

MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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

Volume XXIV, No. 2, June, 1998



Jakob Enns, his three daughters and a friend, Miss Kremser, murdered in the village of Friedensruh in 1918.

Mennonite Victims of Revolution, Anarchy, Civil War, Disease and Famine, 1917 - 1923

by Peter Letkemann

Sparked by the work of Harvey Dyck and an international team of scholars, Mennonites in many parts of the world have chosen 1998 to commemorate the victims of terror and repression in the former Soviet Union during the 40-year period from 1917 to 1956. My contribution to this commemoration has been the compilation of a comprehensive name-list of victims, continuing the work begun almost 20 years ago by Dr. George K. Epp. The primary purpose of this list is to perpetuate the memory of these individuals and their suffering, and, secondly, to provide accurate and verifiable statistics on the extent of Mennonite losses during these years. In this, the first of a three-part series of articles, I wish to share some preliminary findings regarding the victims of war, revolution, civil war, disease and famine during the years 1914 - 1923.

The 'Time of Troubles' for Russian Mennonites began on 1 August 1914 with the declaration of war between Germany and Russia. During the first three years of the war Mennonites suffered relatively little compared to the rest of the Russian population. Some 12,000 Mennonite men (approximately 12% of the Mennonite population¹) were enlisted in the war effort as forestry workers and medical orderlies, as well as in various secretarial and administrative positions. Of these enlisted men, only 132 are known to have died² - 125 from diseases such as typhoid, cholera, or tuberculosis; 3 committed suicide and 4 forestry workers were murdered. To date, I have been able to ascertain only a handful of names.

With their men away in the service, women, children and the elderly on the "home front" had to work doubly hard to keep farms and industries going. While

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In this issue

This year marks two important anniversaries for many Canadian Mennonites. One is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the arrival of the first group of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the 1920s. On July 21, 1923 a group of 738 arrived by train in Rosthern, Saskatchewan after a lengthy trip which began in Chortitza, Ukraine. Many more followed in the succeeding years. A total of over 20,000 immigrants arrived from 1923-1930. Many stories of the ordeal that led to their often desperate attempts to leave their former homeland and the difficulties they faced creating a new homeland in Canada have been told. Still, there is more to be told. The recent opening of many archives to researchers has brought new information and promises to yield much more. This issue of the *Mennonite Historian* focuses particularly on the Mennonite experience after the Bolshevik Revolution and the migration of Mennonites in the 1920s. The aftermath of the revolution also became the occasion for the birth of the Mennonite Central Committee in July, 1920. MCC was originally created as an agency for famine relief (1920-1925). Soon, however, it also became involved in aiding Mennonite refugees beginning with the crisis of 1929-30 which resulted in the resettlement of many refugees to South America. After World War II MCC helped in the resettlement of refugees to Canada as well as to South America (1947-51). The editors of the *Mennonite Historian* are grateful to MCC Manitoba for its financial contribution toward the June and September special issues.

The September issue of the *Mennonite Historian* will focus on the Mennonite experience in the Soviet Union during World War II, the Great Trek, and the eventual resettlement of many of these refugees in Canada. Readers are invited to submit stories, photographs and other information to the editors. — AD

Mennonite Victims

(cont'd from p. 1)

the work was not easy, the grain that was harvested could be sold for good prices and Mennonite mills made a handsome profit. Mennonite factories, most of which had been converted to war production, also made good profits.³ True, the Land Liquidation Laws of 1915 hung like the sword of Damocles over their heads; yet, while over 200,000 Germans from Volhynia were deported to the Eastern parts of the Empire in 1915-16, Mennonites for the most part were never directly affected by this legislation.

When the Tsarist Regime was toppled by the bloodless revolution of February/March 1917, most Mennonites breathed a sigh of relief and looked forward to better times. Their hopes, however, were dashed by the Bolshevik coup d'état in October/November 1917 and the ensuing years of anarchy and civil war.

The first Mennonite historian to attempt a count of victims during this period was Adolf Ehrh.⁴ He provided a figure of 1,107 deaths (approximately 1% of the Mennonite population): 132 war casualties, 647 people murdered, 168 typhoid deaths and 160 famine victims. Thirty years later Frank Epp doubled this estimate when he wrote that "from 1914 to 1921 more than two percent, or over 2,250, of the Mennonite population had met death by violence or disease."⁵ Epp provided no documentation for this estimate, nor did he include famine victims in his calculation.

My research to date has identified a total of 3,189 victims during the 6-year period from 1917 to 1923:⁶ 1,230 (39%) were brutally murdered or executed; 1,452 (45%) died in the typhoid epidemic of 1919-20; and 507 (16%) are known to have starved to death in the famine of 1921-22. Together with the 132 known war casualties listed earlier, we arrive at a total of 3,336 deaths during the period 1914-23 - more than 3% of the Mennonite population.

The deaths during the period 1917-23

were not evenly distributed geographically: 96% percent of the victims (3,055) were from Ukraine — with 69% from villages west of the Dnieper River (including the settlements of Chortitza, Yazykovo, Zagradovka, Borozenko, Baratov, etc.) and 27% from villages east of the Dnieper (including Molochna, Memrik, Ignatyev, Schönfeld, etc.). Only four percent of the victims (134 persons) came from the Russian Federation (RSFSR), which included Mennonites in the Crimea, Caucasus, Volga, Don and Ural regions, and in Siberia.

Of the 1,452 known typhoid victims over 85% were from the Chortitza region alone. Several writers have indicated that typhoid deaths in the Chortitza region amounted to at least 10% of the population.⁷ The number of 1,258 victims (426 known by name) in the Chortitza region, however, is based on reports from only 9 villages (Blumengart, Chortitza, Rosental, Einlage, Neuendorf, Nieder Chortitza, Osterwick, Schöneberg and Schönhorst). In the Yazykovo villages only 36 names are known, in the Molochna settlement only 44 typhoid victims have been identified, and in Zagradovka only 3. Given the scope of the epidemic, it is quite likely that there were many more victims than those that have been identified to date.

Of the 507 reported famine deaths, at least 387 (76%) were from the Molochna villages, compared with only 77 from villages west of the Dnieper River (48 from the Chortitza Settlement, 16 from Zagradovka, 12 from Gnadental and 1 from Friedensfeld), and 40 from the Orenburg Settlement. None of the Molochna victims are known by name. In the Chortitza region, the village of Nieder Chortitza was especially hard hit, with 33 reported deaths.⁸ The total number of famine-related deaths was relatively low, compared to the population as a whole, thanks to the timely arrival of aid from North American and European Mennonites.

Of the 1,230 murder victims, 1,148 are known by name; only the names of 82 (out

of a total of 129) persons murdered in the villages of Ebenfeld and Steinbach (Borozenko Settlement) in early December 1919 have not been found.

The first known murder victims were three men from the village of Marianovka in the Terek Settlement, shot by bandits on 16 October 1917 while returning home from Chassav Yurt. By mid-February 1918 another 6 men were dead and the 15 Terek villages were abandoned as residents fled to the Kuban and Molochna in the wake of attacks from the surrounding Muslim mountain tribes.

