

MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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The Samuel F. Coffman family about 1920. Standing (l-r): S. Ellen, John E., Barbara F., David W. Seated (l-r): Magdalena E., mother Ella and father Samuel. Photo: Courtesy of Conrad Grebel College Archives, Waterloo, ON.

Strengthening Mennonite Ties: Letters by S. F. Coffman and H. H. Ewert

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Mennonites coming to Canada from south Russia (Ukraine) in the 1870s received much help from the Mennonites of Ontario. Memories of this warm welcome and learning to know each other are still treasured by descendants in both groups.

Subsequent contacts between Ontario and "Russian" Mennonites of Manitoba prior to the next immigration of the 1920s are not as well documented as they ought to be. One could conclude from what is known so far that relationships thinned out considerably over the next decades. This conclusion needs to be tested, however.

The First World War did break down a prevailing "silence" that may have existed for a time. The question of military service and conscientious objection helped these Mennonites to "discover" each other again, and to reestablish a deeper relationship of real significance for the future of the Canadian Mennonite community as a whole.¹

The correspondence between Heinrich Ewert (1855-1934), a Mennonite Collegiate Institute principal of Gretna, Manitoba, and S.F. Coffman (1872-1954), a high profile Mennonite church leader of Ontario, belongs to the process of inter-Mennonite strengthen-

ing and expanding of earlier ties.²

It is interesting to see how such correspondence was initiated and carried forward during this time. In this article we will share a portion of that exchange.³ An exact transcript has been attempted here.

Gretna, Man., Oct. 21, 1918.

Rev. S.F. Coffman
Vineland, Ont.

Dear Brother:-

It has long been my desire to get in touch with the Mennonites in Ontario and I write this letter to you for this purpose. I found your address in a circular letter addressed by Prof. Paul E. Whitmer to the contributing editors of the proposed Mennonite Cyclopaedia.

Would you please have the kindness to inform me how the Mennonites of Ontario have got along during this war, particularly how the draft has affected them? Does the Government treat you the same it treats the Mennonites in the West? In the newspapers I always find reference to an order in council the Government passed in 1893 for the benefit of the Mennonites that came here

from Russia, but they never make mention of the law passed in 1867 exempting Quakers, Tunkers, and Mennonites from military service, and even the Military Service Act does not mention this act. Have your members of draft age and the young men of Mennonite families been left unmolested? The military authorities in the West have respected the agreement of the Government with the Mennonites, only in some cases they have doubted the bona fides of their church certificates and this has caused some annoyance.

Our Mennonites here have been opposed to subscribe to the war loan, but they have contributed to the Red Cross and to the Patriotic Fund. For this year's loan the Finance Minister has given our people his pledge that the money that comes from them shall only be used for relief purposes and our war bonds shall bear a stamp stating that.

Our churches are agreed that under these circumstances they will take bonds. With concurrent mail I send you some literature that might interest you.

Yours in Christ,

H.H. Ewert

S.F. Coffman sent his answer only a few days later.

Vineland, Ont., October 28th, 1918.

H.H. Ewert, Principal,
Gretna, Man.

Dear Brother:-

Your letter of the 21st Inst. came to hand just at the time that the subject of the conditions and standing of the Russian brethren was pressed upon my mind. It will be a pleasure to me to give you the information asked, as far as in my power to give it, and it will be a further pleasure to continue the correspondence in order to impart and receive information that is needed in order to have a proper understanding of the questions that confront us as a non-resistant people of the same common faith.

The Mennonites in Ontario have been held as a distinct people from the Russian Brethren. It was no doubt the purpose of the Government to make ample revision for the Non-resistant people of every faith.

(cont'd on page 2)

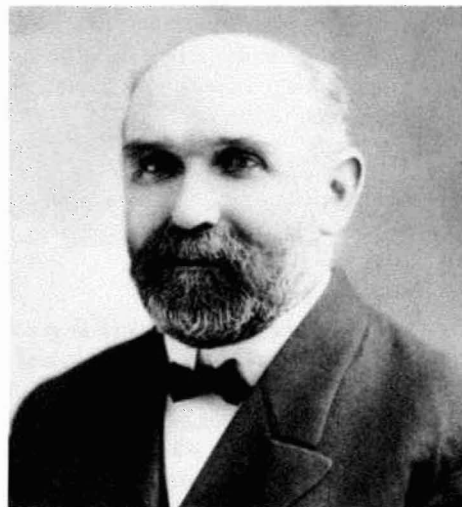
Strengthening Mennonite Ties (cont'd from page 1)

There was an effort made on the part of some of the members of the Government in this behalf at the time that the recent Military Service Act was framed. The Act was primarily in the hands of Hon. Arthur Meighan, who represents a constituency in Manitoba. The clause referring to the Order-in-Council of Canada, 1873, was, no doubt, inserted on behalf of the large representation of Russian Mennonites in Manitoba and the West. The promise of the Government to these people was to be kept in good faith. Since there was no information at hand regarding the promises made to the Mennonites who had settled in Ontario in the early part of the Century, they were not regarded as being under any special treaty. Yet their interests were taken up by a member of the Government, Mr. W.G. Weichel of North Waterloo, Ontario. Provisions were made for them under the exemption privileges, but that was as much as the Government felt to allow them, - freedom from Combatant service. We appealed a number of cases of this kind, after our boys were called upon to register under the act, and made our plea that the section of the Exemption privileges as stated in the Act did not describe correctly our faith, and claimed that we were also entitled to the privileges of the Exceptions granted under the Order-in-Council which stated that military exemption was to be granted by law and Order-in-Council to the denomination of Christians called Mennonites.

