

# Mennonite Historian

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



Mennonites emigrating from Russia during the 1920s. Photo: Courtesy of MHC Collection.

## Why Emigrate?

*Editor's note: The following document was translated by Walter Regehr from the original German. The German text was published in **The Mennonites in Russia from 1917 to 1930: Selected Documents**, edited by John B. Toews (Winnipeg, Man.: Christian Press, 1975), pp. 299-303. Walter Regehr has completed a draft translation of the entire manuscript which will be published in the near future.*

*These documents are a poignant expression of the critical situation which the Mennonites in Russia faced in the early 1920s as they contemplated their future and also provide interesting insights concerning their attitude toward their fatherland and toward the peoples with whom they lived.* AD

### P. Baerg, "A Few Thoughts on the Emigration Question."

Naturally, it would not occur to me to decide the major, fateful question of whether or not the Mennonites should emigrate from Russia. Unfortunately, the time available to me to approach the question with composure and objectivity is short. I can only point briefly to a few things that appear significant to me...

#### 1. The Mennonites no longer have a Fatherland in Russia.

Though we had ample opportunity long

before the war to come to this realization, we have been brought to this understanding during the war, particularly the civil war and until today, by ruthless cruelty. We have been convinced that in Russia we are no more than tolerated strangers whose remaining here is impossible. The country for which we have always conscientiously carried out our civic responsibilities, and which we have always endeavored to love as our Fatherland and whose weal and woe we honestly wished to share, has destroyed

all the love and loyalty in our hearts. It has demonstrated itself to be a wicked step-mother who wishes to get rid of the stepchildren in order to claim the inheritance for her own children. Now we no longer have a Fatherland.

It would be highly ungrateful of us if we should forget what Russia has been for our fathers and for us. For a century the Mennonites in Russia have been privileged in every way as nowhere else in Europe. But this time is now part of the past, and today the situation is a totally different one. We do have a home here, and we older ones will probably never find a second one anywhere which will allow us to forget the old one. In foreign places we will think back to our South Russian steppe with longing and never be totally able to suppress the homesickness. But our heart does not have a Fatherland that is the object of our highest loving adoration, and that is profoundly sad. Yes, and in the long run that is unbearable and intolerable.

#### 2. Military Service.

Except for the most extreme situation we do not want to surrender our position of nonresistance. It does appear, however, that the time is approaching where we will lose our privilege. The events of the winter of 18/19 have demonstrated that by far the greater segment of us become militant as soon as it comes to defend one's own life and that of the family, the honor of the women and girls, and frequently only one's property. And prior to that, when we could not defend ourselves, we asked for military protection or armed others to defend us, which is basically one and the same thing. From there to the defense of the Fatherland is only one more step. We are gradually learning to understand that it is impossible to remain nonresistant in the present world order. And just as our inner attitude to nonresistance has changed, so we will probably be obliged to give it up outwardly as well, and come to terms with it!

Military service in some form is in prospect for the future. Anyone who is at all familiar with Russian barracks and barrack's life is seized with horror at the thought that our brothers and sons must endure, in every aspect, these filthy schools. That must be completely ruled out. If there must be barracks, then at least let them be such in which our youth can learn something positive and in which they will be exposed to fewer temptations and dangers. And so we come once again to the

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## Why Emigrate?

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conclusion that there is no staying in Russia for us.

### 3. The Absence of a Stable Legal System and of any Respect for the Law.

There is despair in having to say we live in a country where a stable legal system does not now exist, nor ever has; a country whose citizens have no respect for the law. We have always lacked the consciousness that we live under laws that are there for everyone's welfare, which we all must follow without complaint, which above all else are just and fair and equal for all and which are enforced without exception and with ruthless strictness but with justice. Governmental decrees and decisions have frequently contradicted not only each other, but also any elementary sense of justice. Chaos reigned in the legislation and decrees of individual holders of power and agencies so that the sense for legality and respect for the law could not even arise. Added to this there was the untrustworthiness and openness to bribery of the officials which was frequently so pervasive that the ordinary

mortal without friends or protection could not get justice promptly or without much effort. None of this is better today, but has become infinitely worse. If formerly the situation in the area of trustworthiness and honesty of officials was bad, today one cannot even speak of morality of officials. Anarchy rules in legislation, and among the officials there is arbitrariness and greed.

And we practical Mennonites have demonstrated remarkable adaptability in this area. We have managed to achieve our rights even in crooked circumstances. It is self evident to us that as a rule the Russian is unreliable in relationships and untrustworthy in service, that he wants to be bribed, and that as an official he allows himself to be guided by selfishness and other impure motives. For this we despise him and use him as he is. We give gifts, we bribe and pay as well as any. It has come to the point where people rarely sees anything villainous in such "gifts". One sees this as something unavoidable and only a means to gain one's right or be spared from an unjust, arbitrary or even illegal measure, which of course is frequently achieved by this. But we have frequently not considered that in this way we cannot but lose every sense of justice, and over time become morally deadened and depraved. Nor have we considered that with the application of such means, uprightness and honesty cannot but disappear from among us. Actually, to a large degree they have already disappeared...

