

# Mennonite Historian



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*The nine at Tiefengrund, Saskatchewan. Front (l-r): Benjamin Ewert, Bergthaler minister, Gretna, Man.; Aeltester Peter Regier, Tiefengrund, Sask.; Johann M. Friesen, Bergthaler minister, Altona, Man.; and J. E. Sprunger, Berne, Indiana, U.S.A. Back: Deacon David Epp, Laird, Sask.; Johann Dueck, Eigenheim, Sask.; Heinrich Warkentin, Laird, Sask.; David Toews, Eigenheim, Sask.; and Gerhard Epp, Eigenheim, Sask. The last four were all Rosenorter Mennonite Church ministers. The photo first appeared in the 1903 issue of the **Bundesbote Kalender**.*

## Conference Roots: 1902 - 1903

Spiritual renewal and religious regrouping had lasting consequences for the early Mennonites in Western Canada. The basic three-fold grouping of Bergthaler, Kleine Gemeinde and Fuerstenland (Old Colony) communities came with the 1874-1875 migration itself.

Revival and reform movements in the 1880's added the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman), Mennonite Brethren, and the Reinlaender Mennonite Church to the scene.

Other issues such as education led in 1893 to the formation of the West Reserve Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, and the reconstitution of their more adaptable co-church members as the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba.

With the main migration over in 1880, it was barely a decade before some Manitoba Mennonites took to the trail once more. By 1894 a number of families had reached what would later be Saskatchewan, as well as Alberta, and possibly even B.C. The

Rosthern area would quickly become another Mennonite center as arriving Manitobans were joined by Prussian Mennonites, and some from south Russia who took up homesteads there as well. At the turn of the century the organized Mennonite congregation of Aeltester Peter Regier, soon known as the **Rosenorter Mennoniten Gemeinde**, was already six years old.

Contacts between the original and the later western Mennonite communities existed from the beginning. Family ties survived the strain of distance, the coming of the railroad eased the difficulties of travel, and the shepherding concern of church leaders for their scattered flock rose to the challenge of pastoral needs.

It was not always easy for dispersed Manitoban Mennonites to root themselves in the newer congregations of the Northwest. Yet to the Bergthaler ministers of southern Manitoba it seemed important to have their migrated members join the Mennonite congregations of their emerging Saskatchewan communities. To make this transition easier, they felt an urgency to bring the scattered portions of the brotherhood closer together.

The Ministerial meeting of Dec. 31, 1897 raised the topic of a **Konferenz** (purpose not mentioned), and on May 5, 1899, the same body agreed to attempt the calling of a conference to which "all Mennonite congregations in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Langdon, North Dakota" would be invited. It was further decided to have the meeting at the new church built at Hochstadt a few miles northeast of Altona. It would be combined with a mission festival. H. H. Ewert was asked to correspond with Aeltester Peter Regier, of Saskatchewan, and Johann Bartel, of Langdon, N.D., regarding this proposal. If the meeting seemed feasible to all the groups, Aeltester Johann Funk would send each one a formal invitation.

The conference apparently failed to materialize. The issue, however, remained. On Dec. 30, 1901, the Bergthaler Ministerial agreed to send Rev. Jacob Hoepfner and if possible also Aeltester Johann Funk to Saskatchewan. They were to visit Bergthaler members resident in that province and if attempt to persuade them to join the Rosenorter Mennonite church. Also, more broadly, these men were to seek closer ties

with this Mennonite church body as a whole.

Again there were difficulties, so that the May 9, 1902, Ministerial asked Brother (John M.) Friesen to replace Jacob Hoepfner in the Saskatchewan assignment. At the June 30 meeting it was finally agreed that Rev. Benjamin Ewert would accompany Friesen to Rosthern, and that the money for travelling expenses (about \$55.00) would be loaned from the Needy Persons Fund (**Armenkasse**).

These efforts did succeed. In July (exact dates are not certain) these two Bergthaler ministers paid a visit to Aeltester Peter Regier at Tiefengrund, a small local school district northwest of Rosthern, Saskatchewan. In his garden they met with him and several other Rosenorter leaders to discuss the transfer of membership question, and the larger issue of future relations between the Bergthaler and Rosenorter Mennonite communities in western Canada.

