settlers, and tracing their origin in Prussia.

The workshop, attended by over ninety participants from throughout southern Manitoba, was divided into three sections. In the first section, Schapansky discussed the history of the Mennonites in West and East Prussia. Topics included the Flemish and Friesian Gemeinden of the Vistula delta and valley, the records and documents relating to these groups, and historical accounts of the West Prussian Mennonites.

The second section summarized the immigration to Russia. Schapansky discussed the motivation for the immigration, gave a historical overview of the settlement in the Old Colony, highlighted some of the key individuals involved in the migration, and summarized the source documents relating to the migration. Schapansky concluded with a brief section describing some of the documents covering the time period of the Mennonites in Russia as well as in Canada.

This event was preceded by an evening seminar in Steinbach, also addressed by Schapansky and attended by fifteen people. Both events were well-received, and sparked good question and answer sessions.



RM of Ritchot councillor Albert Bilodeau (left) and members of the Mennonite Memorial landing Site Committee, Orlando Hiebert, Frank Dueck and Bert Loewen study the map at the spot where the first Manitoba Mennonite settlers disembarked in 1874. The Committee is planning a park at the fork of the Rat and Red Rivers to commemorate this event. Photo: courtesy of *The Carillon*

Photo Resource from Conrad Grebel College

Information from about 6,000 negatives and photographs from *The Canadian Mennonite* has been entered into a computer data base. The *Canadian Mennonite* was the first English language Mennonite newspaper published in Canada and was published in Manitoba between 1953 and 1970. Frank H. Epp was its founding editor.

The Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario received funds from the Canadian Council of Archives and the Quiring-Loewen Trust to process these photographs. Linda Huebert Hecht worked at Conrad Grebel College for nine months, cataloguing the photos and doing research about their use in the newspaper. Approximately half of the photos and negatives have now been processed.

The data base is now available for use at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo as well as in Winnipeg at the Centre for MB Studies and the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Persons wishing to obtain photo reproductions, or more information about the project, may write to: Reg Good, Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3G6, or call (519) 885-0220 ext. 242.

Book Review

Klassen, Bertha Elizabeth. *Da Capo: Start Once from the Front: A History of the Mennonite Community Orchestra*. (Winnipeg: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1993.) hdc. 130 pp., \$29.95.

Reviewed by: John Martens

We are, or often must appear to be, an enigmatic people and the title of this book, with its classical terminology juxtaposed with an awkward translation from the Plautdietsch well encapsulates this enigma. Bertha Klassen's first book will find more than acceptance among her many friends. It will gain broad appeal because it is a fine tribute to a vigorous and multi-faceted organization that has served with dignity and humility in its sometimes dichotomous community.

The book is published in an attractive 11 1/2" by 9" format with the front and back pictures separated by 50 years of story. It will grace a coffee table, but because of its shape and the bold size of its print, its usefulness extends to the kitchen table where you can continue to read while buttering your toast — the book will not close on you while both hands are busy.

Written in an interesting narrative style, *Da Capo* is much more than a chronology of events and lists of names of people, although it does that too, devoting the last 11 pages to lists of players, significant data about concerts, and a complete index.

The stories begin with the Wayside Chapel Orchestra playing for the 1927 Mennonite Brethren Conference in Winkler, where the twenty-year-old Benjamin Horch encouraged the musicians to play sixteenth notes as eighth notes to prevent the fast music from offending the conservative audience.

The stories continue almost to the moment of publication. The last one is about the 1993 Winnipeg Bach Festival with Glenn Klassen as conductor, professionals and "semi-professionals" sharing the same stage. Sixteenth notes are no longer a moral issue, but rather a musical one. "The orchestra," the author contends, "had reached maturity."

The question as to what constitutes maturi-

ty is not addressed in this book. Is it when "Da Capo" and "start once from the front" sit comfortably in balance with each other, as is suggested in Gerald Loewen's logo, where Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* excerpt beautifully balances the "Wir Pilgern nach Zion" excerpt (written in Ziffern)? Or, is maturity reached when we can stand back objectively and chuckle at ourselves through works like John C. Klassen's *Brotherly Gavotte* and *Mennist Waltz*? The question does beg some analysis, which Klassen chooses not to provide.

It is the treatment of individuals by the author that places this book into a unique category — unique in the sense that no one is frozen in time or space. So on p. 7, we discover Emmanuel Horch as a school boy practising mentally during school lessons how to play "What can wash away my sin?" and next thing we know, he's running, at age 80, up the steps to the stage at the 1993 Winnipeg Music Festival to present a trophy to the winner.