### 4. National and Social Contrasts.

Circumstances have brought about until the most recent times, that we were almost totally isolated from the actual, the real Russia. In Russia, to speak with P.M. Friesen, we knew and valued only three things: the good land, the cheap labourers and the gracious emperor, the giver of great privilege. This ignorance of Russia and its population, our privileged status, and, in every respect, the vast distance between us and our workers and our near Russian neighbors brought with it, almost universally, that the Mennonite looked on the Russian with contempt. To a minor degree a certain disdain for non-Mennonites in general was carried over by many in that they considered themselves in every way better and more competent. This pride allowed the development of self-satisfaction and a kind of spiritual

arrogance, both of which have a demoralizing effect and make for hindrances to progress.

But other reasons also hindered the realization of an honest relationship of friendship with the Russians. The incomparably better social situation and higher cultural level of the immigrant alien and heterodox Mennonite farmers in comparison to the native Russians did not allow cordial, brotherly relationships to develop between them. In addition to this, for the purpose of our self-preservation, there came the necessary effort to close ourselves off from the Russian environment and to maintain our exceptional status. Over against this our privileged status aroused the jealousy and frequently the hatred of our Russian neighbours who already saw us, and still do, as foreigners and intruders, who own the land which by right should belong to the Russian farmers.

In recent years, during the war and especially during the civil war and until today, these contrasts have been sharpened and deepened, not only among the Russians but among ourselves as well. While earlier we made honest efforts to demonstrate that we were good, faithful subjects and felt no less Russian than the Russians, there can be no thought of that today. We no longer stand in any moral relationship to Russia. All better feelings and emotions have been violently destroyed. In the place of the love and goodwill toward Russia that we nourished earlier, not only in word but honestly and actually, have come contempt and hate. Very deliberate hate. There has always been a gulf between us and the Russians, but this has now grown into an abyss, which in my estimation cannot be bridged.

We live as citizens of this land, therefore, in an inner conflict which can only lead to disaster. If that has not yet occurred -- or better said, that it has not occurred to a greater degree -- is primarily due to the fact that a good deal of Dutch blood flows in our veins, besides our upbringing and our bit of Christianity. This enables us to lock the ill-will away deep within us and to preserve an outward calm. I imagine something like this to be the relationship between Germans and the French, between Germans and Poles.

How has it come to this? This has happened historically. We have not managed

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Editors: Abe Dueck (CMBS)

Alf Redekopp (MHCA)

All correspondence and unpublished manuscripts should be sent to the editorial offices at:

600 Shaftesbury Blvd.,

Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

Phone 204-888-6781

e-mail:

aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca

or

1-169 Riverton Ave.,

Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5

Phone 204-669-6575

e-mail: adueck@mbconf.ca.

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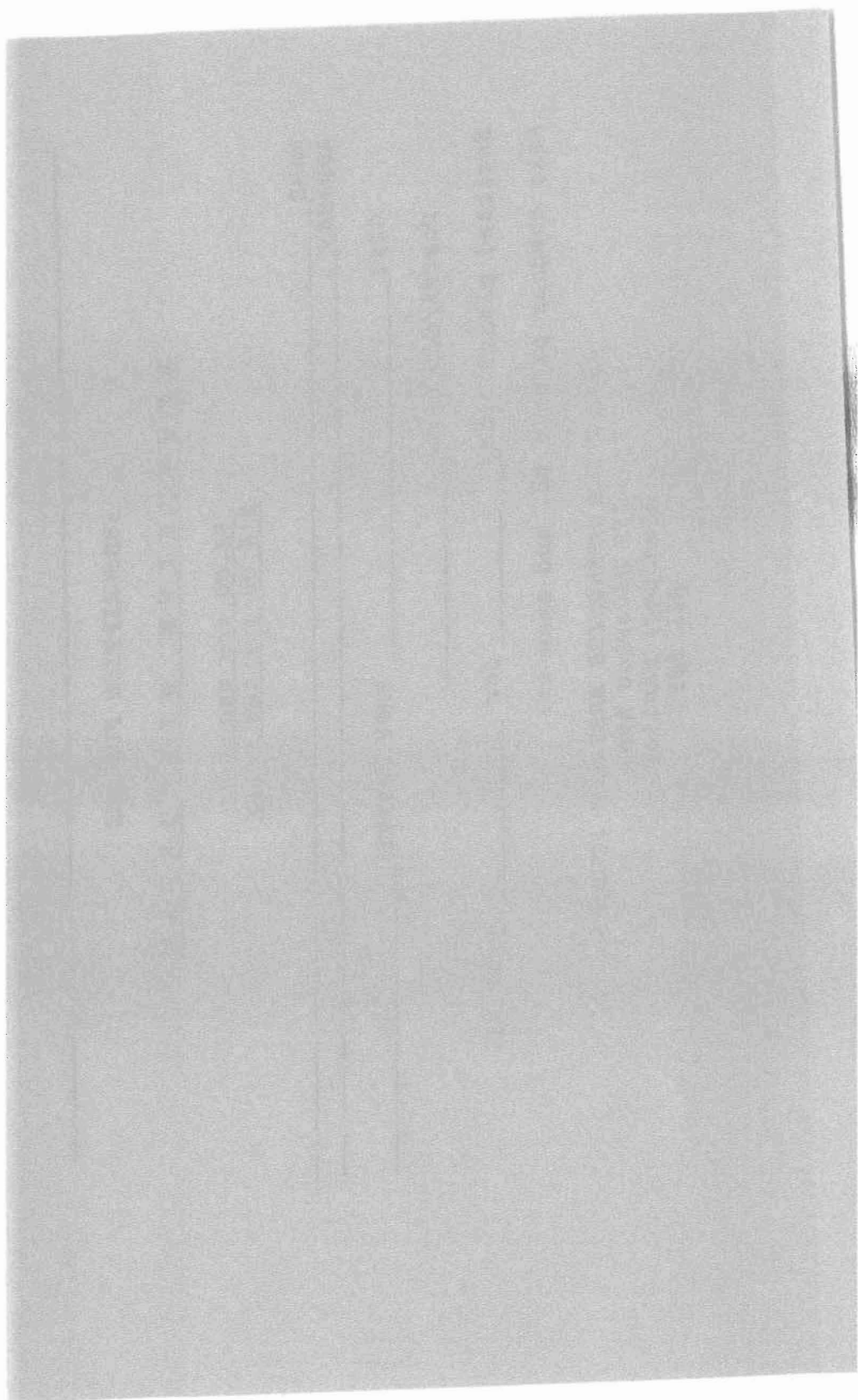
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# Genealogy and Family History