Our appeal to the Department of Justice, and other appeals to the same Department made at different time (sic) by different individuals, received the reply that the Mennonite people were under the Exceptions to the Act and had no duty to perform. The Local and Appeal Tribunals refused to act according to the Decision of the Military Council (under the Department of Justice) and our brethren were thus held for military duty, but only for non-combatant service. Some of these cases were appealed to the Central Appeal Judge. The first (sic) decisions came from his department, that the Mennonites in Ontario were not under the Exceptions as described by the Order-in-Council, 1873, and that they were subject to the Act, and exempted only from Com-

batant service. With this decision some of our brethren were ordered to report for service and were obliged to go to the camps and report for duty. This call included boys from the various branches of the Mennonite Church and the Tunker Brethren. These boys all were obliged to refuse to accept service and also refused to put on the Uniforms. The consequence was that they were imprisoned in the camp, some were tried by court-martial and sentenced to two-year terms at military prisons. We appealed again to the Government for relief from these conditions, making it plain that our people could not accept any form of military service. The Militia Council, of the Military Department, (not a department of the civil Government) took up the matter and decided that our brethren should not be required to do active service and were granted an indefinite leave of absence, but were still counted as soldiers.

Later appeals that came before the Chief Justice, (the Central Appeal Judge) stated that our people are under the "Exceptions under the Order-in-Council of 1873, and neither the Local, Appeal or Central Appeal Judge have any jurisdiction over these cases, and the cases were dismissed. We are at present having correspondence with representatives of the Government to ascertain whether or not this decision is to apply to all cases of Mennonites and Tunkers in Ontario. If it does, then all of our brethren who have been called and have been granted "Leave of "absence" will be free



Heinrich Ewert (1855-1934). Photo: Courtesy of Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, MB.

from the Jurisdiction of the Army. We should say that all of the Sentences of the Courts-martial were quashed and the brethren returned to camp and granted indefinite leave of absence. We hope now that the Chief Justice will sustain his late decisions and make the application to all of the Non-resistance Churches in Ontario. We are waiting to hear from the Department regarding it.

Those of our brethren in these western provinces have been accorded the same privileges as the Russian Brethren, although the District Registrars know that there is a difference in their organizations and Conference relations. All that was required of any of them thus far was that they hold certificates signed by their bishops that they are bona-fide members of the Mennonite Church. You will readily see that this makes the section of the Military Service Act, as applied to the Ontario Mennonites, a purely sectional or Provincial interpretation and not a Dominion Act. This is not according to Constitutional practice. It would not stand if taken up by our people and brought before the Department of Justice for a definition. But we do not feel that it is wise to agitate the question and we are leaving it in the hands of the various departments of the Government to work out, so long as we are being accorded freedom from service under some conditions. We cannot help how the Government looks upon us, so long as we know that we are not personally violating the spirit and life which Our Lord has imparted to us as His children and followers.

There is at present (sic) an agitation against the privileges accorded the Non-Resistant people. It seems to be aimed especially against the Mennonites (sic), and makes no distinction as to location or origin (sic). It is evident, however, from the sources of the agitation, that it is particularly against the Mennonites in the West, and that would mean, against our Russian Brethren. Recent reports in our eastern papers show that there is some sentiment rife in Alberta, and in Saskatchewan, on account of the fact that our people are settling in colonies and are continuing the use of the German language.

(To be concluded, with endnotes added, in the next issue.)

GENEALOGY AND FAMILY HISTORY

by Alf Redekopp

Queries

Doerksen - I would like to correspond with anyone who is researching Abram Doerksen (1830), m. to Katharine Penner (ca. 1833), or his siblings, Isaak Doerksen (1826) m. to Maria Penner, and David Doerksen (1840) m. to Katherine Dueck (1840). Contact: Eva Beaulac, General Delivery, Albion, BC V0M 1B0.

Waldeck - I am looking for information on this family name. It originated either in the Hamburg area or in Prussia. The family may have emigrated to western Canada between 1860-1890. Contact: Dale Wallingford, 1818 Gilbert Avenue, Ottawa, ON K2C 1A4.

Fuhrman - I am looking for information about the family of a Maria Fuhrman (1903-1983), who was adopted as a baby by the Bernhardt Langemann family of the village of Tiege, Molotschna. Maria came to Canada in 1924 and married Jacob J. Boldt (1896-1967). She had half brothers and sisters who stayed in Russia after her emigration. Who were her biological parents? Contact: Lotty Schwartz, 112 Kingston Cresc., Kitchener, ON N2B 2T7.