In 1918 a total of 156 murders and executions are reported. Most of the victims were residents on estates and private farms, or travelers. The scattered settlements in the Schönfeld-Brasol region were especially hard hit. The first casualties were five members of the Aron Thiessen family, brutally murdered on 25 January 1918. In all a total of 96 persons from the Schönfeld-Brasol region were murdered before residents finally abandoned their farms and estates by the Fall of 1919. Other Mennonite villages in Ukraine were relatively untouched during 1918, with the exception of Halbstadt where six men, including 5 Mennonites and 1 Russian youth, were executed by the Bolsheviks in February 1918. One of the ring leaders responsible for the executions was a Mennonite by the name of Kroeker. According to various reports, Kroeker and at least five other Mennonite Bolsheviks: including a Hübert from Nikolaipol, Peter Braun (Lichtenau), Gerhard Friesen (Gnadenheim), Johann Wiebe (Lichtfelde), and a Neufeld (Molochna region), were executed by German occupation forces during 1918.

Over 67% of all murder victims (827) were killed in 1919, the vast majority during the six-week period from 26 October to 5 December, when Makhno's anarchist army overran Mennonite villages throughout Ukraine. Brutal massacres occurred in Blumenort (Molochna), Eichenfeld (Yazykovo), Münsterberg

(cont'd on p. 9)

GENEALOGY AND FAMILY HISTORY

by Alf Redekopp

Queries

Hiebert/Huebert: I am looking for the parents of Abram, Jacob and Peter Hiebert. These brothers were born around 1865-1875 and likely grew up in Neukirch, Molotschna. Abram settled in Wanderloo, Terek. Since 1907, Jacob was a partner with Franz B. Redekopp of a large mill in Kamenskaya, Don Gebiet. Peter was a schoolteacher in Schoental, Crimea. Contact: Leona Gislason, 442 Castlefield Ave., Toronto, ON M5N 1L5 or e-mail: fractal@globalserve.net.

Epp: Seeking information on parents and siblings of Peter Jacob Epp born 1855 in Blumenort, Molotschna. Possible brother named Wilhelm (son of Jacob Epp and Maria Martens) who came to US 1878-1884. Peter moved to Wohldemfuerst in about 1864, later married Maria Ch. Schmidt. Three sons include Jacob, Johann and Nicholas. Documentation indicates possible move to Russia in 1845. Contact: Carol and Herbert Epp, 27427 Sunnyridge Road, Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274-4038.

Klassen: Looking for the descendants of Heinrich Klassen and Katharina Dueck who came to Canada from Schoenhorst, Russia in 1923. The Klassens worked on farms around St. Anne and Arnaud, Manitoba. In 1932 they had five sons and one daughter. The oldest son, Peter was born in Canada in February 1924. Katharina was born ca. 1900 as the daughter of Deacon Heinrich and Katharina Dueck of Schoenhorst. In 1959 the Klassens were living on Minto Street in Winnipeg. Contact: Isaac Unger, 80 Bridgecrest Dr., Winnipeg, MB R2C 3S4.

Pankratz: Looking for information on Peter P. Pankratz who came from Russia in 1893 and settled in Mt. Lake, Minnesota. He immigrated with his parents Peter J. Pankratz (1830-1910) and Anna Kahn/Kohn/Kuhn (1835-1903) from Paulsheim, Russia. The family's ancestry can be traced to the Warsau region of Poland and immigrated to the colonies in Russia around 1835. Are there any

writings or diaries where these people are mentioned? Contact: M.H. Derksen, 676 Ladore, Grand Junction, CO 81504 or e-mail: millie@acsol.net.

Falk: Searching for information about the family history and genealogy of David Falk (1759) and his wife Sara Martens who settled in the village of Schoenwiese, South Russia. Does anyone have or know of writings such as diaries, articles or birth, death and marriage records from Schoenwiese. Contact: M.H. Derksen, 676 Ladore, Grand Junction, CO 81504 or e-mail: millie@acsol.net.

Dyck: Searching for information on the descendants of Wilhelm Dyck b. 1872 in Einlage, Chortitza, Russia d. 1918 of Typhus and married to Susanne Woelk (1874-1918). Children include: Jacob b. 1900, Anna b. 1902, Susanne, Wilhelm, Aganetha b. ca. 1910 and Peter b. 1913 d. 1992. Contact: Egon Bickelmann, Michelbach Hauptstr. 14, D-74582 Gerabronn, Germany.

Recent Books

Robert G. Dirks. *Our Dirks Ancestors Pilgrimage from Holland to North America 1500 AD to 2000 AD* (Kamloops, BC : Private publication, 1998) 280 pp.

This book contains the ancestors and descendants of Heinrich H. Dirks (1832-1894) and Aganetha Buller (1832-1911) who were born in Karolswalde, Volhynia region of Poland/Russia and died in Marion, South Dakota. The Dirks ancestral line is traced back to a David Dirks and Sarcke Schmidt married in 1701. Heinrich H. and Aganetha migrated from Volhynia in 1874 and settled in South Dakota. The book also includes photographs, copies of various legal documents such as homestead records, maps and background information about the geographical areas where the family lived. Contact: Robert G. Dirks, 1948 Sheffield Way, Kamloops, BC V2E 2M2

J.R. Kehler. *The Descendants of Peter Kehler 1836-1876 : Johann Kehler 1864-1927. Feature Edition.* (Steinbach, MB : Private publication, 1997) 107 pp.

This book traces the descendants of Peter Kehler (1836-1876) who lived

emigrated from the Bergthal Colony in 1874 and settled in Manitoba. He passed away in 1876, leaving a widow with 5 children. At least some of these children were given to adoptive families. The book includes genealogical data, photographs and some images of original documents. Contact: J.R. Kehler, Box 20737, Steinbach, MB R0A 2T2.

Am Trakt Village Census on FEEFHS Website

The Federation for East European Family History Societies (FEEFHS) was founded in June 1992 by a small group of American and Canadian genealogists with diverse ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. From a beginning of eleven societies accepted into its membership the first year, it has grown to include over 170 member organizations. Their motto is UNITY-HARMONY-DIVERSITY as they welcome all societies and individuals into their membership, regardless of present or past strife in the homelands of Central and Eastern Europe.

FEEFHS communicates with its individual and organizational members in many ways such as a quarterly newsletter, sponsoring national and regional conferences, publishing resources such as the *Resource Guide to East European Genealogy* and hosting an Internet WWW (World Wide Web) site.

FEEFHS "HomePage" on the Web since May 1995 consists of 108.5 megs of data (equivalent to 3,631 pages) with a 211,898 word search engine index, surname databases, maps and cross-indexes to related sources. The URL (Web Address) is: <http://feefhs.org>.

One significant discovery for Mennonites at this web site is the census list for the first two villages established by Mennonites emigrating from Prussia in 1855 and 1856 to the Trakt Settlement located in the province of Samara on the Volga River. This document contains the names and ages of all the residents of the villages of Hahnsau and Koepental as of 1857. The specific URL is: <http://feefhs.org/fri/ru/volga/samara/revlist/1857.html>.

Send inquiries to Alf Redekopp, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 or 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5. E-mail: aredekopp@confmenno.ca

Seventy-Five Years Ago

by G.P. Schroeder, translated by J. Pauls

Our train was the second one which, left the station in the village of Chortitza on July 2, 1923. My neighbour, Peter Berg, was the group leader and I was one of the railway car leaders.

