

Mennonite Historian

A PUBLICATION OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE and THE CENTRE FOR MB STUDIES IN CANADA

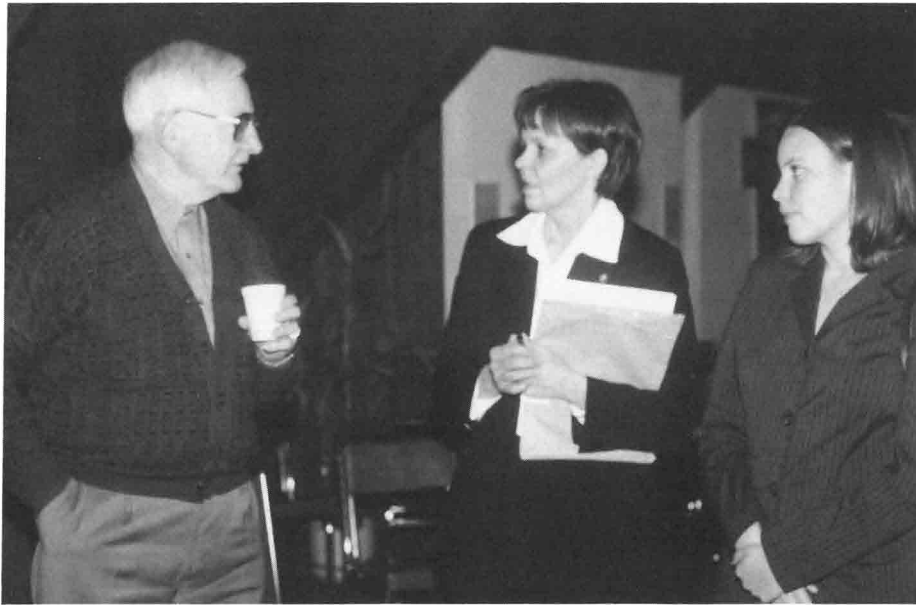
An Unknown Turkestan Mennonite

VICTOR G. WIEBE

Since learning of the participation of my wife's family in the Trek to Central Asia I have maintained an interest in the stories of Mennonite sojourn in the region. Mennonites, of course, have written some accounts of the area and a number of books by travellers comment on the Mennonites and the occasional specialized history gives nod to a Mennonite presence. Often the Mennonites in the expansive area formerly known as Turkestan and now divided into five separate republics, were just called German. One of the most interesting stories from a non-Mennonite comes from the book: *Mission to Turkestan: Being the Memoirs of Count K. K. Pahlen 1908-1909* (London, Oxford University Press, 1964).

Count Konstantin Konstatinovich Pahlen¹ (1861-1923), a German speaker of Latvian origin, was a jurist, career civil servant and loyal citizen of the Russian Empire. He served in a variety of administrative positions like Volst elder, commissar for peasant affairs, and Vice-Governor of the guberniya of Warsaw. Pahlen was an Evangelical Lutheran and the Christian faith was a vital force in his life. He, like his father before him, showed marked sympathy for Jews and other harshly ruled ethnic groups. After the 1905 Revolution, in which he was wounded in an assassination attempt, he was made a Senator of the First Department of the Senate and he moved to St. Petersburg. Revolutionary disturbances in Turkestan in 1905 and 1906 and pervasive corruption in the region caused the Imperial government to order a Senatorial investigation. Czar Nicholas II entrusted the investigation to Pahlen and this lasted from June 1908 until June 1909. With a number of assistants, Pahlen carried out his investigations with great vigour and enthusiasm, travelling the breadth of Turkestan. He examined all aspects of the economy, government, agriculture, justice and colonization. Pahlen made full use of his powers to suspend or prosecute officials involved in outrageous or criminal activities. In the end, however, because Russian Prime Minister Stolypin

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Winnipeg lawyer Walter Thiessen in conversation with Adele Dyck and daughter Gabriele Dyck, Winkler realtor and immigration booster. (Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs)

Another Immigration to Canada?

KEN REDDIG

Are we witnessing what may become yet another immigration of Mennonites to North America? In September of 1997 the first families of Mennonite immigrants from Germany began arriving in southern Manitoba, specifically to the Winkler area. These immigrants, often referred to as *Umsiedler* or *Aussiedler* (labels they do not like) first emigrated from Russia to Germany in the early 1970s via family reunification programs. Now, some 20 years later, some are moving once again. Prompting this move are issues and concerns often loosely defined as *freedom*.

Presently they come to the Winkler

area, because of the preparatory work of a local resident, Adele Dyck. Adele is also an immigrant to Canada. She and her family (husband and seven children) emigrated from Paraguay in 1985. Soon after coming to Canada, Adele began her own real estate business, Star-7, the "7" referring to her seven children.

As a business woman in Winkler, Adele was elected to the Executive of the local Chamber of Commerce. It was there that she began to hear the concerns of local manufacturers and businesses regarding the shortage of skilled workers. It was proving to be difficult to attract

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Another Immigration

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sufficient labour for the many burgeoning companies in the area.

On a trip to Europe Adele came into contact with Mennonite immigrants in Germany and heard them express their wish to come to North America. As she researched immigration possibilities she discovered that Manitoba rarely gets its share of the yearly Canadian immigrant quota, most wish to settle in BC or the larger eastern cities. This has proven to be a frustrating problem for Manitoba employers, especially in rural areas. While Manitoba is supposed to receive approximately 8,000 immigrants each year, it averages only about 3,000.

Adele's research revealed that under the *Manitoba Nominee Program* of the *Canadian Immigration Branch*, if potential immigrants can prove they can bring sufficient cash for initial living expenses, \$10,000 per applicant and \$2,000 per dependent, they can apply for immigration to Canada provided they have a job offer. In addition, each immigrant must also pay the Canadian immigration and processing fees.

Working with employers in the Winkler

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area, Adele began securing job offers and matching them with potential immigrants. She facilitates and completes the necessary applications for immigration status.

As of the end of January 1999, over 500 potential Mennonite immigrants have visited the Winkler area to check out immigration possibilities. Already some 150 people have immigrated and many more are scheduled to immigrate this spring and summer when their children finish the current German school term. Adele says there will be a large group of Mennonite immigrants to the Winkler area between April and July of 1999.

In a sense it is too early to tell how these immigrants will fare in Manitoba because this immigration is still small and only in its early stages. Most express their satisfaction with Canada--though there are some exceptions. Adele reports that they like rural areas, appreciate the wide open spaces and some express their love for winter--something Adele cannot understand as a former Paraguayan. They do miss the comprehensive social services they received in Germany, and find they must be more self-reliant here in Canada. While the Winkler Chamber of Commerce arranges for a host family to assist them in adjusting to their new life in Canada, no financial assistance is provided.

On the other hand they express their appreciation for the *freedom* they have in Canada. This is especially the case with the Manitoba school system. In Germany they felt that parents had no input in the schooling of their children. In Canada there are parent committees, independent schools, and a much closer connection between public schools and parents. They also appreciate the less unionized atmosphere of southern Manitoba companies. But undoubtedly the biggest stimulus is the opportunity to fulfill a dream. For many it was the dream of their grandparents and parents in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution to come to North America. Now, some 75 years later, they are finally realizing this long-cherished dream.