by Alf Redekopp

## Recent Books

Ernest N. Braun, editor. *Braun: A Gnadenfeld Heritage*. (Steinbach: Braun Family Tree Committee, 1999) 436 pp.

This compilation is already a "third edition" of a family history documenting the descendants of Jacob D. Braun (1826-1919) and Katharina Funk (1827-1920) who were born in Kronstal, Chortitza Colony, Russia, lived in Friedrichsthal, Bergthal Colony, Russia until 1875 and settled in Gnadenfeld, Manitoba. This volume adds a historical review including the genealogical background of the Braun and Funk families, the emigration to Canada 1874-1876, the trek to Paraguay 1926-1927, and the return to Manitoba in 1928. The book contains photos, maps, family group sheets and genealogical data. Contact Ernest N. Braun, P.O. Box 595, Niverville, MB R0A 1E0 or phone 204-388-6146.

Beno F. Enns and Ernest H. Baergen. *Family of Franz and Katharina Enns* (Saskatoon: Private Publication, 2000) 296 pp.

This compilation contains the genealogical data for the descendants of Johann J. Enns (1855-1921) and Helene Fast (1856-1931) who lived for a while at Wiesenfeld on the River Bychok. Later they established the estate Johanneshof some 90 km. southwest of the city of Ufa. In 1918 they were forced to relocate to Dawlekanowo. In addition to the genealogical data, this volume contains stories and photos from the family of Franz Enns (1891-1971), son of Johann J. Enns. Contact Ernest H. Baergen, 530-2510 Kenderdine Road, Saskatoon, SK S7N 4G5

*Peter H. Heinrichs Family Book*. (Winnipeg: Heinrichs Family Committee, 2000) 147 pp.

Peter H. Heinrichs (1864-1917) was born in the Bergthal Colony in South

Russia, married Maria Giesbrecht (1865-1935) in 1884 and became a fairly well-to-do farmer near Rudnerweide, Manitoba in the Mennonite West Reserve. This volume contains genealogical data on the ancestors and descendants. It has biographical information on many families as well as many photos and several maps. Contact Jake Heinrichs, 445 Stafford St Apt 426, Winnipeg, MB R3M 3V9.

B. Pauline Heppner. *The Heppners' in Prussia, Russia and America*. (Edmonton: Marcon Consulting Corporation Ltd., 2000) 492 pp.

Completed in time for the Hoepfner/Heppner Reunion held 21-23 July 2000 in Steinbach, this volume includes a brief survey of the Russian Mennonite history back to the founding of the Anabaptist movement. There are sections on the various migrations, the origin of the name and the early Heppners of the 1600s and 1700s. A major section of the book deals with the family history of Jacob Hoepfner (1748-1826), the first delegate chosen in Danzig to act as a negotiator with the Russian government with regards to the migration of Mennonites to Russia in 1788. The descendant charts list the known descendants of Jacob Hoepfner and his brothers Peter Hoepfner (1752) and Anton Hoepfner (1760). The book includes photos, maps, a variety of stories and a comprehensive name index. Contact Edward P. Falk, 211-13th St., Winkler, MB R6W 1S5.

Gladys (Penner) Wiebe. *Penner Family History Book 1680-2000 : The Descendants of Peter O. Penner (1832-1910) and Margaretha Friesen (1832-1891)*. (Saskatoon: Private Publication, 2000) 684 pp.