All night our train stopped at the station of Alexandrovsk where some more emigrants from Schoenwiese were added to the group. On the morning of July 3 there was a farewell. Very distinctly I recall some details of this. Henry H. Epp was there to bid farewell to his brother Dietrich H. Epp. It is quite natural that on occasions like this you witness embracing, kissing, etc. Rev. David Hofer was present at the Alexandrovsk railway station and took pictures of the proceedings. When he was in the act of snapping a picture of the two Epp brothers, Heinrich H. Epp turned and stepped aside. He did not care to demonstrate his emotions.

In Charkov we were kept somewhat longer, since here we were asked to bathe, receive inoculations and our clothes were disinfected. Then we proceeded via Kursk, Briansk, Smolensk and Witebsk toward the boundary. On July 7 we arrived in Kursk. Our journey was much too slow. Our children were well; there was much singing in our car. Our plan was to organize a choir on the other side of the boundary. This was intended to serve on the ship as well. Rev. and Mrs. Jakob G. Tiessen with their 11 children and daughter-in-law and also Mrs. Cornelius

Warkentin, Waldheim, with her children were with us. Mr. Warkentin was already in Canada as member of the "Study Commission". Mrs. Warkentin, as midwife, was repeatedly asked to assist at births. Shortly before we reached the boundary at Sebesch the fourth birth occurred. Brother J. Peters from Nieder-Chortitza, who had already been in Canada, gave us all sorts of encouraging information about it.

Sunday, July 8.

We continued to move all night. This was an answer to prayer. After having waited in Kursk all of Saturday, we asked the Lord for more rapid progress and He heard our pleas. In the morning we attempted to set up one of our samovars at one of the railway stations. The kindling wood had barely started to burn when the bell rang and we had to hurry to get into our car. At 10:30 a.m. we arrived in Orel. Immediately the step ladder was let down and the men ran for water. In Orel we waited 16 hours and at 3:00 a.m. we continued our journey.

Monday, July 9

Toward noon we arrived in Briansk. Here too our patience was tested severely. At 8 p.m. we left for Smolensk and arrived in that city at 9 a.m. Truda, my first wife, and I went to the market place where we bought cheese, sugar and bread. At 9 p.m. we left this beautiful place of our fatherland. At sunset the forest in the west glowed as if on fire, a rare view. Inwardly moved, we sang appropriately, "Golden

evening sun, how beautiful you are!" After this we had our evening prayer and then some of us went off to bed.

Wednesday, July 11

During the night it had cooled off considerably. While the train was moving, we set up our samovar and ate and drank. Until now there was no lack of appetite. We arrived at Witebsk and from here travelled in a more northerly direction. At midnight we came to Novo-Sibirsk.

Thursday, July 12

Before noon we proceeded on our way to Sebesch, the boundary station. However, now we encountered some difficulties. Our locomotive was not strong enough to pull us up a hill; a second locomotive was called to our assistance. Later, when there was insufficient power again, the men had to get out and push. Repeatedly more men were called out to push. It caused quite a commotion. At midnight we arrived in Sebesch.

Friday, July 13

This morning we received permission from our group leader, Peter Berg, to wash at the lake, cook, bathe, etc. A whole gypsy camp gathered at the lake. Soon the samovar was steaming and the whole crowd settled down on the green grass for breakfast. The water was as soft as rain water. At 6 p.m. the customs inspection took place.

Soon this frightening experience was behind us too. Everything went smoothly. First to appear were our leading men, Dietrich H. Epp and others. In Russian we say, "Ne pomascheschne pojedjesch." Everyone was glad to do his part to speed up proceedings. After the inspection all our belongings were returned to the railway cars. In the evening we were informed that the railway officials demanded another three million rubles per railway car from us--one more injustice. Well, we told the Lord about this and went to bed.

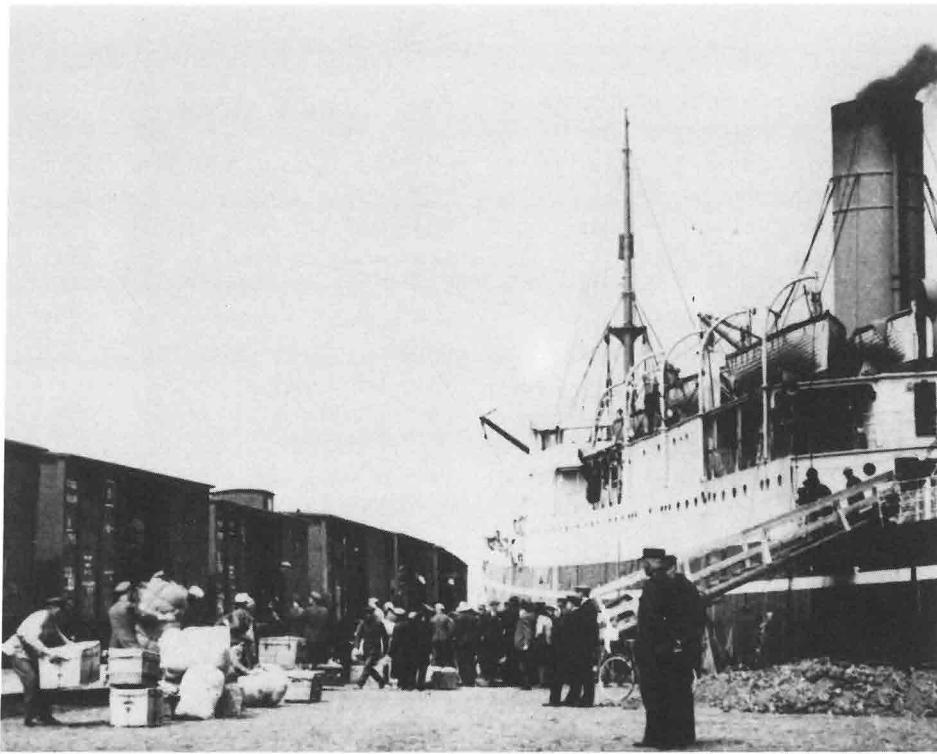
Saturday, July 14

Early in the morning the samovar was set up again. During the night Mrs. Warkentin had been called to another car. At 8 a.m. we left Sebesch. Then, after one more examination at the boundary where our passports were checked, the

Cash and Credit Passengers (by year of immigration)			
YEAR	CREDIT PASSENGERS	CASH PASSENGERS	TOTALS
1923	2,759	--	2,759
1924	3,894	1,154	5,048
1925	2,171	1,601	3,772
1926	2,479	3,461	5,940
1927	340	507	847
1928	408	103	511
1929	1,009	10	1,019
1930	294	11	305
TOTALS	13,354	6,847	20,201

Western Ontario Mennonite Conference: 1963-1988

by Ralph Lebold



Passengers and baggage being transferred from a train to the S.S. Bruton during the 1920s.

stepladder was taken away. A rough man swore at all of us as a farewell and then we crossed the boundary line. What a sensation! Russia with its "Tovarischtschi" and its "Prodna-log" was behind us.

At the Latvian railway station, Zilupe we were well received by representatives of the C.P.R. Since it was noon, men were asked to get the prepared meals for each car. Afternoon we transferred our belongings to the Latvian railway cars and at 3 p.m. we were taken to Reschitza. Here too we were received graciously. A sumptuous beef soup with rice was our supper, for which we said grace gratefully. Our belongings were put into disinfection chambers but this was completely different from what we had experienced at Charkov. There things were tied together and thrown into a dirty basement; here they were hung on clothes hangers and pushed into disinfecting chambers. The bathroom too was clean and bathing took place all through the night.