Details of this discussion are not available. Historian John G. Rempel describes it as "laying the foundation of the Conference", i.e. the new organization, **Die Konferenz der Mennoniten Mittleren Kanadas** which held its first (henceforth annual) sessions at Hochstadt, Manitoba, the following summer.

The Conference of Mennonites in Canada, as that original community is now known, will hold its 75th annual sessions at Toronto this July. During the intervening seventy-five years it has increased from a fellowship of a dozen local congregations to well over a hundred, a membership of several hundred to 25,000 or more.

But meaning hardly lies in numbers alone. Rather it is in the bond of mutual Christian fellowship, affirmation, and serving God

*Entscheidung der Ministerialversammlung  
abgehalten am 30. Juni 1902.*  
1. *Entscheidung der Ministerial Versammlung  
Ewert und Joh. M. Friesen nach Rosthern  
fahren um dort das Geld für den Trip,  
welches ungefähr \$55 betrug und aus  
Armenkasse gedeckt werden.*

The recorded minute is given under the heading: **Decisions of the Ministerial Meeting held at Bergthal** (i.e.) Alt-Bergthal - Ed.) on June 30, 1902. It reads: Be it agreed that the (lit.) minister brethren Benjamin Ewert and Johann M. Friesen shall travel to Rosthern and that the money for the trip, about \$55.00, shall be loaned from the Needy Persons Fund (**Armenkasse**). (From the Ministerial Meeting minutes ledger of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1893-1926).

Johann Funk was the **Aeltester** of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church at this time. He lived at Alt-Bergthal, west of Altona, and so the meeting probably took place at his home.

together with which the Conference community has been blessed during all these years.

Meaning lies in the growth of personal and congregational maturity to which this larger and common link has contributed so much.

It is found also in the unfinished God-given tasks of telling and being the Good News of God, that action which fuses what has been, is now, and shall be into one purposeful story which we share with Him.

Lawrence Klippenstein

Sources: Johann G. Rempel, **Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in Saskatchewan in Wort und Bild**, Rosthern, Sask. 1950; Henry J. Gerbrandt, "The Conference of Mennonites in Canada," **Call to Faithfulness**, ed. by Henry Poettcker and Rudy Regehr, Winnipeg, Man., 1972, pp. 81-91; J. G. Rempel, **Fuenfzig Jahre Konferenzbestrebungen 1902-1952**, Rosthern, Sask., 1952, Volume 1; Peter Wiebe "History of Conference of Mennonites in Canada", unpublished paper, Goshen College, 1950.

## Our Seventy Fifth

*This commemorative issue completes the second year of publication for **Mennonite Historian**. In it we seek to highlight a little the beginnings of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada seventy-five years ago.*

*Roots can begin in many places. So it may be arbitrary to select the story of Tiefengrund, 1902. Hochstadt, 1903, was certainly part of it as well; some say that's really the start. Its story belongs, of course, and there are also many others.*

*Peter Regier's life and work was one of these. In this issue we complete the brief four-part sketch of his contributions. The Reesor article by J. Winfield Fretz likewise concludes herewith. Note the celebrations of a sister fellowship, the Menno Colony, in Paraguay, South America, as you page on through.*

*The eight-page format is a special feature of this number. Regular four-page publication will continue with the September issue.*

*We thank all those who have shared the input for **Mennonite Historian** since it first appeared. Your articles, photos, and suggestions are welcome and needed. Do send them in!*



# Peter Regier

## Conclusion

During the early decades of Aeltester Regier's ministries, Tiefengrund evolved as a community in its own right. The need for a school led to the opening of classes in the Regier home with daughter Anna teaching the pupils. By 1897 German and religious, as well as English subjects, were being taught. The first district school began about that same time with three men, Isaac Klassen, Abraham Friesen and Peter Regier elected as trustees. David Toews became the first qualified teacher, serving from 1898-1901.

Local congregational life began with the regional organization of the **Rosenorter Gemeinde** in 1909. The school districts of Hamburg, Johannestal and Tiefengrund were linked together. Fourteen Rosenorter member families, and two others, formed the Tiefengrund Mennonite Church with its first church house dedicated for worship in October, 1910. Regier himself announced the occasion in **Der Mitarbeiter**: dedication and main message in the morning, Thanksgiving sermon and mission program in the afternoon. Aeltester N. F. Toews, a visiting minister from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, was one of the guest speakers. Toews was working at Langham during this time.