The tributes to the Horches, Ben, Albert and Emmanuel are sprinkled throughout the book, but nowhere with greater love than when the author discusses their contributions as teachers. This love and attention to the individual, whether as player, conductor, board president, or guest of the orchestra is a remarkable feature of the book. Occasionally in her narrative the author's otherwise solid research is replaced by personal opinion — nothing a second printing can't correct. Aside from these, and a few spelling errors, the author is to be commended for giving us such human glimpses into the lives of our musicians, including what they are doing today, wherever they are — in Canada, Paraguay, or Germany.

A rather rare feature of *Da Capo* is the large number of pictures used. They range from formal family portraits and snapshots of players and singers in action to pictures of expense sheets. Again, all ages are represented, in all kinds of activities. The wide double page, twenty-three inch span, also allows for a spectacular 1954 picture of the choir and orchestra in the Winnipeg Auditorium. Faces can easily be identified.

And yes, the '50s hair styles are interesting, but not as interesting as the fact that many of these players and singers are still playing and singing today, almost 40 years later. Allow me to mention three: John C. Klassen, composer and conductor, playing, as he does today on various instruments; Walfried Dirks, tower of support through the years as player and administrator; and pharmacist Abe Loewen from Steinbach, playing his cello as he did recently in the Westwook Community Church orchestra! Ben Horch would have been pleased.

In fact, in a sense, the book is about Benjamin Horch and about his vision. His presence is palpably felt throughout. His picture at the beginning and the account of his 80th birthday celebration is indeed a "fitting tribute to a musical grandfather by his musical children."

John Martens is Associate Professor of Music at Concord College in Winnipeg, MB.

The Peter J. Braun Archives: A Brief Assessment of their Research Significance

by George K. Epp

The euphoria resulting from the discovery of the Peter J. Braun Archives Collection in Odessa, Ukraine, has included much excitement and numerous publicized affirmations about a breakthrough in Mennonite research. They deserve to be heard, but should be evaluated as well. It may be that we have raised expectations that will not be fully met by actual examination of the records.

On May 16, 1990, when, after serious digging and prodding, several of us finally obtained an index of over 3,000 Mennonite files placed before us in the Odessa archives, I did not recognize them as the Peter Braun collection. My time was limited so I concentrated on the Johann Cornies materials, believing however, that we were looking at the entire corpus of Molotschna archives, and perhaps some Chortitza documents as well. The staff of the Odessa Regional Archives further informed me that there were many more volumes of records dealing with all foreign settlers in South Russia. I thought that these had to be records of the familiar *Fürsorge Komitee* i.e. the Guardians' Committee, which looked after foreign settlers in this area for half a century or so. Soon the pile of volumes before me was overwhelming; we had obviously barely scratched the surface.

On our return of Canada, and after Dr. Harvey Dyck of the University of Toronto had identified the Molotschna materials as the Peter J. Braun Collection, our attention naturally focused on that collection. We almost forgot that we had seen dozens of volumes of the *Fürsorge Komitee* in Odessa as well.

Realizing that we might never find the financial resources needed to retrieve all the materials of the Guardians' Committee itself (perhaps as much as \$100,000), I immediately contacted the Osteuropa Institut in Munich, urging the Director to take on this important task. I gave the Institut all relevant information at my disposal, including the names of people to contact in Odessa. Once copies of these documents were in Munich, I reasoned, it would be easy for us to obtain access to them when we needed to.

In October of this year, I was informed that the Osteuropa Institut now has the funding in place, and that there will be a full-time staff member of the Institut working in Odessa. Dr. Peter Hilkes, whom some of the readers recently met in Winnipeg, and a staff member in the Institut, will also be active in the archives at Odessa. The initiative will entail an enormous amount of work because there are no indexes for most of the files. Researchers will have to work page by page. However, in two or three years we should have the needed access to these documents at the Osteuropa Institut in Munich.

Meanwhile, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, we are taking stock of what we have in the Peter J. Braun Collection. I have

scanned through about half of the 78 reels. One soon realizes that the pages are not all of equal value. It must be said that accounts of individual Nogais connecting with the Mennonite villages and individual settlers are indeed significant. However one hundred pages of these accounts do not necessarily tell us that much more than ten pages do, i.e. they simply affirm the fact that there was significant interaction between Nogais and Mennonites. The same can be said about many pages of the Forestry Service accounts files. They establish the fact that this service was expensive, but do not necessarily say much, for example, about the method of forestry taxation

in the Mennonite colonies.