But why Winkler? First of all, Winkler has recently averaged zero unemployment so employment opportunities abound. Many of these immigrants acquired a house in Germany with government assistance. They are able to sell their house for a significant profit and purchase one of equal value at a much lower cost in

Winkler. At the same time, while the hourly wage is less in Canada than in Germany, living costs are lower. For these immigrants the positives outweigh the negatives and the overall opportunities seem to be greater.

Some have also noted social concerns as a stimulus for immigration. In Russia they were considered Germans, in Germany they were considered to be Russians, they hope that in Canada, especially in Winkler where many local residents speak German and Low German, they will fit in more easily and not be tagged with unwanted labels.

The efforts of Adele are not without some controversy. Since she is a real estate agent, some suggest she is assisting these families to come to Canada so they will feel obligated to purchase housing through the services of her company. Where good entrepreneurship ends and conflict of interest begins is open to question. There is also the local concern that since many of these immigrants have sufficient funds to purchase immediately houses, they are stretching the availability of housing in the Winkler area and as a result are driving up prices.

Adele does charge for her services, though initially she did not. One of her employees noted that in order to complete one application it takes a full day's work, if all the information is readily available, which it rarely is. Does she gain from this immigration? Most likely. But then so do the other merchants and manufacturers in the Winkler area. Besides, as some argue, who else is willing to go to the trouble of assisting potential immigrants with the application process?

Will this small beginning turn into a major tide of immigration? It is too early to tell. But Adele certainly thinks it will. She notes that there are thousands of Mennonite immigrants in Germany willing to make the move to Canada. And while southern Manitoba has received the first trickle, other Mennonite communities throughout Canada will certainly be recipients of many more of these immigrants in years to come.

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Ken Reddig is the Director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg.

Genealogy and Family History

by Alf Redekopp

Recent Books

Kenneth L. Ratzlaff. *A Family's Mennonite History: The story of our Claassen, Epp, Harms, Koop, Neufeld, Plenert, Ratzlaff, Unruh and Warkentin Ancestry* Volume 1 (Lawrence, KS : Private publication, 1997) 415 pp.

This book tells the story of the writer's ancestor's in the context of the Russian Mennonite History. It contains a section which sets the stage for the family history, a section which discusses the immigrants from the Russian Empire and a final section which contains ancestry and descendancy charts. Contact: Kenneth L. Ratzlaff, 2601 Belle Crest Dr., Lawrence, KS 66046. E-mail: kratzlaff@ukans.edu.

Helen Kornelson. *Our Family Tree : Cornelsen - Kornelsen : The Johann Jacob Kornelsen Family 1884-1974* (Watrous, SK : Private publication, 1998) 212 pp.

This book tells the family history of Johann Jacob Kornelson (1884-1974) who lived in the Nepluew Mennonite settlement in Russia at one time. Later he lived in the village of Kusmitzky. He emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1929 with all but the oldest son, who was in state service at the time. They settled in Watrous, Saskatchewan in 1930. Contact: Helen Kornelson, Box 1194, Watrous, SK S0K 4T0.

Marianne Reimer Kennel. *Descendants of Abram Froese 1754-1998* (Steinbach, MB: Private publication, 1998) 251 pp.

This book begins with Abram Froese (1854-1801) who migrated from Prussia with the first group of Mennonites to settle in Russia in 1788. He settled in Neuenberg, Chortitza Colony. The book consists of the history of 9 generations of descendants from this family. Almost the entire book has been formatted by software specifically designed for compiling a

genealogy. Contact: Marianne Reimer Kennel, 4554 Fort Lynne, Harrisonburg, VA 22802 E-mail: emkennel@aol.com.

Herbert D. Peters. *The Descendants of Daniel D. Peters 1749-1879* (Saskatoon, SK : Private publication, 1998) 416 pp.

This genealogy is a record of the descendants of Daniel Peters (1794-1879) and Katharina Hamm (1800-1839) and Helena Janzen (1816-1861). Daniel Peters was born in Prussia and came to the Molotschna Colony with his maternal grandparents. He married in the village of Schoensee and later moved to Ruekenau. After 1835 he moved north of the Old Colony and established his home and farming operation into what became known as Petersdorf. Petersdorf was later incorporated into the Yazykovo settlement. The book traces the descendants of the 11 out of 18 children which reached adulthood. Contact: Herbert D. Peters, 1420 Faulkner Crescent, Saskatoon, SK S7L 3R4.

Majorie Hildebrand. *Elm Grove Farm: the story of the ancestors and descendants of Bernhard and Helena Hildebrand 1679-1998* (Winnipeg, MB : Private publication, 1998) 165 pp.

This book contains the family history of Bernhard G. Hildebrand (1901-1962) and his wife Helena Reimer (1908-1989). The book traces the Hildebrand ancestry back 4 generations to a Bernhard Hildebrandt family in Rosenort, Prussia. Through one of the maternal lines the ancestry is traced by to Christoph Lehn born in Holland in 1679, hence the dates in the title! The book includes the written memories of the 11 children of Bernhard and Helena Hildebrandt. There is also family tree which shows all the descendants of the grandparents of these children, namely the descendants of Gerhard Hildebrand (1876-1926) and Elisabeth Reimer (1878-1959). Contact: Anne Winter, 771 Coventry Road, Winnipeg, MB R3R1B8

Carl Epp. *Gerhard Epp and Katharina Janzen* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 1998) 54 pp.

This item traces the descendants of Gerhard Epp (1864-1919) and Katharina Janzen (1868-1944) who came to Canada in 1893 and settled in the area that eventually was known as the Eigenheim district of Saskatchewan. Gerhard Epp was elected to the ministry in 1895, serving the newly organized Rosenorter Mennonite Church. Contact: Carl H. Epp, 7 Acadia Bay, Winnipeg, MB R3T 3J1.

J. Timothy Unruh. *The Jacob C. and Elisabeth Bergen Unruh Family Record* (Rocklin, CA : Private publication, 1998) 777 pp.

This book contains the family stories of the descendants of Jacob C. Unruh (1879-1943) and Elisabeth Bergen (1883-1978) of Newton, Kansas. The first part gives a historical overview of the times, places and events in the lives of the ancestors of this family. The second part deals with the birth of Elisabeth Bergen in Central Asia, the fate of those who stayed in Russia and early experiences in western Kansas. The third part includes a section on each of the 7 children and their descendants as well as a number of pedigree charts. Many excellent photographs are shown throughout the book. Contact: J. Timothy Unruh, Box 1034, Rocklin, CA 95677-1034.

Elaine Wiebe. *The Family of Heinrich Wiebe (1830-1899) and Agantha (Penner) Wiebe (1831-1868) and Maria (Froese) Wiebe (1844-?)* (Saskatoon, SK : Private publication, 1999) 198 pp.

