

# Mennonite Historian

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



Dr. Harvey Dyck in conversation with interested attendees at the public meeting following the presentation of the latest microfilm collection to the Mennonite Heritage Centre.  
(Photo: Courtesy of Conrad Stoesz)

## Mennonite-Related Documents from the Zaporozhye Archives

by Peter Letkemann

On Friday, 27 April 2001, the Mennonite Heritage Centre received 109 reels of microfilmed documents from the State Archive of the Zaporozhye Region (*GAZO: Gosudarstvenii Arkhiv Zaporozhskoi Oblasti*). Thanks to the untiring efforts of Prof. Harvey Dyck, some 130,000 pages of documents from "the richest group of Mennonite-related sources in the former Soviet Union" - selected by Dyck and microfilmed during the years 1994 to 2000 - are now available to North American scholars.

After a preliminary survey of the collection, I am amazed at the enormous amount of bureaucratic paper-work generated both by the Tsarist and the Soviet administrative apparatus, and at how much of it survived the Revolution, Civil War and World War II. These

valuable sources will undoubtedly shed new light on many aspects of the Mennonite experience in the Zaporozhye region from the late-eighteenth century up to the time of the Second World War.

The contents of the collection are described in the book *Mennonites in Southern Ukraine, 1789-1941. A Guide to Holdings and Microfilmed Documents from the State Archive of the Zaporozhye Region*. Compiled by Harvey L. Dyck and Aleksandr S. Tedeev (Toronto: Centre for Russian and East European Studies, 2001), which Harvey Dyck presented to the MHC Director Alf Redekopp on this occasion.

In Part One of the *Guide* (152 pp.), Aleksandr S. Tedeev, the current director of *GAZO*, provides a brief analytical description of the 172 collections (*fondy*) identified as containing Mennonite-related

documents. Of these *fondy*, about 25% [43 collections] date from the Tsarist Period (1794-1919); the remaining 75% [129 collections] contain documents from the Soviet Period. The Soviet holdings are divided into state administrative files and files of the Communist Party. The latter were housed in a separate archive until 1991, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party files were transferred to *GAZO*. Harvey Dyck provides the following succinct characterization of these files: "State Archive documents, generated by Soviet administrative organs, reflect what was happening in a region, while Party Archive documents often help to explain why."

In Part Two of the *Guide* (330 pp.), Harvey Dyck presents "A User's Guide to the University of Toronto Collection of Microfilmed Mennonite-Related Documents from the Zaporozhye Archive." It consists of detailed *fond* by *fond* and file-by-file inventories of all the documents.

The files from the *Tsarist Period* are found on the fourteen reels #25 to 38, and #55. Only 8 out of 43 *fondy* are represented, in whole or in part, on these reels. They include: a) Administrative Files of the Khortitsa *volost* (1851-1909), the Nikolaipole *volost* (1869-1916), and the Nizhnaia Khortitsa Village administration, 1897-1919. The most extensive collection is Fond F-59 / *opis* 1 [reels #28-35], containing files of the Nikolaipole *volost* administration from its founding in 1869 to 1917. File No. 10, for example, will be of interest to genealogists, since it contains a list of all persons (including their ages) residing in the villages of Nikolaifeld, Franzfeld, Eichenfeld, Adelsheim, Hochfeld and Petersdorf as of 15 January 1873.

b) Reels #25-27 and #37-38 contain statistical and land survey materials for the Khortitsa *volost* and Berdiansk Uezd. Fond F-230, *opis* 2, *delo* 177, for example, lists the land possessions of I.G. Fast on his estate Wiesenfeld, Aleksandrovsk Uezd, as of 2 May 1885.

c) Finally, there are also several smaller collections of Institutional Files, including the Khortitsa Volost Court, 1899-1900, and one file each from the Orekhov School, and the *Taubstummenschule* in Tiege.

Not microfilmed are a large group of Factory Files of Mennonite-owned farm implement factories in the Khortitsa *volost*, including the A.J. Koop Factory,

(cont'd on p. 2)

## Zaporozhye Archives

(cont'd from p. 1)

Aleksandrovsk (Schoenwiese), the A.A. Koop Factory (1889-1919), the Lepp and Wallmann Factory in Aleksandrovsk (Schoenwiese) and Khortitsa, the Dietrich Schulz Factory, Pavlovka (Osterwick) and the B.V. Rempel Factory, Pavlovka (Osterwick). A large collection of files of the Forestry Administration and the *Forsteidienst* (1846-1917) are also not included on the microfilms.

