

Mennonite Historian

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



Children at the Grossweide Orphanage. Photo Credit: Mennonite Heritage Centre, House of Heinrich photo collection No. 497:332

Trying To Do Good In A Changing World: Abraham Harder And The Grossweide Orphanage

by Donovan Giesbrecht

“No, we refuse to do it” – the response only added to Abraham Harder’s discouragement. Following his inner conviction, Harder had asked local church leaders to help him establish an orphanage in the Molotschna Colony. His request had already been denied by the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld municipal councils; now, even his church was against him.¹

In spite of these setbacks, Harder’s plan eventually came to fruition. By 1906, Abraham and his wife Justina had used money from the sale of their farm to purchase an abandoned property in Grossweide. Up to eighty orphans at a time would make this their home, and, though there were times of need, the generosity of local Mennonites sustained the mission for years to come.

But this would not continue. In 1922 the new Soviet government sought control of the orphanage; it banned religious instruction and imposed a communist curriculum. The Harders resisted this intervention, and were removed from their service promptly. Matters went from bad to worse. In 1936, Justina died of an illness as the couple fled Soviet persecution. Soon after, Abraham was exiled to Kazakhstan, where he died in 1941. Meanwhile, the Grossweide orphanage was left to deteriorate under Soviet rule.

The story of Abraham and Justina Harder and the Grossweide orphanage has been told before. Anna Epp Ens’s book *The House of Heinrich* described it in

(cont’d on p. 2)

Beginnings of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba

by Lawrence Warkentin

While researching the beginnings of the first MB Church in Winnipeg I felt like Luke: “Many people have written accounts about events that took place among us. They used as their source, materials that circulated and other eye witnesses of what God has done.” Luke 1: 1-2.

The witnesses have passed away, but materials that circulated have surfaced from time to time and are still showing up somewhere. Some of this material surfaced on the internet and caused me to delve into these materials.

The Center for MB Studies posted a page that caught my attention. It read as follows: “Winnipeg beginnings. The history of the beginnings of the Winnipeg Mennonite Brethren Church usually indicates that small groups began gathering in homes in 1907 and that the formal organization of the church which became the North End Chapel (eventually Elmwood MB) took place in 1913. However, recently a letter was discovered written by Bernhard Tilitzky, marked: “Louise Bridge”, and dated April 25, 1906 (*Zionsbote*, May 2, 1906 p.7) which indicates that a group was already meeting in the home of Peter Ewert. The group conducted a Sunday school program which attracted up to 40 children. H.S.Voth and P.H.Neufeld of Winkler ministered to the group at Easter, 1906. The documented beginnings of Winnipeg Mennonite Brethren, therefore are at least one year earlier than previously realized.”

It was exciting for me as I realized that the Bernhard Tilitzky mentioned was my great-grand-father and that my mother, Anna Ewert, was one of the 40 children in that Sunday School. In the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. archives in Abbotsford I found the *Zionsbote* article written by Bernhard Tilitzky, and several other articles written by his daughter, Anna Tilitzky, about the church services held in the home of Peter Ewert. I began gleaning the details from these Winnipeg reports in the *Zionsbote* and I searched the archives in the library of the City of Winnipeg.

Beginning with the May 2nd *Zionsbote* article by Bernhard Tilitzky, I discovered

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Grossweide Orphanage

(cont'd from p. 1)

1980, Herb Giesbrecht added to the story in a 1988 issue of the *Mennonite Historian*, and, one year later, the *Harder Family Review* dedicated a full issue to the Harders and their orphanage. Generally these accounts present the Harders as a couple trying to do good in a world gone bad, and, in many ways, they are right in doing so.²

Nonetheless, there are two features of these accounts that deserve further reflection. The first feature is the characterization of the Mennonite church as being uncharitable in response to Harder's request for support. Harder's diary makes it very clear that the church refused to support his plans for an orphanage; unfortunately, however, neither the diary nor the historical accounts mentioned above attempt to explain this refusal. Readers are left to assume the worst.

The second feature is the way Giesbrecht's *Historian* article in particular presents the Grossweide orphanage as being among the first signs of an emerging social conscience in the Mennonite colonies. Giesbrecht calls it "a curious and perhaps uncomplimentary fact" that it took until the turn of the 19th century for "evidence of a social

conscience" to emerge among the Russian Mennonites.³ Here the orphanage in Grossweide is presented as one among at least ten other institutions that finally brought attention to the needs of the poor, the elderly, and the disadvantaged.