Wanda, the youngest daughter of Peter Regier, married John Friesen in 1917. He was ordained to the ministry in 1929. "Aunt Wanda," as everyone calls her, is now seventy-nine, and lives in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Her husband passed away in 1969.

In his treasurer's report the following month Regier reported the offering receipts for Home Missions support. Tiefengrund church dedication, \$70.45; Laird church dedication, \$30.00. (The Laird and Aberdeen communities had built their own churches in 1910 also.)

Additional persons were called to various ministries as required. The Sunday School started in 1912 with Abraham Funk, a pioneer homesteader, and Johann, son of Peter Regier, as teachers. Johann had also been ordained to the preaching ministry by his father in 1911. David Epp, of Laird, and Cornelius Ens, of Eigenheim, were ordained that same year.

In late 1910 and 1911 the Regier family suffered the loss of Mrs. Regier's parents, Grandpa Johann passing away on December 27, 1910, and Grandma Katherina on Oct. 26, 1911. They had celebrated their golden wedding a few months after arriving at Tiefengrund in July, 1903. Aeltester Regier's own sister Margareta died on July 15, 1912. Johann, reporting the loss in **Der Mitarbeiter** added: "She has planted much love in her earthly life, much evident from the many present at her funeral on July 18."

At the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his **Aeltesten** ministry in June, 1913, Regier announced his desire to be replaced. An overwhelming vote gave that position to David Toews, who had served as minister for some time while also becoming the tireless promoter, and for a while, teacher of the German-English Academy in Rosthern. He was ordained to his new office on Sept. 13 of that same year.

For a dozen or more years Aeltester Regier shared the church's joy and sorrows in retirement at his home in Tiefengrund. His farming operation and leadership in the **Gemeinde** had been given over to others. These were the years of World War I. The fall of 1918 marked the arrival of a number of Mennonite families escaping military conscription in the USA. With them was Rev. Jacob Klassen, at once an active worker in the Rosenorter churches. "Spanish flu" struck the community that same year, leaving among its victims Rev. Gerhard Epp who passed away in 1919. Large groups of Mennonite immigrants from Russia began arriving at Rosthern in July, 1923. Just a few weeks earlier a number of new leaders, evangelists and deacons had been ordained to office in various congregations of the Rosenorter community.

Regier preached his last sermon on Oct. 29, 1922, and also served communion on that occasion. Anna, his beloved wife, had been laid to rest in 1914, and he had remarried to Mrs. Katharina Dyck two years later. She shared his final years, and also the last days of suffering when Aeltester Regier became seriously ill in early April of 1925.

He died on the eleventh, leaving to mourn Katharina, his wife, eight of his twelve children, a sister in West Prussia, a brother in Oklahoma, along with many

grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and countless others who had appreciated his life and work so much.

Funeral services were held on April 15. The mourners who gathered were so many that the service could not be held in the meetinghouse; it took place on the grounds nearby. Bishop Johann Gerbrandt of Drake preached the funeral sermon. Others added words of farewell. Many flowers, left by children and friends as a parting gift, marked his grave in the church cemetery.

In the **Nachruf** published in **Der Bote**, J. J. Klassen wrote these words: "The entire service, including the messages and choir numbers with so many participants, suggested how much the people had loved the departed **Aeltester**. Amid difficult circumstances he had worked hard to gather his congregation during the pioneer years. Under his leadership it flourished and grew. They grew together, he and they, so that the loss was felt not only by his beloved wife, the family, and his personal friends, but by every member in the church as well."

The Mennonites of Western Canada, and beyond, owe much to persons like Aeltester Peter Regier. He loved God, and sought to serve his people. With his co-workers he set a pattern of dedicated and responsible leadership which exemplifies Christian love in action even today.