Harvey Dyck has wisely chosen, I think, to focus on materials from the Soviet period of the 1920s and 1930s. The *State administrative documents* are found on 90 reels - #1 to #24, #38 to #95 and #100 to #109. They are richest for the period 1919 to 1930, providing valuable information on the Civil War years, the years of reconstruction under NEP, and finally the devastating collectivization and dekulakization period in the Khortitsa raion (including Nikolaipole volost). Very few documents from the 1920s have survived from the Molochna region. For the 1930s, on the other hand, the documentation is better for Molochna than for Khortitsa, thanks to the extensive files

of the Molochansk Raion Committee (1923-39) and the Rotfront Raion Committee (1933-39) of the Communist Party.

Three of the largest collections from the Soviet State administrative documents are: a) Fond R-1: Zaporozhe Okrug Executive Committee, 1923-1930; b) Fond R-121: Khortitsa Volost Executive Committee, 1919-1923, and c) Fond R-235, containing files of the Khortitsa Raion Executive Committee [*raispolkom*] for the years 1922-1930.

The files of Fond R-235 / *opis* 5 / *delo* 70-79, for example, contain extensive lists of dekulakized farms in Nikolaipol (Nikolaifeld), Baburka (Burwalde), Kichkas (Einlage) and Smoliana (Schöneberg). In Fond R-235 / *opis* 3 / *delo* 50, I was surprised to find a moving, hand-written petition from my great-grandfather David Letkemann to the Nikolaipol village council, dated 3 April 1930, pleading that they review and reverse their decision to dekulakize him and his family. Other such petitions are found in this file, as well as in the following *delo* 54. It seems that many people still felt they could "reason" with Soviet authorities at that time. Unfortunately, my great-grandfather's petition was not granted and both he and his wife died in exile several years later.

Fond R-1182 contains files of the Zaporozhe Okrug Court, 1923-28: *opis* 1 contains the files of 19 "criminal" cases involving Mennonites. *Opis* 2 contains the files of 641 men requesting exemption from military service.

Harvey has also chosen to copy the administrative files of the Shirikoe (Neuendorf) Village Soviet, 1921-30; the Nizhnia Khortitsa Village Soviet, 1918-1926; and the Orlovo Village Soviet, 1927-1935.

The *Communist Party documents* are found on 21 reels - # 96 to 100, and #110 to 125. Harvey writes: "The sheer volume of such materials gives evidence of the preoccupation of the Party, at all levels, with Mennonites, who were a difficult ethno-religious minority for the Party to deal with given their relatively great social solidarity and resistance to the social-discriminatory and anti-religious facets of sovietization."

Harvey Dyck, John Staples and their team deserve the gratitude of Mennonite scholars and laymen alike for making all of these documents available to us!

*Peter Letkemann is an organist and historian living in Winnipeg.*



Abe Dueck presenting a cheque for the museum project to Abraham Schmidt.

## Mexican Mennonite Archives/Museum Begun

Several years ago the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society entered into an agreement with a corresponding committee in Cuauhtemoc in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico to assist them to begin developing an archives/museum. An amount of about \$14,000 was raised in southern Manitoba for the project. In the meantime several levels of Mexican government also provided the equivalent of about \$30,000 (US) each and additional amounts were donated by Mexican Mennonites. By December, 2000, enough money was in place to begin building.

In April, 2001, Abe Dueck and Adolf Ens travelled to Mexico to meet with the committee there, to discuss various partnership possibilities, and to transfer some of the funds. The historic connection of most of the Mexican Mennonites with Mennonites of Manitoba and other parts of Canada has been recognized and the value of the museum/archives project for both communities was underlined. The sharing of materials and expertise is vital to the success of such a venture.

A formal agreement outlining the objectives of further cooperation was signed by both parties. The museum building is well on the way to completion. One section of the building will house archival and other Mennonite resource materials. The remainder of the building will house various artifacts and also depict the Mennonite story for local people and for visitors to the area.

A.D.

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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

[www.mennonitechurch.ca/heritage/](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/heritage/)

e-mail:

[aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca)

or

1-169 Riverton Ave.,

Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5

Phone 204-669-6575

[www.mbconf.ca/mbstudies/](http://www.mbconf.ca/mbstudies/)

e-mail: [adueck@mbconf.ca](mailto:adueck@mbconf.ca).