Enns - I am looking for anyone who is a descendant of Gerhard Enns (1787-1855) and Elisabeth Goertzen (1816-1862). They had 7 children: Abraham (1839), Klas (1841), Elisabeth (1843), Kornelius (1845), Peter (1847), John (1850), and Heinrich (1855). Contact: Daniel P. Enns, 3328 East Hammond Ave., Fresno, CA 93703.

Fleischner - Bertha Fleischner b. Dec. 9, 1850, daughter of Jacob Fleischner married Jacob Golbeck in November, 1872 at Heidelberg just north of the Molotschna Colony. In 1888, the family moved to Hillsboro, Kansas. The Golbeck descendants are looking for any Fleischner relatives who may have come with the Golbecks to the USA and settled in the St. Louis area. Contact: Peter Golbeck, RR 2, Tiverton, ON N0G 2T0.

Recent Books

Verner Friesen, ed. **From Prussian Lowlands to Saskatchewan Prairies: A History of the "Tiefengrund Friesens"** (Saskatoon, SK: Friesen Family History, 1994), hdc., 147 pp.; \$40.00.

This book contains the family history and genealogy of Abraham Friesen (1849-1901),

who was elected as minister in the Fuerstenwerder Mennonite congregation in West Prussia in 1872. In 1894 Friesen moved his large family to Canada and settled on a farm in an area which later became known as the Tiefengrund community in Saskatchewan. The volume also includes genealogical data and photographs of many of the descendants of Abraham Friesen's eighteen children. Contact: Verner Friesen, 1517 Adelaide St. E., Saskatoon, SK S7J 0J2.

Henry J. Braun, ed. **1995 Braun Family Tree** Second Edition (Steinbach, MB: Braun Family Tree Committee, 1995), pb., 282 pp.

This book contains the family history and genealogy of Jacob D. Braun (1826-1919) and his wife Katharina Funk (1827-1920), both born in Kronstal, Chortitza Colony, South Russia. They moved to the Berghthal Colony in 1852, and settled in Manitoba, Canada in 1875. The book traces the Braun family back to Nicholas Braun, b. about 1727 in Lakendorf, West Prussia, and the Funk family back to Johann Funk (1840-1804) of Grosswerder, West Prussia. This edition is an update of one published in 1971 and referred to as the "blue Braun book" (Lark Printing Ltd.). Contact: Henry J. Braun, Box 1192, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0.

Abe Friesen, ed. **Peter Friesen and Maria Rempel Descendants 1828-1994** (Steinbach, MB: Private publication, 1994), hdc., 360 pp.

This book contains the family history and genealogy of Peter Friesen (1828-1903) and Maria Rempel (1833-1908). Their family lived in the Berghthal Colony from at least 1856 to 1861. By 1868 they were living in the Fuerstenland Colony. Peter Friesen was the leader of one of the groups of Mennonites who left Russia in 1875 and settled in the Scratching River Settlement, northwest of Morris, Manitoba. Contact: Abe Friesen, Box 1322, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0.

Ewanda (Siebert) Boehr and Esther Patkau, compilers. **From Hemp and Flax Fields to Lands of Wheat and Corn: Baehr - Böhr - Boehr Genealogy 1700-1995** (Langham, SK: Private publication, 1995), pb., 356 pp.

This book contains the family history and genealogy of some of the descendants of Johanness Böhr (1773-1849) who lived and died in Stockborn, Germany. Included in this publication is a translation of the diary of Jakob Böhr (1838-1928) who joined Peter Dick, Philip Wiebe and Bernhard Warkentine, a group of Russian Mennonites who travelled to America in 1872. It also contains the

history and genealogy of Johann Boehr (1845-1940), Jakob's nephew, who was persuaded to join the Russian Mennonite delegation on its trip to North America in 1872. This Johann Boehr stayed in America. Initially he lived with his uncle, Jost Bally, a Mennonite in Woodford County, Illinois. Eventually he bought a homestead just south of Henderson, Nebraska. In 1879 he married a widow Anna Klassen (nee Regier), a recent immigrant from Altenau, Molotschna, South Russia in 1879. Johann's younger brother, Peter Boehr (1849-1930) and his wife Elizabeth Schowalter (1855-1944) also left Stockborn, Germany and settled in Nebraska in 1884. In 1903 a branch of the Boehr family settled in Langham, Saskatchewan. Contact: Ewanda Boehr, Langham, SK S0K 2L0.

Helen Koop Johnson. **Tapestry of Ancestral Footprints** (Lockport, MB: Private publication, 1995), pb., 282 pp.

Prompted in part by the questions of a granddaughter, Helen Johnson has written this book in which she attempts "to summarize the history of the involvement of the Mennonite religious philosophy and...to trace the social, political, cultural and ethnic factors that created the distinctness of our Mennonite ancestors."