This book contains the genealogy of the descendants of Heinrich Wiebe (1830-1899) who was born in Neuhorst, Chortitza Colony, Russia and immigrated to Canada in 1875 where he established his family in the Manitoba Mennonite West Reserve village of Rosengart. He was brother to the Elder Johann Wiebe, of Fuerstenland, who
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Turkestan Mennonite

(cont'd from p. 1)

disagreed with suggested changes to colonization practices, his lengthy 20 volume report¹, which is an outstanding source of information on Turkestan, was just put on the shelf and ignored. Nothing fundamental was changed until the Red tide of Revolution swept through Turkestan in 1917. Meanwhile, Pahlen returned to the Senate. With the beginning of World War I and the Russian Revolution he felt first the sting of Germanophobia and then persecution by the proletariat. Thus in 1917 he fled to Finland and finally to Germany.

Pahlen's last three years of life were spent at Wernigerode, Germany, where he was active in the ecumenical mission society "Licht im Osten" (Light in the East) where the Mennonite evangelist Jacob Kroeker also laboured.

In 1922, during a visit to relatives in Finland, he dictated in German, solely from memory, an account of his mission to Turkestan. This was never published and only appears in the English translation in the book indicated above.

In the course of his mission to Turkestan, Pahlen encountered the Mennonites who lived there. They were joyful at meeting a German speaking Russian official and he was impressed by their accomplishments, mostly agricultural, and their obedience to the law. However, he did find one Mennonite who spent time in jail. This is Pahlen's story of him.

In Tashkent I examined the dossier of a pardoned German Mennonite who at the demand of the Russian Chief District Officer in Andizhan² had been sentenced to three year's imprisonment with hard labour for libel. Like many of his brother sectarians he had been exempted from military service and given a government job instead - in this case that of state forester in the Andizhan district. The Mennonites were quite justly renowned throughout the Empire for their honesty, trustworthiness, and obedience to the laws of the realm, which none of them had ever broken. The case was, therefore, somewhat unique in the annals of Russian justice. It started over a report the Mennonite had submitted to his immediate superior, the Domain Head Forester. In this he stated that he had learned, from perfectly reliable sources which however he could not

reveal, that a rising of Muslims in the Andizhan district and surrounding region was being actively prepared. It happened that the Chief District Officer in Andizhan at the time was a jovial, kind hearted colonel possessed of a blind faith in the integrity of his subordinates. When he had read the Mennonite's report, which had been passed to him by the Head Forester, he asked his District Officer how much of it he thought was true and was reassured by the latter's assurance that the whole thing was a tissue of lies and an infamous libel. By now the report had reached the Governor-General and was provoking quite a stir in high administrative circles. This prompted the District Officer to stage exemplary proceedings against its author. As the Mennonite was holding a government job in lieu of military service he was subject to military jurisdiction. He was in consequence tried by a military court and sentenced to three years hard labour. By the time he had served half his sentence an astounding event occurred in Andizhan District (pp.53-54).

Pahlen then describes the astounding event which happened on 18 May 1898. A rich Uzbek of the Andizhan district, an Ishan (that is a Sufi teacher or guide) under the spell of Islamic passion planned, organized and proclaimed Holy War against the Russian infidels, gathered his murids (i.e. disciples), about 400 in number, and attacked the local garrison in their barracks³. Though surprised and many of the garrison of 160 were killed, the Russian soldiers fought back, drove off the attackers, and captured their leader. This revolt caused a great concern in St. Petersburg. The Ministry of Defence over-reacted and started a vicious campaign to punish all the local Uzbeks. The local Russian officials, however, tried to minimize and paper over the extent of the revolt. Pahlen continues:

The Mennonite who had given advance information of the Ishan's intentions was of course pardoned, and was granted a large indemnity in compensation for the wrongs he had suffered (p.55).

In this example of corruption in Turkestan Pahlen relates that the District Officer who was both an officer in the Russian army and the principal author of seeing the Mennonite punished was also a Mohammedan follower (murid) of the revolt leader. Further, this District Officer

who lulled his Chief into a sense of false security was never punished in an effort to hush up the episode. Pahlen implies that he was to correct both this oversight and to mitigate the harsh punishment given to innocent Uzbeks.

Pahlen obviously had previous knowledge of Mennonites as privileged and accomplished Russian citizens and admired them. Unfortunately this specific Mennonite is never identified by name. Who was he and is his story the same as that remembered by Pahlen?

Endnotes

1. Various spellings of the name are used; *Pahlen* is German and used by Pahlen himself, the transliteration from Russian is *Palenom* and some English sources give *Palen*.
2. K. K. Palenom. *Otchet po revizii Turkestanskago kraia*. St. Petersburg, 1909-10, 19pp.+ supp.
3. Andizhan is in the Oblast of Fergana about 260 kilometres west south west of Tashkent.
4. A description of the Andizhan revolt can be found in Richard A. Pierce. *Russian Central Asia 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley, California, University of California Press. 1960, p. 226-233. Because Pahlen relied solely on memory some of the details in Pahlen's account differ from Pierce's description.

Victor Wiebe is a librarian at the University of Saskatchewan.

Mennonite Life to Cease Publication

A report in *Gleanings from the Threshing Floor* recently indicated that *Mennonite Life* will cease publication in December, 1999, after over fifty years of existence.

Mennonite Life began in 1946 at Bethel College with a number of purposes and goals in mind, such as replacing the *Bethel College Monthly* speaking to issues of Mennonite identity in a situation of considerable social change after the end of World War II. It provided a forum for General Conference interests, including Russian-background Mennonites and those living in the plains states (thereby competing with the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* which was seen as not offering room for those interests).

In 1996 a new editorial committee was appointed and the magazine was

redesigned. According to the report, there has been more praise for *Mennonite Life* since that time than at any other time in the recent past. Ironically, subscriber numbers have continued to drop so that they are now below 500. *Mennonite Life*, the report comments, "is succumbing to a trend that seems to be more widespread in church-related and even secular publishing: general audience magazines which address issues of a more intellectual nature than popular culture and current news have trouble surviving."

Adapted from *Gleanings from the Threshing Floor*, November, 1998.

B. H. Unruh papers acquired by the Mennonite Library and Archives

The MLA at Bethel College recently acquired photocopies of a B. H. Unruh collection held at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California. The process of acquiring these materials began in 1990 but because of limits on the amount of photocopying that could be done in any one year it has taken until now to acquire the complete collection. It is expected that it can contribute significant new evidence for the story of Russian Mennonites in the early twentieth century and Unruh's prominent role in that story.

Excerpted from *Gleanings from the Threshing Floor*, November, 1998.

Genealogy and Family History (cont'd from p. 3)

led the first group of Mennonite immigrants who arrived in the West Reserve. Some of his children moved west to Saskatchewan around the turn of the century and later on to Mexico. Contact: Elaine Wiebe, 24-1605 - 7th Street East, Saskatoon, SK S7H 0Z3.

Bert Friesen. The Kroeker Family Genealogy : *The Ancestors and Descendants of Abram A. Kroeker and Elizabeth Nickel* (Winnipeg, Man. : Private Publication, 1998) 93 p.