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# Genealogy and Family History

by Alf Redekopp

## Queries

**Duerksen** - I'm trying to find out if my Duerksen ancestral heritage originated in Holland. Abraham Duerksen was born 11 March 1834 presumably South Prussia m. Elizabeth Buller b. 15 July 1837 presumably South Prussia. Together they came via Antwerp to USA from the village of Hierschau in the Molotschna settlement in July 1875, landed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, first settled near Parker, SD and later built near Marion, South Dakota. Abraham Duerksen's father was possibly Johann. Where did the Duerksen surname originate? I would also like more information about the parents of Elizabeth, Ben and Anne Sperling Buller. I am also trying to find information on Abraham Willems, believe to be married to an Aganetha (Agatha) Harms or Wiens. Contact: Judy Duerksen Evans, 200 Charles St., Lot 7, Deadwood, SD 57732 USA, phone 605-578-2262 or email: jevans@mato.com.

**Boese and Wiens** - I'm trying to put together a comprehensive listing on the descendants of Gottlieb Boese, b. c.1780. His last child was Samuel (1832-1908) of Waldheim, Molotschna who married Katharina Wiens (1834-1890) of Schoensee, Molotschna, daughter of Peter Wiens and Katharina Penner. They later lived in Crimea. Their children (all born in Schoensee) were: Anna, b. 1858, who married Johann Teichrieb; Katharina, b. 1863, who married David Friesen (1930 in Watrous, SK); Heinrich, b. 1867, who married Lena Kanke (1930 in Watrous); Peter, b. 1869, who married Anna Kanke (1930 in Waldheim, SK); and Maria, b. 1874, who married Abraham Klassen (1930 in Gretna, MB). Samuel's brother Heinrich was my great-grandfather. Information about any of their descendants would be greatly appreciated. (I have the 1931 wheel chart) Contact: Helmut A. Epp, 7 Concord St., Box 1016, Fonthill, ON, L0S 1E0 or email: helm.epp@sympatico.ca. Phone 905-892-4534.

## Recent Books

Arlene Stoesz. *The Johann Stoesz Family 1731-1992* (Butterfield, MN: Private publication, 1992) 88 pp.

This book focuses on Johann and Maria Stoesz, who settled in Mountain Lake, Minnesota and their descendants. The Mennonite Heritage Centre recently received a copy of this book which contains an update of the book entitled "A Stoesz Genealogy" researched and compiled by A.D. Stoesz in 1972. Contact: Arlene Stoesz, 39891 610<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Butterfield, MN 56120 or djstoesz@rconnect.com.

## The Massacres of Ebenfeld and Steinbach, Borosenko Colony, 1919

by Margaret Bergen

I am searching for descendants of the survivors of the massacres of Ebenfeld and Steinbach of Dec. 4, 1919. I have gleaned some statistics and names from an article by Abram A. Enns, and one from the "Journal" of Heinrich Epp (1899-1989).

Sixty-seven (67) people were killed in Ebenfeld, twenty-eight (28) survived. Fifty-four (54) people were killed in Steinbach, four (4) survived.

Here is a list of the survivors named in these articles:

*From Ebenfeld:*

1. Abram A. Enns, a teacher in Ebenfeld, living on a khutor at that time, and his wife, Nettie Enns, nee Penner, and their children, who emigrated to Canada in 1926, possibly to B.C.
2. Jakob Bergen, Sr. and his children, Jakob Jr., Susanna, Peter, Abram, Heinrich and Solomon. (I am the daughter of Jakob Bergen, Jr., and have located all the descendants of Jakob Bergen Sr.)
3. Jakob von Kampen, emigrated to Saskatchewan.
4. Seven members of the Bernhard Penner family.

5. Abram Penner, son of Dietrich Penner.
6. Susie Penner and Tina Epp, who were driven to Abram Enns' khutor by Dietrich Peters prior to the massacre.
7. Anna Penner, daughter of David Penner, who dressed herself as a Russian peasant girl and so escaped.

*From Steinbach:*

1. Anna and her brother, Peter Neufeld, children of Peter Neufeld.
2. Lisa Funk
3. Cornelia Funk

I was at the Ebenfeld (now Oljankfka) cemetery, Borosenko Colony, in September, 2000. It is situated on the private property of a Russian/Ukrainian family who have maintained this cemetery since 1919. They showed me the exact spot of the mass grave. My uncle, Johann Bergen is also buried there. The gravestones had been removed a long time ago by the authorities to build a granary.

I would like to get in contact with descendants of the survivors of Ebenfeld and Steinbach. Contact: Margaret Bergen, 405-246 Roslyn Road, Winnipeg, MB R3L 0H2.

## William Hespeler : Person of National Significance



Upon the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Sheila Copps, Minister of Heritage, Government of Canada,

announced 20 new designations of national historic significance. Of special interest to Mennonite historians is the designation of William Hespeler (1830-1921), a former Ontario merchant, who traveled through Germany and Ukraine during the 1870s to recruit Mennonites to settle the Canadian prairies. A small memorial celebration to remember the contributions of this man, was held at the St. John's Anglican cemetery in Winnipeg on April 18<sup>th</sup>, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.