Peter O. Penner (1832-1910) and his wife Margaretha (Friesen) brought their family from Russia to Canada in 1875 and by 1880 settled near Heuboden, Manitoba in the Mennonite West Reserve. In 1902 Peter O. Penner and some of his

family settled at Clark's Crossing in the south end of the Hague-Osler Reserve, just north of the city of Saskatoon. This book documents the ancestors of this family and traces the history of its descendants. Photos, maps and many stories are included. Contact Don & Gladys Wiebe, 311 Quill Crescent, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4V3 or dgwiebe@home.com

Arthur Toews. *Family Registry : Isaak Isaak Toews 1841-1906 and Katharina Funk 1843-1917 of Kronsweide Russia*. (Winnipeg, MB: Private Publication, 2000) 164 pp.

This books consists of the family history of Isaak I. Toews (1841-1906) and Katharina Funk (1843-1917) who were born in Kronsweide, Russia and moved to Osterwick after their marriage. Some descendants immigrated to Canada in the 1920s while others remained in the Soviet Union. Others left the Soviet Union in the 1940s. This compilation includes biographical sketches, photos, maps, genealogical charts and a name index. Contact Arthur Toews, 935 Windermere Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3T 1A2.

## More about Calendars

by Helmut A. Epp

I have long been interested in the ever-increasing divergence between the Julian (old style) and Gregorian (new style) calendars. Thus, when Prof. James Urry's article entitled "Mennonites Marking Time" appeared in the December 1999 issue of the *Mennonite Historian*, I was quite taken by it. However, he left unanswered the question about why a Mennonite scholar born November 17<sup>th</sup> under the old calendar would receive best wishes from his non-Mennonite friends on the 30<sup>th</sup>, rather than November 29<sup>th</sup> – the proper date under the Gregorian calendar.

I am convinced that this gentleman was born in the 1800s (technically between 29 February 1800 (leap-year day) and 28 February 1900) as he himself, being a scholar, knew enough to add only twelve days to his Julian calendar birthday to

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Send inquiries to Alf Redekopp, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4  
E-mail: aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca



## MHC News

### MHC Open House

by Shirley Bergen

Thirteen exhibitors responded to the open invitation to get their historical material viewed at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on November 18, 2000. The result was a lively networking session. Information was shared regarding the use of the internet. Experienced researchers shared their genealogy records, helping others find new branches for their family tree. Others showed creative ways to tell their story. Recently published books were available. Some were able to put faces and stories to their list of names. New friendships were formed and old ones renewed. This Family History Day was truly a time for memories. Unfortunately, many family tree enthusiasts missed this wonderful opportunity to broaden their base of information. This event was jointly sponsored by the Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Genealogy Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society



MHC Director Alf Redekopp examining the family history display prepared by Vi Loewen at the MHC Open House and Genealogy Day, Sat. Nov. 18, 2000. Photo: Courtesy of Conrad Stoesz.

## Rare Book Note

by Lawrence Klippenstein

A recent donation from the Alexander Rempel collection was published almost 100 years ago, but deserves to be noted here. It is titled *Niederlaendische Ansiedlungen im Herzogtum Preussen zur Zeit Herzog Albrechts (1525-1568)* (Leipzig : Verlag von Dunker und Humblot, 1903), and is written by Dr. Bruno Schumacher.

This book provides a very special contextual treatment of an emigration (Dutch families moving to Prussia) which included Mennonites moving to Royal Prussia in the first half of the sixteenth century. Menno Simons visited these communities around the end of this period.

Mennonites are mentioned specifically in only a few pages at the end of the book, i.e. are not otherwise differentiated from other people emigrating from northern Holland (mainly) at this time.

The author does however present a detailed sketch of the economic (specially landholdings), legal and political realities which existed at the time of this move. It was, of course, the critically important first aspect of a migration which resumed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, with people going to New Russia, and then again in the 1870s with around 17,000 persons descended in many instances, from the people who came to Prussia in the sixteenth century and then went on to North America.

A very detailed set of footnotes offers help for further studies on the period under discussion in the book. The Mennonite Heritage Centre may well be one of only a few North American libraries now holding this volume.

## Genealogy Course at MHC

A Continuing Education Course in **Mennonite Genealogy** will be offered by Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) and taught at the MHC on **Thursday, Jan. 18, 25, Feb. 1, 8; 7:00-9:00 p.m.** The instructor is Alf Redekopp. The fee is \$50. To register call the CMU dean's office at: 204-487-3300 or contact the Heritage Centre at 204-888-6781.

## Guardianship Committee of Foreign Settlers Records

Tim Janzen, Portland, Oregon recently donated to various archival repositories a microfilm containing selected files from the early 1800s materials found in the Odessa Archives in the records of the "Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers in Southern Russia" (Fond 6), Inventory 1. Both the MHC and CMBS have received a copy. Janzen writes that in his opinion the most valuable item on this microfilm is a complete 1801 census of the Chortitza Colony listing about 1650 Mennonites from 9 villages. It is in German and is highly readable. It is similar to the 1795 Chortitza Colony census previously published by B.H. Unruh in format. Also of high interest are vital records of all births, marriages, and deaths in the Chortitza Colony for much of 1801 and 1802 and for the period from May to October, 1807, an 1802 Neuenburg village census, an 1803 Hutterite Colony census, an 1801 Krons Garten census which is in Russian, and lists of all children vaccinated against smallpox in the Chortitza Colony in 1809 and 1814. There are also various voters lists for the Chortitza Colony and for the Molotschna Colony during the period 1801 to 1812 among other items. This material gives significant new information about early residents of the Chortitza Colony that had previously been unavailable. When this data is reviewed in conjunction with the 1795 Chortitza Colony census and the portions of the 1802, 1808, and 1814 Chortitza Colony censuses previously published by B. H. Unruh as well as the information published in Peter Rempel's recent book *Mennonite Migration to Russia, 1788-1828* it gives us a much more complete picture of the inhabitants of the Chortitza Colony prior 1814 than we had available to us previously.