This monograph traces the descendants

of Abram A. Kroeker (1892-1981) and his wife Elizabeth Nickel (1894-1981). The ancestry is given mainly for the Kroeker side although the Nickel side is shown on some of the charts and described briefly. A.A. Kroeker's ancestor's left Prussia in 1805 and initially settled in Fuerstenau, Molotschna Colony, Russia. Later the family moved to the Chortitza Colony. His parents came to Canada in 1876 where they settled in the village of Hoffnungsfeld, Manitoba near present day Winkler. Contact: Bert Friesen, 100 Dunvegan Street, Winnipeg, MB R2K 2H1.

Queries

Martens – Janzen: I am looking for information about Margarete Martens born in Neukirch, Molotchna, South Russia. She was married in Neukirch to Johan Johan Janzen in 1883, and died in Kazakstan in 1943. She had 3 sons and 3 daughters. Her husband died in 1908. Ten years later she married Johan Groening who passed away 2 years later. She then married a Mr. Thiessen. Contact: Gredi Janzen, E-mail: jfriesen@mb.sympatico.ca

Ediger – Enns : I am searching for the descendants of Anna (Enns) Ediger (1852-1893); married 1873 to Johann Ediger. Their children were as follows: Aron b. 1875, Anna b. 1877, Katharina b.1880, Jacob b.1882, Johann b. 1884 and Eva b. 1887. Contact: Susan Suderman , 109-445 Yates Road, Kelowna, BC V1V 1Y4 or phone 250-763-3001.

Enns – Kroeker: Searching for the descendants of Margaretha (Enns) Kroeker (1869-?) born in Ekaterinoslov, Russia; married Oct. 22, 1887 to Isaac Kroeker. Margaretha's brothers and sisters were: Anna (Enns) Ediger b. 1852, Katharina (Enns) Abrams b.1854, Jacob Enns b. 1856, Aron Enns b. 1858, Peter Enns b. 1861, Maria (Enns) Peters b. 1863, Heinrich Enns b. 1866. Contact: Susan Suderman, 109-445 Yates Road, Kelowna, BC V1V 1Y4.

Toews: I am looking for information on the parents of Wilhelm Toews b. 8 Nov. 1867 who died in 1964 and is reportedly buried in Grossweide Cemetery in the Plum Coulee area. He was married four times,

first to Katharina Hiebert b. 2 Oct. 1877; then to Maria Hiebert b. 18 Oct. 1888; then to Susanna Kauenhowen b. 7 June 1881; then to Lena Hiebert b. 15 Sept. 1910. There were 19 children of this union. Contact: Vina Mayer Box 4008, RR#2, Clearwater, B.C. V0E 1N0 or Email: vimayer@mail.wellsgray.net.

Buhr: I would like to find the connection between my line of Buhrs and Buhrs documented in the book by Helen Regier entitled, *The Jakob Buhr Family 1805-1977*. Elizabeth Buhr (1854) daughter of the Bergthal delegate, Kornelius Buhr married into my line. Her husband was also a Kornelius Buhr, an older half-brother of my grandfather, Johann Buhr. The father of Kornelius and Johann was Erdman Buhr, 1818-1901, who migrated to Mountain Lake, Minnesota in the 1870's. Contact: Lorne Buhr, 716 Knottwood Road S, Edmonton, AB T6K 1W5. E-mail: lbuhr@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca

Hillman: I am looking for information regarding my grandfather, William Hillman, b. ca.1896-98, Swift Current, SK. He claimed to have grown up in the Winkler, Manitoba area. He may have been an orphan raised by a family in Winkler. He married Rose Lawrence of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan in 1923 in Medicine Hat, Alberta. That is also where he died in 1954. Any information about him prior to 1923 would be greatly appreciated. Contact: Jon Hillman, 108 Hwy 33, Big Spring, TX 79720

Bergen – Klassen: We would appreciate any help in locating two Bergen families in Friedensfeld, Fernheim, Paraguay. Two Klassen daughters, Margarete und Elisabeth, married two Bergen brothers, Abram and Peter. They were the daughters of Franz Klassen and Margaretha Janzen. (Their mother was the daughter of Johan K. Janzen and Margaretha Dyck of Lichtfelde, Molotschna.) Sometime between 1925 and 1930 the Klassen family came to South America. A younger brother Franz Klassen may have moved to Brazil. We would like to find information about the descendants of these families. Contact: Please contact Dr. Harry Janzen, 6040-187A Street, Surrey, BC. (604) 576-6847 or E-Mail janzen@direct.ca

Recent Acquisitions

by Peter Letkemann

The Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) recently received microfilm copies of two valuable sources for the study of Germans in the Soviet Union. The microfilms were part of an exchange between the Institut für Auslands-beziehungen (ifa) in Stuttgart, Germany and the MHC, negotiated by Bronislava Kristufek (ifa) and Peter Letkemann of Winnipeg. The Institute in Stuttgart received microfilm copies of *Der Botschafter* [1905-1913] and *Der Bote* [1924 - 1972] in exchange for copies of *Deutsche Zentral Zeitung* and *Neues Leben*.

The *Deutsche Zentral Zeitung* [DZZ] was the official German-language newspaper of the Central Committee of the German section of the Communist Party - equivalent to *Pravda*. In fact, the content of DZZ included translations of speeches by Stalin, Molotov and other officials, government decrees and reports first published in *Pravda*. MHC received copies of the issues for Jan 1 - Sep 30 1928 and from 1 Jan 1935 to 12 July 1939. The DZZ must have employed a small army of translators, working day and night, to produce translations of official Russian language materials. The DZZ ceased publication in mid-1939.

Reading through the issues of 1936-1938 we enter into the duality and unreality of Soviet life - promises of a bright future for the Soviet people, and glowing reports on achievements in agriculture and industry, sports, aviation and technology. One gets a feeling for the paranoia of the period as we read transcripts of the many show trials, but not a word is said about the arrest, imprisonment and execution of innocent Soviet citizens.

We also catch occasional glimpses into

life in Mennonite villages and how some Mennonites at least are coming to terms with the Soviet regime. We read, for example, about Maria Epp from the 'Ernst Thälmann Collective Farm in the 'Rot Front' Rayon - who received the Order of Lenin on 26 Feb 1936 for her achievements as the best milker in the region

Neues Leben [NL] was the successor to the DZZ and began publication in 1957. It remains the official newspaper of the Germans in Russia. MHC received copies of issues for 1957, 1959-60, 1964-65, 1972-95 - a total of 24 years.

In NL we can read the poems of Helene Ediger and David Loewen, the short stories of Johann Warkentin and Heinrich Epp, the scientific essays and memoirs of Prof. David Penner. We see how some Mennonites adapted to their Soviet environment [but read nothing of those who did not adapt]; after 1990 we find many stories and memoirs critical of life under the Soviet regime, including lists of victims arrested and executed during the Stalinist era.

These acquisitions represent only two of the dozens and dozens of German language publications produced during the Soviet Era. Together, these periodicals give us the 'official' insiders view into the life of Germans in the USSR from 1928-1995.

Peter Letkemann is an organist and historian living in Winnipeg.

