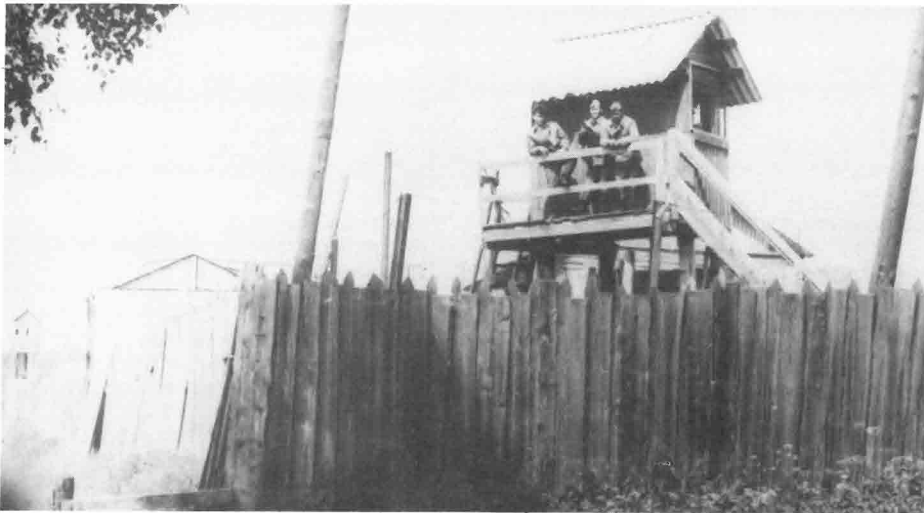


# MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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

Volume XX, No. 1, March, 1994



**Peter Petrovich Rempel, born in Niederchortitza, Old Colony, in 1885, is believed to have died in a labour camp in Arkhangelsk, north Russia, in 1942. This is a photo of a guard tower in the camp where he died. It was taken by Peter, the grandson of Peter Petrovich, during a recent research trip in which he tried to retrace the steps of his grandfather, and thus came to visit the camp at Arkhangelsk. Photo credit: Peter Rempel, Jr., and Herb Klassen, Moscow, Russia.**

## The Recent Russian German Emigres of Germany: A Survey Report

by John N. Klassen

*This article is based on a report given by the author on the 20th anniversary of *Mennonitische Umsiedlerbetreuung* (MUB), the organization that has cared for Russian German emigres (*Ausiedler*), who have arrived in Germany since the inflow heightened dramatically in the early 1970s. It is a ministry sponsored by MCC International and European Mennonite churches. The celebration was held on October 30, 1992, in Neuwied on the Rhine, Germany.<sup>1</sup> The translator of these materials was Walter Regehr at the Centre for MB Studies in Canada, Winnipeg. Endnotes were added by the editor.*

From 1950 on approximately 2.6 million *Ausiedler* (emigres) have emigrated to Germany from other countries. Of these 553,400 are from the former Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> For the state the integration of these new citizens has been a social problem of major proportions. It has also been a serious spiritual concern for the churches.

Approximately 90% of these "Russian" newcomers have indicated some church affiliation preference. Of the more than half a million aforementioned emigres, about 45% claim to be *Evangelisch* (i.e. Lutheran), 25% are Catholic, 15% Baptist, and 10% Mennonite/Mennonite Brethren, while 5% or so belong to some other religious group.<sup>3</sup>

The emigres from the FSU are almost exclusively the descendants of the Germans who settled in the Volga River region and in Southern Russia (Ukraine) at the invitation of the Russian government (i.e. Catherine the Great and several of her tsar successors) in the years 1763 to 1853. At the time the entire German population in Russia included about 55,000 Protestants (Lutheran and Reformed), 35,000 Catholics and about 12,000 Mennonites who as farmers and artisans were prepared to move and make new beginnings on the steppes of Russia.<sup>4</sup>

Upon arriving in the Federal Republic of Germany the emigres are transplanted into a society that is at once favourable and difficult. Often it is also a riddle and hands out big surprises. While Lutherans and Catholics are normally quickly integrated into their respective church communities as provided by their state church rights, the Mennonites (including Mennonite Brethren) and Baptists with their free church characteristics must find a church of their own choice if they want to join one. At first they tried to become members of already existing churches of their own denomination. However, real integration into church life is as difficult for Russian German Christians of the state church as it is for those coming from free church traditions. After 1974, when emigration from the Soviet Union increased

sharply, both the Baptists and the Mennonites began to establish independent congregations and by the grace of God have built them up very successfully.<sup>5</sup>

Emigre Catholic believers generally do not establish new congregations in Germany. Many Lutherans with a pietistic theology (e.g. stressing conversion, new birth, and sanctification) have established church-like fellowships parallel to the regular congregations which they join. At the moment there are fifty such fellowships in Germany. As a *Kirchliche Gemeinschaft* (church fellowship) with offices in Bad Sooden-Allendorf they publish a newsletter and organize an annual *Heimatkirchentag* (convention). Locally these fellowships are known as Lutheran *Brüdergemeinden* (Brethren congregations).

The remainder of this paper will focus on Mennonites and, to some degree, also Baptists. In the treatment of the question of immigration and establishing of churches, these emigre groups need to be seen as sharing a common background, since many of the Russian German Baptists come from Mennonite communities, particularly the Mennonite Brethren.<sup>6</sup> It happens frequently that such Baptist brothers/sisters join with a Mennonite church when they come to the Federal Republic of Germany. It can also happen that emigre Mennonites become Baptists in Germany.

### Statistical Data

How many of these emigres acknowledge that they are either Mennonites or Baptists when they touch German soil? As already mentioned, in the first fifteen years (i.e. roughly from 1970-1985), 14-16% of the Russian-German immigrants indicated in the reception centres that they were Baptist while 9-12% stated that they belonged to one of the two Mennonite groups - the *Kirchliche* or Mennonite Brethren. Based on such claims about 56,000 Mennonites have emigrated by the end of 1991. This includes all family members, though not all are church members. According to a biblical view only those persons who are baptized believers in Jesus Christ belong to the church.

A similar situation prevails among the Baptists. By the above calculation 83,000 emigres have listed themselves as Baptists in the time period noted. The fact that many in this latter group have a Mennonite background will become apparent in the reflections that follow, but this background must not put their current Baptist status into question. In total this comes to approximately 139,000 persons who consider themselves either Baptists of Mennonites, including children and other family members who have not yet become church members.

One of the tasks of the *Mennonitische Umsiedlerbetreuung* (MUB) is to meet in the state reception centres those immigrants who call them-

(cont'd on page 2)

## Russian German Emigres

(cont'd from page 1)

selves Mennonite, or have a Mennonite background. Should they wish it, the names of such families are then listed in order to facilitate reunion with relatives and friends. By the end of 1991 the volunteer workers of MUB had carefully gathered 71,000 names with birth date and place of origin added. According to reliable MUB estimates at least 20,000 persons who have come to Germany do not have their names on such a list.

Assuming that this estimate is realistic, one can say that about 91,000 persons of Mennonite background and who now call themselves either Baptist or Mennonite have found their way back to Germany.<sup>7</sup> The remaining 48,000 (out of 139,000) are thus descendants of Protestant or Catholic parents, since at the time of the emigration of Germans to Russia the Baptist Church did not yet exist.<sup>8</sup>

Another fact is that Christians do not seek membership in the churches once joined by their parents or grandparents. Many former Mennonites are now members of various Baptist congregations. Likewise one finds many former Lutherans and Catholics (Swabian, Hessian and families from the Rhineland and Palatinate) in Mennonite congregations, particularly in Mennonite Brethren congregations. Originally Russian Mennonites came almost exclusively from West Prussia. Former Russian Mennonites can, of course, also be found among Lutheran emigre families and individuals.

### Integration into the Churches

At the end of 1991 there were approximately 200 new *evangelische Freikirchen* founded by Russian German believers in Germany. These churches have various names and have formed several associations. The four larger organizations are: the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft zur geistlichen Unterstuetzung der Mennoniten* (AGUM), or Fellowship to Give Spiritual Support to Mennonite Churches; the *Bruderschaft der Taufgesinnten Gemeinden* (BTG, i.e. Baptists and MBs); the *Bruderschaft* (Brotherhood - Baptists and MBs); and the *Vereinigung* (Association of various Baptist churches).

A number belong to independent churches using various names. These include the following: Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and Baptist-Brethren, as well as *Evangelische Freikirchen* or *Freie Evangelische Gemeinden*. The four organizations could be further characterized as follows.<sup>9</sup>

#### AGUM

Twenty-five Mennonite congregations belong to this group. AGUM has about 5,000 members, of which 3,860 are relatively recent arrivals from the former Soviet Union (1991).

#### BTG

This is a merger of eight mostly older emigre

congregations with three new smaller similar churches. Their membership totals 3,275. Three Mennonite Brethren congregations that belong to it include 1,540 members.

#### Bruderschaft (Brethren congregations)

This is a loosely organized group consisting of about fifty congregations with a membership of around 14,000. Twenty-one Mennonite Brethren congregations with a membership of about 7,500 belong to this body (1991).