A.R.

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





## Kuruschan Altenheim Ledger Books

by Alf Redekopp

Recently the Mennonite Heritage Centre was given two ledger books which originally were maintained by the last administrator of an Old Folks' Home on the Kuruschan River in the Molotschna Colony. These items are significant in that they present the record of the final years of an institution, for which little information is known.

Each volume is bound with a hard board cover measuring 8 ½ by 14 inches and containing 133 and 45 pages respectively. The ledger is identified on the inside cover as the "Tagebuch vom Altenheim Kuruschan Russland von Franz Martin Willms" and signed H.F. Willms. The ledgers were donated to the Mennonite Heritage Centre by Harry Willms of Long Bow Lake (near Kenora), Ontario, who is the son of H.F. Willms (1896-1975) and the grandson of Franz M. Willms (1852-1921).

Franz M. Willms first married Maria Klassen (1854-1885) in 1873 — a marriage which bore 5 children. His second marriage was in 1885 to Anna Rempel (1860-1940) and resulted in another 9 children. Franz and Anna Willms were the administrators of the Kuruschan Altenheim from 1910 to 1920.

The first ledger begins with many pages detailing income and expenses starting on October 6, 1911, as well as separate pages which document the accounts with individual employees such as Maria Barkman, David Martens, Anna Janzen, Leni Friesen, Helena Friesen, Anna Braun, Johann Braun and others. Interspersed between pages of financial accounting, there are chronological diary entries also starting on October 6, 1911 and continuing until September 3, 1916. Each entry is brief providing information on the weather and farm activities, travel



The Mennonite Old Age Home at the Kuruschan River was built in 1905. From 1910 to 1920 Franz and Anna Willms were the Administrators. Photo taken from *The Descendants of Franz M. Willms* compiled by George and Marjorie Willms.

and other events.

The second volume continues with additional pages of income and expenses, and diary entries of daily happenings from October 18, 1918 until October 25, 1921. This section includes entries on the political unrest, the movement of the "Red" and "White" armies and names of persons who murdered. These sections very likely hold information of interest to family historians.

What happened to this Altenheim and its last administrators? According to the recollections of their daughter Margaretha, as recorded in *The Descendants of Franz M. Willms* compiled by George and Marjorie Willms in 1998, the story is as follows:

On a particularly cold winter day probably in January 1920, a General Akimow and his wife asked for admission and lodging at an Old Folks' Home in Kuruschan, in Molotschna Colony, where my parents had been the administrators since 1910.

Knowing that it was dangerous to accommodate a general during the revolution, my father sent him to the mayor of the village. The mayor examined the general's documents and found them to be in order. The general had somehow managed to obtain false identification papers. Unconcernedly my father gave him a room in the Old Folks' Home for which he paid well. He wished to wait there until the Red Army—it was hoped—would be toppled by the White. At the time a bloody war was being waged between the Red and White Armies, and since 1917, we had been in turn under White and Red rule. When the Whites dispersed the Reds we were greatly relieved but whenever the

Reds ruled we lived in constant fear of harm and death.

And so it happened that General Akimow had to wait for several months till spring until the Whites again dispersed the Reds. Then the General donned his uniform again and reported to the White Army. He was never to return to the Old Folks' Home again.

In the meantime the Red Army had become progressively stronger in our area and had taken over control of the Old Folks' Home. Our parents were released but not for long. Early one morning, two soldiers came and placed Father under arrest while we were having breakfast. He was allowed to finish his meal before he had to go along with his captors....

When asked the reason for his arrest, his captors answered quite frankly, "Because he hid General Akimow." The matter was obviously serious. Papa calmly and truthfully reported the entire matter to them as it had transpired... Then he was taken to a cellar next to Rev. G. Harder's house where several other captives were held, including J. Janzen, a young man who later was able to move to Leamington... During the second night he was called out with four other men, none were ever seen again.

A year later, we had a memorial service for Father...Mother was a widow for 19 years...

Interestingly, the final entries in the diary journal, record that on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1921, the family had to leave the *Altenheim* including their keys and possessions and experience difficult times. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October they were allowed to get their possessions from the home. During the subsequent years in the 1920s a number of the descendants emigrated to Canada.



Summer student workers, Donovan Giesbrecht and Gabrielle Hamm at CMBS

## CMBS News

### Summer Activities

This summer is proving to be a very busy one at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. In addition to a busy schedule for regular staff, two students have been hired under government grant programs.