Let us focus on this second feature for a brief moment. Now if the Russian Mennonites actually lacked a social conscience—and, more specifically, lacked compassion for orphans—what are we to make of the long history of the *Waisenamt* (Orphans' Bureau) in the colonies? The *Waisenamt* outlined the duties of the family and the group to assist the helpless and destitute. According to these rules, children who lost both parents would be placed into a foster family, with two external guardians appointed to monitor the orphan's well-being and to care for or invest the child's inheritance.⁴

The *Waisenamt* is not an obscure aspect of Russian Mennonite history. Even Giesbrecht's article recognizes it as a precursor to later social developments. Why, then, does the article imply that, prior to the establishment of institutions like the orphanage in Grossweide, the Russian Mennonites lacked a developed social conscience? Clearly, the account assumes that a community's social conscience is expressed primarily through institutionalized care giving. But perhaps family and church based care giving—as prescribed by the *Waisenamt*—is also a sign of a community's concern for the disadvantaged. Some might even argue that the growth of social-welfare institutions is evidence of a lack social conscience, not the reverse—a sign that families and church communities are no longer willing to sacrifice time and energy for those in need.

In our day, we are beginning to reevaluate the changes modernity has brought to our care giving methods. Many of us now find the whole notion of an orphanage to be somewhat inhumane, arguing that it is best for children, the elderly, the mentally handicapped, and others who are disadvantaged to experience care in familial settings, in homes, not institutions—this, even if much of the care is provided by professionals instead of family members.

As already mentioned, previous historical accounts have not speculated as to why church leaders refused to support Harder's plan for an orphanage. In general they give us the impression that obstinance and frugality were behind the response. But perhaps there were good

reasons for this refusal; perhaps, like some of us now, these church leaders had serious concerns about the institutionalization of care giving. Perhaps they saw the family setting as being a superior place for orphaned children to grow up, and therefore had good reason to discourage the establishment of the Grossweide institution.

Abraham Harder experienced many trials, and there is a clear sense in that he was a man trying to do good in a world gone bad. But we need not think that "even the church was against him," nor must we believe that his orphanage was one of the first signs of a social conscience in the Russian colonies. Instead, we may think of Harder as trying to do good in a changing world, a world where institutions were gradually assuming more and more of the care giving tasks of the family and the church, and a time in which at least some church leaders were still uneasy about this transition.

Endnotes

¹ Abraham A. Harder diary, translation, p. 1, in the Abraham A. Harder Fonds at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Other relevant primary sources at CMBS include the John A. Harder Fonds, the B.B. Janz fonds (files 14 & 112), and the *Mennonitische Rundschau*.

² Anna Epp Ens (ed.), *The House of Heinrich: The Story of Heinrich Epp (1811-1863) Rosenort, Molotschna and His Descendants* (Epp Book Committee: Winnipeg, 1980); Herb Giesbrecht, "The Grossweide Orphanage in the Molotschna Colony (1906-1922)," *Mennonite Historian*, vol. 14, no. 1 (March 1988); *The Harder Family Review*, issue 7 (July 1989).

³ Giesbrecht, "The Grossweide Orphanage," p. 1.

⁴ See: P.M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia*, trans. by J.B. Toews et. al., revised edition (Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches: Winnipeg, 1980), p. 809; William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony*, revised edition (CMBC Publications: Winnipeg, 1986), p. 54; for more on the *Waisenamt* see: Jake Peters, *The Waisenamt: A History of Mennonite Inheritance Custom* (Mennonite Village Museum: Steinbach, 1985).

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Dec. 24 (noon) – Jan. 3, 2005

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Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

Mennonite Genealogy DNA Project

by Glenn Penner

Traditionally genealogists have used written records to piece their families together. Unfortunately for most Mennonites written records will only take us back to the mid-1700's, the mid-1600's if we are lucky. There is another, much more modern, methodology that allows us to reach back dozens, if not hundreds, of generations. This is DNA analysis. DNA analysis has revealed some amazing information about the distant past of the human race as well as other living beings (for example all domestic hamsters appear to be descended from one breeding pair). As might be predicted DNA analysis has been embraced by genealogists as a way of determining whether two people with the same surname are indeed related.

There are now several commercial companies that will look at "markers" on the Y chromosome, which is passed directly from father to son. These companies require only a small sample of the dead skin scraped from the inside of the mouth with a type of hard Q-tip provided by the company. In July Amelia Reimer and I, together with the *FamilyTreeDNA* company, started a Mennonite DNA project. This project provides Mennonites with a simple way of having their DNA sampled and compared with others. In order to see the results so far go to the Mennonite DNA project web page at: <http://www.familytreedna.com/public/menno/>. Note that the individual is not identified only the family name of the contributor.