#### Vereinigung

According to its own reports this (the oldest) association of emigre congregations numbers fifty-one congregations with around 10,000 members. One Mennonite Brethren congregation with 120 members is included here.

#### Independent Emigre Churches

At the end of 1991 approximately fifty churches could be identified as "independent". The number of these congregations is constantly increasing, not only through the establishment of new ones, but also by the shifting of congregations which leave the above-mentioned associations. At least five Mennonite Brethren congregations with approximately 840 members are among the Independents. The aggregate membership of these congregations at the end of 1991 was about 4500.

Additionally, about 250 *Freie Evangelische* church Christians from Russia have joined the older established Mennonite congregations; 550 are members in the Mennonite Brethren group, the AMBD,<sup>10</sup> and about 2,500 have found a place in West German (national) congregations (according to Viktor Krell). Besides that at least 300-600 emigre believers have found their spiritual home in the established *Freie Evangelische* congregations.

### Summary and Conclusion

If our survey is relatively accurate, then around 139,000 Russian German emigre Mennonites and Baptists have a spiritual home somewhere in a church in Germany. Of these, 14,700 would belong as members to one of the two streams of the Mennonite church, 24,200 to one of the various Baptist congregations, and about 1000 belong to *Freie Evangelische* or *Evangelische Freie* congregations. Approximately every third or fourth Russian German who is part of a Mennonite or Baptist emigre family holds membership in a local German congregation.

What can one say about the other 100,000 or so family members of the 139,000 emigres of the total Mennonite and Baptist community in Germany? One can not give an accurate statistic to cover all individuals. A few suggestions can be made, however. Many of them are children who attend a free church but are not yet church members. In part (is it a large part? - ed.) the 100,000 are probably non-churched believers, i.e. they do not hold formal membership in any congregation. A number of them have probably become members of a state church.

It is, of course, a well-known fact that many individuals of the Mennonite and Baptist groups discussed here have not yet come to personal faith in Jesus Christ. Here is one of the primary evangelistic tasks of these congregations - to reach their own people. The Lord has plans for their well-being, and is the future hope for these churches.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The term *Aussiedler* is used in this article to designate Russian German emigres from the former Soviet Union who settled mostly in Germany. The term *Umsiedler* (less preferred now) is sometimes used interchangeably with *Aussiedler* to refer to these immigrants.

<sup>2</sup> The coming of these emigres was discussed in a number of articles in *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch 1990*, pp. 39-70. See particularly the section "Uebersicht ueber die Zahl der Aussiedler aus der UdSSR in den Jahren 1973-1988".

<sup>3</sup> This data was collected at the various camps which first received the emigres before they found permanent homes. Unna Massen had one of the earlier camps set up as reception centres.

<sup>4</sup> For a basic historical survey of the coming of the German colonists to Russia cf. Adam Giesinger, *The Story of Russia's Germans from Catherine to Khrushchev* (Lincoln, Neb.: AHSGR, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> For a brief survey of the development of the emigration in the 1970s and early 1980s cf. an unpublished article by Lawrence Klippenstein, "Auswanderungen der Mennoniten in Russland," presented to a symposium at Bechterdissen, Germany, in September, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> The larger picture of Baptist/Mennonite commonalities can be studied in Walter Sawatsky's, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> The Centre for MB Studies and Mennonite Heritage Centre have recently received an MUB printout listing of just under 83,000 names. They are titled as being from the period 1972-1992. All of the earlier lists were published in *Mennonitische Rundschau* and *Der Bote* but this was discontinued when the number of emigres arriving in Germany increased significantly about six years ago.

<sup>8</sup> The origin of the Baptist movement in Russia and Ukraine is usually traced back to the 1860s. Cf. Hans Christian Dietrich, *Urspruenge und Anfaenge des russischen Freikirchentums* (Erlangen, Germany: Fairy v. Lillienfeld, 1985), or a more popular treatment in Hans Brandenburg, *The Meek and the Mighty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> The First Quarter, 1994, issue of the MWC newsletter *Courier* cites the current membership of the Mennonite organizations in this group as follows: AGUM, 5274; BTG ca 4000; Independent MBs, ca 5650 (pp. 7-8).

<sup>10</sup> AMBD is the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Mennonitischer Brudergemeinden Deutschlands* (Fellowship of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Germany), currently with a membership of about 1300.

*John N. Klassen is currently teaching in a Bible school recently established for Aussiedler in Bonn, Germany. He is serving under the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services.*

## GENEALOGY AND FAMILY HISTORY

by Alf Redekopp

### QUERIES

**Derksen/Doerksen:** I am looking for the descendants of Heinrich Derksen born September 4, 1878 in Neuhorst, Chortitza Colony, Russia. He came to Canada in 1924 and lived in Hague, Grenfell or Greenfell, Saskatchewan. He died in August, 1947. Contact: Kevin Derksen, Box 446, Morris, MB R0G 1K0.

**Kaethler/Kettler:** I am seeking anecdotal and factual information about Peter Jakob Kaethler (1837-1885) born in Kronsweide, Chortitza, and died in Hochfeld (Morozovo), Yazykovo. His wife, Aganetha Isaak (1847-1931) was born in Einlage, Old Colony, and died in Saskatchewan(?). They had seven children including my grandmother, Anna Kaethler (1884-1966), born in Halbstadt, Molotschna, and died in Clearbrook, BC. Contact: Judith D. Rempel, 2416 Bowness Road NW, Calgary, AB T2N 3L7.

**Paulsheim:** Can anyone send me information on the village of Paulsheim in the former Molotschna Colony? Also I would like to get data on the Albrecht mill at Pologi (Ukraine). Thank you for any help you can give me. Contact: Katherine Peters, R.R.2, Didsbury, AB T0M 0W0.

**Peters:** I am seeking anecdotal and factual information about Herman Peters (1862-1914) and his wife Helena Friesen (1867-1912) who died in the Rosthern area. They had 10 children including my grandfather Herman Peters (1896-1968) who died in Saskatoon. Contact: Judith D. Rempel, 2416 Bowness Road NW, Calgary, AB T2N 3L7.

**Rempel:** I am seeking anecdotal and factual information about Wilhelm Wilhelm Rempel (1832-1905) and his wife Maria Dick/Dyck/Dueck (1840-1886) of Neuhohefeld, Chortitza, Russia. Wilhelm had 12 children (four with an earlier wife) including my grandfather Johann Wilhelm Rempel (1875-1953) who died in Clearbrook, BC. Contact: Judith D. Rempel, 2416 Bowness Road NW, Calgary, AB T2N 3L7.

**Stobbe:** I am seeking anecdotal and factual information about Heinrich Stobbe (1868-1917) and his wife Maria Fischer (1872-1915) who died in Rosthern. They had nine children including my grandmother, Susanna Stobbe (1896-1968) who died in Saskatoon. Contact: Judith D. Rempel, 2416 Bowness Road NW, Calgary, AB T2N 3L7.

**Thiessen:** If you have ancestors by the name of Thiessen who lived in the Molotschna villages of Gnadenthal or Tiegenhagen, contact: Richard Thiessen, 781 Kildonan Drive, Winnipeg, MB R2K 2G1.

### NEW RESOURCES

1) *Computer database of David Haury's 'Index to Mennonite immigrants on United States passenger lists, 1872-1904'*

Although the information for Haury's book, now out of print, was recorded in PC-FILE III,

this format is not widely used for database management at this time (1993). Through the assistance of John Thiesen, archivist for the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, Jay Hubert received copies of Haury's original disks. Hubert then converted these files into other formats to make them compatible with databases more commonly used today. He will return a free copy of the files to anyone who sends him disks formatted for MS DOS (two 3.5" disks at 1.44 MB, three 5.25" disks at 1.2 MB, four 3.5" disks at 720 kB, or seven 5.25" disks at 360 kB). Return postage is appreciated. You may contact Jay Hubert at 21 Convert Court, San Rafael, CA 94901.

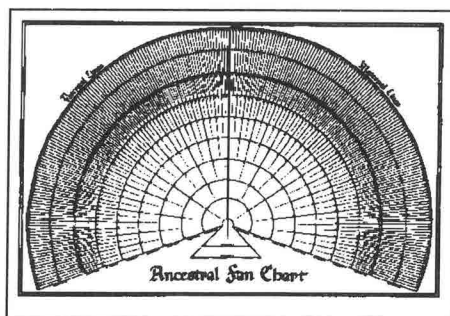
The disks contain five self-extracting files, and a READ.ME file which gives adequate explanations for their use. Each of the five files contains similar information. Usually only one of the five files will be needed. You must choose the one that is compatible with the database program you are using. The choices are: Personal Ancestra File, version 2.2, Gedcom file for general use with lineage-linked database programs, Brother's Keeper, version 5.0, dBaseIII database program, and Paradox 4.0 database program.

The copyright for these files has been assigned to Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas 67117-9989. Permission has been granted to make copies of these files, provided the distribution is free, as explained in the READ.ME file.

The ships' lists themselves are available from a variety of sources including: *Index to Mennonite Immigrants on United States Passenger Lists 1872-1904* compiled and edited by David A. Haury (North Newton, KS: MLA, 1986); and *Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need; A Scrapbook about Mennonite Immigrants from Russia 1870-1885*, compiled and edited by Clarence Hiebert (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1974).