Faith Story Display

Funding has been received from Dr. David Friesen for a visual display that recounts the faith story of our Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. Tentatively entitled: Faith, Service and Reconciliation, the display will be multi-paneled with some audio-visual content.

The need for such a display comes out of the increased number of non-Mennonite visitors who come to the Mennonite Heritage Centre, often directed by Manitoba or Winnipeg Tourism. Some also come to see the exhibitions mounted in the Art Gallery. They come anticipating that they will learn something about Mennonites. These casual visitors are often disappointed when "The Heritage Centre" has only books and original documents for them to see. They often express interest in a more visual, accessible display that tells

them who Mennonites are and what they believe and do.

We are missing an opportunity to tell our story and witness to our faith and the work of our schools, congregations, commissions and agencies by not having some visual display that illustrates who we are, what we believe and from where we have come.

The display will be multi-cultural, emphasizing that while Mennonites originated in western Europe, today they come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, live in many different countries and come from all walks of life. It will incorporate the story of both the Swiss and Russian Mennonites. The display panels will be invitational, presenting the viewer the opportunity to participate in this community of believers. With such a focus, the viewer should come away with a keen sense of who Mennonites are, how they worship, where they live and why they have created their many agencies of missions and services.

Work on this display will begin in April.

K.R.

Gallery News

The present art exhibition is that of Peter Martens and Henry Peters. Both work within the montage, some would define it collage, medium. While both have Mennonite roots, they come from opposite ends of the spectrum. Where Peter Martens has stayed within the church, Henry Peter's family left the church when Henry was a child. Henry has long had an unfocused desire to reconnect. Peter Martens has, on the other hand, created art for use within his congregation. Their different, exciting and colourful exhibition runs through March and most of April.

Opening April 30 and running until the last week in June will be an exhibition by Karen Cornelius. Karen is a printmaker who has spent many years living on the continent of Africa--most recently in Eritrea. Her work from Africa along with new pieces created since moving to Winnipeg, will fill the MHC Gallery to overflowing with colour and energy. Entitled *Rhythm and Pageantry: A Way of Life*, her exhibition will offer a rare opportunity to look into the distinctive culture and ancient church of this area of Africa.

K.R.



Elder David Dyck (1846-1933) and wife, Helene Rempel (1849-1941)

Elder David Dyck was born in Chortitza in 1846 and came to Marion County, KS, in 1876. Dyck studied at Rochester Theological Seminary (Baptist) in 1883 and then moved back to Kansas. In 1890 he was ordained by Elder Abram Schellenberg. After a brief period in Colorado (ca. 1892-1895), Dyck was commissioned to work in southern Manitoba and moved to the Winkler area in 1895 where he remained approximately eleven years. But as an itinerant evangelist he was actively helping the new Mennonite Brethren settlements in northern Saskatchewan and in 1910 he bought a farm in Bruderfeld, SK.

Elder David Dyck was the first moderator of the Northern (Canadian) District Conference and served in that capacity for 13 years. A.D.

Anniversary of Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren

This year marks the 100th anniversary of organized activity of Mennonite Brethren in Saskatchewan. On March 12 and 13, 1999 the Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren celebrated the anniversary at their provincial convention at Waldheim, Saskatchewan. One hundred years ago, on 8 June, 1899, the first Mennonite Brethren Church was organized near Laird. The Laird congregation joined Waldheim when their own church was permanently closed in 1970. In 1988 the Bruderfeld Mennonite Brethren Church also closed to join the Waldheim Church.

Mennonite Brethren began settling in the Laird area by around 1895. Some came from the United States, others from Manitoba, and still others directly from Russia. In 1897 Elder David Dyck, who had come to the Winkler-Gretna area from the United States around 1895, moved to Saskatchewan and devoted himself to organizing the scattered Mennonite Brethren families in the area. As a result a group organized in 1899 and immediately decided to build a church at a cost of \$583.00 on land one mile south and 3 1/2 miles east of Laird. The building was dedicated in December and was called the



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Ebenfeld Mennonite Brethren Church. It was apparently named after the Ebenfeld, Kansas Mennonite Brethren Church. Jacob Wiens was elected as the first leading minister of the congregation.

Before long (1902) the Bruderfeld (Brotherfield) congregation was organized about six miles west of Waldheim and in 1918 the Waldheim Church was begun. In 1909 the Ebenfeld Church was relocated to the town of Laird. Then, on December 18, 1909 the incorporation of the Mennonite Brethren of Saskatchewan received formal assent by the Saskatchewan Legislature. The first Saskatchewan convention after formal incorporation took place at the Ebenfeld Church on June 4, 1910. Coincidentally, that was also the first year of the Northern District Conference (which later became the Canadian Conference), and it met in Herbert on July 1 and 2, 1910. The next two conventions were also held in Saskatchewan—1911 in Bruderfeld and 1912 in Herbert. A.D.

Mennonite Brethren Choir?

Can you help identify the date, the place, the group and the individuals in this choir photo taken between 1905-1915?

At least two people are identified. In the second row, third from the left, a young man with a moustache, is Isaac Steingard (1883-1969), then of Lichtfelde, Molotschna and in the second row standing first on the right in a long white dress is Susan Klassen (later a Mrs. Harder).

Lichtfelde had a very prominent Mennonite Brethren Choir founded by Isaak Born (1853-1905), who compiled and published the series called *Liederperlen*. Is this photo from Lichtfelde? Please contact: CMBS, 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5.

A.R.



Photo received courtesy of Shirley Perron, Welland, Ontario.

The Flood of 1912

*This account is part of a collection which is soon to be published under the title **Events and People in Russian Mennonite History** by Helmut T. Huebert and is used by permission.*

There had been floods in the Halbstadt region of the Molotschna Colony on a number of occasions, notably 1893 and 1909, but the flood of 1912 was the worst in living memory. The winter of 1911 to 1912 was relatively mild, with very changeable weather. There were four *heavy* snowfalls followed by warm temperatures and considerable melting. When the ground became frozen, a sudden melt did not allow the water to soak into the ground, but had to run off.

There was heavy snowfall for several weeks, then again warm temperatures on February 24-26, 1912. This caused rapid melting and widespread flooding of the Molochnaya River and its tributaries, especially the Tokmak and the Begim-Tschokrak Rivers.

Flooding was recorded well up the Tokmak River at Klippenfeld. The houses and barns were not inundated because they were on higher ground, but the low lying gardens towards the river were. Agnes Thiessen [nee Fast], five years old at the time, recalls that just the tips of some of the trees showed above the water. She was terrified by the loud crunches of ice flows colliding. Two wooden bridges in the village were swept away.

After a few days the Fast family travelled downstream to see what had happened to their relatives in Liebenau. Chairs and dead cats were strewn on the street. Heinrich and Lena Fast, uncle and aunt of Agnes, had been sleeping peacefully when their small child, Lena, cried. The aunt, getting up to tend Lena, had stepped into water. She woke her husband, who discovered that there was water in the whole house. When he opened the door to see what was going on outside he was unable to close it again because of the rush of water. The whole family climbed to the loft for safety. Several days later the children were still upset because they had lost some toys and dolls in the flood.