There is much information on schools, and we find very revealing letters concerning morals in the Molotschna colony. For genealogists the census of 1835 will no doubt be of much interest. Important are also the records of the Ohrloff Educational Society (*Schulverein*). There are also some records of the *Landwirtschaftlicher Verein*, but unfortunately even on this important institution information is still somewhat limited.

At this point of our analysis of the Peter J. Braun Collection, we must conclude that even for the Molotschna colony this is not a comprehensive source. It is however a beginning and a very important one. One needs now to look at the rest of the documents so that these preliminary remarks can be adjusted to take in the documents as a whole. We hope to be able to do this soon.

Finding the Klippensteins of Russia

by Lawrence Klippenstein

We knew that our assignment for MCC Russia did not include giving time and energy to find lost relatives. Indeed till a few years ago I used to tell Russian customs officials and others that I had none in the USSR. Later I learned about Klippenstein families who came to Germany from the former USSR in the large emigration wave that began in the 1960s and continues to this day. I was led to believe then, and came to see that there were probably others who were still living there now.

An unusual story about these remaining ones was given to me at a meeting in the MCC Europe office in September, 1992. The article I

received there included a picture of an active Russian Orthodox priest whose name is Vladimir Klippenstein. Most interesting, I thought. What could this be all about?

It turned out that a German correspondent for the paper *Neues Leben* (published in Moscow) was visiting the city of Kaliningrad, formerly Königsberg of East Prussia. He decided to chat with an Orthodox priest whom he met one day in the German Cultural Centre of the city. Introducing himself as Eugen Warkentin, the correspondent learned he was talking to Father Vladimir who immediately added to his introduction the comment "*Na See motte doch een Mennonit senni, een Plautdietscha. Yo oba von vua kohmi See dahn hea?*" (You must be a Mennonite, a Low German one. So where are you from?) Then the priest went on to say he was in fact Vladimir Klippenstein, now serving an Orthodox congregation in Kyrgyzstan, and here in Kaliningrad looking up former members of his flock. Father Vladimir had to leave then, but the men agreed to write and pursue the acquaintance which then brought out other interesting details about Vladimir's family (to be shared in another episode in the next issue).

Bergthal/Respublika revisited

I want to add this Bergthal story because my great-grandfather Heinrich Klippenstein came from the Bergthal colony north of Mariupol in Ukraine. People in Moscow and elsewhere used to find it quite interesting to discover we had personal family connections with the CIS and Ukraine in particular.

In May LaVerna and I joined an MCC colleague, Mary Raber, for the graduation exercises of Donetsk Baptist Bible College where she was teaching. I had discovered that it was only about a four-hour drive from there to the former Bergthal Colony near Mariupol.

(cont'd on page 11)



Father Vladimir Klippenstein of the Russian Orthodox Church serving in Kyrgyzstan today. Photo credit: Neues Leben, June 17, 1992, p.25.



A Moscow Mennonite German choir group. Front row: (l-r): ?, F.C. Thiessen, Martha Perk Isaac, ?, Suzanna Reimer. Back row: ?, ?, Alvin J. Miller, Abe Isaac, Katie Thiesen Klassen (Mrs. H.F. Klassen), ?, Olga Perk Klassen, Walter Perk, ?. This is a picture of the participants meeting at the Klosterhof, Bolshaia Lubianka, in Moscow on Pentecost Sunday, June 7, 1925. Corrections and additional names will be much appreciated. Photo credit: Courtesy of Maureen and Herb Klassen, MCC Russia office, Moscow.

Klippensteins of Russia

(cont'd from page 10)

That I thought it was an ideal opportunity to do some family "rooting around" and visit the community where my great-grandfather and his family once lived.

We managed to find a translator/driver and made the trip on a beautiful day in late May. First we had a late lunch on the beach of the Sea of Azov and then went to find the village of Respublika, which was Berghthal many decades ago (name changed in the 1920s possibly). Fertile fields and orchards appeared along the roadside as we made our way to what we found to be a delightful valley where the village is still to be found today. We learned that several of the original five villages are gone altogether but two we could visit, Respublika and Ksenevka not far away. We were able to meet some of the residents as well. (to be continued).

Microfilming Mennonite Serials

The Mennonite serials microfilming project is continuing at a good pace. Dr. John Roth of Goshen College is supervising this project at the preparation end, with the American Theological Library Association overseeing the filming itself.