The first part contains a brief history of the Christian religion and the development of the different church groups which shaped the group which became known as Mennonites. Then the author deals with the history of her maternal family, starting with Justina Groening (1823-1903), first married to Hermann K. Enns (1818-1855) and then to Peter J. Dueck (1833-1887) of Halbstadt, Molotschna. A final section in the book deals with the history of the Koop family, the author's paternal side. Contact: Helen Johnson, Box 20, Grp. 20, RR 1, Lockport, MB R0C 1W0.

FEEFHS Conference in Calgary

The Federation of East European Family History Societies is sponsoring the East European Genealogy Conference in Calgary, AB Canada on July 25, 1995 during the week of the AHSGR meetings. Dr. Ed Brandt of Minneapolis, MN will present the topic "East European Resources for all Ethnic Groups". To register write to Walt Rusel, RR 2, Cochrane, AB T0L 0W0 or call Ed Brandt at 1-612-331-2230 for further information.

Send inquiries to Alf Redekopp, CMBS, 1-169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5.

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

Other MHCA News

On May 7 the Mennonite Children's Choir of Winnipeg introduced its exhibit at the MHC Gallery with a special program at the Centre. Helen Litz and Judy Urbonas conducted the choir. The exhibit will be open to the public until July 15.

Helene Friesen, a grad student at the University of Manitoba, has begun a research project with the Mennonite Heritage Centre, helping to prepare the publication of CMC resolutions under the direction of Dr. John Friesen, CMBC. Conrad Stoesz, a University of Winnipeg student, is working as MHC summer archival assistant with support from a Careerstart grant.

Alf Redekopp attended the annual sessions of the Association of Canadian Archivists in Regina from June 12-16.

Another collection of Mexican Mennonite documents, the Johann W. Thiessen papers, was recently microfilmed at the Men-



Artist A. E. Heidi Koop chats with friends at the opening reception of her exhibit in the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery. The exhibit will run until July 7. Photo: Courtesy of Heidi Koop, Winnipeg, MB.

nonite Heritage Centre.

Lawrence Klippenstein represented GCMC historical interests at a joint meeting of historical commissions from the Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Brethren churches (NA) held in Salem, Oregon, on May 19-20.

A conference headed "The Holy Spirit and The Gathered Community. The challenge of Pietistic Experience for Anabaptist-related Groups" will be held at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA on September 28-30. It is sponsored by EMU and

Bridgewater College in Harrisonburg. For info call (703) 432-4400.

50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

NIVERVILLE MENNONITE CHURCH

October 7 & 8, 1995

All former members and friends are invited.

For more information contact:
 John K. Friesen
 Box 303 Niverville MB
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 204-388-4185

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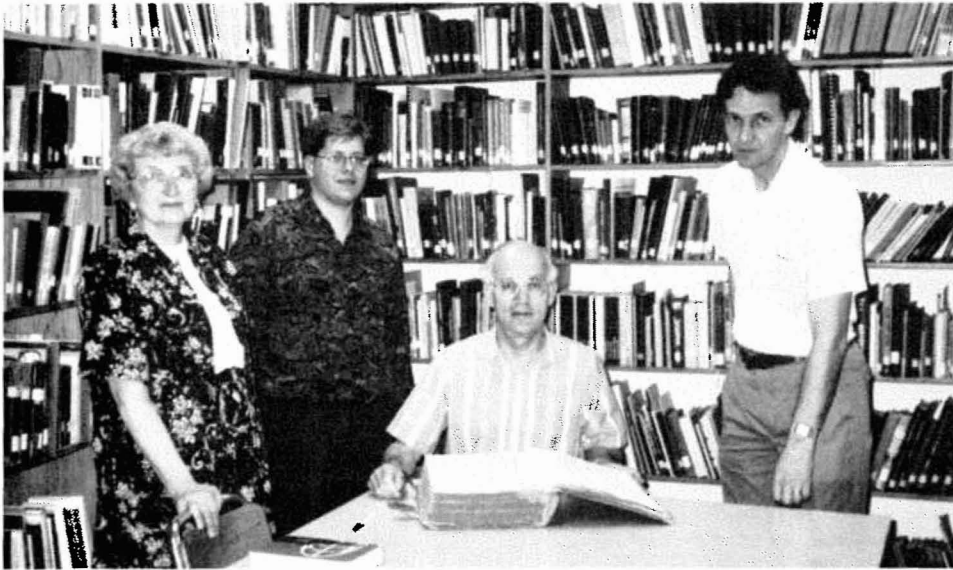
or order directly from:
CMBC Publications 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4
 Tel: (204) 888-6781 Fax: (204) 831-5675

New Book Release!

Horst, Gerlach. *Nightmare in Red* (1995), Hdc., 270 pp., \$24.95 US, Pb., \$14.95 US. Second edition.

An amazing account of the author's experience of imprisonment in the Soviet Union during WWII.

Order from: Shirley Tschetter, L & S Distributing, 4100 Ash Grove Ave., Sioux Falls, SD USA 57103.



Regular and summer staff at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (Winnipeg). L-r: Alvina Block, special project worker; Matthew Janz, summer Careerstart placement worker; Abe Dueck, director; Alf Redekopp, archivist.