2) *Ten-generation Ancestral Fan Chart* (Lancaster, PA: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1993).

This blank chart is ideal for recording one's ancestors back to the tenth generation, showing at a glance all ancestral lines. This specific version improves the previous ones that the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society produced. Standard genealogical numbers have been added and it has been printed on ivory acid-free stock with red and black ink, giving it a distinctive, "historical" color. The size is 25" x 36.5" inches. Order from LMHS, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602-1499. Cost: \$6.00 US.



### BOOK NOTES

Alfred Penner, ec. *My Years in Sagradowka 1902-1928: The Memories of Gerhard G. Penner. Volume 1* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 1993) pb., 97 pp.

This book contains the translation of the first part of the autobiography of Gerhard H. Penner (1902-1989), augmented with notes and illustrations by the editor. It covers the Russian time period, during which Gerhard H. Penner was born in Orloff, Sagradowka, along with the years of political change which saw the Soviet Union develop, and his coming to Canada in 1928.

Alfred Penner, ed. *Fast Family Letters 1929-1991* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 1992) pb., 146 pp.

In this book Penner has translated the letters collected by his mother, Aganetha Penner nee Fast. She was the only member of the Fast family to leave Russia in 1928. This Fast family lived in Ohrloff, Sagradowka. The book begins with letters received in 1929 from her parents. All correspondence with the family came to a complete stop after 1937. It did not resume till 1963 when Aganetha Penner discovered that her sister-in-law Tina Fast and her sister Justina had survived the war. *The Fast Family Letters* conclude with letters written in Germany by the family of Tina Fast's daughter to Alfred Penner's family. For the above titles contact: Alfred Penner, 260 Bluegrass Rd., Winnipeg, MB, R2C 2Z2.

Arnie Neufeld, ed., *A Family Portrait: Stories and Adventures of the Klassen/Peters Family* (Winkler, MB: Heritage Valley Publications, 1993), pb., 138 pp.

This compilation contains *The History of the David G. Klassen Family* first published in 1972, and a 1976 publication entitled, *Trek to Freedom*, written by Susan Toews. Special family celebrations held since the dates of these publications resulted in other tributes and stories being told and written. These have also been included to form a "family portrait". Some of the documents have been translated and others have been published in the original German with minimal editing. It is the hope that someone may take up the challenge to translate them soon. Contact Arnie Neufeld, P.O. 224, Winkler, MB, R6W 4A5.

Kliwer, Victor, ed., Kliwer. *Genealogie der Familie/Genealogy of the Family Peter Kliwer and Anna Adrian* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 1992) hdc, 194 pp.

This bilingual study traces the family back to Anna's paternal grandparents, Elder Julian Adrian and his wife Anna (Janzen) of Klein Schardau in W. Prussia, and her maternal grandparents, Elder Franz Goerz and his wife Maria of Zwanzigerweide, West Prussia. Elder Goerz was born in 1779, noted in excerpts from a very old diary that survived from that period. Contact: Werner Kliwer, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB, R3P 0M4.

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



## The Mirror of the Martyrs Exhibition

The exhibit, "**Mirror of the Martyrs**", is a drama of people of authority-obedient to crown and church, torturing and killing Anabaptists, people who claimed a higher obedience. Rulers saw Anabaptists as a growing, conspiratorial threat that must be stamped out before it could win more to the cause and thus endanger the unity of church and state. Anabaptists were Christian dissenters, radicals in the 1500s at the time of the Reformation. They taught that only Christian believers on confession of faith should be baptized, the Scriptures offer authority for the faithful, that church and state should be separated, that believers should live simply and in loving communities as followers of Jesus, rejecting all violence and war. These Anabaptists were arrested, imprisoned and killed by the hundreds, even thousands, for their beliefs.

The idea for this exhibit was born with the reappearance in 1988 of 23 copper plate etchings done by Jan Luyken and used to illustrate the great *Martyr's Mirror* of 1685. A group of Friends of the Anabaptist Heritage purchased the plates as a non-profit trust. These 300-year-old works of art offer a fresh way to tell of the struggle of women and men under pain and torture who hold firm in their convictions. The exhibit includes eight of the original plates.

Jan Luyken, born in 1649, was a well-known Dutch poet and artist in the generation that followed Rembrandt. He created a total of 104 etchings for the 1685 Dutch edition of the *Martyr's Mirror*.

The editor/writer of *Martyr's Mirror*, Thielemann van Braght, was born in 1625. He compiled a total of more than 800 martyr accounts drawing on earlier writings, martyr ballads, stories told and retold, and documents in city archives. An eloquent Amsterdam preacher, van Braght wanted the *Martyr's Mirror* to be a means for his people, softened by riches and respectability, to recover a courageous biblical faith.

Two words are keys to this exhibit, "Martyr" and "Mirror". "Martyr" is derived from the Greek word for witness, i.e., one who sacrifices life or something of great value for the sake of principle. Normally we think of a mirror as a looking glass, but van Braght used "Mirror" to mean "an exemplary model, a reflection of the mystery of the meaning of ultimate reality". "What beliefs are worth dying for?" is the question asked again and again.

This exhibit surveys the 2000-year-sweep of the Christian martyr story. Lutherans, Reformed, Orthodox and Catholics have their martyr books and writings. Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and other faiths also have their martyr traditions. In one of the small cases of the exhibit you will see the most famous martyr book of all, John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. In 17th century England it was "the most widely read book next to the Bible."

At the heart of the exhibit are 12 stories of martyrs, each with photographs enlarged from



Manitoba Exhibit

small four-by-five inch prints. Viewers will see images that speak without words: the poise and endurance of an Anabaptist woman under torture, a child watching, the serenity of a martyr at the moment of death. They will see the faces of persons of authority — rulers, sheriffs, clergymen, jailers — who see themselves as good people helping to preserve an orderly Christian society.

Another title van Braght gave to this book was *Bloody Theatre of Nonresistant Christians*. Rulers used public executions as religious spectacle to dramatize God's wrath and warning to dissenters. An execution was a kind of morality play with stage, script, director, cast, stage hands, props and spectators. At the very centre of the exhibit is the arena — a dimly lit stage with four openings through which one can peer into the place of execution — a city square, perhaps the year 1550. Surrounding the core of the exhibit are sections on martyrs past, martyrs today, the art of printmaking, book publishing, the detective story of the lost plates and the lands of the Anabaptist martyrs.

*Adapted from a script provided by The Martyr's Mirror Trust, Kauffman Museum, North Newton, Kansas and Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana.*

## Mirror of the Martyrs Program at the Winnipeg Location

Concord College, 169 Riverton Avenue  
April 15 - May 10, 1994

### Special Events

April 15, 7:00 p.m. **Opening Reception**  
(Reservations required by April 10)

**Lecture:** "Introducing *The Martyrs' Mirror*"  
by Walter Klaassen

April 16, 7:30 p.m.

**Lecture:** "Early Christian Martyrs"  
by Gerry Ediger

April 17, 7:00 p.m.

**Lecture:** "Anabaptist Women Martyrs"  
by Alvina Block

**Film:** "The Radicals"

April 19, 7:30 p.m.

**Lecture:** "Music of the Martyrs"  
by John Martens

April 30, 10:30 a.m. **Brunch**

(Reservations required by April 27)

**Lecture:** "The Martyrs' Mirror" - Gerhard Enns  
with readings by Sarah Klassen

May 1, 2:30 p.m.

**Lecture:** "Contemporary Mennonite Martyrs"  
by Adolf Ens

May 6, 7:30 p.m.

**Lecture:** "Russian Mennonite Martyrs"  
by Lawrence Klippenstein

May 7, 10:30 a.m. **Brunch**

(Reservations required by May 4)

**Lecture:** "Martyrdom and North American Mennonites Today" by Abe Dueck

May 8, 7:00 p.m.

**Film:** "The Great Trek" — The 1943 Mennonite flight from Soviet Ukraine to Germany.

### Regular Exhibit Hours:

1:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.  
Daily.

**Special arrangements** can be made for group showings with guides.

**For further information** and reservations, call CMBS Archives (204) 669-6575 ext. 244/255 or MHC Archives (204) 888-6781.

### Sponsored by:

Centre for MB Studies in Canada (Winnipeg)  
Mennonite Heritage Centre (Winnipeg)  
Concord College (Winnipeg)  
Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

### Patrons:

Assiniboine Travel Service Ltd.  
Ph. 204-775-0271  
Crosstown Credit Union Limited  
Ph. 204-942-1277  
Friesen Tokar Reynolds Architectural Partnership  
Ph. 204-885-9323  
Jake and Jean Rempel, Winnipeg  
Ph. 204-269-8582

# Mennonite-Related Archival Resources in the State Archives of Gdansk

by John Friesen

In September of 1993 I travelled to Gdansk, Poland. My aim was to see first-hand the resources for Mennonite history research which the State Archives of Gdansk affords. When I arrived at the archives, I was directed to the assistant archivist, Stanislaw Flis. Since I had written that I wanted to see their Mennonite-related materials, he had prepared some for me to study.