Lawrence Klippenstein

## Sources:

**Der Mitarbeiter**, Nov. 1910, Jan., 1911, Nov., 1911, May, 1925, June, 1925, J. J. Klassen, "Nachruf", **Der Bote**, April 22, 1925, pp. 3-4; J. J. Dyck, "Ein Jubilaeum", **Der Bote**, Nov. 20, 1935, p. 1; Johannes Regier, "Geschichte der ersten Fuenfzig Jahre der Rosenorter Gemeinde in Saskatchewan, 1894-1944", **Der Bote**, March 13, 1946 and March 20, 1946, pp. 5-6 in each issue. Johann G. Rempel, **Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in Saskatchewan in Wort und Bild**, Rosthern, Sask., 1950, pp. 25 ff.; "Gemeinde Chronik", **Tiefengrund Church Register**, Vol. 843, Archives of Conference of Mennonites in Canada; Waldemar Regier, "Tiefengrund", unpublished paper, CMBC, 1959; Robert A. Friesen, "Rosenort in West Prussia and Saskatchewan", unpublished paper, Bethel College, Kansas, USA, 1969; Reg and Laurel Klassen, "History of the Tiefengrund Church", unpublished paper, CMBC, 1977; H. T. Klaassen, **Birth and Growth of the Eigenheim Mennonite Church, 1892-1974**, Rosthern, Sask., 1974.

## Photo credits for this issue:

Jake E. Friesen, Hague, Sask., p. 1; Archives of Conference of Mennonites in Canada, pp. 2, 4; Clara K. Dyck, p. 3; John P. Dyck, p. 5; Conrad Grebel College Archives, p. 6; **The Carillon**, p. 8.





## From Generation to Generation

*Helmut Harder*

Every present generation of people serves as the transporter of a variety of goods between a past and a future generation. Among the many items which we receive from our fathers and mothers and give to our children is a highly precious commodity: values.

We cannot avoid the fact that every generation is a conveyor of values, nor should we deny this. Kierkegaard, the nineteenth century theologian and philosopher, tried to avoid this fact. He claimed that every generation needs to begin again from the beginning. While he recognized that we are influenced by our ancestors, he regretted this. Ideally he wanted each person to map out his own life and to be able to decide upon values for each individual situation.

Kierkegaard had a point, to be sure. Each

person must to some extent forge life's pathway and find faith personally. But Kierkegaard overdid his point. We are always influenced by the thinking and acting of a previous generation - and this is good. A church father of the past depicted each present generation as dwarves who stand on the shoulders of giants. The giants represent the influential persons of the past.

It is unfortunate when parents and teachers deny their right to transmit values to the younger generation. It is sometimes claimed, in the interest of the freedom or the creativity of the child, that the adult generation should at most present the learner with a smorgasbord of ideas and religions from which the child can pick and choose at his own discretion. Such thinking misses the point that our fathers and mothers have been blessed with a firm and valuable faith, and

that their faith-heritage is to be respected by their children.

But the transmission of values from one generation to the next is not a simple matter. From our forefathers we inherit a somewhat complex set of unwritten rules which influence our view of everything we come across in life. As little children we accept their influence at face value; as youth we have second thoughts; then as adults we settle upon a value-system as well. Thus we learn our values gradually, and not without some stress. During our own lifetime, the values we inherit undergo a complex process of modification. By the time the future generation receives them they are not identifiable simply as the values of the past generation. Nevertheless the connection from generation to generation is there.

## MCI Summer School

John P. Dyck

When G.G. Neufeld became school inspector in southern Manitoba, things really began to happen. He laid the foundation for the high level of education which the schools in his area achieved in later years. Instruction of German and religious studies did not, however, receive the attention desired by many Mennonite families at the time. Inspector Neufeld's position would not allow him to get too involved in such local matters.

H. H. Ewert, on the other hand, continued to feel the urgency of keeping language and religious instruction alive in the curriculum of the schools. In July, 1930, he organized a four-week summer school at the MCI. Only six teachers registered, but it was the beginning of a worthwhile undertaking.

The students included three women: Eva Hiebert, later Mrs. Isaac Penner, Sadie Sawatzky, now a secretary in a Jehovah's Witness conference office, and Mrs. Tina Buhr, now Mrs. John Warkentin, and resident in Winnipeg. The men were William Neufeld, presently pastor of the North Kildonan M.B. Church in Winnipeg, John Friesen, for a time teacher at the MCI, and today serving development causes in the Third World, and John P. Dyck, long-time teacher in Mennonite and Hutterite elementary schools of Manitoba.

Religion courses were taught by teacher and minister Peter A. Rempel. In this very short time Mr. Rempel gave his students a thorough survey knowledge of the Bible, stressing the various books of the Old and New Testament. Besides that, he also gave us a working understanding of the Jewish people, with their customs and religious practices. He also presented lessons on the life of Christ. Our only textbook beside the Bible was a very condensed *Handbuch fuer Sonntagschullehrer und Bibelfreunde* by F. W. Herrmann.