What information can we obtain from DNA analysis (of the Y chromosome)? A simple analysis for an individual male will tell him about the very early origins of his distant ancestor (not all Mennonites are of northern European descent). A comparative study of the DNA of several people of the same family name, but who are apparently unrelated gives us some idea of how distantly they are related. For example, I have started a sub-project to compare the DNA of Penners who appear

to be unrelated. Many years ago Mennonite historian Horst Penner suggested that the Penners descended from two families: one was Flemish and spelled their name Penner, and the other was Frisian and spelled their name Pender (later Penner). By testing the DNA of many apparently unrelated male Penners we can test this theory. In order to encourage other male Penners to get involved I am willing to pay the costs of a DNA analysis (\$300) and make all of the arrangements. But in order to qualify you must not belong to one of the Penner families from which I already have samples. We are also interested in volunteers in order to get DNA results for the approximately 300 different "Mennonite" family names.

For more information on the Mennonite DNA project or the Penner DNA project please contact me at gpenner@uoguelph.ca; phone 519-824-4120 ext. 52602.

Recent Books

Margaret Froese. *Children and Heirs: The Story of Gerhard & Helena (Thiessen) Klassen Their Ancestors & Descendants* (Winnipeg, MB: Private Publication, 2004) 164 pp.

This compilation includes the family history of the ancestors and descendants of Gerhard G. Klassen (1876-1951) and his wife Helena Thiessen (1877-1963), who shortly after their wedding in the village of Yekaterinovka, Ignatevo, moved to the Orenburg Colony, located in the foothills of the Ural Mountains. The family immigrated to Canada in 1926 and settled at Didsbury, Alberta, where Gerhard died in 1951. The book includes biographical material, genealogical lists, a reproduction of some family documents, photographs and an extensive name index. Contact: Margaret Froese, 922 Merriam Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3T 0V3.

Henry Unger, Martha Martens and Adolf Ens. *Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch: Registers of the Church at West Lynne 1881-1935* (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2004) sc., 530 pp. \$30.00.

This volume reproduces the first five volumes of the church registers that have come to be known as the "Sommerfelder Church Registers 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B and the UV (untitled volume)." With the permission and blessing of the present day Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba, the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society published this item as the fourth volume in the West Reserve Historical Series.

Between 1874 and 1880 virtually the entire community from the Bergthal colony in Russia immigrated to Canada, settling on the lands set aside east of the Red River in Manitoba exclusively for Mennonite homesteading. Unhappy with the land on their initial homesteads, by 1880 large numbers of these families were moving across the River and establishing new villages on the eastern portion of West Reserve. The Bergthal people who relocated to the West Reserve were initially identified as the "Gemeinde bei West Lynne" (Church at West Lynne), even though they continued to be part of the church on the east side of the River and served by its bishops and ministers. The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church eventually grew out of the group that lived on the West Reserve and the group that remained in the East Reserve became known as the Chortitzer Mennonite Church of Manitoba.

With the shifts in location of the Bergthal people in Canada, several church registers were begun -- one series that today is in the custody of the Choritzer Mennonite Church, and the other series, which are reproduced with this publication, that are in the custody of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba.

The editors of this volume have not only reproduced the family registers, but have also prepared separate male and female indexes with cross-references to five other registers -- the Bergthal Gemeinde Buch 1843, the Choritzer 1874, 1878, 1887, and, the Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch (1880).

The book may be ordered from the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4.



Federal Government and Support for Archives

On October 2, 2002, the Federal Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada would be drawn together to create a new knowledge institution for Canadians. This announcement marked the creation of Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the beginning of a change process that is and will continue to affect all archives including our Mennonite archives.

While representing Manitoba archival institutions at a strategic planning meeting of the Canadian Council of Archives in Ottawa on Sept 25, 2004, I listened to the newly appointed Librarian and Archivist of Canada, Ian Wilson, speak about the great accomplishments in the development of archival institutions across Canada during the past twenty-five years. However, he also said, "If we fail to evaluate and to change, the archival community will not have the same range of successes in the future."

Although this statement is true, many archivists and archival institutions, are concerned about new directions being proposed by the LAC. They would argue the validity of another true statement which says that "if its not broke[n], don't change it." This is the sense that archivists from across the country are expressing as LAC prepares its submission to the Federal Treasury Board for the renewal of the grants and contributions program administered through the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA).