News from CMBS

Historical Commission Meetings

The Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission (North America) met in Salem, Oregon on May 19-20. The main reason for meeting at this location was to provide opportunity for some joint sessions with the Mennonite Church Historical Committee.

Several books in the series "Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought" are nearly ready for publication. These include: **Bridging Troubled Waters: The Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Twentieth Century**, a book of essays that were read at a symposium in Fresno in February, 1993; **Only the Sword of the Spirit**, by Jacob Loewen and Wes Prieb; and a history of MB missions in India by Peter Penner.

The Commission is also initiating a symposium on "Russian Mennonites in the New World." This is intended to look at the Mennonites who migrated from Russia to various contexts in North and South America. Direct co-sponsorship by a Canadian Mennonite organization will be sought.

In 1996 the Historical Commission will meet in Winnipeg on June 7-8.

MBBC Photograph Collection

A special project to process a large collection of photographs and slides pertaining to the Mennonite Brethren Bible College during its 48-year history is being initiated this summer. Alvina Block, who is completing a degree under the archives program at the University of Manitoba, has been appointed to work at the project as part of an internship requirement. The work will involve

an initial sort, identification, and also organizing and entering the information into a computer data bank so that researchers can have easy access to the photographs.

The project is made possible by financial assistance from the federal government given through the National Archives of Canada and the Canadian Council of Archives.

MBCI Celebrates 50 Years

The Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute celebrated its 50th anniversary May 19 to 21, 1995. The reunion was a massive gathering of alumni members for events that took place throughout the weekend. It included a huge Saturday night banquet attended by 1,200 people, most of them alumni, and an even bigger Sunday morning worship service, attended by more than 2,000 persons at the Winnipeg Convention Centre.

Established in 1945, the first students attended classes in Mennonite Brethren Bible College (now Concord College). By the fall of the second academic year, a building that housed both classrooms and a dormitory was purchased at 173 Talbot Avenue.

Today MBCI is a two-building complex linked by an overpass across Riverton Avenue. It is adjacent to Concord College but is a quite separate educational organization. The student body has grown from 44 in 1945 to 540 today.

A book to be edited by Ervin J. Kroeker is being prepared for publication.

Ervin J. Kroeker

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RUNDSCHAU INDEX AVAILABLE

The following volumes of the *Mennonitische Rundschau Index* have been reprinted:

Volume I: 1880-89

Volume II: 1890-1899

Volume III: 1900-1909

Volume V: 1920-29

Volume IA: Author Index, 1880-1909

Price: \$55.00 per volume, Vol. V: \$45.00.

Add \$5.00 per volume to a maximum of \$15.00 for shipping and handling.

Order from the Centre for MB Studies.

Niebuhr Family Reunion

For descendants of
Jacob Niebuhr (1766-1835) and
Aganeta Wiebe (1780-1848)

Where? Winkler Bible School,
Winkler, Manitoba

When? August 4-6, 1995

For further information call:
Bill Klassen (204) 668-5960

Springstein School Reunion

All teachers and students who attended from 1927 to 1947 are invited to join the celebration at the Springstein Mennonite Church on the first weekend of August, 1996.

For further information contact:

Springstein School Reunion
Committee

c/o Mrs. Mary Dueck

15 Wakefield Bay

Winnipeg, MB R2M 2B5

Phone: (204) 257-5524

The Chortitza (Ukraine) Centennial Monument

by Joan Kirk

My mother, Katherina Loewen/Kosciuk, has told us stories of Russia from the time we were in diapers. We got so used to hearing them that they became a part of our lives. Many of the stories were about Great Grandfather "Steinhauer" Heinrich Hamm of Chortitza.

Grandpa Hamm was born on October 5, 1848 and died October 4, 1928 in Chortitza. His wife was Anna, nee Braun. He carved most of the gravestones for the Rosenthal/Chortitza congregations. He was also responsible for carving the Johann Bartsch and Jacob Hoeppner monuments which now stand at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba.

I would like to personally thank the people responsible for bringing these monuments to Canada. It was a very rare and special occasion for me when I visited Steinbach and touched them with my own hands. Grandpa's trademark or "insignia", a naval anchor, was clearly visible. The damage done by bullets during the Civil War was very visible and brought back many of the stories my mother told us.

My mother is now eighty seven years old, and still tells us these stories. Recently she came out with another most interesting piece of information. Can anyone verify this data?

It seems that Mother was a favourite grandchild of Grandpa Hamm and often played under his feet while he worked. While he was carving the Centennial Monument, (*Denkmal*) Grandpa swore her to secrecy as to anything she saw while he was working on this monument. It seems that the base of this monument was hollowed out, and the documents from the *volost* were sealed in it. While my mother was telling me this, her hands were spontaneously moving, as though she was packing the documents. (After all, she did keep the secret for eighty some years!)

The monument was erected at the junction of Old Row, New Row and Main Street in Chortitza. It was "destroyed by soldiers" in an attempt to find these documents, but they were unable to locate them.