A very valuable part of this course was the introduction to Mennonite history, and ways of teaching it. There was a course on chorale and catechism instruction too. Some of us had to give a demonstration lesson having as pupils the members of our class.

Gerhard H. Peters, a teacher of the MCI, lectured briefly on the geography and history of Germany, and gave us notes on his subject. He also held a very thorough drill on German uses of verbs and the cases of nouns and pronouns. This, of course, cannot be performed without a minimum of humour and hilarity. I, for one, enjoyed these practices tremendously and certainly benefited from them, as did my fellow-students of the class.

Twice at least Mr. Ewert himself gave us a lecture of an inspirational nature. The man, now already 75, had lost little of his vitality and enthusiasm. The only thing he admitted to me one afternoon was that he had recently sensed the need for a little rest in the middle of the day. He had never recognized that need before. At this time he was taking his meals



*MCI summer school faculty and students (1930): Back (l-r): Gerhard H. Peters, Heinrich H. Ewert, P. A. Rempel. Seated: Sadie Sawatzky, John K. Friesen, William I. Neufeld, Tina Buhr, Eva Hiebert and John P. Dyck.*

at the MCI dining room, since his wife was visiting in the USA. The mother of one of the students was cooking for those of us who lived in the dormitory.

This summer school provided us with a wealth of practical information. The chief value, however, consisted in our receiving a better idea of how to teach these subjects. I believe that my pupils in later years found it less boring when they were taught these extra-curricular subjects, and so many of them did actually enjoy them. I attribute this success to the four weeks spent in the 1930 summer school at Gretna.

## Architecture Study

Jan Gleysteen

In the annual meetings of the Mennonite Historical Committee of 1975 and 1976, Leonard Gross of the Historical Committee, Goshen, Indiana, and Jan Gleysteen of the Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pennsylvania, were charged with the task of producing a book on Mennonite Church architecture within the foreseeable future.

Gross and Gleysteen would like to solicit your help in this project. They would welcome good, sharp slides and black and white photos (preferably both) of all Mennonite meetinghouses, old and new, interior and exterior views; before, during or after remodeling. Also appreciated will be detailed photos of the pulpit, the communion table or pictures of the congregation at worship, outside signs and bulletin boards. This might be an interesting assignment for one or several camera buffs from within each congregation.

Each picture should be identified on the

backside by a small number or letter with an explanation of each picture by its number on a separate sheet of paper. Names of persons should also be identified as well as the date of the slide or photo. In addition, there should be basic information such as name, address, and conference affiliation of the church.

The explanation could include: the years in which the church was built (or bought or remodeled); the original cost of the building; whether an architect was employed and if so, what was the architect's name; how was the architect instructed about our Mennonite concepts before he began his design? If an existing church was bought, what alterations were made to suit it for use by Mennonites? (For instance: What was done with a divided pulpit in a meetinghouse purchased from another denomination?) Any interesting anecdotal or historical materials related to the construction or use of the meetinghouse should also be gathered and sent in.

It is hoped that these pictures can become a worthy and essential contribution to the study, along with the other information supplied. However, rare or irreplaceable photos could be copied by us and returned if so desired. Please send the materials of your church to:

Jan Gleysteen, CA  
Congregational Literature Division  
Mennonite Publishing House  
Scottdale, PA 15683

### Note:

The article on page 4 is excerpted from a longer article in the 1977 Meetinghouse edition of *The Mennonite*, and used by permission. Helmut Harder is a professor of theology at CMBC in Winnipeg.



# Reesor — Extinct Community

## Conclusion

### Community Activities

At first there were no buildings whatsoever in the area but gradually settlers built their houses and a few out buildings. One of the early nonresidential buildings was a store owned and operated by a French Canadian named L. P. Trudel. This was a tremendous community improvement because it eliminated the long trips to Kapuskasing or Hearst for ordinary domestic supplies. The General Store and its owner became a community center. The storekeeper served as the Justice of the Peace, the postmaster, and as chief information officer.