Heinrich Gaede also reported about



Flooding in Halbstadt, likely in 1912. At the left is the residence of Benjamin Unruh.

Liebenau, perhaps the hardest hit Mennonite village. The water of the Tokmak River rose very rapidly, possibly due to ice jams. There was soon a fast flowing stream down the main street of the village carrying straw, wood and ice flows up to 21 inches thick.

Heinrich and his family were trying to secure the house and barn from rising waters when he heard shouts coming from the street. A man was standing on his buggy calling for help. His driver had cut the horses loose and escaped himself, leaving the man stranded on his vehicle. He now demanded that Heinrich bring him a horse. Heinrich shouted back that it would be impossible to get a horse from the barn, and besides, they were already all wet, so he himself would also have to get into the water. The stream pushed the buggy close to the fence, so the man jumped into the water and escaped to Gaede's house. Heinrich told him "You have come to our house to be rescued, while we ourselves are planning to leave!" "No" the man replied, "I am staying here!" He was given dry clothing, and the family continued to dam off the doors of their home.

A friend of the Gaedes, Abram Kroeker of Wernersdorf, managed to reach the yard through the garden, where the flood stream was not so strong. He rescued four of their youngest children on his wagon. Heinrich, in the meantime, had decided to stay on his

farm as long as possible in an attempt to save his cattle and horses. The water reached the back shed, but had not flooded the main house when he noted that it was no longer rising. By evening the crest was reached and the water level fell.

Some of the immediate neighbours of the Gaedes had evacuated or were sleeping in the attics. The eastern end of the village must have been lower, since the flooding there was more severe. The house of Gerhard Doerksen [No. 2] was flooded to the windows and subsequently collapsed. The shop of Martin Hiebert [No. 3] was also ruined. Jakob Neufeld's house [No. 4] caved in due to damage and was later replaced by a new home, this time built on a high foundation. No. 5, flooded to the windows, also collapsed.

Farther downstream flooding and subsequent damage was very severe in the Ukrainian town of Tokmak. A large wooden bridge was destroyed by the ice and pushed against a more sturdy stone bridge. About 200 houses were flooded and collapsed, with considerable damage to many more. The police asked a Jewish couple to evacuate their home, but the husband was afraid to have his very ill wife moved - the cool air might hurt her. When the water poured into the windows it was difficult to reach the house, and by the time rescuers arrived, the lady had died.

In Halbstadt, on the Molochnaya

River, many basements were flooded, and at least one house collapsed. This house was noted to be constructed of fired bricks; the construction material prone to disintegration with flooding. Two telegraph poles were knocked down by the ice, tearing the wires. It was dangerous to travel across the river to Prischib not only because of the high level of the water, but because of the strength of the raging current. Travel was disrupted sufficiently to make it impossible to deliver the mail on February 27.

Other tributaries of the Molochnaya River, such as the Begim-Tschokrak, also flooded. At Waldheim, well up the stream, considerable damage was reported. The river overflowed its system of dikes and forced at least one family to evacuate; many orchards were extensively damaged. While there was fairly widespread destruction in the northern Molotschna, one village saw the possible bright side of the flood. At Fischau, downstream from Halbstadt on the Molochnaya River, there was also flooding, but obviously quite limited. It was reported that the inundation of the lowlands would ensure that there would be a good crop of hay for that year!

Sources:

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- Huebert, H. T., *Hierschau: An Example of Russian Mennonite Life*, Springfield Publishers, Winnipeg, Canada, 1986, p. 360.
- Lohrenz, Gerhard, *Heritage Remembered*, CMBC Publications, Winnipeg, Canada, 1974, p. 53. Lohrenz has labelled the flood pictures as 1915. News reports from the Molotschna during that time record only mild weather with very little snow. There is absolutely no mention of a flood. We are presuming the pictures are actually from 1912.
- Mennonite Historical Atlas*, p. 34.
- News Reports, *Friedensstimme*, 29 February 1912 p. 9; 7 March 1912, p. 4; 14 March 1912, p. 9.
- Thiessen, Agnes, Personal Letter, 29 Oct. 1998.

Helmut T. Huebert is an orthopedic surgeon in Winnipeg.

Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online

by Bert Friesen, Editorial committee chair

The Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia is a project of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC). It makes available information about Mennonites in Canada on the World Wide Web.

The web site took a major step forward in 1998 through a \$25,000 grant from the SchoolNet Digital Collections program funded by Industry Canada. It can be seen at the SchoolNet Digital Collections site or at the Historical Society's own site at: <http://www.mhsc.ca/>

Until this year, the main content was basic data about congregations in Canada gathered during the MHSC's *Mennonites in Canada* project. Now two new elements have been added to the site's information: an introductory survey of Mennonites entitled "Who are the Mennonites"; and Canadian-related material from the print version of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, volumes 1-5.

The first element gives an overview of Mennonite history and theology including baptism and peace. Other elements include culture, language, music, and genealogy. One section deals with the church today, including a discussion of service and non-conformity, and another about the world Mennonite church, which includes a discussion about missions and the Mennonite World Conference. Each of these overviews is necessarily brief. However, in due time, each of these areas will have detailed articles on the site.

The second element is the transfer of information from the printed *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. This includes detailed information about family histories, individual biographies, histories of Mennonite institutions, some specific topics such as painting and printmaking, alternative service work camps, and inter-Mennonite cooperation. Most of this material is from Volume 5. The first volumes were published over 40 years ago. The material from these volumes needs more work in updating and reflecting current Canadian perspectives and understanding.

The potential of this medium to make information available is very broad.

Information can easily be updated or changed in many ways. Also, it lends itself to more than text; it can also include photos, videos, and audio. All of these elements will eventually be part of this medium.

The MHSC welcomes your comments and suggestions. Please visit our web site.

Khorezm : The 8th Miracle of the World : Celebrating the 2500 Anniversary of Khiva

by Kamil Nurdjanov translated from Uzbekian into Russian by Rufia Redaminova, 1994

Greek and Arab travelers made reference in 1882 to a settlement of tall and brave people. They raised wheat and bred cattle and were engaged in fishing and hunting.

It was located near the Amu Darya River (the legendary Oxus). They lived some 12 km. from Khiva. The people were Mennonites who had leased land from the khan. Previously, they had lived in Russia, in the Saratov region on the Volga. Pacifist by religious persuasion, they left their homeland due to the threat of army enlistment. Their new home was located in Turkestan (which included Uzbekistan) in Khiva khanate. The khan was an absolute ruler.

The new arrivals soon followed the mode of farming they had left behind in Russia. However in 1883 they were granted the khan's permission to seek another settlement as Turkoman bands had on several occasions attacked them and stolen cattle. Again as pacifists they refused to defend themselves. One of their number was killed in these raids, hence the khan's consent to them to move on..

Approaching the new community, not far from Khiva, a visitor was struck by the new white-painted church which the local folk called "The "White Mosque". Here at harvest-time no fields of wheat were seen; the reason was a lack of water and sufficiently large croplands. Hence the Mennonites resorted to making handicrafts and, in a short period of time, they managed to become the best craftsmen in the region.