The Gdansk archives include extensive records on the area around Gdansk from the thirteenth century to the present. It has published a book listing all its inventories and collections, title *Archiwum Panstwowe W. Gdansku*. The introduction to the book is in Polish. For the benefit of foreign researchers, it also contains English and German summaries of the introduction.

The listings of the various larger collections in the *Archiwum* are all in Polish, although some headings for the collections which have significant German content are translated into German. Descriptions for the individual collections are given in Polish only.

From these listings and descriptions of major holdings, one has to go to the inventory listing of each separate collection. Any one collection in the main listing in the *Archiwum* may consist of one or more volumes of sub-listings. The largest collection had ten volumes of entries. These volumes include the listing of actual archival documents. One volume may have hundreds of pages, and each page might have up to a dozen or more collections of archival materials. One quickly realizes that the archival holdings of the Gdansk State Archives are quite extensive indeed.

These inventory listings of holdings are the key to the archives. The entries are all in Polish, but every holding which has German content is either listed in German or is translated. There are no indices to the listing of collections. One simply has to page laboriously through the volumes one by one.

The first item Stanislaw Flis showed me was a document from the eighteenth century. It was a transcript of the interrogation of Mennonites by Gdansk authorities dealing with what Mennonites believed about the Trinity. The seven-page document was hand-written in Gothic script, and dated September, 1726.

In another set of documents, in the volume entitled *Kriegs und Domaenenkammer zu Marienwerder, 1772-1808*, there were a number of materials about attempts by Mennonites to buy land in different towns, e.g. Schwetz, Riesenburg, and Neuenburg. In all the collections which I examined, the request to purchase was denied. In one case the official ruled that the Mennonites had not offered to pay a price for the property sufficiently above market value. In another case the offer to purchase was denied by the magistrate, who stated, "this act (of denying the request to purchase) is clearly to the benefit of the community because to have a Mennonite living in the town would be detrimental to the well-being

of the community." The person making the request was fined for daring to file the application to purchase.

The inventory *Akta Miasta Elblaga 1260-1772/-1844* included a *Brandordnung* for the villages in the Elbing area from 1666, and *Privilegien* for nineteen villages from the thirteenth, fourteenth, and sixteenth centuries. These materials were checked to see whether Mennonites had patterned their *Brandordnung* and *Privilegien* on them.

The holdings in the Gdansk archives are unfortunately not complete. When Germany was



On a trip to the area of Zeyersvorderkampen where my Sawatzky lineage lived before they emigrated to Russia in the 1790s, I crossed one arm of the Nogat River on this small two-car ferry powered by a small diesel engine. The person on the left is my guide, Dr. Arkadius Rybak, from the village of Starepol (formerly Altfelde) near Malbork, and on the right, the person in charge of the ferry. Photo credit: John Friesen, CMBC.



One of the building styles used by Mennonites in the Zeyersvorderkampen area. The house and barn are built in the shape of a T. Because the farmland is about six feet below sea level, flooding was a constant danger as can be seen in the photo. The buildings were built on a mound of soil to protect them in case of a flood. Photo credit: John Friesen, CMBC.

divided at the end of WWI, some of the archival materials were removed. The introduction to the main Gdansk archival listing states that in 1919 "the most important documents of authorities and institutions" were taken from Gdansk to Koenigsberg and to Berlin-Dahlem.

The collection at Berlin-Dahlem was also divided. At the end of World War II documents from the years prior to 1806 were taken to Merseburg in the former DDR (East Germany). Some of the materials from Koenigsberg also seem to have been taken to Merseburg after World War II. As a result of German unification, the collection at Merseburg is now being returned to Berlin-Dahlem.

It is thus evident that only a portion of the original materials in the Gdansk archives remained there. Even those materials which were left in Gdansk did not all survive World War II. When the Russian front approached Gdansk in 1945, it was decided to divide the collection into a number of smaller portions and to distribute them throughout the countryside. It was hoped that at least some of the holdings might thus be saved.

Some of the portions were captured by the Russians, and others by the British. After the war, the captured sections were returned. However, some of the original portions have not turned up, and are presumed to have been destroyed in the war. Stanislaw Flis stated that it was hard to establish exactly what percentage of the total holdings of the archives had been lost, since it is not always possible to determine the size of each of the lost collections. However, he said it was estimated that about a quarter to a third of the total pre-war holdings in the Gdansk State Archives disappeared this way.

It should be emphasized though, that despite these losses, the Gdansk archives are still rich in resources. Most of its collections include records from 1806 to the present. Even though a considerable amount of the earlier material was taken first to Merseburg and then to Berlin-Dahlem, some of the earlier records are still in the Gdansk archives. It is also evident that not nearly all the official records were taken to Berlin-Dahlem after World War I. Many remain in Gdansk and can be consulted there today.

John Friesen is Professor of History and Theology at CMBC in Winnipeg, MB.

## Research in Progress (cont'd from page 6)

Heinz Bergen of Regina, Saskatchewan is gathering materials to prepare a history of the former village of Einlage (Old Colony) on the Dnieper River in Ukraine. New maps of this village are available from the Heritage Centre.

Research on the history of the Conference of Mennonites of Canada is continuing. The History Archives Committee is looking for a writer for this book. If you are interested please contact the Mennonite Heritage Centre for further information. The committee is also inviting anyone to send in materials related to this history.

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

## Friends of the MHC Archives - 1993

Since 1988 we have been receiving special contributions from a group of people who wish to promote the Mennonite Heritage Centre activities with extra support. We call them "Friends of the Archives" — about 45 persons in all.

Their total contributions in 1993 came to about \$4,000.00. This was extremely significant in making our budget balance at the end of the year. We wish to publicly express our warm appreciation for this help in 1993. We provide a souvenir mug, a subscription to the *Historian*, and a donations certificate to all persons who complete a five-year cycle of support by donating \$500.00 or more.

You are encouraged to join this group. Please write us if you wish more information. Our address is: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4.

## New Resources

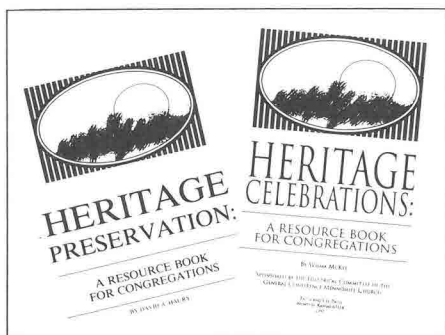
Elsewhere in this issue we share with you the sad news of the termination of the GCMC Historical Commission. The good news is that the Commission did produce two excellent resources for congregational heritage work. They are:

**Heritage Celebrations: A Resource Book for Congregations** (1992) written by Wilma McKee, published in a ringed binder, 75 pp., \$12.00.

**Heritage Preservation: A Resource Book for Congregations** (1993) written by David A. Haury, pb., 30 pp., \$8.00.

We want to note that the first item has been republished in a very attractive second edition titled *Heritage Celebrations. A Guide to Celebrating the History of your Church*, pb., 100 pp., \$14.25 CAN/\$10.95 US.

Order from the Mennonite Heritage Centre.



These paintings are part of the MHC gallery exhibit "Funeral of a Frozen Women," currently provided by Jean Smallwood (Neufeld) of Winnipeg, MB. The exhibit will be open till April 25. It will be followed by an exhibition prepared by seniors from Bethel Place in Winnipeg, MB. This exhibit of paintings will be coordinated by Esther Peters, supervisor of this group. Photo credit: Jean Smallwood.

## Recent Acquisitions

1. Photocopy of a two-volume diary of the late Rev. David Toews, Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Courtesy of Dr. David Riesen, Winnipeg, MB.
2. Files of *Der Bote* office (1992-1993). Courtesy of Erwin Strempler, editor.
3. Set of slides on former Mennonite buildings in Ukraine. Courtesy of architect Rudy Friesen, Winnipeg, MB.
4. J.J. Epp, *Historical Sketch of our Mennonite People's Trek from Russia to Canada and early Development in the New Land*. 13 pp. Translated by Dora Adrian. Photocopy. Courtesy of Weldon Epp, Winnipeg, MB.
5. Letters by and to the late Michael Klaassen, Herold Mennonite Church, Morden, MB. Originals and English translation. Courtesy of Esther Bergen, Winnipeg, MB.
6. John Edward Friesen, "Dietrich Neufeld and Velvet Revolution": Education, Instead of Violence and Terror, as a Means of Achieving Societal Change", unpublished paper written at Bethel College, Kansas, 55 pp. 1993. Courtesy of the author.
7. Report on the Heinrich Toews shooting incident in Altona, MB. 6 pp. From the papers of John P. Elias, Winkler, MB, translated by Ed Enns, Winnipeg, MB.
8. Diary of Elder Franz Goertz from the Molostchna settlement (b. 1781). 8 pp. Photocopy. Courtesy of Werner Kliever, CMBC.
9. Diary of Joseph Hofer written in St. Petersburg, Russia, in the summer of 1873. Translated by Arnold M. Hofer, Freeman, South Dakota. Courtesy of the translator.