Both MHC and CMBS have also received five rolls of microfilm comprising over 14,000 pages of material from Inventory 2, 1847-1852 of the Guardianship Committee records through a collaborative project coordinated by Dr. Paul Toews, Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno, California.

It is certainly thrilling to see this material after it has been hidden away for almost 200 years!

AR



50 Years Ago! This photo appeared in the *Konferenz-Jugendblatt* (May-Aug., 1951, p. 13) with the following caption: "The 'home' of the 'Konferenz-Jugendblatt' (By way of comparison there is a note of humor in the picture. The Tribune is one of Winnipeg's two large daily papers.)"

## Open House

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies is planning an "Open House" on the evening of January 23, 2000 to introduce the community to its new facilities. The move from the former basement location to the second floor (offices, etc.) and the main floor (vault) is now complete.

Visitors will be introduced to the many resources available at the Centre for genealogists, historians and others. Everyone is welcome. Refreshments will be provided.

The Mennonite Brethren Conference offices will also participate in the open house so that visitors can become familiar with the various programs and agencies that operate out of the premises at 169 Riverton Ave.

## Volunteers

The operation of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies has always benefitted a great deal from the assistance of volunteers. Without the assistance of various volunteers the move during this past summer and fall would have been much more difficult and expensive. Among the volunteers were members of the River East Mennonite Brethren Church, several groups of students from the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate

Institute, and regular volunteers John Klassen and William Schroeder.

A new volunteer recently joined others who come on a regular basis. Betty Hamm returned to Winnipeg from Abbotsford and brought a collection of papers and books from her late husband, Peter M. Hamm with her. Peter Hamm was a long-time missionary in India, taught at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, and was an administrator for the Board of Missions and Services. Betty Hamm is sorting and filing the collection of papers and is also assisting in other ways.

## Recent Accessions

1. 40 biographical sketches of various Russian Mennonites by Helmut Huebert.
2. Reports and minutes of the Board of Communications 1996-1998.
3. Photos of Ben Horch leading the Oratorio Choir (195-), Tabor Bible School choir (1936- 1937). Haven of Hope Broadcast Choir (1943-1944) donated by Ed and Bertha Buhr of Mennon, Saskatchewan.
4. Two boxes of student records from MBBC/Concord College dating from 1990-1999.
5. Excerpts from the 1850 Census of Mennonites in Chortitza that document the movement of Mennonites, donated by Delbert Plett
6. Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute daily bulletins, staff minutes and newsletters that date from 1982-1994, donated by Alf Redekopp, former MBCI teacher.
7. 13 vinyl records, which feature various Mennonite artists, donated by Richard Thiessen, now of Abbotsford, BC.
8. Brooklands Mennonite Brethren Community church book, which includes church memberships from 1964-1995, donated by Dave and Karia Boese .
9. Agendas, minutes and reports from the Board of Trustees of the General Conference of MB Churches dating from 1978-1994. Donated by Jake Neufeld, Conference Treasurer.
10. Three photographs of the unveiling of the monument at the former Burwalde Mennonite Brethren church site, the location of the first Mennonite Brethren church in Manitoba. Donated by Peter Kroeker of Winnipeg.
11. Sermon outlines by Walter Janzen, dating from 1958-1994, donated by Les Janzen of Winnipeg.
12. Personal papers and other materials of Peter Hamm donated by Betty Hamm of Winnipeg. The documents relate to his involvements in India, in education, as well as family research. Included is a diary of Peter's father, Martin Hamm, dating back to 1908.
13. Two small diaries of Isaac A. Willems of Brotherfield, Saskatchewan dating from 1938-1957 donated by Julia Neufeld of Winnipeg.
14. Sermons, memoirs and church materials collected by Isaac Tiessen of Ontario and donated by Otto Tiessen.
15. Leamington MB Church materials dating from 1963-1999.
16. A.A. Kroeker collected documenting life at Winkler Bible Institute, Mennonite Brethren Bible College and Manitoba MB missions. Donated by Wally Kroeker.



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## A Miracle Discovery

by Margaret Bergen

I just returned from my fifth trip to the Ukraine – a Mennonite Heritage Cruise on the Black Sea and the Dniepr River. I enjoyed it very much, especially since a number of my friends and acquaintances were also on the cruise.