An expression of this concern can be seen in the statement by Association for Manitoba Archives board chair, Jody Baltessen, made during a meeting with a representative of LAC on October 7th hosted at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. She said:

"it is a concern among archives in Manitoba that a federal institution such as the LAC – an institution accountable to its sponsoring body in just the same way that archives at the local level are accountable to their sponsoring bodies...will set goals, objectives or directions that cannot be realized by archives generally because they do not align with local realities, constituent accountabilities or variable states of development. The risk here is that we, Canadians generally, will lose hard won gains in access to records that exist with defined communities enabled to open their doors to the wider public through judicious use of CCA grant programs. In Manitoba, this is particularly true of religious archives, whose records document settlement and social and eco-



On September 30, the Heritage Centre received the first "Outstanding Achievement Award" from the Association for Manitoba Archives for its Alternative Service website featuring the story of Conscientious Objectors to War. Conrad Stoesz, project manager (left) and Alf Redopp, MHC Director, were please to received the award. Photo credit: Dan Dyck.

nomie development in the west, and who have been able to extend public access largely because training and funding for control of holdings and preservation has been available through the CCA."

In the past 10 years since I have been associated with the Mennonite Heritage Centre, in grants alone for processing collections and for preservation so that these records are now accessible, we have received \$84,000 in grants. (Our staff and institution have also benefited immensely from research, policy development, training and education programs supported by the CCA and funded through transfer payment from National Archives of Canada.) The grants to the MHC have ranged from as low as \$700 to as high as \$12,000 and have been awarded through a local peer-reviewed adjudication process that is independent, representative, transparent and fair. The grant programs have been flexible and adaptable to meet national and local needs. For example, we have been able to match the funds within our means and we have been able to make records available that are of significance to the wider public.

The Canadian Council of Archives has the support of archival institutions in every province and territory. It is uniquely positioned to provide strategic advice to the LAC and is continuing to do so. The LAC needs to table its evaluation and proposal for the renewal of the grants and contribution program with treasury board by March 2005. It would do well to harness the conditions and champion the system that works –building a system on the strong relationships of the grass roots system of archives in each area. And, finally, you our reader, are invited to let your elected representatives in Ottawa know how important archives are to you.

AR



Some of the participants at the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) Consultation hosted by the Mennonite Heritage Centre, October 7, 2004. Left to right: Shelley Sweeney, University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections; Marianne McLean, LAC, Ottawa; Kenlyn Collins, Winnipeg Art Gallery Library & Archives; Gordon Dodds, Archives of Manitoba; Elizabeth Blight, Association for Manitoba Archives; Mryna Brownlie, Archives of the Diocese of Rupert's Land. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

Why you should care about funding for archives

Archives are always looking for stories that can be shared about how archives make a difference to people. Recently the following story came to light.

Thanks in part to great archival work by her church conference Sherryl Koop won a precedent setting case against Revenue Canada. At stake was a tax deduction for clergy housing. Revenue Canada earlier ruled that Koop was not in a valid ministerial role and would not receive tax credits as an unordained minister. The Canadian Council of Christian Charities got involved by hiring three skilled lawyers to defend her.

In 1998 Sherryl Koop was called to the Tax Court of Canada to defend herself against Revenue Canada. She was a minister of the Manitoba Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and previously held a position with a non-profit organization as chaplain at four penal institutions for youth in the province. As a part of her case she needed to prove that she had had an official commissioning service by her home congregation and that people from the denomination had been present at this commissioning (instead of ordination). The guidelines of Revenue Canada stipulate that a minister that is commissioned

needs to have this service published in their home congregation and then have evidence that this service took place. As a result the archives of the denomination were approached to provide the bulletins from McIvor Mennonite Brethren Church, Winnipeg that listed the details of the service. This bulletin from 1986, combined with the order of service listed there, became a pivotal piece of evidence in her case, which she won.

According to *Christianity Today*, Judge D.G.H. Bowman declared that Koop was in effect a minister of the congregation. He considered factors such as income level, whether the individual acted as a minister of a congregation or as a member of a religious order, and whether the work emphasized more proselytism or social work. He declared that Koop was in fact a minister of a congregation and given her ministry and level of self-sacrifice, earlier rulings by Revenue Canada to be a "little short of startling".