Donovan Giesbrecht, a history student at the University of Winnipeg, began working on a Control of Holdings project funded by the Canadian Council of Archives in April. It involved the processing of the remaining textual documents acquired when the Winkler Bible Institute closed in 1997. This project has been completed and a Finding Aid for all WBI materials has been created.

Donovan has also begun work on a *Mennonite Brethren Herald* photograph collection, a collection which is estimated to consist of ca. 16,000 photographs. Approximately 3,000 will be processed under this grant.

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies also received a grant of \$2,500 under the Canadian Archival Information Network (CAIN) program for the purchase of a new computer and associated technical improvements. This has enabled the Centre to keep up with the technological advances that are taking place in archival practice.

All the above projects were made

possible with financial assistance from the Government of Canada through the National Archives of Canada and the Canadian Council of Archives.

As in the past, the Centre has received a grant to hire a summer student under the Career Placement program of the Department of Human Resources of the Federal Government. Gabrielle Hamm, a University of Manitoba student, has been hired under this program. She will be working on a variety of projects, including entry of annual statistical data for the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

### Historical Commission Meets in Winnipeg

The Historical Commission had its annual meeting in Winnipeg June 22-23. The Commission coordinates some of the activities of the various Mennonite Brethren centres in North America and is also engaged in projects such as publishing books in a series entitled *Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought*, publishing short biographies of significant personalities in a *Profiles* pamphlet form for bulletin inserts, sponsoring symposia, and a variety of other ventures. It is still uncertain whether or in what form the Commission will continue after the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America ceases to exist in 2002.

### New Publications, Theses

Dora Dueck, "Print, Text, Community: A Study of Communication in the *Zionsbote*, A Mennonite Weekly, Between 1884 and 1906." Master of Arts thesis, Department of History, Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg, March, 2001

Gerhard Regehr, "*Reisebericht*" of Gerhard Peter Regehr. Translation by Jeff Clingenpeel and Laura Brubacher with additional text by Anita and Galen Toews. Private publication, 2000.



CENTRE FOR  
**Mennonite  
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1-169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada R2L 2E5

### Reader's Response: Wrong Author attributed to "Some Thoughts on Emigration"

by Abraham Friesen

The document: "Einige Gedanken zur Auswanderungsfrage [A Few Thoughts on the Emigration Question], translated and published in the *Mennonite Historian*, Vol. XXVI, No. 4, December 2000, is attributed to P. Baerg, as it was by John B. Toews in his *Selected Documents* published in 1975. But this is an erroneous attribution. The document, signed only by "P.B." in the original, was written by Peter J. Braun - director of the *Lehrer Seminar* in Halbstadt at the time, Russian Mennonite archivist since 1917, and author of *Kto takie Mennonity?* ("Who are the Mennonites") of 1914 and 1915. This fact is readily ascertainable.

In his 13 July 1922 report to A. A. Friesen and Benjamin H. Unruh - the two other members of the *Studienkommission* - B. B. Janz wrote regarding the discussion concerning emigration in the Mennonite colonies of Russia:

...The question was quite consciously placed on the program agenda: "Is a further emigration necessary? This [question] received a very definite response, as you can see from the minutes of the meeting. The question concerning a more general emigration was intentionally not posed; should I explain why? I will forego that today. Instead, I have asked a whole group of thoughtful individuals in our society to articulate, more specifically and on principle, their position on the emigration question for our people. It is to be lamented that the time allotted for doing so was very brief and some [individuals] so preoccupied that I can send you only a few judgments today: Dr. P. Dueck, P. Braun, H. Janz, Epp, Klassen, Baerg, etc...(1)

It is interesting to note at this point that

(cont'd on p. 6)

## Call For Papers

### The Return Of The Kanadier Mennonites: A History Of Accomplishments And Challenges

An academic conference examining the history of the immigration and integration of Kanadier Mennonites from Paraguay, Mexico and other Latin American countries into Canada will be held in Winnipeg in October 4-5, 2002.

The conference will pay special attention to the accomplishments of these Mennonite immigrants and the challenges they faced as they integrated into Canada. While the conference will hear about the Mennonite migrants who left Canada for Latin America during the 1920s and 1940s, the main focus will be on the return of their descendants between 1960 and 2000. The conference will feature papers on Kanadier immigrant communities in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, Nova Scotia and other locations in Canada.

Among the issues that will be examined are the following: 1) community formation, 2) work and economics, 3) gender and family relations, 4) health, 5) inter-group relations, 6) education; 7) religious teaching, 8) relations with government, 9) migration and diasporic culture, 10) transplanted Latino and Low German cultures.