10. Photo of 1938 General Conference session delegates in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Courtesy of Hilda Epp, Winnipeg and Anna Willms, Saskatoon, SK.
11. Seven diary notebooks of Rev. Johann Schroeder, Chortitz Mennonite Church, East Reserve, MB. 1921-1951 (?). Courtesy of Ernie Braun, Tourond, MB.
12. A video *Your Heritage to discover, to share...* One hour, 45 minutes. Available at the CMC Resource Centre.

## Research in Progress

Several weeks ago we were privileged to host three researchers working on the publication of a centennial history of the Hague-Osler Mennonite reserve in Saskatchewan. The group included Leonard Doell (Aberdeen), Dick Braun (Osler) and Jacob Guenther (Warman).

Leonard has written a biography of Klaas Peters which was published in the book *The Bergthaler Mennonites* (CMBC Publications) in 1988 and Jacob Guenther wrote *Men of Steele — Lifestyle of a Unique Sect* (1981).

Dr. David Friesen of Edmonton, Alberta, is completing a book on the history of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Winkler, Manitoba. It is to be ready for a centennial celebration next year.

The local history committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society is working on several volumes of sources dealing with the history of the former West Reserve in Manitoba. John Dyck (48 Coral Cres., Winnipeg, MB) is the chairperson of this committee. He is also editing these volumes. His new book on the Crosstown Credit Union of Winnipeg was published a month ago.

(cont'd on page 5)



## A Tribute to Esther Horsch, 1909-1994

by Abe Dueck

On January 29, 1994, Esther Horsch died peacefully at her home in Winnipeg. This was less than two years after the passing of her husband, Ben Horsch (See John Martens, "A Tribute to Ben Horsch", *Mennonite Historian* Vol. 18 September, 1992:5). Esther too left a very rich legacy of involvement in the Mennonite community. This was all the more remarkable because her extensive contributions were made during a time when few women were given similar leadership roles.

Esther was the oldest member of a pioneering Mennonite Brethren family in Winnipeg. She was born in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and after a number of moves the family came to Winnipeg. Her father, C.N. Hiebert (1881-1975), became a city missionary in Winnipeg in 1925, at a time when the city was experiencing the influx of new Mennonite immigrants from the USSR.

At the North End MB Church she met Ben, whom she married on June 29, 1932. In 1933 she was appointed English language instructor at the recently-founded Winnipeg German Bible School (1930-1939), where she taught periodically in subsequent years.

She and Ben also spent time in further studies at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA) and in Germany. In 1943 Ben was appointed an instructor at Winkler Bible School where both he and Esther became active in the community, particularly in music.

When the Mennonite Brethren Bible College opened in Winnipeg in the fall of 1944 Ben was invited to join the faculty of the Music Department. In the first year, Ben's involvement was on a part-time basis while he continued teaching in Winkler. Esther was not immediately officially appointed as an instructor, although the records indicate that she taught a small class of three students in English language in 1944. Thus she was the last surviving member of the original instructional faculty at MBBC. Her death came fifty years after the founding of the college.

The records of subsequent years do not always clearly document the role of Esther at MBBC. Women, of course, could not hope to be given the same official status as men on the faculty. Nevertheless, from 1947 to 1955 Esther was listed as an instructor and her picture appeared regularly with other faculty members in the yearbooks of the college. In fact, in most years her picture appeared with other regular faculty members (in 1948 it was located between those of J.A. Toews and Ben Horsch).

Her position or teaching assignment was variously described, usually as "Hymnology" or "English and Hymnology". In the College minutes of June 20-21, 1946, however, she is also referred to as the "technical administrator" of the Music Department, and in the catalogues of 1953-56 she is listed as Assistant Registrar. She was sometimes also referred to as the Dean of



Esther Horsch, 1909-1994.

Women, although official records do not contain any such designation.

Students who attended the College during those years regarded her as much more than an instructor; informally she became a counsellor and friend to many. For a time she also taught Hymnology at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) in Winnipeg.

Esther's contribution was significant in many other areas. For some years she became a storyteller for Radio CFAM and was known as "Tante Esther". Later she was engaged as a social worker at several institutions including Logal Neighbourhood and Marymound. In 1979 she published a biography of her father entitled *C.N. Hiebert was my Father*. Her writing and communication skills were widely recognized.

The obituary referred to Esther as a "closet Mennonite historian and family archivist". A large collection of hymnals and other musical materials housed in the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies at Concord College has been named the "Ben and Esther Horsch Music Collection".

Esther's life was also marked by hardship and difficulty. Particularly tragic was the death of Esther and Ben's only child, Viola, in an automobile accident in 1968. But Esther continued to reach out to others, including her own grandchildren and members of the Mennonite community and beyond.

Esther Horsch truly deserves to be recognized as one of the foremost leaders among Mennonite women of her generation.

## Recent Acquisitions

1. *Pioneer was Fast*, a 3-ringed binder with 44 leaves, compiled by Peter W. Fast, Wycliffe Bible Translator. Contains accounts of personal experiences.
2. A cassette recording of "*Kernlieder: cycle for voice and piano*" composed by Thomas Jahn (1991) and performed in Waterloo, Ontario by David Falk and Elvera Froese. Donated by Peter Letkemann, Winnipeg, MB.

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

3. Seventy-two (4x6) colour photographs from "Coaldale Revisited", an event held at the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church, Coaldale, AB on May 21-23, 1993. Taken and donated by Lorina Marsch, Winnipeg, MB.
4. An *MB Herald* photograph and negatives collection consisting of 250 photographs and 250 35mm B&W negatives.
5. Papers, essays and periodicals collected by John Unger while holding the office of director of the Christian Education for the Canadian MB Conference.
6. Ten German theological books published between 1835 and 1894 collected and donated by Theodor C. Martens, Altona, MB.
7. River East MB Church records consisting of 20 inches of textual materials covering the years 1963 to 1990.
8. Eight large boxes of letters from the former USSR mailed to the Russian Department of Mennonite Brethren Communications. Written between 1988 and 1993.

## Do We Need The MB Church?

by Henry C. Born

In recent weeks I have read J.B. Toews' *A Pilgrimage of Faith: The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia and North America*, and wish to commend our Centres for M.B. Studies for publishing this book. It will likely be the last one written by someone who can record first-person experiences related to forces that shaped so much of the Mennonite Brethren Church in its earlier years.

After reading the book I am left asking a question which was directed at me when we were in Paraguay two years ago, where we ministered particularly to the M.B. Church in Volendam. When I had presented a historical review of the church in two sessions, one of the leaders said, "There need to be two more chapters, one discussing the present status of the M.B. Church, and one dealing with its future place and role."

I still keep asking: What is the significance of today's M.B. Church, both in the smaller framework of the Mennonite community, and in the larger perspective of evangelical churches? When I read the heading of the last chapter in *Pilgrimage of Faith* I anticipated at least a partial answer to this question, but found that the concerns and advice expressed related only to the evangelical cause in general.

Are there any plans to address, somewhere, the importance of, and the need for the M.B. Church in the ecclesiastical larger picture of today?

## MMHS Annual Meeting News

by Elmer Heinrichs

The Reinland Community Centre, hosted in the first Mennonite church building erected in Manitoba, was the site of the annual meeting of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society held on January 29, 1994.

Projecting the upcoming program, president Bert Friesen (Centre for MB Studies) said that 1994 should be a very active year for the Society. He noted that the society of 157 members with five hard working committees fosters an interest in family genealogy, as well as Mennonite history and culture and supports publications in these areas.

The Mennonite genealogy committee may be the most active, involving more members than any other, and concentrating on family history and genealogy. Martha Martens, a six-year member of the board, told the attending 30 members that the committee's highlight in 1993 was a Genealogy and Family History Workshop organized in conjunction with the Winnipeg branch. Over 80 people attended, with Henry Schapansky of Westminster, B.C., available as resource person and presenter.

The local history committee, reported chairman John Dyck, focused its efforts on three West Reserve projects. These consisted of public forums, research and manuscript preparation aimed at publication of the pioneer Reinlaender Mennonite Church family register, and the planning of long-range goals for other publications.

Dyck said the historic Reinlaender church register would include birth, baptism, marriage and death records of hundreds of family members, many of whom were born in the 1800s. Sometimes, the records include names and dates for family members who remained in Russia, i.e. did not emigrate to Canada. Cross references are being compiled by volunteers.

The Heritage Grants Program and the MMHS have approved support to cover publishing costs, with additional funding to be raised by the committee. The manuscript should be at the printer in the spring of 1994, said Dyck.

The committee is hoping also for the 1995 publication of the 1880 West Reserve Settlement register, a census which records village of residence and includes families not found in the church register. "We always need more researchers and writers," commented Dyck. The committee is also exploring the possibility of setting up a permanent office and local archives in the community, perhaps at Altona or Winkler, he reported. The former Elim Bible School in Altona which a local seniors group is now seeking to buy, was suggested as a possible site. "It's a must," says Abe Hoeppner. "Senior researchers don't want to and cannot go to Winnipeg for research work."