Archives play many different roles in society. Documents are preserved for legal, theological, genealogical, inspirational, sentimental and democratic reasons. In this case the documents were used to maintain the democratic rights of a minority group. Preserving and making bulletins accessible to people is not a priority of the federal government – nor should it be. However governments should recognize that records held by small archives are important to main



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taining democratic freedoms for all Canadians. To Sherryl, her denomination, and others in her position these documents are very important.

Another reason why some public money should be used to fund private archives is because religious archives often hold the story of the founding and settling of Canada. These materials are used by the public at large to tell Canada's story. For these reasons it is important to allow archives and their sponsoring bodies the freedom to collect and preserve documents they deem useful while providing funds to make more materials accessible.

Both the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies and the Mennonite Heritage Centre collect church bulletins. While church bulletins are not a commonly used archival document they are important. They document the weekly activities of a congregation. The rule of thumb in archives is that 20% of the records get used 80% of the time. Bulletins would generally fall into the "not greatly used" category. That said, we cannot judge the value of a document based on the frequency of its use. In this case the bulletins that helped Sherryl win her court case may never be used again, but their use secured the rights for others for years to come.

CDS

CMBS News

The Centre continues to look for a director. If you have suggestions forward them on to Cam Rowland, director of Discipleship Ministries crowland@mbconf.ca In the interim Donovan Giesbrecht has been hired to help staff the centre and process materials.

Three of the more significant donations this year to the Centre have been the diaries and correspondence collected by Anna Thiessen, matron of the Mary Martha Home in Winnipeg, records of Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren congregations and conference, and early photos from the Herbert Bible School.

CDS



The new Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches office building under construction. The new address will be 1310 Taylor ave., Winnipeg, MB R3M 3Z6. The archives will be on the main floor Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz

Peter W. Enns† (1912-2004)

Peacefully, after a long, productive, and community-minded life, Peter W. Enns, 92, of Winkler, MB died on Nov. 28, 2004 at Salem Personal Care Home.

He established the P.W. Enns Family Foundation to raise

funds to build the Mennonite Heritage Centre at 600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg, on the campus of what is now Canadian Mennonite University. Visitors to this striking, A-frame building can admire his personal touch on the handcrafted wooded doors gracing the north entrance.

Funeral services were held at the Winkler Berghaler Mennonite Church on Wed. Dec. 1, 2004.

Delbert F. Plett† (1948-2004)

Peacefully after a battle with liver cancer, Delbert F. Plett, 56, of Steinbach passed away on Thursday, November 4, 2004 at the Bethesda Hospital.

Delbert studied the Mennonites who immigrated to Manitoba in the 1870s, as well as their history in Russia, Polish-Russia and Flanders. He wrote and compiled 14 books on conservative Mennonites and as many by other authors. In 1988 he organized the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and oversaw its operation until 2003, when it changed its name to Flemish Mennonite Historical Society, Inc. He was the editor of the magazine, *Preservings*, since 1995.

The funeral service was held at the Blumenort E.M.C. Church. A fellowship meal followed at Steinbach Mennonite Church which he joined in 1985.

Since Delbert left no immediate family, he left the bulk of his estate to the "D.F. Plett Research Foundation Inc." meant to foster research and writing about the conservative and traditional Mennonites.

MB Beginnings in Winnipeg

(cont'd from p. 1)

that regular meetings were held in the home of Peter Ewert. (It is interesting that his father, also a Peter Ewert, had started the first MB Church in Poland in 1861). With help from archival maps and the Henderson Directory, I located the house of Peter Ewert where the meetings were held. The house was located on the lots 580-584 Talbot Avenue (Corner of Talbot and Eaton), which the Ukrainian Catholic church purchased and used for the construction of their Church. They later sold it to the Serbian Orthodox Church. When I spoke to the priest of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, now on Watt Street, I mentioned that the MBs at one time had conducted church services in the house on that property. He replied, "It must be holy ground."

According to the house plans found in the archives, there would have been sufficient room for 40 children and a good sized congregation. The four families that comprised the first MB congregation were: Bernhard and Eva Tilitzky, 713 McCalman Ave. (house is still there); Anna Tilitzky, 713 McCalman Ave; Peter and Emilie Ewert, with children Peter and Olga, 584 Talbot Avenue; Franz and Eva Ewert with children Peter, Anna and Benjamin, 563 Chalmers Avenue (house still there); David and Maria Penner with child, Maria Penner, 720 Talbot Avenue, (house still there).

The adults were all members of the MB Church. That makes for a congregation of fifteen, nine adults and six children.

Peter Ewert had a sausage factory and grocery store on that property, where the whole family found employment.