Ever since the *Salomon Bergen Family Book*, written by my father's cousin, Isaak Bergen, in 1995, was published, I began to wish I had more information on my father's mother. All I knew was that she was an only child, Katharina Teichroeb, living in Ebenfeld, Borosenko Colony, Ukraine, who married Jakob Bergen from Schoenhorst, Ukraine. So I knew that father had no Teichroeb cousins, so I never asked him any questions about the Teichroeb. (He had 76 Bergen cousins). Now that I was starting to get interested, I had no one to ask, as father had already died. Jacob and Katharina Bergen had settled first in Steinbach and then in Ebenfeld, Borosenko Colony. Father and his older brother, Johann, were born in Steinbach, Borosenko Colony; the other children were born in Ebenfeld, Borosenko Colony. Johann was murdered by the Machnow bandits in 1919, and buried in a mass grave in Ebenfeld. After the Ebenfeld massacre, all the Ebenfeld Mennonite buildings were destroyed by the bandits, so no one could claim property there. Katharina (Teichroeb) Bergen was murdered in Felsenbach, Borosenko Colony, and buried in Felsenbach in a grave with several other murdered people. (My cousin Annie and I went to the cemetery there.)

My last five years of research to



Margaret Bergen with the Russian owners of the property on which the Ebenfeld Mennonite Cemetery is situated, standing beside the mass grave site of 1919 where her uncle Johann Bergen was buried. Photo: Courtesy of Margaret Bergen.

discover the names of the parents of Katharina (Teichroeb) Bergen, proved fruitless. Finally I did find out that her father's name was Johann Teichroeb, but I still did not know the name of his wife, nor any dates of birth or death. When I was in the Ukraine this September, my cousin and I took a taxi to Ebenfeld (now named Oljanifka). This is now a Russian/Ukrainian village. First we went to the Mennonite cemetery, which since 1919, has been on private property owned by a Russian/Ukrainian family. I had been there in 1998. At that time the owner, a Russian/Ukrainian man in his early seventies, told me that his mother had told him about the 1919 massacre of Ebenfeld, and he showed us the site of the mass grave. I now read a memorial poem there, which was written by a member of the 1998 tour group. It affected me so much, that I broke down and cried – and yet it has been 81 years since my uncle Johann Bergen was murdered and buried there.

The small graveyard is surrounded by trees. The Russian/Ukrainian family, on whose property this graveyard stands, has taken very good care of this site for 81 years. The grass is cut. No weeds there. Only one gravestone (Schmidt) remains. The other gravestones had been taken years ago for the foundation of a granary in Ebenfeld. I asked the owner of this property, why the family hadn't cut down the trees in the cemetery, and cultivated the land. She said, "Oh no, this is sacred ground". For 81 years, this family has taken care of this small graveyard. (The husband died two years ago. The wife and children carry on). I was so affected by their respect for and care of this former Mennonite cemetery. (There are no Mennonites living here now).

Two years ago when I was there, I heard that the tombstones from this cemetery had been used to build the foundation of a granary in Ebenfeld. This granary was now in ruins. The tour leader of the 1998 tour refused to stop to check if any gravestones could be found there in the rubble. So now I made inquiries, and the Russian/Ukrainian family led me to the ruins of this granary. The young grandson obviously had been listening to our conversation. He immediately led us to a tombstone that was lying in the rubble. The engraved names on the granite tombstone were still legible. And lo and behold – it was the tombstone of my great-

grandparents Teichroeb. And now I have the information that I had been searching for. Here it is: Side I: *Hier ruhet Johann Teichroeb, geb. 1843, gest. 28. Feb. 1913.* Side II: *Hier ruhet Maria Teichroeb, geb. Loewen. 12 Juli 1840, gest. 15 Mai 1911.* Side III: *Wer die Gottes Stadt die droben ist, gefunden hat.* Side IV: *Ruhet saft. Auf Wiedersehen.* (May the one who has found God's heavenly abode, rest in peace till we meet again.)

The Russian/Ukrainian family was aware how touched and excited I was by this discovery. The daughter then said, "When my brother comes home, we will move this tombstone back to the cemetery." Needless to say, I was overwhelmed by their kindness and thoughtfulness.

We looked for more gravestones with the children's help, but without success. I found it amazing that the only tombstone still in existence there in the rubble of the granary, happened to be that of my great-grandparents Teichroeb. It seemed unbelievable, like a miracle.

## More of Calendars

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arrive at the Gregorian calendar date. These friends, however, only knew the current difference between the two, i.e. thirteen days, so he must have given them his Julian calendar birthday, specifically mentioning that it was the old style (Julian) date.

Most Mennonites who arrived in Canada in the 1920s made the same error – that is, if they bothered to adjust their birth dates at all. My parents, both born in 1892, added thirteen days, based on the fact that the Gregorian calendar was thirteen days ahead of the Julian when they arrived. Adding thirteen days was fine for those born on or after 29 February 1900, but not for those born in the 1800s. Combining a Julian calendar birth date with a Gregorian calendar death date produces a twelve or thirteen day overstatement in the life span, depending on the century of birth. Because of my involvement in genealogy I can confirm that most Mennonites who came to North America in the 1870s adjusted their birth dates by properly adding twelve days.