According to Gerhard Lorenz in *Heritage Remembered*, (p. 13), this monument was buried by the Soviets and replaced by another one. Later the original *Denkmal* was located and put where it had always stood. It was then destroyed again.

My aunt, Justina Loewen/Dyck/Friesen,



Christian and Magdalena (Nussbaumer) Geiser, born at Mont-Cortébert, Berne Jura, 1830. These photos were sent by Samuel Geiser, Bruegg near Biel, Switzerland, to the late Alexander Rempel, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON in January, 1958. They are now lodged in the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, MB.

who left Russia in 1945, says that when she moved away that base was still lying in a yard nearby. (I think she said Redekop's yard). Do you suppose these documents are still there, -- sealed in time? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could locate this base and check it out?

If you know anything about this monument, or the location of the base, you may contact me at 2260 Lynden Street, Clearbrook, BC, V2T 3B7 (ph. 604-859-7935). Let us hear from you. Language is not a barrier.

Joan Kirk is a researcher from 2260 Lynden Street, Clearbrook, BC V2T 3B7.

Eds. Next time we plan to publish one response already sent in, along with a photo of the monument in question. We welcome further comments.

Letters to the Editors: The Boer War and Esther Horch Tribute

In September, 1994, Mennonite Historian published an article by Dr. James Urry titled "Russian Mennonites and the Boers of South Africa: A Forgotten Connection". It brought in a number of letters from readers, more perhaps, than any other single item had done till then (or has till now). The tribute to Esther Horch (MH, March, 1994, p.7) brought some response as well.

Though it is now nearly a year later (there never seemed to be sufficient publishing space to include all the material), we feel that readers may still be interested in some of the comments made. Unfortunately, even now we can only share ex-

cerpts. We will gladly give you addresses if you would like to correspond with those who wrote in.

From John Dyck, Winnipeg, MB

Evidently Mennonites were not all equally sympathetic to the Boers....Henry Neudorf enlisted in Calgary, Alberta, on 25 April, 1902 "to serve in the Canadian Mounted Rifles for a period of 12 months or until the termination of the present war in Africa", and was assigned to Regiment No. 394.. Henry was born in Russia on 4 August 1873, to Peter and Maria (Neufeld) Neudorf, who had immigrated to Canada in 1875. Henry grew up in the village of Schanzenfeld, near Winkler... (Info from a nephew of Henry's, Ike Neudorf, resident now in Winnipeg, MB).

From Frank F. Enns, Winnipeg, MB

Did you know that the former railroad station, Sewell, located on the CPR line between Morris and Rosenfeld, MB, was once called Dewett?

Eds. We have tried to find it on a map, but so far, no luck. Can anyone help?

From Arthur Kroeger, Winnipeg, MB

As a young boy in the late 1920s and 30s, I remember my father mentioning the Boers of South Africa in conversation with friends and relatives... The central point was the suffering of the Boer population as a whole during the Boer War. The reality that the Boers fought back with guns seemed actually not to matter that much.... One day a Boer family came to Chortitz to give a performance, demonstrating its skill in sharp-shooting... Proceeds from the performance went toward the Boer cause in South Africa....

From Dr. James Urry, Wellington, New Zealand

The final sentence at the end of the first column on page 1 of the Boers article has been cut off - a line or two are missing. It should read "In 1860 Pretoria became the capital of the Boer Republic of Transvaal, and in 1910 the capital of the Union of South Africa". Also, the references to Peter Kruger (p.1, col.2 and p.2, col.3) should read Paul Kruger - as per a note from Peter Klassen of Calgary, AB. (**Eds.** Our apologies for the slip. Thanks for letting us know).

From George H. Enns, Winnipeg, MB

Re: the article "A Tribute to Esther Horch" (MH, March, 1994, p.7). The 1945-46 MBBC yearbook, *The Rainbow*, notes (p.10): "Mrs. Esther Horch - Hymnology" along with the names and subjects of other part-time in-

Letters to the Editors

(cont'd from page 6)

structors. The 1946-47 yearbook lists her as "Mrs. Esther Horsch-Hymnology" along with nine other part-time instructors, this time each with a photo. Esther and two other of the part-time instructors were married... There was no 1944-45 yearbook....



Cairn at the restored Eigengrund cemetery east of Altona, MB. A community gathering will be held at the site on July 30 at 3:30 p.m. For further information call Ron (Joe) Braun, Altona, MB at 1-204-324-6259. Photo: Courtesy of Bill Braun, Winnipeg, MB.

The JMU Conference in Winnipeg - 1995

Many people will know by now that JMU stands for Jewish-Mennonite-Ukrainian and designates a three-day conference to be held in Winnipeg, MB on August 28-30 this summer.

The conference will convene under the title "Building Bridges": Jews, Mennonites, and Ukrainians in Canada". All the sessions will be held at St. Paul's College on the University of Manitoba campus.

The conference will feature about 40 presentations (academic papers) on a wide variety of themes related to the Canadian experience of these three groups. Discussion will follow each paper.