Sunday, July 15

The first awakening outside of Russia! Now followed the medical examination, which brought sad results for some of the passengers. In many families trachoma

was discovered and those concerned were kept back. We, as well as Jakob Tiessen and family and Johann Schroeder and family, were declared healthy. There was great rejoicing in our family, but, alas, many tears for other families. We now received our tickets for the sea voyage. A religious service was held in open air, in which the speakers were Rev. Johann J. Klassen, Rosental, Rev. Jakob Tiessen and Elder Johann Klassen, Schoenwiese. In their sermons they gave special consideration to those who were temporarily retained. Psalm 68:20.

Monday, July 16

After breakfast our belongings were taken to the waiting railway cars. We gave our toasted buns to those who stayed behind. At 2 p.m. the call came to board the train. Away we went via Riga to Liebau. Our hearts ached as we watched those who, with tearful eyes, were left behind. The train made good progress and at 1 a.m. we arrived at Riga. Too bad we didn't have the opportunity to view this city. Our next train was waiting for us; in a few minutes our belongings were transferred and in half an hour we moved on.

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The location of the annual Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 1998 meeting, is being held in the famous Ontario city of "Stratford on the Avon". The city of Stratford is on the western edge of the original Amish Mennonite settlements. Four of the five original congregations were located between Stratford and Kitchener; the fifth was located along Lake Huron, near the village of Zurich, some forty miles to the west.

When the Amish Mennonite conference changed its name in the summer of 1963, it was more Mennonite than Amish, but it was not fully reflective of either group. The common mode of transportation was the automobile. Communication via the telephone was the norm. Electricity was used by the majority of the church members. In reality, the Amish Mennonites were accommodating to the culture and conveniences available to them.

In worship, the common hymnbook of choice was the Church and Sunday School hymnal. Sermons were seldom written out and prayers were usually given extemporaneously. These original congregations had a leadership pattern known as "the bench". This included a series of ordained persons, often including a bishop, several ministers, and two or more deacons. These persons served without remuneration and often had farms to support their families. Contrary to their brethren to the east in the Kitchener-Waterloo area who were beginning to receive "pastoral support", there was underlying suspicion that there were too many liabilities when receiving financial support from the congregation.

If in 1963 the Amish Mennonites did not reflect the religious and cultural practices of their Amish cousins, there were some basic beliefs that were parallel. For example, both held to the doctrine of nonconformity to the world, as well as to the principle of nonresistance. The Amish Mennonites, however, had more in common with their Mennonite cousins

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Writer for the J.J. Thiessen Biography Selected

Esther Epp-Tiessen has been selected by the Mennonite Heritage Committee to write a biography of the late J.J. Thiessen. Rev. Thiessen was a well-known minister, elder and board member within the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. His many activities included involvement with the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, MCC, the establishment of First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon and a founder of Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

Esther comes to this task having worked on a number of important research projects. For her Masters degree in History she wrote her thesis on the origins of MCC Canada. Later she wrote a history of Altona, which was published in 1982.

Together with her husband Dan they worked with MCC in the Phillipines from 1982 - 1986 where they served as country directors. They have served as co-pastors of two congregations and more recently she has served on the MCC Canada Board of Directors, worked as program coordinator with MCC Ontario in programs dealing with family violence,



peace and justice as well as global education.

For the past number of years her voluntary work has included serving on the Board of Directors of the Rotary Centre School Authority (Waterloo), a school and treatment facility for children with physical, communication and developmental disabilities. This involvement grew out of their son Timothy's years at the school.

Esther and her family will be moving to Winnipeg this summer. Her family consists of husband Dan, who will begin teaching at CMBC this coming fall, sons Mark, Christopher and Timothy (deceased).

Bote Anniversary to be Celebrated

A committee has been created to celebrate the 75th. Anniversary of *Der Bote*. This paper was founded in Rosthern, Saskatchewan and its first issue was published on January 14, 1924. The paper is published every week and has faithfully served the CMC ever since.

A variety of activities are scheduled for this anniversary year. Readers of the paper will note a weekly series of articles reflecting on past editors, board members and topics. Special dinners and Crokinole tournaments will be held. Most of these events will be fund-raisers to assist in the ongoing compilation of the Index for *Der Bote*.

Unique to this anniversary is the limited production of 75 Crokinole boards which have the 75th. anniversary logo of *Der Bote* imprinted on the board. These boards will be available to persons who can win them at special fundraising tournaments or who have made a significant donation to the indexing project. Details will be announced in *Der Bote* and in future issues of the Historian.

Renovations to Heritage Centre Underway

Renovations have begun to the Heritage Centre Gallery. These renovations hopefully will solve the problem of leaking in the CMBC Library below, and will add important new space to the Gallery. It is anticipated that the

renovations will be completed by the end of July.

Memorial Cairns

Descendants of the Johann Schroeder family have donated a cairn and an tombstone to the Heritage Centre. Members of the family were on a heritage tour in Ukraine when they came across two memorial stones which had been removed from the former family cemetery. They were originally in the graveyard of the Schroeder/Dick estates known as Neuhof/Rosenhof, near the present day town of Wesseloje.

Attempts to relocate the cairns to their original location were thwarted when they discovered that a Collective now occupies the graveyard. Not wishing to see the two large stones lost, they arranged to have them brought to Canada. In December both the cairn and tombstone arrived in Winnipeg.

The family contacted the Mennonite Heritage Centre and it was decided to place these items at the Centre. The cairn (a photograph of which appeared in the December Historian) will be placed at the entrance to the Heritage Centre and the tombstone will be located within the Heritage Centre Gallery.

The family is dedicating the cairn as a memorial to the many Mennonite families who experienced war, dislocation, separation and began a new life in Canada. A formal dedication of the cairn and tombstone will take place on Sunday afternoon, August 16, at 7:00 PM at the Heritage Centre. The public is invited to participate in this event.

Mennonite Studies at the Heritage Centre / CMBC

Together with CMBC, the Mennonite Heritage Centre will be offering a number of evening classes during the fall and winter months. In fall, on Thursday evenings during October and November, Lawrence Klippenstein will be teaching an eight week course on Russian Mennonite History. This course can be taken for College credit or audited.

Concurrently, on Thursday evenings, a class on conversational Low German will

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JB: Death of Mennonite Brethren Leader Marks End of an Era

On May 9, 1997, John B. Toews died in Reedley, California. Toews was perhaps the most influential Mennonite Brethren leader in the 20th century. His life spanned most of the century (1906-1998) and he was one of the last of the MB leaders who grew up in Russia, experienced the trauma of revolution, civil war and famine, and then fled to a new homeland in North America.

Toews was active in many different leadership roles in the Mennonite Brethren denomination. Included were periods of presidency of Bethany Bible Institute, Mennonite Brethren Bible College and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary. He pastored several congregations, was Executive Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions for ten years and Director of the Historical Commission for over ten years. Whatever his position, Toews never wasted time in putting his own stamp on the area he directed.

In the area of Mennonite Brethren history and theology, Toews spearheaded the efforts to coordinate the work of three major archival centres (Fresno, Hillsboro, Winnipeg). He initiated a major drive to collect archival materials and also to microfilm most of the congregational records of MB congregations in the United States and Canada. The massive work of translating Peter M. Friesen's *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland* (1789-1910) was undertaken

under his leadership. Other publications on Mennonite Brethren history and theology were also produced largely because of his inspiration and leadership.