The organizing committee welcomes paper proposals in the length of 100 words. They should be mailed to either: Ken Reddig, Mennonite Central Committee, Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, Manitoba or to Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2E9.

The conference is sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, Chair in Mennonite Studies (U. of Winnipeg), Mennonite Central Committee, and Canadian Mennonite University.

### Thoughts on Emigration

(cont'd from p. 5)

John B. Toews should have chosen P. Baerg as the author over P. Braun when B. B. Janz's document does not give a first name or initial for Baerg, but does for

Braun. In any case, Janz, who sent these opinions to Unruh and Friesen, does list P. Braun as one of the authors.

Secondly, anyone who reads the real P Braun's correspondence in the Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA), his other handwritten documents and other pieces by his hand, will immediately recognize the handwriting as that of the meticulous P. Braun. But there is more. The opening line of the second paragraph contains a sentence that has become famous. It is: "Die Mennoniten haben in Ruzsland kein Vaterland mehr" (Mennonites in Russia no longer have a fatherland). This is a line repeatedly attributed by Benjamin Unruh, a close friend of Peter Braun, to the latter. Writing to Peter Braun on 9 March 1931, Unruh stated:

The German colonists [Kolonistentum], especially the Mennonites, today have the best reputations in counter-revolutionary circles. [For that reason] we must not, on any account, ruin the matter through careless publications so "shortly" before the solution, before the catastrophe. Nowadays everyone takes note of everything we say and write. I know that for a fact. And you should not propagate your slogan: "We no longer have a fatherland" too loudly. Even that is not appreciated in Berlin, for their plans are quite different from our own.(2)

In his brief biography of Peter Braun written in 1952, Unruh described an event that took place in March 1919 where Braun uttered the slogan for the first time. He wrote:

...The treatment the colonists of German, Low German and Dutch extraction received during World War I from the Russian public as well as its government, however, shook him [Peter Braun] to the core. In March 1919 Braun too fled Halbstadt by dark of night, pushing a baby carriage before him. On the road, in the proximity of the Mennonite hospital in Muntau close to Halbstadt, he encountered a colleague and there uttered that content laden sentence: "We no longer have a home[land]!"

... But he [Braun] never got over the experience of that night, and when - in 1921 - leading Russian Mennonites of the Molotschna District were asked to take a position on whether one should promote emigration from the homeland they had grown to love, it was the director of the Halbstadt

*Lehrerseminar* who affirmed it most passionately. No one would have credited this level-headed man and Christian with being able to give vent - in such an open and explicit manner in his memorandum - to his [profound] disappointment and offended love of homeland. For him there was only a take it or leave it.(3)

If the above is not enough to convince the skeptical reader, permit me to add a clincher. In his manuscript, *Die Auswanderung der niederdeutschen mennonitischen Bauern aus der Sowjetunion, 1923-1933*, in the Hoover Archive on the Stanford University campus, Benjamin H. Unruh reproduces the document in a slightly abbreviated form. He introduced it by listing the title, "Einige Gedanken zur Auswanderungsfrage," and giving the author as "Peter Braun - Neu Halbstadt.(4)

There can be no doubt but that Peter J. Braun, my mother's uncle, wrote the document in question. He should be given the credit for it.

#### Endnotes

1. B. B. Janz Papers, *Centre for M B Studies* Winnipeg.
2. B.H. Unruh to Peter J. Braun, 9 March 1931. Peter Braun Papers, *MLA*.
3. B.H. Unruh, "Peter J. Braun," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1952): 31.
4. Page 232-236.
5. This document was considered lost - at least by Unruh. See his biography of Braun. It has recently been rediscovered in the St. Petersburg archive and will be published soon in Germany.

*Abraham Friesen is Professor of History University of California, Santa Barbara.*

## Reinland Homecoming 2001

by Conrad Stoesz

The Village of Reinland was established in 1875 by the Reinlaender Mennonite church and became one of the primary villages on the Mennonite West Reserve. In 1876 the first church was built in Reinland and still stands today as the oldest Mennonite church in western Canada. To celebrate its distinguished history the village of Reinland is hosting *Reinland 125+1 Homecoming 2001* on July 13-15, 2001.

Included will be circle games, a parade, drama, a worship service, and of course food.



The village will also be reprinting its history book, *Reinland an Experience in Community*, originally published in 1976. You can preorder a copy of the reprinted book and the supplement. Please register by contacting Armin Ens at 325-8559 or visit the web site at [www.web4.net/reinland](http://www.web4.net/reinland).