I had long assumed that the 1920s arrivals made this error because they didn't find out about the Gregorian calendar until they arrived here, but in correspondence with Dr. Urry I learned that German-



language Mennonite newspapers in Russia – such as the *Botschafter* and the *Friedensstimme* (as did non-Mennonite German-language newspapers) – carried both the Julian and Gregorian calendar dates in the masthead. However, it is apparent they didn't know when the difference went from twelve to thirteen days, and therein lies their error.

To my knowledge, the Eastern Orthodox Church is the only body still using the Julian calendar. If they continue to use it indefinitely, the difference will grow another month roughly every 4000 years. The problem is that the Julian calendar uses 365.25 days in the year (a leap year day every fourth year, bar none); however, the true solar year has been established as 365.242 days, a difference of one day in 128 years approximately. The Gregorian calendar provides for this difference by having a leap year day only in the centuries evenly divisible by 400 – e.g. 1600, 2000, 2400, and not in years such as 1700, 1800 and 1900 or 2100, 2200 and 2300. Most years there is also an adjustment in the clock of a few seconds to make up any minor difference.

*Helmut A. Epp is former trust company manager who lives in Fonthill, Ontario. Much of his retirement time is spent working on genealogy.*

## Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online

by Bert Friesen

The project to make information about the Mennonite world in Canada accessible to as many people as possible online is progressing very well. (See [www.mhsc.ca](http://www.mhsc.ca)) During 2000 the editorial committee has worked on the editorial process and started the solicitation process for new content. Until now the content has been the Canadian content from the published *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, primarily from Volumes V and I. Ancillary material has also been added from other sources. These include Mennonite conference statements of faith and position papers on various issues, mostly ethical.

This project will involve many individuals and potentially be of benefit to many more. We invite you, as readers, to become involved in the project. Please contact the editors of the *Mennonite Historian* for more information.

## Why Emigrate

(cont'd from p. 2)

to reconcile our neighbors with our presence here. All the hatred that was heaped up over the years has now come to a head. If we did not know the Russian people earlier, now we have come to know them fully, but from a perspective we had not anticipated. The events of recent years have brought us to the point where we see our oppressor, our tyrant, our enemy in every Russian -- not in the individual person, but in each representative of the nation. Just at the very sight of them the emotion is stirred. They are the ones who have destroyed our houses, devastated our goods and our fields, eradicated our forests. They have robbed us, cursed us, humiliated us and made us poor and wretched, mistreated and raped our mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. They have consigned our fathers, brothers and sons to death in shameful ways, like dogs and worse and have murdered the flower of our people. They are the ones who have brought us to the brink of ruin, who have sworn down upon us want and hunger, misery and despair, and who continue to poison our sons, to seduce our daughters and to infect our families. We hate and loathe the nation that has devoured our sheep and cattle, that takes our bread, that drives us from house and farm and displaces us and coldly and heartlessly abandons us to misery and dooms us to death by starvation. Had not our foreign fellow believers come and taken pity on us we would no longer be among the living - to the great satisfaction of our oppressors. How shall we ever come to a decent, friendly relationship with this nation, something that would be absolutely essential to any further living together? How can there be any hope for a settlement or a reconciliation? How shall we live in a land we can only curse? That, in my opinion, is totally ruled out. Even though the individual highly moral person may manage to bring this about, the mass of people can not. It is impossible to bring about such a transformation in the mass psychology of the people. And even if this were possible our remaining here would be tantamount to our moral ruin, because the time of our isolation and seclusion is definitely past, and we could not resist the disintegrating influence from the outside. So separation would be the only salvation.

All these considerations - and these are not nearly all of them - of necessity draw

attention to the fact that remaining in Russia under Slavic or Jewish-Slavic rule and among a preponderantly alien population means the ruin of our peoplehood and that emigration is the only hope for our salvation. Anything that would speak against emigration would likely only be reasons of a material nature, temporal progress, economic possibilities that could emerge in Russia, the material goods which we must leave behind, etc. Whoever puts higher stock in material goods should stay here. Whoever, over against this, places ethnic, moral, intellectual, spiritual goods above these should emigrate. The choice in response to such a question should not be difficult. The result could be briefly stated in this way:

In the face of the dangers that threaten our peoplehood in Russia we owe it to the younger generation and to ourselves to leave Russia and to attempt to become indigenous in healthier soil, in an environment of similar extraction, culture, language and confession, and to participate as fully enfranchised citizens in the life of a healthy nation. This means we must seek a home in a Germanic Protestant environment.

If, and how soon, the emigration will become reality and where this land of the future is to be sought or whether the future will show us other ways - these are further questions that have yet to be resolved. As far as I am concerned, a close, the closest union with Germany, our spiritual (intellectual) fatherland, would be in accord with my heart. The intensification of nationalism in the whole world forces us to this. Only in this way could we finally escape the difficult inner conflict and destructive ethnic self-denial. The uneasy limping on both sides would end because we could take our stand firmly on one side, could be totally what we are in our hearts and could admit it openly. This would be of great significance for the strengthening of our character, our morale, and of our entire inner moral being.