Toews published two major books in the later years of his retirement. The first (1993), entitled *Pilgrimage of Faith: The Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia and North America 1860 - 1990* was an exploration of the theological developments in the Mennonite Brethren Church during this era. Toews was especially concerned about the loss of the Anabaptist theology of discipleship and the adoption of North American evangelistic techniques. "Amid three decades of evangelistic activity," he stated, "Mennonite Brethren have not been spared the trend of accommodating the message of the gospel to a culture that is open to the benefits of salvation but does not want to 'take up the cross and follow me'" (258-59).

Toews's last book (1995) was his autobiography, entitled *JB: The Autobiography of a Twentieth Century Mennonite Pilgrim*. In the Foreword Wally Kroeker remarks, "No one of our generation has experienced JB's measure of Mennonite Brethren history. He is the last of those who overlapped with the first generation of our fellowship. He has presided over and helped shape our collective experience through most of this century. In some ways he is Mennonite Brethren history. His life, spent in devotion to the church, is a microcosm of the swirling changes that have buffeted and burnished our pilgrimage together." AD

Historical Commission Meets

The Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission of North America met in Abbotsford, BC on May 10-11 following the symposium on "One People, Many Stories." Paul Toews, the Executive Director of the Commission, was unfortunately not able to be present because of the passing of his father, J. B. Toews, on May 9.

The Commission reviewed the activities of the past year and made projections for the coming year. One of the new ventures that the Commission approved at its last meeting was a project called "Profiles of Mennonite Faith." This involved the

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publication of short stories of people of faith which then were mailed to all the Mennonite Brethren congregations for distribution to their members. Three have now been completed: the first on Dirk Willems (Paul Toews); the second on Magdalena Becker (Lueita Reimer); and the third on Peter M. Friesen (Abe Dueck). The Director's report stated, "This project has been successful beyond our best expectations." Despite the higher than expected costs, the Commission decided to continue the project.

The past year was also the most productive in the publication of volumes in the series entitled, "Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought." Four volumes have been published during the past year, including *Only the Sword of the Spirit* by Jacob Loewen; *Comanches and Mennonites on the Oklahoma Plains: A. J. and Magdalena Becker and the Post Oak Mission*, by Marvin E. Kroeker; *Moving Beyond Secession: Defining Russian Mennonite Brethren Mission and Identity, 1872-1922* by Abe J. Dueck; and *Journeys: Mennonite Stories of Faith and Survival in Stalin's Russia* by John B. Toews. There are no manuscripts ready for publication in the coming year.

Grants, Summer Projects

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies has again received several grants from the Canadian Council of Archives. A Control of Holdings grant in the amount of \$4545.00 was received to process a large collection of photographs. Alvina Block has already begun work on the project. An amount of \$1384.00 was also received to purchase an audio tape storage cabinet and for preservation supplies.

A summer student has been hired for a ten-week period under the Canadian government's Career Placement program. Cynthia Unruh will be working on a variety of projects and will also be available to researchers during periods when the Director and Archivist are absent

Letters to the *Historian*

Dear Editor:

The article in the September 1997 issue of the *Historian*, "Dr. Katherina Born Thiessen: A woman who made a difference" is a significant story that needed to be told. I would like to express my appreciation to Shirley Bergen for making us aware of yet another outstanding person in that pioneer community.

In such an excellent article I hesitantly point to the following comment which appears in the article. "She was too radical for the Aeltesters of the Reinlander (Old Colony) Church so they excommunicated the Thiessens."

In fact, Reinlander church records give no indication that the Thiessens were ever members of that church. They arrived in Manitoba in 1885, after the East Reserve Chortitzer Church had already elected a minister and a deacon in the village of Hoffnungsfeld. The Thiessens' choice of residence in this predominantly Bergthaler/Chortitzer village would seem to indicate that membership in the Bergthaler church was their first choice. This is further confirmed by the fact that they were entered in the very first scribbler used for preliminary entries of members of the new West Reserve Bergthaler church. Reinlander church members, given their large numbers in the surrounding area, would likely also have benefitted from her medical expertise.

John Dyck, Winnipeg

Dear Editor:

We thank Peter Letkemann for the wonderful tribute he wrote about Dr. George Epp. We went on a church history tour of Germany with George and Agnes. We enjoyed it very much and have many unforgettable memories of that trip. George told many interesting stories.

Helen Friesen, Calgary

Dear Editor:

Jacob Dick's purchase of an engraving in an Ottawa flea market provides additional visual information about the Mennonite settlements at an early period. The engraving, based on a sketch done by Lord Dufferin during his visit to the Rat

River (East) Reserve in 1877, is the only known pictorial record of Lord Dufferin's visit to the Mennonite settlement. A professional photographer had located in Fort Garry during the 1860s and was on hand in 1873 when the Mennonite delegates departed for their tour and inspection of the East Reserve. He also recorded for posterity the arrival of the first contingent of Mennonites on the *International* in 1874. However, there are no photographs of the Governor General's visit to the East Reserve in 1877. Fortunately, Frederick T. Blackwood (Lord Dufferin) was an artist. Lady Dufferin wrote in her diary, "'D' drew a good deal and finished some very nice sketches."

The scene in the engraving is the village of Eigenhof on August 21, 1877. The village had only two farmyards. The house-barn on the left belonged to Jacob Wieler and the one on the right belonged to Gerhard Schroeder. The vice-regal couple, their daughter Nellie, and their entourage slept in the three circular tents. The cook prepared the food in the rectangular tent. The formal reception was held on a shaded platform just off to the left of the picture. A German and British flag flew on each side above the decorated arbour.

The windmill depicted in the engraving was built by Gerhard Schroeder. The details that Dufferin included in his sketch of that landmark indicates that he appreciated the skill of the Mennonite millwright who, with the simplest of tools and materials, had created a machine that could harness the wind's energy. The walls and frame of the octagonal tower were made from tree trunks, and the arms of the sails were held in place by ropes.

This information was provided by the late Abram P. Dueck of Randolph (Chortitz), Manitoba, a great-grandson of Gerhard Schroeder. A.P. Dueck heard the story of the visit of Lord Dufferin from his grandfather, Rev. Johann Schroeder, who was five years old when the visit occurred. A map based on A.P. Dueck's information was made by William Schroeder in 1978, and shows an almost identical placement of the tents and buildings as is shown in the engraving. This memorable occasion was described briefly years later by several Mennonite

pioneers in a local publication and at length in the *Manitoba Free Press*. The Countess of Dufferin (Harriot Hamilton, 1839-1936) described this visit in detail in a letter she wrote to her bedridden mother in Ireland. A longer and more detailed account of this visit is included on pages 95-109 in *The Bergthal Colony* by William Schroeder.

William Schroeder, Winnipeg

Dear Editor:

Thanks for the *Mennonite Historian* which came today. The tributes paid to the late Dr. George Epp were worthy. He was a dedicated, talented Mennonite Christian who more or less started from scratch as a landed immigrant and worked his way up with his many talents to become an outstanding teacher, professor, raconteur and tour group leader to the former USSR.