The "Canadian Mennonites and the Challenge of Nationalism" symposium, in which the soci-

ety participated, received a positive evaluation when it was held in Winnipeg in March, 1993. A book including a number of the papers read will be published in the near future.

The research, scholarship and publications committee was involved with the translation and publication of *The Molotschna Settlement* through CMBC Publications in the Echo Historical Series. A second book, *Trek to Central Asia*, was also published recently.

This year *Am Trakt*, a history of the colony east of the Volga River and another volume in the series, a biography of Johann Cornies by D.H. Epp will also be published as well, said Friesen. "There is lots of interest in the Molotschna volume, and the biography of Cornies is expected to have a wide circulation," said Adolf Ens, a representative of CMBC Publications.

Re-elected to the 14-member board were: Bert Friesen and Evelyn Friesen, Mennonite Heritage Village. New members are Adolf Ens, CMBC; Lawrence Giesbrecht, EMMC; Lawrence Klippenstein, MHC; and Alf Redekopp, CMBS. Ens expressed concern about the lack of women representation on the Board. "The view of women is important for our history," he said.

Member Ken Braun raised the issue of the gradual loss of the Low German language, and wondered if the Society might be willing to address the problem. "Low German — a very rich language — seems to have fallen into disrespect in Canada," said Braun. He noted current linguistic studies in Europe, its continued use in Mexico, in South America, and to some extent, still in Canada also.

"It would be nice to link local interests with interested linguists in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg and other Canadian institutions," he said.

Chairman Friesen said the board would discuss his concern and see if some contacts can be made. Braun was also encouraged to personally spearhead promotion of the Low German language.

Refreshments served by the Reinland community were followed with an address "Meeting Historians and Other Scholars in Russia" by Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, of the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg. About 60 persons were present for this presentation.

## Russians Interested in Pacifism

by Elmer Heinrichs

A former country representative of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Russia office touched on pacifism in Russia, contact with German-speaking people, meeting Westerners from abroad and the growth of Bible societies in his keynote address to the annual meeting of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society held in Reinland, Manitoba, on January 29, 1994.

Lawrence Klippenstein and his wife LaVerna returned from Moscow in September, 1993, having spent a year in the newly-established MCC-CIS (Russia) office as country reps for MCC. In his report titled "Meeting Historians in Russia", Klippenstein mentioned attending a conference on pacifism with representatives of Doukhobor, Tolstoy, Mennonite and other pacifist-oriented groups.

People have become more interested in pacifism — though not in state terms. The search for exemption rights as conscientious objectors is a live question. British Quakers have been at the forefront of helping pacifist Russians get better legislation to deal with these concerns. Obtaining such legislation has been an uphill battle. However, some people have been receiving assistance from a former Red Army Baptist lieutenant-colonel, Anatoli Ptchelintsov, who has tried to make things less difficult for COs, the group was told.

Klippenstein added that his own dissertation titled "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia" was now being translated into Russian. A recent discovery of records, he added, involved the short-lived United Council of Religious Communities, an organization set up around 1919 to help COs in the early years of the Lenin era.

An interesting trip for the MCC representative had been one to Barnaul in Siberia to attend an annual celebration held in memory of the forced resettlement of Germans from the Volga River region in 1941. "There are still many Mennonites living there, and some scholars are really involved in the study of Russian Germans as well as the Low German language," said Klippenstein.

New German publications are appearing. Quite recently *Zeitung fuer Dich* released lists of names of people, including many of Mennonite origin, who died in the Stalin era.

A Bible Society for all of Russia, and several organizations, such operating again, reported Klippenstein. He noted, however, that there are some internal struggles between the Baptist and Orthodox church leaders about proper church representation for these groups.

Answering a question later about whether a foreign Bible Society doesn't check to see where the money is going — a lot of money is reportedly coming in from the West — Klippenstein said, "Such gifts give the Russian people important help in the operation of their society, but sometimes donations can lead to misunderstandings."

There has been a somewhat mixed response to an MCC project begun over a decade ago — the translation of the Barclay series of N.T. commentaries and an O.T. commentary series into Russian. "Some are very happy with the commentary, others have questions. As in our country, the Christian people in Russia vary a great deal, and what's appreciated by one may be almost anathema to another."

*Elmer Heinrichs is a freelance writer residing in Altona, Manitoba.*



## MHSC Annual Meeting

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada board and executive met on Saturday, December 4, at Concord College (MBBC), Winnipeg for its annual meeting.

Members who attended the meeting represented provincial Mennonite historical societies in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, as well as the different Mennonite archives and Mennonite Studies centres.

President Ted Friesen of Altona reported that the society's major project, the writing of *Mennonites in Canada*, Volume III, will hopefully be "out before the end of 1994." Dr. Ted Regehr, Professor of Canadian History at the University of Saskatchewan and the author of Volume III, reported that his writing thus far has compelled him to "rethink, redefine and recognize any ideals, interpretations and factual information" of the Canadian Mennonite experience of the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. "My own ideas have changed and continue to change," stated Regehr. The title of the book will be, *Mennonites in Canada: A People Transformed, 1940-1970*.

The board decided to begin negotiating a publication deal with the University of Toronto Press. It is hoped that the book will be off the press in time for Christmas 1994.

The board re-elected Ted Friesen (Altona, Manitoba), Dr. John Friesen (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Royden Loewen (Steinbach, Manitoba), and Linda Huebert Hecht (Waterloo, Ontario) to the executive.

## Stories About the Past Workshop in Altona

**Where:** The Altona Senior Citizens Centre  
1 block north of Wall to Wall gas station

**When:** Saturday, April 30, 1994



**9:30 a.m.** - Coffee and registration.

**10:00 a.m.** - Program Papers.

Town of Altona Beginnings - Lawrence Klippenstein (Wpg.).

Pioneer Health Care on the West Reserve - Otto Hamm (Morden).

**12:00** - Lunch.

**1:00p.m.** - Program Papers.

The MCI: A Pioneer School - Gerhard Ens (Wpg.). Discussion of papers.

### Displays:

Mennonite Books - Rempel/Harms Maps  
Mennonite Heritage Centre  
Additional historical displays welcomed.

**Sponsor:** The MMHS Local History Committee, chaired by John Dyck.

**Registration:** with lunch \$10.00; without lunch \$2.50.

**Phone** two days ahead to ensure meals: Winkler 325-9082; Altona 324-6090; Gretna 327-5544; Morden 822-5292.

**Admission Free - Bring a Friend**



This is a group of Muscovites much interested in pacifism and conscientious objection in Russia. They are seen meeting here in the MCC office in Moscow (1993) to discuss ways of improving legislation to help young persons get military exemptions if they are COs. Photo credit: Lawrence Klippenstein.

## Book Review

Bartsch, Franz. *Our Trek to Central Asia*. Trans. by Elisabeth Peters and Gerhard Ens. (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1993) pb., 143 pp., \$10.00.

Reviewed by Matthew G. Neufeld.

This translation of Frank Bartsch's account of the "infamous" Mennonite trek to Central Asia (*Unser Auszug nach Mittelasien*, Echo Verlag, 1948) will benefit students of Russian Mennonite history whose first language is English. Bartsch had a definite agenda in writing his account of the trek. He hoped that it would warn others against "interpreting Scripture capriciously and arbitrarily in order to justify and reinforce preconceived notions and opinions."

The book begins by examining the various streams of thought that helped to persuade Mennonites in Russia and Ukraine to embark on their trek to Central Asia. The primary focus is on the teachings of one Klaas Epp. A group of Mennonites, including Bartsch, accepted Epp's views on the parousia and journeyed east in 1880, expecting to find a refuge from the Anti-Christ. Disagreements arose between those who remained loyal to Epp's teachings, and others who came to doubt the validity of his personal claims and his pronouncements on the coming of the end of the world. The faction loyal to Epp settled in Ak Metchet, while the other groups made their homes in the region of Aulie Ata.

Bartsch occasionally seems to concede some embarrassment about having followed Epp for as long as he did. This is particularly evident when Bartsch discusses the way Epp and others with a profound end-time consciousness used (mis-used?) Scripture to justify and explain various actions or circumstances. Another noteworthy feature of the narrative is the picture that emerges of Klaas Epp himself. Epp appears to have had a real flair for public relations, especially the art of persuasion, knowing what to say or do to have the maximum effect on people. Sadly, there also appear to be parallels between Epp and some modern cult leaders; for example, his belief towards the end of the 1880s that he was the Son of Christ, as Christ was the Son of God (p. 127). One definitely does get a sense of the dangers of an overzealous attachment to end-time thinking as evidenced by the chiliastic group and Epp.

This group is also interesting for its description of the terrain and peoples of Central Asia as well as the attitude of some of its members toward the natives of the region. One must commend the translators for making Bartsch's account accessible to a wider audience. We hope this can bring new insights for the debate over the role of these trek-related ideas in Russian Mennonite history and within the broader Anabaptist tradition.

Matthew G. Neufeld is a graduate of Concord College and currently studying at the University of Winnipeg.