According to historical documents the new settlers established amicable relations with their neighbors. They learned their

language, customs and general culture. It was due to the Mennonites that the families in Khorezm learned to grow tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, cabbage, parsley, cucumbers, etc. By 1890 the Mennonites were successful cotton-growers. They also helped to build oil factories. The minister of their congregation was Otto Schmidt.

In the 1890s the Mennonites contributed valuable experience in improving the pedigree of cattle. To the great surprise of the Uzbeks the German Mennonites could demonstrate the amazing milking-machine. They were also builders; even today we can view historical architectural monuments and dwellings, among them the Palace Nurullabai, in the construction of which the Mennonites participated. By 1929 the population had increased to 280.

During Stalin's persecutions many Mennonites disappeared. Local people believe they were taken away at night, nobody knows where to. It was a very sad fate indeed that befell the Mennonites who had promoted culture, wheat farming, cattle breeding and technical progress in Khorezm.

Centro Menno

Centro Menno is a drop in centre located in the city of Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The Centre is staffed by MCC volunteers and serves as a resource to the 33,000 Old Colony Mennonites living in rural Bolivia.

Centro Menno houses a book store as well as a lending library of both German and English books. Good used and new books are always in demand and serve to promote literacy and education.

Especially valued are biographies, Mennonite and other history, fiction, encyclopedia, picture books for children, family life, and a limited number of faith and life books.

If you have books which you could donate, please bring them to the Mennonite Heritage Centre or contact us for further details. The collection process is spearheaded by Edna and John R. Peters, currently of Winnipeg, who spent the past four years as volunteers with MCC in Bolivia. They thank you for any books you can give for this centre.

The Mennonites

by Father Bitsche

The following article appeared in a French language periodical in Manitoba just before the turn of the century. Reflecting the thinking of the time, it is a prime example of a province fraught with tensions between Catholics and Protestants, French and English.

What is interesting is the perception that this Catholic Father has of Mennonites. United by language and religion, successfully making their way in this new land, he obviously sees Mennonites as a threat. He sees this orphaned "Mennonite" girl not just as a needy case, but somehow as a providential inroad to the Manitoba Mennonites who obviously are a charitable people.

We know that the south of our beautiful Province is populated with a race of people called the Mennonites. What we know less well is that these hard-working, courageous, industrious, thrifty men are succeeding very well in our country, so well that they are becoming a danger to our [i.e. the Catholic Church's] national and religious influence.

To weaken them, to make them our allies, they must be made to embrace our faith. But therein lies the difficulty. Menno-

nites are among the most united [of all religious groups] and are protected in their error by a language very difficult to learn and a language which they maintain with jealous care, thereby teaching many of us a great lesson. To convert them, it is therefore necessary to speak their language.

It seems that Providence wishes to help us. The Reverend Mr. Campeau, devout priest of St. Joseph, has just taken in a little girl of about 10 years of age, Russian in origin and raised among the Mennonites. This child is Roman Catholic, but unfortunately, as is usually the case with her compatriots, she is ignorant of her religion. What great charity it would be for a rich person to see to the education of this little girl. Taught with care in one of our convents, she would be, upon return to her own people, an apostle of our Holy religion and a support for the influence of our nationality. Furthermore, it is certain that the simple act of this generosity would predispose many Mennonites in our favour, because they themselves are very charitable.

It is thus a religious and patriotic work and despite numerous needs we do not doubt that our appeal will be heard.

From *Le Manitoba* Vol. 26, no. 36, le 28 juillet 1897, p. 1. Translated from the French by Ingrid Riesen.



K.R. Centro Menno, a drop-in Centre in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

Book Notes

(cont'd from p. 12)

and socio-historical analysis, Calvin Redekop in his book *Leaving Anabaptism: From Evangelical Mennonite Brethren to Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches* examines how over a period of a century this group found itself "leaving Anabaptism." He identifies dynamics pertinent to minority religious groups facing majority cultural assimilation. Published by Pandora Press this 265 page book retails for \$29.00 and is available in Mennonite bookstores.

The Mennonite church preaches and often practices mutual aid -- sometimes with success and sometimes not. A new book examining mutual aid from a Biblical, theological and historical perspective has recently been published by Herald Press. *Building Communities of Compassion: Mennonite Mutual Aid in Theory and Practice*, edited by Willard Swartley and Donald Kraybill, is an attempt to understand this practice within the setting of the Mennonite church. In many ways this is the first attempt at analyzing this practice and how it has functioned within the Mennonite Church. This 308 page book retails for \$21.50 in Canada and should be available in Mennonite bookstores.

Canadians may be familiar with the controversy surrounding the trilogy *Lebensraum* written by Ingrid Rimland. This three-volume novel spans seven generations and 200 years in its depiction of the life and struggles of Mennonites from Russia. The novel has received much attention due to the fact that the third volume especially, has strong Nazi overtones. Full-length reviews of the trilogy have appeared and will soon appear in various Mennonite periodicals. These books are unavailable in Canada and must be specially ordered from the US, as customs is restricting their distribution in Canada. Each volume is approximately 500 pages in length and retails for \$US25..

A second edition of *The Golden Years of the Hutterites* has been written by Leonard Gross. Significant new material has been added to his 1980 publication from unpublished sources located in eastern and western Europe. Some 280 pages in length the book sells for \$25.00 Canadian and is available in many Mennonite bookstores. It is published by Pandora Press.

A number of books have recently

appeared on the theme of peace. Reworking his 1981 survey Peter Brock has produced another volume (1998) entitled *Varieties of Pacifism: A Survey from Antiquity to the Outset of the Twentieth Century*. Published by Syracuse University Press the 112 page book retails for \$15.95 US.

Perry Bush, Associate Professor of History at Bluffton College, explores the changes within the Mennonite communities and mainstream American society between the 1920s and 1970s in his book, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America*. The book is available from Johns Hopkins University Press for \$39.95 US.

Seniors for Peace, an offshoot of MCC BC has published *Alternative Service for Peace in Canada during World War II, 1941-1946*. Edited by A.J. Klassen, the book details the experiences of many Canadian Conscientious Objectors. The book retails for \$25.00, consists of 372 pages, and is available in most Mennonite bookstores.

A large number of family histories and biographies have been published in the last number of months. *The Blumstein Legacy: A Six Generation Family Saga* has been produced by Leland Harder and Samuel Harder. Replete with many stories and photographs, this book traces this family from Ukraine to North America. Comprised of 273 pages it also contains extensive genealogical data on the Harder family. Available from the Harder Family Review, P.O. Box 363, North Newton, Kansas 67117.

Longtime minister and leader of the First Mennonite Church (Schoenwiese) in Winnipeg, *Denk Wer Du Bist* is a book of stories of the Johann Hermann and Agathe Enns families. Autobiographical, with significant additions and a wide array of photographs, this book describes not only the story of this family but also, in part, the story of the Schoenwiese congregation. The 259 page book is available from family members.