## Book Notes

(cont'd from p. 8)

several essays. Contributors include the late George K. Epp and Peter Letkemann of Winnipeg, Hans Kasdorf, USA, and Peter Klassen, Paraguay, in addition to German and *Aussiedler* authors.

## Book Review

Peter Hildebrand. *From Danzig to Russia* translated by Walter E. Toews and Adolf Ens, Echo Historical Series (Winnipeg, MB : CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2000) pb., 62 pp.

Reviewed by John J. Friesen, Professor of History & Theology, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba

This publication consists of two documents. The first is the one listed on the title of the book. It has the subtitle "*The First Emigration of Mennonites from the Danzig Region to Southern Russia*." It was written in 1836 by Peter Hildebrand, a participant in the migration to Russia in 1788-89.

The second document, written by Kornelius Hildebrand, Sr. a grandson of Peter Hildebrand, has the title: "*A Sunday in 1840 on the Island of Chortitza*." Both documents were published in the Echo Verlag series in 1965 under the title: *Zwei Dokumente, Quellen Zum Geschichtsstudium der Mennoniten in Russland*. The book was edited by Victor Peters. For the present publication, the translation was done by Walter E. Toews with assistance from Adolf Ens. Ens also provided the footnotes.

The first document, as the title indicates, is a first hand account by Peter Hildebrand of the move to Russia from Danzig. The story continues until the end of the conflict between Jacob Hoepfner, the delegate, and the Chortitza Mennonite community in Russia. Hildebrand was married to Hoepfner's daughter, Helena, and so his document tells the story from

the perspective of Hoepfner.

Throughout the document it is evident that Hoepfner's personal information about the migration events have been included in Hildebrand's story. The tensions in the Hoepfner home before and during the delegate visit, the details of events on the year-long delegate visit to Russia in 1786-87, the long, difficult migration trek to the Ukraine during the winter of 1788-89, and the settlement in the Chortitza area are likely all supplemented with the memories of Hoepfner. Even though Hildebrand lived through these events, it was Hoepfner who was in leadership, and had the detailed knowledge of the actual discussions and negotiations.

Hildebrand's aim, though, is to tell the story of immigration and not to defend Hoepfner. He says in the opening paragraph that he does not want to offend any one, nor to open old wounds. In order not to offend, he will even leave out dates and names. His aim is to provide "an accurate account of the beginning and development of the migration from Danzig to Russia." As such it is a very valuable first hand account of an important stage in Mennonite history.

The second story in the book tells of a wolf hunt which happened on the Island of Chortitza, following a church service in the village school. This short story is very informative about life on the island of Chortitza in 1840.

The translation of the book *From Danzig to Russia* is excellent. The book is very readable, and makes a fine contribution to the ongoing project of making the Echo Verlag series available to English readers.

## Book Notes

by Adolf Ens

*Namaka 1925-2000* is a 28-page Sirlux-bound compilation reporting on a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion of descendants of this Mennonite settlement adjacent to the Blackfoot Indian Reserve in Alberta. Henry D. Goertzen is to be commended for condensing the reunion proceedings and supplementing the text with a comprehensive homestead map, some genealogical and cemetery data, and a substantial selection of pioneer photographs. The 8½ x 11 booklet is available from the publisher, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta, for \$8.

Irene Klassen, Calgary, is familiar to many readers of Canadian Mennonite periodicals for which she reported from time to time. In retirement she has recently published two books. *Pieces and Patches of My Crazy Quilt* (Belleville, ON: Guardian Books, 2000) is an autobiographical family chronicle interspersed with literary fragments. (243 pages, pb., \$27.50) *Poesy and Ponderings* (1999 by the same publisher) is a slim volume (111 pages, \$12.95) of mostly poetry and two dozen brief prose devotional reflections.

Twenty years ago five Mennonite congregations in southern Winnipeg combined to found a seniors' retirement complex adjacent to Bethel Mennonite Church. As part of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration Bethel Place presented two publications. *Sojourners at Bethel Place: Biographies of the residents, May 2000* was compiled and edited by Helen Ens, one of the residents (164 pages, Sirlux-bound). This volume of stories is supplemented by a hardcover "yearbook" of photographs (ca 60 pages, full colour) entitled *Bethel Place 1980 - 2000*. Many interesting fragments of local history are contained in the stories.

Gerhard and Julia Hildebrandt, ed. *200 Jahre Mennoniten in Rußland: Aufsätze zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur* (Bolanden-Weierhof: Verlag des Mennonitischen Geschichtsvereins, 2000) is a collection of 13 essays (273 pages, pb) on various aspects of a 200-year span of Mennonite history in Russia and the Soviet Union. In addition to dealing with settlement, church and administration issues, special topics (education, choral singing, literary activity, missions, non-resistance) are addressed in



The official book launch in Winnipeg at the Mennonite Central Committee office with the editor, Harry Loewen present took place on October 26<sup>th</sup>. The book entitled *Road to Freedom: Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering* will be reviewed in the next issue of the *Mennonite Historian*. The book is available for \$42.50 plus GST and shipping (total \$4950) from the Centre for M.B. Studies in Winnipeg. Photo: Courtesy of Conrad Stoesz.

(cont'd on p. 7)