# Finding the Klippensteins of Russia

by Lawrence Klippenstein

## Conclusion

In the previous issue of MH we introduced to our readers Father Vladimir Klippenstein of the Russian Orthodox Church, now active in a congregation in Kyrgystan, Central Asia. We are indebted to a *Neues Leben* correspondent, Eugen Warkentin, for other details of Father Vladimir's career.

Father Vladimir noted that his father, Jacob Klippenstein, had been born in the Volga region, a member of the Mennonite community who then became a teacher at Leninpol (formerly Nikolai-pol) in Kyrgystan. His mother, said Father Vladimir, was Anna Gerhardovna Paetkau, who had come to Leninpol from Marxstadt where she had studied to become a teacher.

Originally both parents had actually come from Krasnoie in the Arkadak district. The father studied history and archaeology and learned to know a professor at Tashkent. This led to a term of study there for Father Vladimir as well. He became a geologist and earned a PhD in 1981.

At that time he also became an active member of the Russian Orthodox Church. Formative influences for spiritual development had come from Grandmother Helen Dyck who was born in the Old Colony in Chortitza. Father Vladimir's mother rejoiced in his decision to become a believer. His father was less enthusiastic but not opposed and was also baptized a few months before he died. The mother presently lives in Germany, now a member of a Baptist congregation.

Father Vladimir concluded, "I am currently serving a congregation in Khardovar and besides my regular duties I am also attempting to establish a monastic hostel in Bishkek for the Orthodox Church from abroad. It is difficult, but God will surely help us. Our life will only improve when we repent; we were punished for our earlier godless ways."

## Respublika-Bergthal Revisited

Finally some closing words about a visit to the former colony of Bergthal. Early on we met an old grandmother and her little grandson herding a flock of geese. This lady told us about Babushka Sheve Krupchikha, an elderly lady of German Catholic background who spoke Low German perfectly. We found her home and were warmly welcomed into her house. Her daughter served us delicious cold milk and cookies. We heard a lot about some of the sad experiences of the villagers during and after WWII. Sheve also showed us her prayer book and before we left we invited our Baptist tour guide, Seriozha, to lead us in prayer, in Russian. We also sang "Gott ist die Liebe". They were sorry to see us go and wondered why we could not stay for the night.

I did not know in which of the former Bergthal villages my great-grandfather, Heinrich Klippenstein, once lived. The book *Bergthaler Gemeindebuch*, edited by John Dyck, does tell us that the following Klippensteins came from the



**LaVerna Klippenstein (standing) and Sheve Krupchikha at her home in Respublika (formerly the village of Bergthal, Ukraine). This visit took place in May, 1993. Photo credit: Lawrence Klippenstein.**

Bergthal settlement in 1875: Johann (b. 1809), Peter (b. 1831), Johann (b. 1845), Bernd (b. 1836), my great-grandfather, Heinrich (b. 1849) and his wife Sarah (b. 1852). They came with a baby named Peter. Ted Friesen notes in his book on Johann and Agathe Klippenstein that Katherine Klippenstein (b. 1811), wife of Bernhard Friesen, also came during this period.

Now I'm hoping to find out exactly where these persons resided in the Bergthal settlement, where no artifacts of the earlier settlers remain. That will make the visit to Respublika, the former Bergthal village, even more worthwhile.

## Call for Papers

by Marlene Epp

The first academic conference on Anabaptist Women's History is planned for June 8-11, 1995, at Millersville University, Millersville, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The theme will be developed under the broad title *The Quiet in the Land? Women of Anabaptist Traditions in Historical Perspective*. The purpose of the conference is to bring together historians and other scholars to examine women's experiences in Anabaptist traditions from the 16th through the 20th centuries (Amish, Mennonite, Hutterite, Brethren, and other communal societies and Pietist groups).

The Coordinating Committee encourages proposals that represent a broad range of disciplines and consider a spectrum of differences in such areas as race, class, region, sexuality, and nationality. Proposals for single papers/presentations should include a 500-word abstract and a one-page CV. Proposals for complete sessions should include a brief description of the session, names of presenters, CVs, and paper abstracts.

All materials should be submitted by October

1, 1994, to Diane Zimmerman Umble, The Quiet 1002, Millersville University, Millersville, PA 17551. For more information, call 717-872-3233, fax 717-871-2003, or E-mail Di-Umble@daffy.millersv.edu.

## GCMC Historical Commission Terminated

In January, 1993, the Historical Committee of the General Conference Mennonite Church received word that the Executive Committee of the Commission on Education (COE) was recommending its elimination at the end of 1993. Facing budget cuts in 1993 and 1994, COE endorsed this recommendation at the Council of Commissions meeting in March, 1993.

The first mission of the General Conference Historical Committee has been to provide resources for congregational heritage education and celebrations. Committee member Wilma McKee authored *Heritage Celebrations: A Resource Book for Congregations*, which was distributed by the Historical Committee free of charge to all General Conference congregations in mid-1992.

A second book, *Heritage Preservation: A Resource Book for Congregations*, was given to each congregation in early 1994. Compiled by committee chair David A. Hauray, this resource book provides recommendations for congregational historians on how to collect and preserve the records of their respective congregations.

In light of recent discussions on GCMC-MC integration, a second major goal for the new committee was to provide a liaison with the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church. The discontinuation of the GC Historical Committee will leave a significant void regarding contacts with the MC's. Fortunately, COE has designated John D. Thiesen, archivist at the Mennonite Library and Archives, to provide liaison with the MC Historical Committee and attend some of their meetings.

## Call for Articles

MCC is planning a special publication for its 75th anniversary in 1995. Articles will be selected from various journals, newspapers, etc. for inclusion in a book.

We would also welcome submissions to *Mennonite Historian*. Here we list some possible themes, with a Canadian emphasis if possible: Mediation Services, Project Ploughshares, Low-cost housing initiatives, MCC Canada and Southeast Asian boat people, MCC and native concerns, Victim Offender Ministries Programs in Canada, MCC Thrift Shop and Selfhelp Stores, etc.

Articles should not be more than 1,000 words in length, and submitted in hard copy text with type double spaced as well as diskette if possible (WordPerfect). Please send advance notice of your intentions to submit.



This photo shows the late K.H. Neufeld directing a mass choir in Altona, Manitoba, in 1935. We would be very pleased to hear from anyone who may have been present at this event. The town will be celebrating its centennial in 1995. Can anyone send information about the very first families who lived in the town of Altona (1895-1900)?  
*Photo credit: MHCA.*



Anna Block, born on April 4, 1883 in Schoenhorst, Russia passed away on January 2, 1994. Her parents were Abram and Aganetha Penner. Anna had 78 grandchildren, 196 great-grandchildren, 122 great-great-grandchildren and one great-great-great-grandchild. She lived most recently at the Mennonite Nursing Home in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Her husband Abram predeceased her in 1956.  
*Photo credit: John and Anne Neufeld, Winnipeg, MB.*

accessible to researchers from schools as well as from the general public.

Work is going on in the following areas:

1. MCC/BC files are being microfilmed with the end of March as projected completion date.
2. Conference of Mennonites in BC files from its Conference ministers are being organized and recorded.
3. M.B. Board of Church Extension files are being organized and recorded, including the files of churches now dissolved, e.g. Dawson Creek, Oliver, Matsqui, Port Edward and Agassiz.
4. Captured German War Documents which were received from Dr. John B. Toews of Regent College, are being organized. This information includes records compiled by German army staff listing the residents of many Mennonite villages in the Molotschna and Chortitza regions in 1942. This information includes extensive lists of persons who were exiled or murdered and those who died of starvation.

5. A collections policy is being formulated to guide our work in the future.

*Hugo Friesen was recently appointed archivist of the Mennonite Archival Centre of B.C.*

## News and Happenings

The 1994 sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada will be held in Clearbrook, B.C. MHCA will provide a workshop entitled "An Update from the Mennonite Heritage Centre" which will feature new genealogical material from Russia found in the Peter J. Braun Archives from Odessa.

The third of three colloquia planned for 1993 in recognition of the 300th anniversary of the Amish Division took place in mid-October at Metamora, Illinois. The theme was "Tradition and Transition". Nearly 300 individuals from 12 states in the U.S. and the Canadian province of Ontario met to explore together, in a warm and familial setting, their common Amish Mennonite

background and inherited tradition of obedience.

Many sessions of this stimulating and eclectic conference were held, most appropriately, at the Illinois Mennonite Heritage Centre. The remote location of the Centre's archive, library, and museum complex evokes even today the untamed, seemingly endless expanse of fertile farmland that initially enticed Amish and Mennonite immigrants from Europe to press even deeper into the vast North American heartland.

**Loeppkys of Strassberg — dit Sied and jant Sied** — will be coming together for a family reunion on the weekend of July 22-23, 1995. Planning has begun for a reunion of the Johann Loeppky family who came to Canada from Russia in 1875 and settled on the Manitoba Mennonite East Reserve about two-and-a-half miles north of Otterburne.

For further information, a membership or to have your name added to the mailing list, contact: John L. Klassen, Box 69, Altona, MB R0G 0B0, ph. (204) 324-6221, or Bernie Loeppky, 284-19th Street, Winkler, MB, ph. (204) 325-8248, or Susan Loeppky, 192-2nd Street, Niverville, MB, ph. (204) 388-4419.