By 1934 the community had two schools, two stores, two cemeteries, one church, one library, one auto repair shop, two blacksmith shops, two railroad sidings for loading pulpwood, one tennis court, even a small community paper called ACTA NOSTRA. What the community lacked was a bank. The library already existing in 1928 (two years after the colony's founding), consisted of about 200 German books which provided good reading material for both old and young. The library was housed in an upstairs hallway of the Heinrich Enns home. Among the authors were Tolstoy, Dostoevski and Chekhov.

German was the official language of the colony and low German the house language. Although not everybody in the community became a church member almost everybody attended because the Sunday gatherings were a high point in the weekly round of activities. Young people also occasionally put on plays and choirs provided musical programs to the community. School teachers in addition to conducting the daytime school very frequently provided nighttime English classes for adult members who had recently come from Russia and were unable to speak English. In addition they were called upon to write and translate letters and documents and to help some of the settlers fill out Eaton's mail order catalogue orders.

### Cutting Wood For A Living

At first practically all of the men earned their living by cutting pulpwood. This was the main job in the cold winter months when the ground was frozen and the logs could be hauled to the railroad siding. During spring and summer, men often cleared larger plots around their own homes in order to make room for gardens and pasture land for their few cows. The area was not suitable for agriculture.

The Reesor community was organized on the old Russian model of a village with a **Schultze** or a mayor who served as the spokesman for the community and called meetings to discuss community matters. Schools had to be maintained, roads needed to be laid out and maintained, a community cemetery needed to be built, community ser-



*In the summer of 1932 the male members of the Reesor United Mennonite Church worked at clearing the yard surrounding the building they had acquired for a permanent church.*

vices needed to be provided either privately or publicly and as the colony grew new land needed to be secured for additional settlers who desired to join the community.

The Reesor community reached its greatest strength about 1936. Toward the end of the 30's and the early 40's increasingly Mennonite families decided to look for permanent locations elsewhere. Many of them had cut all of the wood on their 75-acre plots and could then only go out and work for other men or leave the community in the winter to go a distance from home. This was not appealing to the settlers. The economic uncertainty in an isolated northern cutover timber land did not offer a promising future. Even the once prosperous storekeeper decided to sell out and move to Hearst because he saw no future in Reesor.

In the spring of 1943, the long-time minister, Herman Lepp, expressed his intention to leave Reesor in these words:

"It is a pity to see more and more of the good old settlement crumble and fall away. As for me, I have the feeling that the time has come for me too, to depart. Things are no longer what they used to be, and I feel that under the developing trends I could no longer continue to do fruitful work. The thought of leaving fills me with sadness. As for the hopes and faith in the success of our venture here, where have they all gone? Who or what is to blame for the general regression."

Some of the families moved to Southern Ontario, others moved as far away as British Columbia and still others found more permanent employment in Hearst or Kapuskasing.

The two cemeteries at Reesor, where a total of 30 persons are buried, will probably be the longest and most visible reminders of a community that once was. After almost twenty years of neglect ownership of the larger cemetery was transferred to the Conference of the United Mennonite Churches of Ontario.

*J. Winfield Fretz*

## The Menno Colony

The 1926-30 emigration of Canadian Mennonites to Paraguay is still remembered by many. At Loma Plata of the Menno Colony, Chaco, 80 or more participants of that movement joined many others to recall this historic moment, and to thank God for His care and goodness throughout the intervening fifty years.

A further celebration was then planned for June 24-26. By the time readers receive this announcement, it will probably have already happened. The program, mailed to many Canadian friends, included the unveiling of a memorial and the official opening of an archives/museum by President A. Stroessner. The new **Zentralschule** (high school) was dedicated as well. Other weekend activities included tours, a program for young people and a special service of worship on Sunday.

An additional related project is the planned publication of a historical study which will tell the story of the Menno Colony in Paraguay. The author is Martin W. Friesen who writes to **Der Bote** from time to time.



## Events

A Buhr family reunion is scheduled for July 16-18, with activities planned at Gretna, Winnipeg and Steinbach, Manitoba during those days. A Buhr family book will be made available, and it is hoped that the new edition of **Mennonite Memories** will be ready also.

The Mennonite Historical Societies of Manitoba and Saskatchewan/Alberta both held annual meetings on June 25 at Winnipeg, and Rosthern respectively. Ontario society members held their meeting on June 11.

The Mennonite Village Museum at Steinbach, Manitoba, now includes the J.J. Reimer library and archives, directed by Ed Krahn. Reimer recently retired from a vigorous thirteen-year term as president of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

The Rosemary Historical Society of Rosemary, Alberta, planned a community reunion and picnic for July 8-10. A local history book, just published, went on sale at that time.