We want to mention here that members of NAMAL (North American Mennonite Archivists and Librarians) may purchase these materials at a special pre-publication price (\$28.00 US/reel plus shipping and handling costs). If interested please write to: Janice Anderson, ATLA, 820 Church St., 3rd Floor,

Evanston, Illinois 60201 or call: (708) 869-7788 or fax: (708) 869-8513.

The material now available on 35 mm microfilm includes the following titles:

Christian Monitor, The (ATLA Order #1991-S001) v. 1-43. 1909-1951 on 15 reels;

Gospel Herald (ATLA Order #1990-S000) 1908-1955, v. 1-48 on 48 reels;

Gospel Witness (ATLA Order #1991-S000) v. 1-3, April 1907 - March 1908 on 2 reels;

The John Horsch Essay Contest - 1993

Winners of the 1993 John Horsch Essay Contest included two Canadians:

- 1) Second Place, in the Graduate School and Seminary Class, for Allan Friesen from Laird, Saskatchewan, and a student at the University of Winnipeg and CMBC, for his paper entitled *The Tiegenghen Congregation: Four Centuries of Community*.
- 2) In the Undergraduate College and University Class, Third Place for Angela Heide of Winkler, Manitoba, and a student at CMBC, for her paper entitled *Anabaptist Witness and the Commission on Overseas Mission*.

The conference is sponsored annually by the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church, its office is located in Goshen, Indiana. The contest is named in honour of John Horsch (1867-1941), a German American Mennonite historian and polemicist whose influence helped to reawaken interest in Anabaptist and Mennonite studies in the twentieth century. Students interested in joining next year's contest are encouraged to check with church history professors in their institutions.

Herold der Wahrheit (ATLA Order #1992-S002) 38 volumes, 1864-1901 on 10 reels;

**Herald of Truth* (ATLA Order #1991-S002) V. 1-45, 1864-1908 on 12 reels;

**Nachrichten aus der Heidenwelt für Alt und Jung* (ATLA Order #1992-S001) Jahrg.1-Jahrg. 3 (1885-1887) on 1 reel.

If you are now not a member of NAMAL and would like to be, contact the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.



On September 8, 1993, Lawrence and LaVerna Klippenstein handed over the seal to the new MCC country representatives in Moscow, Janet and Walter Bergen. Centered in the group is Hansuli Gerber of the MCC Europe office in Tramelan, Switzerland. Lawrence returned to the archives on October 1 to continue as historian-archivist and director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Photo credit: MCC Russia office, Moscow.

BOOK REVIEWS

Loewen, Royden K. *Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850-1930*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993). Pb., 370 pp. \$24.95 CAN.

Reviewed by Vera Fast.

Hard on the heels of Delbert Plett's *Pioneers and Pilgrims. The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba, Nebraska and Kansas 1874-1882*, comes this volume by Royden Loewen, dealing with the same group. Basically in the same geographical areas - Russia/Ukraine, Manitoba (Steinbach and district), Nebraska (Jansen) and Kansas (Meade) - with an expanded time frame (1850-1930).

The similarity ends there, however; while Plett primarily compiled a collection of documents, Loewen's narrative interprets, compares, analyzes and places in context the "lived experience" of this denomination. His three-generational study focuses on the *Kleine Gemeinde's* efforts to "safeguard what it saw as the essence of life in an increasingly urban, industrial society," by migrations, by emphasizing communal religious mores which condemned consumerism and conspicuous consumption, by utilizing an extensive internal network, and by "strategic" adaptation in the areas of church methodology and participation in the dominant market economy.

Loewen deserves credit for his attempt to include the role of women in these processes. Of special interest, although of peripheral importance, in his discussion of bilateral partible inheritance, matrilineal residence, and even the use of the mother's family name as each child's second name, contrast to the *Russlaenders'* custom of using the patronymic as the child's middle name.

One cannot help but notice the vast difference between the church as Loewen describes it, and present-day congregations. This is exemplified by the issues which occupied the *Bruderschaft* in Steinbach between 1901-1919. Various sexual infractions and alcohol abuse were discussed only six times, while matters relating to consumerism, government intrusion and assimilation were on the agenda at least 105 times (p. 246).

This publication is very well-documented, with a comprehensive bibliography. Loewen interacts impressively with other sources acquainted with the literature in his field. His original and extensive research is evidenced in such details as the map on p. 205, depicting the *Kleine Gemeinde* diaspora from Nebraska and Manitoba in the period 1890-1930. One must commend the author for creating a very fine, scholarly addition to an expanding literature on Manitoba Mennonite historical themes.