Participants are also invited to join the August 27 Sunday evening program of readings by writers from all three groups. This gathering will be held at St. Andrews College, Univ. of Manitoba at 7:00 p.m. A reception will follow.

To get more detailed information on the conference including registration contact Bert Friesen, 1-204-339-8677 or write to him at 100 Dunvegan St., Winnipeg, MB R2K 2H1. A brochure and other printed material are available.

NAMAL at Wichita, KS - 1995

Members of NAMAL are again invited to attend a special meeting designed for them at the GC/MC sessions to be held in Wichita, KS in July. If you can make it out there, please come to Room 205 in Century II at 12 noon, July 25. The meeting will close at 1:45 p.m.

Details about this meeting will be forwarded in the NAMAL newsletter which is being prepared. For further information call John Thiesen, 1-316-283-2500 (North Newton, KS).

Book Reviews

(continued from page 8)

ing the War of 1812. Beamer and his wife, Rachel, had immigrated five years earlier from Pennsylvania to the town of Newark on the shores of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario.

Removed from the larger Mennonite settlement at The Twenty, and possessed of an independent spirit, Beamer joins the local militia against the firm teachings of the church and desires of his wife, Rachel. He participates in the battles of Fort George and Stoney Creek, and is held prisoner for a time at Fort Niagara in the United States. He escapes and searches for his wife, and young daughter, Elizabeth, after the Americans burn Newark, including the Beamer's home. The story ends somewhat inconclusively, leaving the way open for Block to write a sequel.

Without Shedding of Blood is a courageous attempt at a novel on the not unfamiliar theme of a young Mennonite man struggling with the nonresistance teachings of his church. However, I am not aware of other "Mennonite" novels that utilize the backdrop of the War of 1812.

Block appears to remain faithful to the history and geography of the time. He has a good eye for "place", for example in his description of the environs of the Battle of Stoney Creek. His personal knowledge of wood-working also showed itself to good advantage a number of times in the narrative.

Unfortunately the novel is not entirely successful. Although Block's use of language is colourful and graphic, sometimes the energy of the verbs seems pitched unnaturally high. Also, with the exception of Samuel Beamer, most characters are one-dimensional, used only as a backdrop to Beamer's own struggles. Among more minor quibbles, although there is a hint that Beamer comes from a Pennsylvania Mennonite family with Loyalist sympathies, it is not

entirely clear why Beamer feels so patriotic to the British cause so soon after immigration.

Nonetheless, I look forward to future efforts by Kevin Block.

Sam Steiner is currently the librarian and chief archivist at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, ON.

Krueger, Jake and John C. Klassen, eds. *ASM. Alternative Service Memoirs* (Altona, MB: Manitoba Conscientious Objectors Committee, 1994), Pb., 318 pp., \$25.00.

Reviewed by Elmer Heinrichs

This book is a compilation of stories of and by seniors recalling experiences 50 years ago when as young men they chose to serve as Conscientious Objectors (COs) in Canadian work camps and mental health institutions during WWII. It is a volume to be read - not a coffee table book - with appropriate black and white photos on camp life, 55 individual CO stories, and other stories about alternative service.

Klaas F. Isaac points out in the foreword how closely young men were screened before they could obtain conscientious objector status. Jake Bartel, pastor in the Holde-man Church of God in Christ congregation defines non-resistance, and Jake Krueger contributes "Ambassadors to COs" to tell about the support of ministers that began with Rev. John N. Hoepfner of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, who accompanied the first group of alternative service workers bound for camps at Clear Lake in June, 1941.

The simple narratives are told with emotion. "It felt as though I was walking toward my death sentence", writes Norman H. Fehr, telling about walking into court to face the judge. Describing travelling to camp as the "unknown trip", Fehr concludes with these words, "He (God) led me in ways that profited me greatly later in life".

The book also includes an interview with a Mennonite who was an active participant in WWII, as well as a testimonial shared by a pastor, designated to go to camp, who ended up in jail; a sermon prepared for CO camps by Rev. Jacob W. Friesen, and a reprint from *Mennonite Life* of "Canadian Mennonites in World War II" by Lawrence Klippenstein.

To order a copy of this book contact Jake Krueger, Box 552, Altona, MB R0G 0B0.

Elmer Heinrichs is a freelance writer who resides in Altona, MB.

BOOK REVIEWS

Goerzen, Anny Penner Klassen with Anne Klassen Suderman and Susan Thiessen Klassen. *Anny: Sheltered in the Arms of God; A True Story of Survival in Russia*. (Fort St. James, B.C.: the author, 1988), pb., 239 pp., \$25.00.

Klassen, Pamela E. *Going by the Moon and the Stars: Stories of two Russian Mennonite Women*. (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1994), pb., 151 pp., \$19.95 CAN or \$25.00 US outside Canada.

Reviewed by Helene Friesen

Anny Goertzen describes life in Russia and the early Soviet era from a perspective of a world that was devoid of human kindness and compassion. The details of Anny's life include her mother being adopted in Winnipeg and raised in the Mennonite colonies in Russia by wealthy parents. As pioneers settling the Tatjanovka region in Western Siberia just prior to World War I, Anny's parents' struggle with hardship began. Here, and later in the Amur region and other places in Western Siberia, and finally Belorussia, the children were conscripted into the effort required to keep body and soul together.