John P. Nickel, Battleford

Engendering the Past: Women and Men in Mennonite History

A Conference on
October 16-17, 1998
at the

University of Winnipeg

This conference will explore and analyze the ways in which gender-- the experience of being a woman or a man-- has influenced and been evident in Mennonite history. There will be papers on evolving Mennonite concepts of femininity and masculinity, female-male relations in Mennonite communities, and gender analysis in Mennonite historiography.

Leading scholars on Mennonite history will present papers. They include Marion Kobelt-Groch from Germany, James Urry from New Zealand, Linda Boynton Arthur from Hawaii, Steven Boyd from North Carolina and other leading historians. Katie Funk Wiebe will be the keynote speaker at a banquet scheduled for Saturday night at Concord College.

For more information or to register please call (204) 339-0959, or email jediger@callisto.uwinnipeg.ca or write Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies, The University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2E9.

Mennonite Victims

(cont'd from p. 2)

(Zagradovka), and Ebenfeld and Steinbach (Borozenko). Makhno's men occupied the villages of the Chortitza and Yazykovo region until late December, when they were finally driven out by Bolshevik forces, and left a terrible legacy of disease and rape. No contemporary reporter ever attempted a tabulation of rape victims or a count of how many unwanted pregnancies (or abortions) occurred as a result of such violations.

As the Bolsheviks consolidated their control of Ukraine, the number of murders decreased dramatically: in 1920 there were only 43 reported deaths, in 1921 only 35 (including 11 Mennonites executed by the Bolsheviks after an unsuccessful peasant uprising in the settlement Am Trakt, and another 15 executed as counter-revolutionaries in the Molochna region); eight men were killed by roving bandits in 1922, and Abraham Siemens was tortured to death by the GPU in 1923.

The list of those killed in 1918-19 includes 8 men who died while serving in the short-lived Mennonite Selbstschutz, and another 45 men who died while in the service of the White Army - some as soldiers, some as medics, others as drivers conscripted to provide transport for the White forces. It is known that some Mennonite men also died while serving in the Red Army during this time, but I have found no names of casualties.

I will conclude this preliminary report of findings by allowing several contemporary writers to speak to the persistent question: "Why did we have to suffer? Why did God allow these terrible things to happen?" As early as April 1918, A.A. Kroeker wrote: "We suffered because of our wealth (*"um des Mammons willen"*), which we pursued too aggressively. We were too materialistic, too selfish. That is why God sent the Land Liquidation Laws, and when they did not achieve the required effect, the knife had to cut deeper."⁹ Another writer, commenting on the biblical text "Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth," stated: "Our people have suffered so many afflictions in the past few years, but do not seem to have learned from these."¹⁰

Hermann Neufeld wrote: "That He [God] allowed all these (misfortunes) to occur is not without a reason Maybe we wronged our servants and brought hatred and revenge upon ourselves; or we sinned against God and our fellow man in the way that we dealt with our land and our possessions...."¹¹ Finally, in his unpublished novel *Panta Rhei*, the well-known writer Fritz Senn allows his characters to offer an indictment of the Mennonite sins of omission and commission in pre-Soviet Russia that contributed to the destruction of the Mennonite commonwealth - including individual greed, instances of human exploitation, failure to deal with the problem of the landless, the treatment of servants and repulsive materialism - and concludes, "like a crucible, this time of sufferings will destroy the rot and whatever thrives on it."¹²

Endnotes

1. Population estimates provided by archivist Peter Braun, "Einige Zurechtstellungen," *Mennonitische Blätter* May 1932, 53: 1914 = 101,000, 1917 = 106,000, 1922 = 113,000.
2. Karl Lindemann, *Von den deutschen Kolonisten in Rußland*, 29.
3. David Penner, "Essen, trinken und vieles wissen," *Neues Leben* Nr. 37 (5 Sep 1990), 8.
4. Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Rußland*, 116f.
5. Frank Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 37.
6. These figures are still subject to change as additional information is received and processed. The complete list of names, together with selected stories and analysis will be published next year.
7. T.O. Hylkema, *De geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinde Gemeenten in Rusland*, 79 (see also the German translation of this work, *Die Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Rußland während der Kriegs- und Revolutionsjahre*, 92). According to a report by Johann G. Rempel (brother of the well-known historian David G. Rempel), in *My*

Village Home Nieder Chortitza, 62, Nieder Chortitza had 94 typhoid deaths (61 men and 33 women) in a population of 894 = 10.5% of the population.

8. Johann G. Rempel, *My Village Home Nieder Chortitza*, 67. Rempel notes that none of these 33 victims were women.

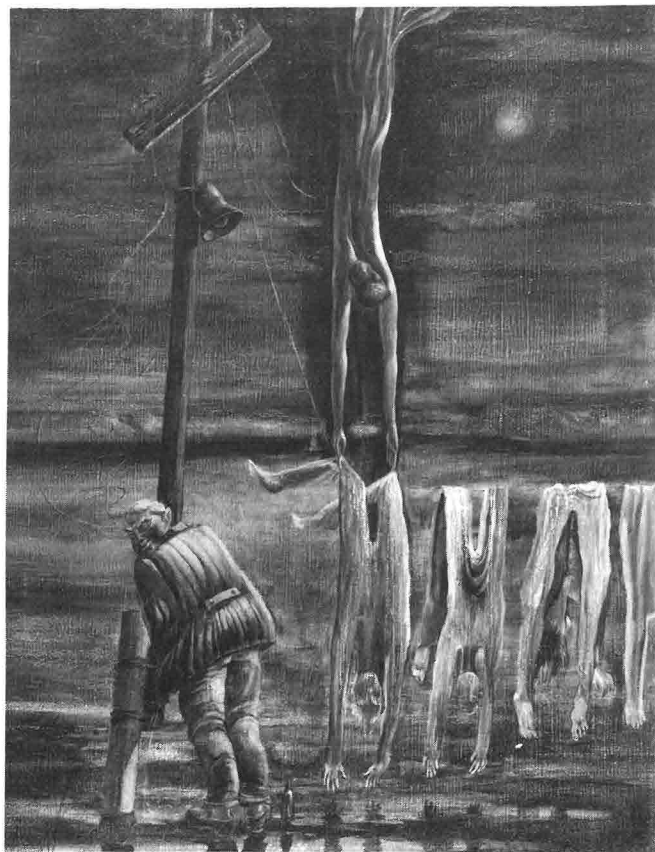
9. A.A. Kroeker, "Unsere Befreiung," *Volksfreund*, 27 April 1918, 1.

10. N.H., "Ihr sollt euch nicht Schätze sammeln," *Friedensstimme*, 2 Nov 1918, 2-3.

11. Hermann Neufeld, "Die Zeit der Heimsuchung," *Friedensstimme* XVII, 31 (4 Sep 1919), 3. See also C. Orosander, "Warum geschieht uns solches?" *Friedensstimme* XVII, 42 (14 Dec 1919), p.1 and nr. 43 (21 Dec 1919), 1.

12. Gerhard K. Friesen, "The Sins of the Fathers: Fritz Senn's Novel *Panta Rhei*," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 12 (1994), 191. See also Gerhard K. Friesen, "The Purple Pulpit - A Previously Unpublished Prose Text by Fritz Senn," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 7 (1989), 84-95.

Peter Letkemann is a researcher, writer and businessman who lives in Winnipeg.



"White Linen". This painting by A.A. Katargin, a Russian Orthodox artist, portrays the worn-out souls hanging like linen on torn wires from a pole in the shape of a cross. The observer does not notice the tragedy which is around him because he has lost his sense of being a member of society.