Vera Fast is an independant scholar and homemaker in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Toews, Paul, Ed., *Mennonites and Baptists - A Continuing Conversation*. (Winnipeg, MB., Kindred Press, 1993) Pb., 261 pp., \$19.95 CAN.

Reviewed by John Friesen.

This book of eleven articles, three by Baptists and eight by Mennonites, explores the relationship between Mennonite Brethren and Baptists. Eight of the articles are historical, one discusses Baptist interpretations of Anabaptist history, and the final two articles in the volume are theological in nature. One of the theological articles discusses the influence of August H. Strong on Mennonite Brethren, and the final article by James Wm. McClendon, Jr. analyses and compares the Anabaptist and Baptist "Visions."

In the first article, William R. Estep discusses in detail the Dutch Mennonite influence on the founding of the English Baptist movement in the Netherlands. The other seven historical articles analyze the relationship of Mennonite Brethren and Baptists in various countries. One article deals with the relationships in Poland and Prussia, three articles survey the lengthy history of relationships in Russia and the USSR, one study looks at the relationship in the mission efforts in India, and two articles analyze the North American scene, one the Canadian and the other the American. In some of the articles there are a few references to contacts between Baptists and Mennonites generally, but most of the volume, despite its title, is a study of the relationship of Baptists and Mennonite Brethren.

This study was commissioned by the Historical Commission of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. According to the foreword, the aim of this study was two-fold. Firstly it was written to promote ecumenical dialogue by probing what is shared and what is distinctive about each tradition, the Baptist and the Mennonite Brethren. The second aim was to determine more clearly the nature of the Baptist influence on the evolution of the Mennonite Brethren church community.

The book accomplishes these aims well. Its articles are discerning, informative, and provide excellent supplements to studies presently available on these topics. The only caveat is that a title indicating that this volume studies a continuing conversation between Mennonite Brethren and Baptists would be more in keeping with the content and the aims of the publication.

John Friesen is Professor of History and Theology at CMBC in Winnipeg, currently on sabbatical leave.



BOOK NOTES

Gerhard Ratzlaff's survey edition of *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay Vergangenheit - Gegenwart - Zukunft* (pb., 108 pp.) contributes significantly to the historical literature of Paraguayan Mennonites. It resulted from a conference on Paraguayan Mennonite themes held in February, 1993. A listing of contributors introduces the growing number of scholars active in this field.

Researchers and others will want to know about an excellent reference book on Waterloo, Ontario. It is a 768-page volume with 4500 items entitled *Waterloo County to 1972: An Annotated Bibliography of Regional History* (Kitchener: Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation, 1993) prepared by Elizabeth Bloomfield, Linda Foster and Jane Forgay. To order the book contact Regional Project, 16 Caribou Cres., Guelph, Ontario N1E 1C9, with cheques made payable to the Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation. The cost is \$55.00 with an extra \$5.00 handling charge for orders from outside of Ontario.

Correspondence between the Mennonites of the CIS (formerly Soviet Union) and relatives in Canada is not always seen as having documentary significance. As titles such as *Letters from Russia* (1993, (pb. 73 pp.) translated and published by Herbert and Justina Peters, appear, one realizes how much information becomes available in this way. Many more such letters exist. Perhaps additional ones will be translated and published so they can benefit others besides the individuals who once received them years ago.

God's Hand Upon My Life (Chilliwack, B.C., n.d.) (pb., 152 pp.) is an autobiography published by the author, Jacob J. Goertzen. It includes documents of CO service, immigration and other experiences.

We have also received Todd James Buhrows, ed. *The Mennonite Book of Poetry*. (Waterloo, Ontario. Parkminster Publishing, 1993). pb., 55 pp. Included are poems by Menno Wiebe, Lois Fast, Eric Janzen and about a dozen other Mennonite (?) poets. Illustrated. A fuller review may follow.

Anne and Peter F. Barga have published *From Russia With Tears - Letters From Home and Exile - 1930-1938* (hdc., 549 pp., \$80.00). This compilation is a translation into the English language of 459 letters from Russia, received from relatives and friends of Frank F. and Elizabeth (nee Regehr) Barga who came to Canada in 1930. The letters are written in German Gothic script and describe the conditions in the Mennonite colonies at the time of Stalin's "dekulakization" of the agrarian population. They originate in the Mennonite colonies of southern Ukraine, particularly Sagradovka, and the slave labour camps of Siberia and the Ural mountains.

The originals are filed as the "Regehr-Barga collection" in the archives of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Man. R3P 0M4. For copies of the book contact: P.F. Barga, Box 522. Winfield, B.C. V0H 2C0. ph (604) 766-4718.