Meetings:

The Tilitzkys and Ewerts had come from Rosenthal, Russia and arrived in Winkler in 1904. In 1905 they moved to Winnipeg, settling in the area which was then called "Louise Bridge" (now Elmwood). Talbot Avenue was then called Central Avenue. The contact with the Winkler MB Church led them to invite ministers from Winkler to serve them in this house church on Talbot Avenue. Meetings probably began as soon as they arrived in Winnipeg in 1905, but the first record of such meetings is the reference to the three services at Easter 1906 conducted by H.S. Voth and P.H. Neufeld. The group in Winnipeg made a request to the Winkler MB Church that they send their ministers more often.

Gleaning though the diary and itinerary of H.S.Voth we find him coming to Winnipeg, staying nights at the Bernhard Tilitzkys, 713 McCalman Ave., and conducting services Dec. 22-24, 1906. This, again, was in the home of Peter Ewert. He also mentions that they had Sunday school in the afternoon.

Who was H.S.Voth (1878-1953)? In 1902, the MB Church of North America designated him to serve as an evangelist – a position which he held until 1908. He was ordained as a minister of the Winkler MB church on Dec. 5 1908. Along with Jakob Ewert and later John Warkentin of Winkler, he had a major role in the founding and development of the MB Church in Winnipeg.

The Winkler ministers continued serving the group in Winnipeg during these early years. Anna Tilitzky, *Zionsbote* correspondent, reported April 29, 1908 on a series of Easter services conducted by Jakob Ewert and Peter Neufeld. Meetings were also held in various homes, as again she reported: "We meet every Sunday forenoon and evening." In August, 1908, Jake Ewert and evangelist, F.F.Wiens conducted a series of meetings. For the first time the report mentions a rented chapel for the evening meetings. They also had a street meeting. In the evening service several responded to an altar call. One service was conducted in the German Baptist Church. At the close several stood praying for forgiveness. The closing evening of the series was held in the chapel again, which was filled to capacity. Some 17 stood indicating their need of salvation. In all 34 decided to commit their lives to the Lord.

In 1909 the church organized more formally. A certain Brother Hugat was to be the leader of the meetings and prayer services; Brother Trottno should be secretary, Brother Bernhard Tilitzky was to continue as treasurer; and, Anna Tilitzky was to continue as correspondent for the *Zionsbote*.

A thanksgiving service was held on Nov. 13, 1909. John Warkentin from Winkler and Karlenzig from Plum Coulee served with messages. This service was held in the Peter Ewert home where they met every Sunday. A fellowship meal followed.

So, at least for three years, 1906–1909, the house at 580-584 Talbot Avenue served as a meeting place for the budding Winnipeg MB Church.

Lawrence Warkentin lives in Abbotsford.

Book Notes

by Adolf Ens

The Burwalde community in southern Manitoba got into history writing quite early, publishing a Diamond Jubilee booklet in 1948. A new, more comprehensive history, compiled and edited by Marjorie Hildebrand is now available: *Reflections of a Prairie Community: A Collection of Stories and Memories of Burwalde S.D. #529* (Winkler: Friends of the former Burwalde School District, 2004), in 8½ x11 hardcover format, 160 pages. In addition to fairly comprehensive school information, the book significantly advances the earlier history of the community and of many of its families.

Celebrations of the bicentennial of Mennonite settlement in the Molotschna Colony have stimulated interest in that part of our history. A recent volume in the "Tsarist and Soviet Mennonite Studies" series, edited by Harvey Dyck of the University of Toronto, provides an excellent study of the background, beginnings and early history of that settlement. John R. Staples, *Cross-cultural Encounters on the Ukrainian Steppe: Settling the Molochna Basin, 1783-1861* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 253 pages, provides many tables of quantitative data and a depth of contextual study not often found in earlier studies by Mennonite authors.

The title of Henry Klippenstein's family history says a lot. *Thicker than Water: The Uncensored, Unabridged and Completely Unbiased Account of the Life and Times of the Dietrich Klippenstein Family* (Vancouver: Loon Books, 2004) is a slim 135 pages (in the awkward book size that Pandora printers seem to favour) of candid, whimsical story telling from the inside of a 1920s immigrant family from Russia settling in Saskatchewan. The author is a retired high school teacher (Briercrest, Thompson, Vancouver).