Canadian Mennonite archivists met for a two-day workshop at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, on June 29-30. The meetings were sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan/Alberta has opened an archives for collecting Mennonite materials at Rosthern Junior College in Rosthern Saskatchewan.

A **Krimertreffen** (one-time residents of the Crimea, south Russia) met at the MBCI in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on July 9, and at the North Kildonan MB Church the following day, Sunday, July 10. Martin Duerksen's book, **Die Krim war Unsere Heimat**, had been published for that occasion.

A new German Mennonite newspaper, **Die Mennonitische Post**, has now produced half a dozen issues. It goes mainly to Mennonite homes in Latin America, as well as Canada and abroad. Subscriptions total nearly 3000 by this time. Abe Warkentin, formerly editor of **The Carillon**, edits the **Post** at Steinbach, Manitoba.

The village of Sommerfeld in southern Manitoba expects to celebrate its Centennial shortly, perhaps next year. Documents or information about the founding of the village are urgently requested. Write to our office if you can help.

The German Canadian Historical Society held its annual meeting in Winnipeg on June 17. President of the Winnipeg chapter is Guenther Sickert of 161 Barrington Ave. The local group is soliciting members for the organization. Berndt Laengin, editor of the **Courier-Nordwesten**, published in Winnipeg, is also a member of the group. President of the national society is Dr. Hartmut Froeschle of the University of Toronto, Ontario.

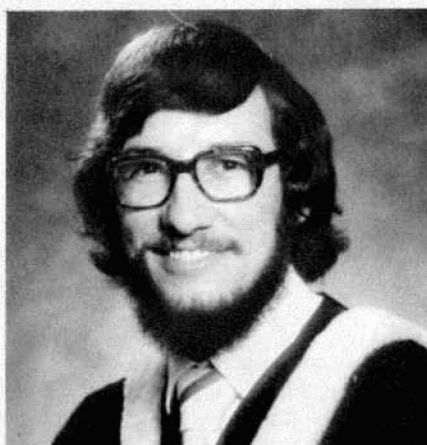
A reunion of former and present residents of the Kleinstadt (Hochstadt) school district northeast of Altona, Manitoba, will be held on July 24, 1977 at the West Park School in Altona. The morning sessions will begin at 10 a.m. This was the community where the first sessions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada were held in 1903.

**Burwalde Album**, Newsletter No. 3, has just come off the press. If interested, write to the editor, Isaac Froese, at 243 Morley Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Burwalde community, northeast of Morden, Manitoba, is planning a reunion in 1978.

Pioneer Days at the Mennonite Village Museum near Steinbach, Manitoba, are scheduled for July 29 - Aug. 1. The Sunflower Festival at Altona will take place July 29-30.

## Staff News

Margaret Franz, CMBC librarian, completed six weeks of cataloging at the archives in May and June. The total number of boxed "volumes" now exceeds 1,000.



*Dennis Stoesz of Winnipeg, Man., microfilmed the J. J. Thiessen papers at the CMC archives this past year. He is also co-ordinating the displays at the Conference sessions in Toronto.*



*Margaret Bryce, Strathclair, Manitoba, is doing a two-month VS assignment at the CMC archives this summer. She is a high school grad, and expects to continue her studies in the coming year.*

## MH Subscriptions

The **Mennonite Historian** finds its way into unexpected places. Here are a few subscription requests:

"Our students do a considerable amount of research on minority groups in Canada. We would appreciate being placed on your mailing list to receive the **Mennonite Historian**." S. Petrowski, Librarian, Lord Selkirk School, Selkirk, Manitoba.

"I do enjoy receiving and reading the **Mennonite Historian**. Since you have not set a subscription price I'm enclosing \$2.00 to help defray costs." Reuben Goertz, Freeman, South Dakota, USA.

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## Book Reviews

**Old and New Furrows: The Story of Rosthern**, published by the Rosthern Historical Society, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, no date (1977); xi and 694 pages, \$13.95. Reviewed by Adolf Ens, CMBC, Winnipeg, Man.