## Plum Coulee Centennial

One hundred years have passed since the Incorporation of Plum Coulee as a village. To celebrate this milestone, Plum Coulee is staging a Centennial Homecoming weekend, July 13, 14 and 15, 2001. The event will include a wiener roast, fireworks, a parade, recognition of the oldest resident, a pancake breakfast, a fashion show, a worship service and other activities. For further details contact Cleo Heinrichs at 204-829-3208 or e-mail [cleo3@mb.sympatico.ca](mailto:cleo3@mb.sympatico.ca)

## Niebuhr Gathering

There will be a Niebuhr family gathering August 3-5, 2001 at Canadian Mennonite University (south campus) in Winnipeg.

Contact: Bill Klassen, 15 Eaglemere Drive, Winnipeg, MB R2K 4K3 Phone: (204) 668-5960

## Book Review

(cont'd from p. 8)

modern is seen as superior. One effect of this approach in Warkentin's book is that the emigration of the conservatives in the 1920s does not figure significantly in his analysis. For Francis, even though he uses the progressivism model, and documents that Mennonites have in many respects acculturated (accepted cultural traits from the larger society) he admits that Mennonites have successfully resisted assimilation (whereby individual members of a minority are transferred into the host society with permanent loss to the ethnic group). He notes that in a number of important areas, like language and intermarriage within the group, Mennonites up to the 1940s had also successfully resisted acculturation.



Arthur Krueger, Howard Dyck and Rudy Wiebe on Feb. 28, 2001 at an Order of Canada Investiture Ceremony. The Order of Canada recognizes people who have made a difference to our country, from local citizens to national and international personalities. Three different levels of membership in the Order of Canada honour people whose accomplishments vary in degree and scope: Companion, Officer and Member. The ceremony recognized Howard Dyck (music) as a member, Rudy Wiebe (literature) as an officer, and Arthur Krueger (public service) as a companion. Photo: Courtesy of Arthur Krueger and taken by Tina Wiebe.

Despite the interpretative approaches which hold up the modern as the ideal and which would likely be formulated differently if the studies were written today, the books are a valuable addition to the studies about Mennonites in Manitoba. The charts, maps, and statistical tables were carefully done. The descriptions are valuable and the interpretations are provocative. The books provide information and should also stimulate healthy discussions about how to interpret the Manitoba Mennonite experience.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and Crossway Publications are to be congratulated for bringing these books to the reading public in an attractive format and at a very reasonable price.

## Book Notes

by Adolf Ens

*Heimatsbuch der Deutschen aus Rußland* 2000 edited by Johann und Hans Kampen (Stuttgart: Landmannschaft der Deutschen aus Rußland, 2000), 288 pages, contains several articles by (former) Mennonites about the post World War II era.

S. Frederick Peters, *"As Remembered": Life and Times of, and by, S. Fred Peters* (Saskatoon: by the author, 2000), 158 pages, 8½ x 11, coil bound. This autobiography, beginning in the USSR in 1921, shortly before his parents immigrated to Canada, is written primarily for the family. However, because the author spent blocks of time with MCC – Europe immediately after World War II, Saskatchewan in the 1970s, Nepal in the early 1980s – as well shorter stints in MDS, the story is also of general interest.

Helene Penner Kroeger, *Margareta: A Woman of Courage* (Winnipeg: by the author, 2000), 268 pages, \$20 pb. This biography covers the period from about 1874 through the early 1930s in Zagradozka (Russia-USSR). While the author did not personally know her grandmother (Margareta Voth Friesen Klassen), she had substantial sources of information in carefully preserved letters, personal accounts from a circle of relatives, and published background material on the settlement. The narrative form of writing and the time period covered (the family tried, unsuccessfully, to immigrate to Canada in the 1920s) makes this a story of interest beyond the extended Friesen and Klassen families.

*Coming Home: Stories of Anabaptists in Britain and Ireland* edited by Alan Kreider and Stuart Murray (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2000) tells a story in two parts. The first consists of some sixty brief personal accounts of persons who have experienced a theological and experiential homecoming in discovering Anabaptist theology, history and community, and are now part of the "Anabaptist Network" in Britain and Ireland. Four essays in part 2 examine the past (16<sup>th</sup> century), current and future of Anabaptism in this region. 220 pages. \$25 pb.

## Book Reviews

John H. Warkentin. *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba*. (Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 2000) 409 pp. \$29.99  
 Dr. E. K. Francis. *In Search of Utopia, The Mennonites in Manitoba*. (Steinbach, MB: Crossway Publications, 2001) 294 pp. \$19.99

*Reviewed by John J. Friesen, Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.*

These two publications make two older, but valuable, studies about Mennonites in Manitoba available to the reading public. Francis' book, published in 1955, had been out of print since 1972. Warkentin's book is his 1960 doctoral dissertation which has not been published before.