Dr. Emerich K. Francis, well-known sociologist, and recognized in Manitoba for his book *In Search of Utopia The Mennonites in Manitoba*, passed away on January 14, 1994. The funeral was held in Munich, Germany. He was born June 27, 1906. A son (an only child) Jorg, married to Bettina, is a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Illinois.

A special panel of the 1994 Canadian Learned Societies Conference will deal with "one hundred years of Doukhobor life in Canada". The session will be held at the University of Calgary in Calgary, AB with the panel meeting on June 10 at 1-5 p.m.

A conference entitled "Anabaptist Vision(s) in the 20th Century, Ideas and Outcomes" will be held at Goshen, Indiana on Oct. 14-17, 1994. For further information contact Dr. Al Keim, Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 (ph. 1-703-433-0543).

The annual report of the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. lists the following as officers for 1994: W.J.J. Riediger, president; Hans Schellenberg, vice-president; Jacob V. Suderman, treasurer; Agatha Klassen, secretary; and Linda Motties, research coordinator. The current address of the Society is Clearbrook Community Centre, 2825 Clearbrook Rd., Clearbrook, B.C., V2T 2Z8.

A commemorative thanksgiving service to recall the 1943 "trek" of Mennonites and other Germans from Soviet Ukraine to Poland and Germany will be held in the Niagara peninsula on Sunday, June 5 at Eden College, Virgil, Ont. The program will begin at 3 p.m. For further information contact: Helene Mathies, ph. 1-905-682-9448.

**Correction.** The mention of President Hindenburg in *Mennonite Historian*, September, 1993, p.2, should have been a reference to the former *Reichspräsident* von Hindenburg. Our apologies. We thank reader Gerd Anders, from Granisle, B.C., for drawing this to our attention.

## The Mennonite Archival Centre of B.C.

by Hugo Friesen

We are concentrating on organizing and recording a backlog of files which have been donated over the past years. Our goal is to produce the finding aids needed to make these materials



## BOOK REVIEWS

Klassen, Sarah. *Journey to Yalta* (Winnipeg, MB: Turnstone Press, 1988) pb., 87 pp., \$8.95; *Violence and Mercy* (Winnipeg, MB: Netherlandic Press, 1991) pb., 110 pp., \$9.95; *Borderwatch* (Winnipeg, MB: Netherlandic Press, 1993) pb., 93 pp., \$9.95.

Reviewed by Lorraine E. Matties.

History interprets events in order to visualize the past for future generations. Poetry documents history from the perspective of the imagination. And, like all art, poetry elicits response. Because it is not preoccupied with the whole picture, it can detail nuances and emotions that prose history is often unable to do. It is able to focus on scenes not central to the main events but which enhance the story by exploring it through the eyes of people who see it from a perspective not explored before. Poetry opens a window of contact to the world that history creates.

In *Journey to Yalta* Klassen explores scenes from her visit to her mother's birthplace in Russia, interweaving them with stories she recalls hearing from her mother and other family members. The poems describe events in Barvenkovo and Yalta, a resort town on the Black Sea where the family travelled for the treatment of Sarah's grandmother, who had contracted tuberculosis. Interwoven also are scenes and reactions to the Revolution. In "Easter (Barvenkovo, 1918)" the poet describes the irony for the family, after hiding in the root cellar for ten days, of emerging on Easter Sunday to find their home ransacked: "Grandmother weeping, wringing her hands/wondering where is God/whose resurrection they should celebrate/today," (5).

Several poems are written from the perspective of Sarah's mother, whose known world was being violently torn from her. Klassen also writes from her own perspective as a Canadian whose life is informed by these places where the traumatic memories of her forebears originate. More recent events also inform Klassen's impressions: "By the Waters" laments Chernobyl's poisoning of the Dnieper River "where our grandfathers swam/naked and cool in the moonlight/spurning currents and the stern/commands of their fathers," (13).

In *Violence and Mercy* and *Borderwatch*, the poems are more free-ranging in subject, but offer much for historical contemplation. Not only the poems about Barvenkovo, but also those that describe events in the present, provide a thermometer to measure the temperature of our time. High-school students, the aging, the sick—all these have voices that describe the attitudes of our society out of which our history is being made.

In a different kind of history, poems about Leonardo Da Vinci or biblical characters offer a unique interpretation of well-known figures. The section on Lithuania in *Borderwatch* is history in the making, as Klassen describes her impression of a country freeing itself from Russian Communist domination.

These impressions are good ground for all of us to understand our own perspectives on time

and place. If we read carefully, we will become aware in a new way of the weight we bring to our interpretations of events, both past and present.

Lorraine E. Matties is a freelance writer and editor in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Neufeldt, Leonard. *Raspberriyng* (Windsor, ONT: Black Moss Press, 1991), pb., 55 pp., \$10.95; *Yarrow* (Windsor, ONT: Black Moss Press, 1993) pb., 55 pp., \$8.95.

Reviewed by Sarah Klassen.

In his two latest volumes of poetry, Leonard Neufeldt recreates the Yarrow of his growing-up years. In *Raspberriyng* he recalls a community where singing in the choir, playing baseball and, of course, picking raspberries were as much part of the rhythm of life as the changing seasons.

This Yarrow is peopled with strongly-drawn characters. There's Betty Wedel who, though she "walked the shimmering rows/upright as a hallelujah," becomes a temptation for the adolescent pickers when she bends to her work. Mr. Ediger's experience of war has left him a Nazi and anti-Semite. The cannery manager, Mr. Penner, is a survivor who says, "I accept the poverty of leaves," while remembering "the harvest requisitions,/or drought, or hunger, or winter oats/for our one remaining horse, which we ate," in post-revolutionary Russia. And there is the poet's father, substituting for the umpire in a home game or driving a tractor, all the while "conducting a cappella choirs without perfect pitch."

This Mennonite community is not without outsiders. Charlie Fong, "separated/sentences like children's names, like potatoes/you had not wanted to spear," and remembered his "children north of Canton." Like Charlie, the Mennonites were not so far removed from their lost fatherland.

Raspberries of younger years become a point of reference when the picker grows up and leaves the berry patch. He thinks of them when buying "ash-grey raspberry tea by the quarter pound" in "historic Salem." "Raspberries have a way of coming back/years later," Neufeldt says. They show up in poems that celebrate a way of life remembered with tenderness, but also with a clear understanding that this community nestled in mountains contained both shadow and light.

Water flows through the poems in the first section of Yarrow—ocean, river, lake. These are mature poems, made with infinite care, and they teach the power of nature and of family bonds. The reader is urged further along the journey with questions like "How long? A minute/years, mind knowing itself/only as body, body thinking/what

hope is there, or need be?"

Inevitably though, the traveller/poet returns to Yarrow, confessing, "you pass through me/scattering wind inside trees./softest shudder in the spine/not letting go." The string orchestra, church choir, baseball game resurface, but the metaphor of raspberry picking frequently gives way to images of the cemetery. There is a kind of regret in the realization that "Because you didn't stay and many others did/they won't bury you there." Neufeldt holds in careful balance the familiarity and strangeness of a place that once was home.

These poems are rooted like raspberry canes in the tough soil of the Fraser Valley. It is a soil rich in history, in living, in memories of singing and working as family and community. The smell of the earth, the flow of the river are held together by the wind and by snatches of song in four-part harmony.

Sarah Klassen is a retired high school teacher and writer in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

## Books Received

Dueck, H.M.R. *An Orphan's Song*. (Winnipeg, MB: Windflower Communications, 1993) pb., 303 pp., \$15.99. A "first" novel based on Mennonite life in Russia and Canada.

Friesen, Jacob. *The Road Unknown*. (Gladstone, MB: the author, 1993) pb., 248 pp. \$10.00. An autobiography.

Jantzen, Mark. *The Wrong Side of the Wall. An American in East Berlin during the Peaceful Revolution*. (Nappanee, IN: the author, 1993), pb., 213 pp. From an MCCer's point of view.

Pearson, Alfred J. *The Rhine and its Legends*. (Elverson, PA: Mennonite Family History, 1992), pb., 34 pp. \$3.00. A reprint of a 1919 edition.

Rauert, Matthias J. and Annelie Kumpers-Greve. *Van Der Smissen. Eine mennonitische Familie vor dem Hintergrund der Geschichte Altonas und Schleswig-Holsteins. Texte und Dokumente*. (Hamburg, Germany: Kuempers Veplag, 1992), hdc., 274 pp. A family history.

Spry, Irene M. and Bennett McCardle. *The Records of the Department of the Interior and Research Concerning Canada's Western Frontier of Settlement*. (Regina, SK, Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1993), pb., 198 pp., \$32.00.

Magosci, Paul Robert ed. *Ukraine: A Historical Atlas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) pb., 27 pp. Maps in colour.

Peters, Victor and Jack Thiessen. *Plautdietsche Jeschichten. Gespraech-Interviews - Erzählungen* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1990), pb., 315 pp., 36 DM. Low German stories.

Some of these titles may be reviewed in the *Mennonite Historian* in a future issue, but listing does not necessarily imply a promise to do so.