The painting was donated to the Mennonite Heritage Centre in 1995 by John Giesbrecht of Vineland, Ontario.

Seventy-five Years Ago

(cont'd from p 5)

Tuesday, July 17

Our European journey progressed rapidly, with only brief stops at railway stations. At 11 a.m. we arrived at Liebau harbour. We were asked to unload our belongings opposite the ship "BRUTON" which was to take us to England. In half an hour we were all aboard the ship.

Our family was assigned to cabin No. 127. We were happy to have privacy here. There were double bunk beds with mattresses and straw pillows for us and the children—one below and one above. There was a conveniently arranged bathroom with a mirror on the wall. We could take a bath at any time. At 1 p.m. we were served genuine coffee and white bread with butter and jam. We were traveling third class. The tables were covered with table cloths. At 5 p.m. we were served supper: coffee, potatoes, sausage and butter. Service at first was not too good. We were unable to communicate with the people since we had no command of the English language.

People were weeping when our ship left the harbor; a moving moment. We all joined in singing, "Commit thy way unto the Lord" and "Now thank we all our God." When we left the harbour there were considerable waves and soon pale faces developed. Some people ate fresh or dried fruit, which made them feel better.

Wednesday, July 18

I awoke early. The children and Truda were still sleeping and everything was quiet. I had slept well that first night on the ship. How different from what we had experienced in the railway cars. Soon there was activity on deck--washing, bathing, etc. For breakfast we were served fried fish, white bread and jam. The sea was calm. We had our morning devotions in which Rev. P. Rempel delivered a good sermon. His topic was, "Where are you coming from and where are you going?" The children are playing and felt like home on the ship. In the afternoon we had a nice nap; then at 3 p.m. Danzig, Germany, appeared in the distance. We met steamers and sailing ships more frequently. We pitied Germany as we passed by. Evening

devotions were led by Gerhard A. Peters. Thursday, July 19

What we appreciated most this day was passing through the Kiel Canal (Wilhelmskanal). It represents an enormous achievement by the Germans (1908 - 1914). At a distance of 100 wersts the canal separates Schleswig-Holstein from the mainland. The canal is deep enough to enable the largest ships to pass through. The passage through the canal was slow but very interesting. It took us 8 hours. After this passage we liked Germany so much that we would gladly have stayed there, if only it were not part of the undesirable Europe. We saw wonderful forests, grainfields, lovely towns and villas. At 9:30 p.m. we passed Cuxhaven with its beacons that could be seen from far away. This day we met many sailboats and even more motorboats. What we saw on both sides of the canal was proof that Germany is still alive.

We also saw German battleships. There were no evening devotions or choir practice today because there were so many interesting things to see.

Friday, July 20

The North Sea is a restless sea and seasickness was an almost regular occurrence. Truda was not well this morning. Breakfast consisted of very tasty fried fish. I had a good appetite too, but Truda ate nothing and the children very little. Fortunately we had some wine and coffee with us. Truda was in bed almost all day; only toward evening, when the sea became more calm, did she feel better. I led the evening devotions based on Gen. 28:15. Then till 10 p.m. I had a serious discussion with John Dyck, Schoenwiese, about spiritual matters, the church, etc.

Saturday, July 21

There was much fog during the night, and so our ship was forced to move slowly, using the fog horn continuously. At one point it had to stop. The sea was calm.

Sunday, July 22, 1923

Our ship "Bruton" arrived at Southampton and on August 4 we left on the same ship. After a voyage of 13 days across the ocean we arrived in Quebec on August 17.

Western Ontario Conference

(cont'd from p. 5)

both in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and in the Mennonite conferences in the USA.

The conference had been a member of the General Council of Mennonite General Conference (MC) since 1956, and had a representative on the Publication Board beginning in the same year. They officially joined Mennonite General Conference (MC) in 1959, thereby officially identifying with the larger Mennonite church. The possibility of merging into one (Old) Mennonite Ontario Conference was never seriously considered, even though there were increasing levels of cooperation between the two conferences.

Recommendations for a name change emerged out of an increasing missions awareness and a concern to interpret themselves appropriately to the "general public", especially in the outlying areas. Also, Orland Gingerich notes that they were "no longer practicing the Amish practices of the founding fathers." (*The Amish of Canada*, p. 115.) The name "Western Ontario Mennonite Conference" was chosen to distinguish them from the Mennonite Conference of Ontario, as well as to remove a potential identification with their Amish cousins.

The times were ripe for change. New congregations were developing beyond the original five congregations. For several decades, the congregations grew so that new ones were added in neighboring communities. The mission emphasis had taken them to develop new urban congregations in Stratford and London.

There was an openness to education so that Orland Gingerich became the first person with a B.Th. degree (1951) to serve in a conference congregation. The fifties saw a significant number of persons train at Goshen College Biblical Seminary and at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, who then served as pastors in the conference (8 persons), in the neighboring Ontario conference (5 persons), or who were appointed to serve as missionaries overseas (7 persons). The impact of this leadership shift over a period of ten years cannot be overestimated.

The name change represents an

important chapter in the development of the conference. People were ready for change. Several key leaders had the vision to move the process forward. Those who were part of the 1963 decision could not have anticipated the impact on church structures or the experience of further inter-conference cooperation. Ten years have elapsed since another step was taken for form the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada an amalgam of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec and the Conference of United Mennonite Churches in Ontario.

Ralph Lebold lives in Waterloo, Ontario.

Mennonite Studies

(cont'd from p. 6)

be taught by Ted Klassen. Also during the eight weeks in fall, the Heritage Centre will be open to the public until 9:30 PM. This is an experiment to meet the request of researchers who often note that day-time hours do not permit most working people to use the archives.

The winter session will be held in February and March with an eight week Low German Literature course taught by Dr. Adolf Ens. Two short four-week courses will be taught as well. In February Alf Redekopp will teach a course on Genealogy and in March Edith Friesen will teach a course on writing memoirs. Both come with considerable experience in research and writing.

More details on these classes can be obtained by calling the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Bote Index (Vol. III) Completed

The third volume of the *Bote* index has now been completed. It should be available for purchase in July. This volume covers the years of 1965- 1976. Largely compiled by Helene Friesen at the Heritage Centre, the index is a valuable resource for students, genealogists, historians and family history researchers. Copies can be purchased from CMBC Publications. Please call (204) 888-6781 to place your order.

Upon completing this volume the

Heritage Centre has immediately proceeded with the compilation of Volume IV of the index which will cover the years of 1977-1989. It is anticipated, if funding is secured, that an index of all issues of *Der Bote* can be completed early in the year 2000.

Klippenstein Receives Prix Award

In recognition of his many years of service to the Mennonite community and the larger Manitoba Heritage scene, Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, former Director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, received a **Prix Manitoba Award**, on May 12 (Manitoba Day). He received the award for "*Distinguished Service Vocational*." The award was presented by The Honourable Rosemary Vodrey, Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship on behalf of the Government of Manitoba. The awards ceremony took place in the Manitoba Legislative Building.

The award itself was a print of a painting entitled "**Avian Blue**" by Aboriginal artist Jackson Beardy. In recognition of this award the Heritage Centre staff held a coffee break/reception in the Heritage Centre where Lawrence received congratulations from conference staff and displayed his award.