Both authors did extensive field work within the Mennonite community to produce their respective studies. Francis, who was a sociologist at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, did most of his research during the years 1945 to 1947. He interviewed many people and utilized the records of individuals, municipalities, bishops, government departments and provincial archives. Financial assistance was provided by the Manitoba Historical and Scientific Society and the Canadian Social Science Research Council.

Warkentin, a native of Plum Coulee and Steinbach, started his field research in 1955. He used the newly developed techniques of historical geography, "with a special focus on the origins of contemporary landscapes, hence an interest in frontier settlements and land use patterns" (xiv). Warkentin set aside earlier geographers' methodologies which assumed that geography determines human possibilities. For Warkentin, people change and adapt as they interact with their geography. His study of the two Mennonite reserves documented his thesis.

Whereas Warkentin's book is a study of Mennonite interaction with their geography, Francis' study analyzes Mennonite interaction with the host Manitoba society. Both see this interaction as changing Mennonite identity. In both cases the peasant, old world ideals give

way to superior ways of organizing communities.

Francis begins his study with the Mennonite immigration in 1874 and develops the story up to the end of World War II. After a brief background survey of Mennonite history from the sixteenth century in the Netherlands to the end of the nineteenth century in Russia he discusses the immigration to Manitoba.

In the immigration story Francis develops his theme of the search for utopia. The utopia that Mennonites were looking for, he says, was "not the possible freedom of the individual from social controls, but with the freedom of the group as a whole for the exercise of strict social controls over the individual. They wished to be free from all institutional control on the part of the host society in order to preserve and enforce all the more rigidly the constituent norms of their own social system" (82).

In order to strengthen his case that Mennonites were looking for a place to exercise group control, he argues that the immigrants were the poorer, less educated, and the marginalized within the Mennonite communities in Russia. This assumption carries over into Manitoba, where he shows that under the influence of the Canadian Anglo-Saxon influence, Mennonites gradually became more enlightened.

Francis shows how this search for the group's freedom to control the individuals played itself out in various areas of community life. Mennonites organized their own Volost or municipal organizations which came into conflict with the municipal governments organized by the province. Francis shows how Mennonites accommodated themselves to this threat. He explains why this accommodation happened without major conflict.

In other areas there was greater conflict as Mennonite group values and the society's view of individual initiative and freedom clashed. The conflicts happened in the breakup of the villages, the development of new agricultural practices and in the rise of towns on the Mennonite reserves. In each case Francis discusses the traditional Mennonite view of freedom of the community to set its own standards, and the view of the Manitoba Anglo-Saxon society which tried to impose its view of individual freedom upon all its citizens.

The climax of this conflict occurred

over the issue of education. The Mennonite belief that controlling education was crucial to maintaining group control clashed with the government's desire to control education in order to instill values of nationalism into children. In this case the compromise Mennonites were forced to make was too great, and a third of them emigrated.

Francis sees the new immigrants, who came to Manitoba from Russia in the 1920s, as much more willing to accommodate. The 8,000 new immigrants who supplanted the 7,000 that emigrated, he says, greatly changed the way Mennonites in Manitoba related to their host society.

Warkentin, in his study of Mennonites' interaction with their physical environment, gathered quite different data than did Francis. Warkentin's focus is on the physical landscape of the East and West Reserves. He discusses the establishment of the villages, but from the standpoint of how they fitted into and shaped the landscape. The breakup of the villages is discussed from the perspective of how the Anglo-Saxon model of individual farms fitted better into the geography and the demands of Manitoba agriculture than did the traditional Mennonite pattern of villages with its long narrow *kagels* of land.

Warkentin discusses the development of roads, central places, drainage ditches, towns, soil conditions and land usage. He shows how geography influenced which towns succeeded and which lost out. He pays special attention to soil conditions in the various parts of the reserves and how this affected the type of agriculture that developed. He shows how human initiative overcame problems of geography. Throughout the book he discusses the interaction of Mennonites with their landscape.

Warkentin concludes his study with the observations that it was not government policies which destroyed the traditional Mennonite communities. Rather, when the traditional Mennonite patterns of community organization competed with the Anglo-Saxon models, in most cases the Anglo-Saxon model was better adapted to their geography. Mennonites thus adopted these models in place of their own.

Both Francis and Warkentin work with a "progressivism" model, in which the

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