Available in English translation is *Lifting the Veil*, part confession, memoir and critique of the life of Jacob J. Janzen. Originally published as *Aus meinem Leben: Erinnerungen von J.H. Janzen*, it was translated by Walter Klaassen and edited by Leonard Friesen. Comprising 128 pages this book is published by Pandora Press and

sells for \$14.00 Canadian.

Abram J. Berg has written his story *A Memoir: My Life's Journey*. Born in Ukraine and coming to Canada in 1923, Abram settled on a farm near Hanley, Saskatchewan. The depression years forced him to leave farming and he became a typesetter working in Steinbach, Rosthern and Saskatoon. Edited by Betty and Dick Epp, the 197 page book is available from Betty and Dick Epp, 2326 Cairns Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7J 1V1.

Born in Ukraine, orphaned at age five and raised in an Old Order Mennonite home is the unusual story in *Plucked Up by the Roots: The Story of Henry Wieler*. Written by Leonard Freeman, the 67 page book may be purchased from the author for \$10.00 at R.R. #1, Elmira, Ontario N3B 2Z1.

Two modest private compilations are *The Story of My Life* by Cornelius Penner and *Family Book: Gerhard Enns 1844-1911*. The latter book contains some good family tree information compiled by Luise Martens. Copies may be viewed at the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Compiled with diary entries, genealogical data and many photographs is *The life and times of Johann Jacob Friesen 1852-1931 and the Gerhard Neufeld Family recorded in his diary 1885-1926, Paulheim, Molotschna Colony, south Russia*. The title says it all. The book is published by Kathy (Dyck) Rempel of Wheatly, Ontario and available for viewing at the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Jacob's Journey: The Memoirs of J.E. Kroeker is edited by Barbara and Timothy Dyck. The life story of a southern Manitoba businessman, the book takes one on the journey of life during the depression and the subsequent recovery. This book is well edited with an excellent layout. Copies are available from the family.

Pacifism in the Twentieth Century by Peter Brock and Nigel Young just released in March 1999 centers on an analysis of the various movements advocating personal nonparticipation in war of any kind with an endeavor to find nonviolent means of resolving conflict. The authors consider conscientious objection, pacifism during the post war years (focusing on Catholicism and Judaism) the antinuclear movement, and the Vietnam War. Published by Syracuse University Press this 452 page book in paper cover retails for \$29.95 US.

Book Reviews

Ted Friesen and Elisabeth Peters with Glenn Bergen. *Memories of Grigorievka* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1998) 295 pp.

Reviewed by Helene S. Friesen, Der Bote indexer, Mennonite Heritage Centre.

"Grigorievka, lieb Heimatland,/Der Ort da meine Wiege stand,..." Thus begins the poem by Peter B. Krahn, about the subject of this book.

Drawing upon the recollections of members of most of the Mennonite families who resided in Grigorievka as well as a history of the village compiled some two decades earlier, Ted Friesen and Elisabeth Peters have assembled a collective history of a unique yet representative centre of Mennonite life in the former Russian Empire.

Settled in 1889 by Mennonite families from the Chortitza, Fuerstenland and Nepluievka colonies about 160 km. north-east of Chortitza and surrounded by a number of larger Russian villages, the village consisted of 41 farmsteads and a smaller section across the railway tracks which cut through the settlement.

Accounts of life in the village take the reader from 1889 to 1926, the year the village ceased to exist. Those who were able emigrated to Canada while others moved to Molotschna. Chapter 1, written by George F. Loewen, provides the details of early settlement, the important roles of education and church life, the growth of agriculture and industry, the hardships brought by World War I and the ensuing anarchy of Civil War, the NEP years which engendered hope for a return to better days, and the decision to emigrate.

In the second chapter, Peters provides an essential social history of life in Grigorievka, summarizing the "modus of life in our village" under the topics of social and medical care, night watchmen and fire brigades, mad dogs and school exams, engagement parties and *Polterabend*, weddings and funerals, and the wonderful traditions associated with marking Christmas and other holy days. Later, she remembers Grigorievka as it was when she left it as a nine-year-old.

The section on village teachers' stories

depicts the significance education held for the settlers. Excerpts of former teachers' memoirs and accounts by members of their families, ensures documentation of each of the 25 teachers' contributions to the community.

Bringing the village into the present, Susan Miller and Henry Klassen describe their visits to their birthplace in 1977 and 1996 respectively, contrasting the past with the present.

The greater part of the book provides a variety of family stories, where members of extended families tell us of their lives before and after they left Grigorievka. Here readers will meet acquaintances and perhaps find material for insight into the more recent past of Mennonite life, both in Russia and in Canada.

For a work of this detail, both the glossary and the index of names are an appreciated inclusion. Readers will find the book an enjoyable read, richly detailed about individuals and families, their anxieties and joys, and their finding their places in a new land. *Memories of Grigorievka* is a fine addition to the expansion of the portrait of our past.

Wilmer A. Harms, M.D., *The Odyssey of Escapes from Russia : The Saga of Anna K.* (Hillsboro, KS: Hearth Publishing, 1998) 203 pp.

Reviewed by Ed Brandt, Historian and Researcher, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

This book deals with the mostly German refugees who escaped chiefly from eastern Siberia to Harbin, Manchuria, beginning in 1928, at grave risk to their lives. Many perils faced them even after they eluded the bullets of the Soviet border guards. Harbin was a temporary refuge, since the city required no visas, but most had to stay there for a number of years before North American church organizations managed to scrape up the funds for passage to whichever countries were willing to accept them, primarily Canada, Paraguay and Brazil.

A list of 526 Lutheran refugees found in the Harbin Mission Files of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America in Chicago and a longer, but less complete, list of 649 Mennonites are appended, with the place

and date of birth given in each case. Some Roman Catholics, German and Russian Baptists, and Greek Catholics were also among the escapees, but they are mentioned only briefly.

Nearly 100 individuals, most of them Mennonites who had relatives here, came to the United States, initially to the West Coast.

The major portion of the book is devoted to accounts of the escape of various groups. Some of these had been published previously, but in German,

They are highly emotional stories of danger, tragedy, exploitation and blackmail, but fortunately also of the kindnesses of individuals of many nationalities and ultimate success in most cases. There are largely conjectural references to those who didn't make it, but theirs remains an unknown story.

Part II ("The Saga of Anna K") is the fascinating story of the author's 1937 German teacher. Readers will readily see what prompted the author to undertake major expenses and Herculean efforts to get the book completed and published.

This book is not only for genealogists and people with German-speaking ancestors from the Russian Empire, but also for those who enjoy dramatic human interest stories and would like to know more about a very courageous group of ethnic kinfolk who risked life for freedom.

Book Notes

A fine illustrated book entitled *The Amish and Their Neighbors: The German Block, Wilmot Township 1822-1860* has just been published by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. Written by Lorraine Roth the book is based on numerous sources, including a large body of records discovered in the archives of the University of Toronto. The book is well illustrated with many fine pictures of the region. The book retails for \$ 20.00 and is available from the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario and the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

One of the smaller Mennonite Church denominations were the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. Blending anecdotal

(cont'd on p. 11)