Book Notes

by Ken Reddig

Publications in Mennonite and Mennonite-related research continues at an astonishing rate. The new books cover a wide range of topics and interests. As this year represents the 50th and 75th anniversaries of the Mennonite immigration from Russia, a number of books have recently appeared on the general topic of suffering.

Sarah Dyck has edited and translated a wide collection of stories in her book *The Silence Echoes: Memoirs of Trauma and Tears*. Co-published by Pandaora Press and Herald Press the book retails for \$23.95 in Canada. With over thirty stories packed into 234 pages the book covers both the post WWI and WWII hardships which Mennonites faced in Russia.

John P. Nickel of Saskatoon has translated and edited a book of personal reflections entitled *Hope Beyond the Horizon: Stories by Russian Mennonite Refugees Fleeing the Soviet Union*. In six chapters different persons relate their experiences of fleeing the ravages of war and persecution. The book retails for \$14.00 and is available from the author or from the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Beginning at the foundation of Mennonite theology, Wesley J. Priebe and Jacob A. Loewen have co-authored a book on Menno Simon's Anabaptist vision and its development over the past 500 years. With the provocative title of *Only the Sword of the Spirit* the 346-page book traces the development of the northern stream of Menno's thought through the Netherlands, Prussia, Russia and to North America. The book is a recent publication of Kindred Press.

Another book on Mennonite theology is *Theological Education on Five Continents: Anabaptist Perspectives* co-edited by Nancy R. Heisey and Daniel S. Schipani. The result of a consultation on theological education held just prior to Assembly XIII at the Mennonite World Conference in India the book contains papers and responses given at this consultation. The book is published jointly by the Mennonite World Conference and the Institute of Mennonite Studies, Elkhart, Indiana.

Two books relating to Mennonite women's studies have been recently published. The first is *In Her Own Voice: Childbirth Stories from Mennonite Women* collected and edited by Katherine Martens and Heidi Harms. A compilation of 26 stories from three generations of women, it relates experiences of giving birth and motherhood. The book is available from the University of Manitoba Press and retails for \$18.95.

Gloria Neufeld Redekop has written a book entitled *The Work of their hands: Mennonite Women's Societies in Canada*. She traces the story of Russian Mennonite women and the societies they created which became the context in which women could speak, pray and creatively give expression to their own understanding of the biblical message. Published by Wilfrid Laurier Church Press the book retails for \$24.95.

Book Reviews

John B. Toews, *Journeys: Mennonite Stories of Faith and Survival in Stalin's Russia* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1998). Paperback, 226 pp., \$24.95 Cdn.

Reviewed by Iris Christinne Hiebert, summer student, Mennonite Heritage Centre.

This book, the fourteenth in the "Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought" series, is a wonderful collection of stories collected, translated, and compiled by John B. Toews. These four survival stories introduce the reader to four remarkable people who survived Stalin's reign of terror in Russia.

Because the original texts of autobiographical material had to be translated into English, difficulties arose when compiling the accounts. Toews' attempt at creating a collection with a sense of continuity was evidently not easy since the material was often disorganized and repetitive. This was found in the oral and written accounts. In addition, he had to make translation and editing decisions to maintain a natural flow to the stories, while preserving elements of authenticity. In spite of these difficulties Toews has done an admirable job of creating a sense of continuity in which the reader can, decades later, enter the experiences that these four shared through their memoirs.

Through these sketches the reader is introduced to four people, two men and two women, who had much in common. All were Mennonites living in a peaceful land where they received freedom of religion and military exemption. Each lived through the horror of Stalin's reign of terror and many life-threatening experiences. Through these difficult years they often wondered where the loving God of their faith was. These were commonalities to all four, yet each of their stories is unique.

Anna and Justina's oral stories are very intimate and share many personal details of their experiences. These women's stories include self-disclosure of the struggles they had with life itself. On the other hand, Abram and Aron's written accounts reveal a need find a sense of order in the memories of the chaotic life

they were once forced to live. Although Anna, Justina, Abram, and Aron's accounts each have their unique differences, it is evident that, although there were times when they struggled with doubt, fear and despair, they continued to look upward to God as their guide and, like Job of the Old Testament, attested their faith in Him.

In spite of the fact that the memoirs are told as separate stories, they have a common thread in their situations, faith, and culture, which tie them together allowing a cohesion that characterizes an outstanding book.

Dueck, Abe J. *Moving Beyond Secession: Defining Russian Mennonite Brethren Mission and Identity 1872 - 1922* (Winnipeg, MB and Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Productions, 1997). Pb., 179 pp., \$20.95.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein, former Director, Mennonite Heritage Centre

This collection of translated documents, along with tables, maps and statistics, points to a wide-open frontier for research in Russian Mennonite studies. Since the great bulk of related primary materials has come down in either Gothic-longhand or printed German or Russian languages, most North Americans remain excluded from getting a look at these materials firsthand.

An introduction to the story of MB conferences in Russia prior to 1922 and a set of tables and maps precede 19 documents divided into two additional sections: First, a set of nine published (complete or excerpted) minutes of, or reports on, MB conference sessions held between 1882 and 1922, and second, related material, both MB and non-MB, three from the so-called *kirchliche* or "old" Mennonite church (conference?) -- a struggle remains in finding the best term here -- related to the larger context of inter-Mennonite discussions of the period covered.

Interpretation of the documents is kept somewhat to a minimum, wisely so perhaps, because the editor is aware that there is a good deal of additional material still needing translation so the larger non-

Russian, non-German reading audience can become fully and knowledgeably involved in determining what it all means.

It would seem that a larger collection may have been anticipated earlier (p. iv). If something is ever added, there may be a chance to add some notes on another version of the 1882 conference minutes from A. Dorodnichyn, ed. *Materials on the religio-rationalistic movements of south Russia in the second half of the 19th Century* (1908 - in Russian) and perhaps items from Johann Wieler's writings in the V. A. Pashkov papers. These would possibly further illuminate Baptist-MB relations in the first decades of the 1860s movement. Hans-Christian Diedrich's *Urspruenge und Anfaenge des russischen Freikirchtums* (1985) might add other insights on this theme.

Translations continue to wrestle with transliterations of Russian place and person names, and publishing copy editors are also challenged here. Note, for example, Kalnev, not Kalev (p. 10), Katlievka, Memrik, may be the same as Katlierevka (p. 22), Schlachting is usually Schlachtin (p. 70), the forestry camps would be Altagir, not Altergi (p. 76), Asov, not Asova or Usov (p. 81 and index), and Anadol, not Anadola (p. 81), while Vuvorovskaia, Kuban, is probably the same as Suvorovskaia (p. 76).

Maps are good to have in a collection like this, although place name spellings can be problematic here also (Orenberg for Orenburg (p. 29), Ignatievo (p. 30), etc.). A number of new maps are indeed included and with them is the location placement of the formerly elusive settlement of Puchtin (p. 30). A footnote on p. 26 still says that Puchtin cannot be located on a map. On a few other matters, a question or two: Is the reporter known for the conference report on p. 65 (J. Heinrichs, perhaps), and what is the former Rueckenau MB church building used for now (p. 5)?

An index is an appropriate appendix here, but several related bibliographical items (like those mentioned) would be available for a helpful little list of readings to close off the book. All these detail quibbles should not detract in any way from the importance of this volume, which, we hope, can be a harbinger of others like it to come.