Community history writing receives its stimulus in a variety of ways. Frequently a planned anniversary celebration becomes the occasion for a town or village to produce a book. Sometimes the historical interest of one citizen is at the core of the writing venture. In Rosthern's case, a substantial grant from the New Horizons Program provided the incentive for the Rosthern Historical Society to come into being, and it in turn set as one of its goals to publish a book to tell Rosthern's story.

**Old and New Furrows** is a committee product. H. Ruth Neumann, secretary-treasurer of the Society and for 43 years teacher in Rosthern edited and proofread all of the articles submitted, but she has obviously permitted the styles of the various contributors to retain their individuality. The result makes for a good deal of unevenness in quality. Besides Neumann, Society President, Dr. William Siebert made a major contribution to the book in conceiving its basic plan, making available his private archival collection which he had been compiling since 1955, and doing a good bit of the writing. A third significant contributor was George P. Dyck, who did much of the research and writing until his death in 1976 just as the book was nearing completion.

Apart from the first chapter on the beginning of Rosthern, there is very little literary unity in the book. Subsequent chapters deal in almost unrelated fashion with topics such as railroads, telephone, business places, schools, churches, medical institutions, etc. About 325 pages are devoted to family histories, most of them submitted by descendants of the pioneers. The final seventy pages of the book are devoted to photographs, which could more profitably have been placed in the context of the chapters which they illustrate.

Rosthern holds an important place in our history and many Canadian Mennonites are interested in its story for that reason. While this book does not attempt to tell the Rosthern story from that perspective, it has gathered a wealth of information about and photographs of Mennonite pioneers and institutions. As such it is a valuable source book which libraries in Mennonite communities across Canada should own.

The absence of an index forces the reader to use the somewhat sketchy table of contents as aid in locating information about any particular aspect of Rosthern history. The arrangement of the family histories in alphabetical order greatly enhances the value of the second half of the book for the many

genealogical researchers who will come to use this source book.

The book is attractively printed and bound and sells at a reasonable price.

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*Dr. George K. Epp spoke on Canadian Mennonite literature at the May 14 Mennonite studies seminar held at CMBC in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Epp is a professor in the German department at the University of Manitoba.*

**Unter dem Nordlicht: Anthology of German Mennonite Writing in Canada.** Compiled and edited by George K. Epp, with assistance from Heinrich D. Wiebe. Mennonite German Society of Canada, Winnipeg, Man., 1977. 292 pp. Hardcover. \$11.00. Reviewed by Jake Letkeman, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In 1974 the Mennonite Centennial Committee published **Harvest: An Anthology of Mennonite Writing in Canada**. It was prepared by an editorial committee including George K. Epp. Now Epp has edited another volume entitled **Unter dem Nordlicht** as a second anthology of Mennonite literature in Canada.

Unlike **Harvest** which was a collection of Low German, High German and English selections, this book contains only German literature. A few Low German pieces punctuate the predominant High German literature.

I suppose it would be nearly impossible to exclude Arnold Dyck's choice bits from any Canadian Mennonite anthology. Epp has also yielded to the nudging of Dyck's memorable phrases and a few other Low German selections.

The entire layout and organization of the book is appealing. Approximately half of the volume is devoted to poetry and half to prose. The poetry is divided into two parts, 1900-1945 and post 1945. Poems are spaced to give one a comfortable feeling while still preserving the old Mennonite frugality.

A good binding permits the book to remain open for easy reading. Short but helpful biographical sketches of the 24 contributors are included in the appendix. Even the blue dust jacket with the northern lights, a small steeped church and an old plow seems very appropriate.

I have enjoyed reading this book. An abiding faith combined with a sense of mission and obligation permeates much of the preacher-writer poetry where risky probing is kept within bounds.

Some verse, however, is less cautious. For example, a sage in a poem by Harry Loewen counsels.

Wollt ihr an irgend einen  
Gott noch glauben  
dann glaubt an einen  
der um Tanzschritt geht,  
und dessen junges Haupt  
umrankt von Trauben  
und der zu lachen  
scherzen wohl versteht

The literary quality of both types is commendable. An **alte Heimat** feeling pervades much of the prose, but some of it also has a more Canadian flavor. The prose consists of short stories, essays and excerpts from larger prose works.

Epp has rendered the German reading public and especially the German speaking Mennonite community a good service by compiling this volume of rather high quality literature.

This review was first published in **Mennonite Reporter** and is used by permission with a few editorial changes.

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