Jacob Davenport Deorksen's *The Barbed Wire Threshold* (Vancouver: by the author, 2002), 406 pages, has an enigmatic title for another family history. The author chronicles the experiences of the family Heinrich and Katharina Doercksen, 1874 immigrants from Russia who settled in Schoensee on the Manitoba East Reserve. Deorksen's writing style is more earthy than Klippenstein's, and that forthrightness characterizes the way he

reports and analyzes events as well. However, the quotation from Oscar Wilde's *The Decay of Lying* may be a subtle warning to the reader: "There is such a thing as robbing a story of its reality by trying to make it too true." Extensive passages of dialogue make for interesting reading – and thinking about issues that more sensitive accounts tend to skirt.

Many readers of the *Historian* will have heard a lecture, seen a film or read a book by John Ruth. His influence as a minister, teacher, writer and filmmaker went far beyond his Franconia Conference and Pennsylvania communities. *The Measure of My Days: Engaging the Life and Thought of John L. Ruth*, edited by Reuben Z. Miller and Joseph S. Miller (Telford, Pennsylvania: Cascadia Publishing House, 2004, 309 pages, brings together 18 essays by historians, artists, writers, ministers, and educators in a tribute to Ruth. The essays, however, are well worth reading on their own merits, even for people who do not know the honouree.

Resources for Russian Mennonite Studies

by Lawrence Klippenstein

The significant archival holdings of the Guardians' Committee which guided the welfare of new immigrants to New Russia in the late and early eighteenth century have long been recognized as a most important source for Russian Mennonite studies. A description of part of this collection is now much more readily available by the publication of a series of finding aids. This archival collection is vast and complex, and has been catalogued into eight separate archival inventories. This publication series contains only the description of materials in the first inventory out of the eight. Five volumes are now available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg – Volumes 1, 2, 4 and 5 received recently compliments of Peter Letkemann and a photocopy of Volume 3 received some time ago compliments of Tim Janzen.

The volumes have appeared in hardcover under the General heading *Popechitelny komitet ob inostrannykh poselentsakh Iuzhnovo kraia Rossii*

(*Guardians' Committee for Foreign Settlers of the South Russian Region*). With an annotated listing of holdings and files, they cover the period 1799-1876. The volumes are a joint project of the Odessa State Archives and the Institute of German and East European Research, located at Goettingen in Germany. The head editor of the project is given as O.V. Konovalovo from Odessa. The dates of publication are: Vol. 1 - 1998, Vol. 2 - 1999, Vol. 3 - 2000, Vol. 4 - 2001, and Vol. 5 - 2002. These five volumes include the description of 5286 files and cover only the years 1799-1839. "Mennonite names" appear in the indexes throughout.

Selected entries describing Mennonite-related materials from files numbered 4134-5184 as presented in the fifth volume, are now conveniently available in German language translation. This material has been translated by Abram Toews of Bielefeld, Germany, and is also available at the MHC.

The history of the Guardians' Committee, and discussion of the gathering process of the files, scattered over a period of time, is fortunately set forth in a bilingual German/Russian introduction for each of the volumes.

Peter Letkemann has also deposited a volume which provides a survey of the work of the Goettingen Institute *10 Jahre Institut fuer Deutschland- und Osteuropaforschung des Goettingern Arbeitskreises e.V. Forschungs und Publikationsbericht (Ten Years: Institute for German and East European Research by the Goettingen Working Group)* (Goettingen, 2001, pb., 112 pp) and two volumes related to the history of Germans from Russia. They are entitled *Nemtzy no Urale i v Sibiri* (Germans of the Ural Region and Siberia) (Ekaterinburg, 1999, pb., 581 pp), which is a collection of papers read at a conference on Germans from Russia held in Ekaterinburg in 1999 (several published in German), and an archival aid on materials dealing with Germans from the Kherson region, *Nemtzy Khersonshchiny : Annotirovanny perechen del Gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Khersonskoi Oblasti* (Kherson Germans: An annotated listing of files found in the State Archives of the Kherson Region, 1919-1930) (Odessa: Astroprint, 2001, 167 pp).

One further item needing to be listed here among recent acquisitions at MHC is a publication of Dnepropetrovsk National

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Book Reviews

Rudy P. Friesen with Edith Elisabeth Friesen. *Building on the Past: Mennonite Architecture, Landscape and Settlements in Russia/Ukraine* (Winnipeg, MB: Raduga Publications, 2004) 752 pp.

Reviewed by Roland Sawatzky, curator, Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach.

Architect Rudy P. Friesen's *Building on the Past* presents us with a complex world of Mennonites in Russia in which buildings speak of power, prestige, and the daily patterns of the material world. Mennonite society is rightly shown to be urban and rural, public and private, simple and ornate. The serious reader will be challenged with any notion of a homogeneous group of religious adherents.