The description of the intensely physical exertion and toil exacted of young children, with meagre rewards and little consideration of their wants and needs, is heart-wrenching. Anny's story is also about surviving the vagaries of Stalin's repression which for her family meant the uncertainty of arrest, interrogation, imprisonment, exile, extreme deprivation, and separation from the loss of loved ones--essentially, of surviving the unendurable.

Unable to go on, the writer appealed to God when she felt she would have preferred to sleep forever. A great deal of credit for surviving the Soviet hell must go to the inner resourcefulness and indomitable spirit of Anny and all those who endured.

Working from a background in feminist theory, Pamela Klassen presents the stories of two Mennonite women born twenty years after Anny. Katya and Agatha tread similar paths through the war. Their stories are extended through analysis and insight as interpreted by a scholar distanced by age, experience and perception.

In her introduction, Klassen explains that the book "is not a historical assessment of these women's lives, but rather an inquiry into memory" (p. 3), a reflection on how they remember "walking and running through

World War II" (p. 5). In her attempt to be true to the women's stories by articulating them in a voice familiar to them, Klassen determined that her "own voice of reflection and analysis must be heard as well" (p. 12).

One concept raised may unsettle those who took part in the 1943 escape-rescue. When Klassen describes the women as "rescued by Nazis from Stalinists, rescued by fascists from tyrants" (p. 14), Klassen's perception appears far removed from the experience of those directly involved. They probably did not view their deliverance in those ideological terms.

Klassen's slim volume contains an extensive bibliography which centres on post-WWII immigrant Mennonite women's experience and on broader feminist themes. Goerzen's book contains family photos, maps, a family tree, and a short glossary that help locate her place for readers.

For a more thorough understanding of Mennonite reactions to the events of the 30s and 40s under Soviet rule, both Goerzen's and Klassen's books could be read concurrently. One wonders how Klassen would have presented Anny's story.

As Anny's story does, Klassen says her interpretation of the two women's lives helps fill the "gaps in the scholarly canon, in Mennonite history" (p. 138). She hopes readers will ponder these stories, because "the stories we listen to and the stories we tell profoundly shape the stories we live" (p. 3).

One comes away from these books contemplating the essence of the nature of endurance. All three women often looked death in the eye: Their conviction of God's protection carried them through. For two of them, it was also the presence and needs of their young children that were the magnet which enabled them to overcome adversity.

Both books are a welcome addition to the growing number of Mennonite women's stories. We need to continue to enlarge our awareness of these writings, and this significant period of history.

Helene Friesen is a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB.

Gerlach, Horst. *Nightmare in Red*. (Sioux Falls, SD: the author and the Tschetter family, 1995), hdb., 270 pp., \$24.95 US, pb., \$14.95 US.

Reviewed by Lorina Marsch

This autobiography first appeared in 1970. It is described as "an amazing account of a German Mennonite youth, caught up in the

madness of Adolf Hitler in 1945, imprisoned in Siberia during WWII, and later reached by God".

Gerlach is uniquely suited to write such a book. He was fifteen years old when the trauma began, so he remembers life before that time. His involvement in the junior section of the "Hitlerjugend" and his natural militaristic bent moulded his life. The Second World War, the devastation wrought on his family, his own abduction, imprisonment and torturous treatment in a labour camp, the absence of all decency and humanity in the bitterly cold north, inadequate clothing, only a threadbare blanket, the constant lack of food, the scarcity of drinking water, and random violence -- all these afforded less than a meagre chance for survival. In fact, of the 3000 people interred in this way, about 2000 perished, including most of the older men, women and girls. And yet, through minute shifts in his situation, which can only be attributed to intervention by God, he was able to live to tell the story.

A heart-stopping trip home through a devastated countryside, the news of loss of life within his own family, and the terrible stories of the survivors left an added mark on him. He was able to flee the Demontage in Thuringen. Settling in Niedersachsen, he became an agricultural apprentice.

Only when he came to America in 1951 as a farm exchange worker through MCC did his life regain focus. The acceptance and love he experienced among Mennonites in the United States fostered a great change in his personal attitude. At the same time he had a life-changing experience with Jesus Christ. From 1953 to 1955 he studied at Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg, Virginia, as a classmate of Myron Augsburg, who wrote the foreword to this addition. One of the host families from his time as a trainee, the Tschetter family, has done the second edition of this book. It includes stories of the author's life after WWII.

Lorina Marsch is currently editor of the Mennonitische Rundschau in Winnipeg.

Block, Kevin. *Without Shedding of Blood*. (Winnipeg: Windflower Communications, 1994), pb., 185 pp., \$12.00.

Reviewed by Sam Steiner

Kevin Block, pastor of the First Mennonite Church in Vineland, in his first novel describes the personal struggles of Samuel Beamer, a young Mennonite carpenter, during
(cont'd on page 7)