Building on the Past is a major expansion on *Into the Past* (1996), the previous work by Friesen concerning Mennonite architecture in Russia. At 752 pages, *Building on the Past* is a comprehensive catalogue of architecture ranging from the 1780s to 1914. Friesen helps define this vast database by dividing it into regions (13 Mennonite colonies), and time periods of five overlapping phases: Settlement (1789-1835), Progress (1835-1880), Flowering (1880-1914), Disintegration (1914-1999), and Recovery (1999-present).

Friesen provides historical context with chapters on Mennonite history, architecture, and specific colonies. Each colony chapter also has an introductory overview. What I found particularly interesting were the chapters devoted to the architecture of estates and urban centres, subjects that have suffered in comparison to the historical treatment of rural settlements. These two chapters provide a view of Mennonites as they expanded and prospered in different areas of Russian life. Mennonites were already establishing themselves in Russian towns and cities by 1805, and although a relationship always existed between urban Mennonite businesses and rural centres, one must question to what extent "isolation" proved viable among rural inhabitants.

An architect's eye for the material is obvious. There is discussion of architectural styles and detailing, and this is usually placed within the context of the village or colony history. Hundreds of

recent and historical photographs, maps, and floor plans are included to give the greatest possible detail to the identification of buildings and locations. Wall and window details, tombstones, brickwork and even individual bricks with Russian initials were painstakingly photographed and included. The vastness and depth of the material at times threatens to overcrowd the book, but the design of the layout and the historical context help to reign in the data, creating a workable format.

As with many architectural studies, there is an under-representation of the buildings of the poor. This is largely due to the lack of preservation of these structures, being constructed of unbaked bricks and thatch. What have been preserved are the larger brick houses and institutional buildings that survived conditions during the Soviet period. Indeed, many of the surviving buildings were taken over as collectives and used in a more communal fashion than during Mennonite habitation.

Friesen has taken numerous field trips to this part of Ukraine, which has provided him with photographs and a distinct sense of place. Annual tours continue to the region, and this book will be essential to anyone either touring generally or interested in specific locations or buildings.

There is something overwhelmingly sad about the book as well. It is archaeological, the buildings speaking of a society that no longer exists in a recognizable form, whose residents migrated, fled, were exiled or killed during the turbulence of the 20th Century. The order on which this society was built, the order that is evident in each house and church and school, disintegrated under the weight of chaos and dictatorship. The book is essential for Mennonite historians and those interested in the passing of Russian Mennonite life.

Dueck, Abe J. *Concordia Hospital. Faith, Health and Community. 75 Years 1928-2003*. (Winnipeg, MB: Concordia Hospital, 2003), 107 pp.

Reviewed by Connie Wiebe, Archives Administrative Assistant, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg.

This full-sized, glossy-paged book was written for the occasion of the 75th

anniversary of the establishment of the now named Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

This history is an update of the booklet, *Concordia Hospital, 1928-1978* also authored by Dr. Abe Dueck, former director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg.

The book is organized in three parts. The first gives a strong overview of the "birth of a vision" its struggles and triumphs. Dueck was able to bring the reader into the birthing pains of this extraordinary dream for first a maternity hospital and later a comprehensive care medical facility.

Part Two of this history takes us from 1978-2003. Here Dueck outlines further growth of the hospital. The million dollar expansion of the 1980s saw the purchase of a CT Scanner despite strong government disapproval. The eventual closure of the obstetrical department in 1983 was in direct contradiction with the original intent of the hospital.

Despite the health care crisis of the 1990s, Concordia was able to flourish in the areas of surgery, medicine and emergency room services and as recently as 2002 was designated a "centre for excellence" in the area of orthopedics which later led to Concordia being recognized as the first community hospital in Canada to have a Surgical Accredited Teaching program.

Part Three contains the appendices where Dueck reviews the work of the boards of directors, chief administrative offices and medical directors.

Throughout the history book Dueck effectively reminds the reader of the vision and mission of Concordia's founders. It was only through persistent efforts that the intent to create a faith-based community hospital was maintained. Service and healing, core values of the Anabaptist/Mennonite heritage remain as strong identifying features of the Concordia Hospital.

Book Notes

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University entitled *Nemtsy Ukrainy: Materialy k entsiklopedii "Nemtsy Rossii"*, Vypusk 7 (Germans of Ukraine: Materials Submitted to the Encyclopedia "Germans of Russia", Section 7) published in Moscow in 2002 (pb., 209 pp).