

Mennonite Historian

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



Missions to Russian speaking people in Saskatchewan by the Mennonite Brethren began in 1906. Eventually this first mission became the Arelee Mennonite Brethren Church. This building was built in 1964 and the photo taken in 1979. Credit: CMBS photo collection NP149-01-64.

Widening the Fellowship: Mennonite Brethren ministry to Russian and Jewish people

by Ken Reddig

Since its founding in south Russia (Ukraine) in 1860, the Mennonite Brethren Church has made some important moves outside of its own ethnic boundaries. Though forbidden by law not to form churches among Russian or Ukrainian people, there were, nevertheless, a series of efforts to work among the local people. However the first major expansion of the newly formed church was through its missionary efforts in India and then later Africa.

The point of this series of articles is to look briefly at some of the more significant efforts in Canada to plant churches outside of its early German/English milieu. This article is based largely upon the significant work as

found in Dr. Peter Penner's valuable book *No Longer at Arms Length: Mennonite Brethren Church Planting in Canada*. Much more detailed information on the specific church plants referred to here is provided in that book.

It is my assumption that in Canada the ministry to the Russians and the Jews were among the very first attempts at church planting among people outside the German/English milieu. Some might argue that the transition from German to English was part of the process of moving out. However, for the purpose of these articles I am putting the transition from German to English aside and concentrating largely on other language and

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Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online to Launch

by Sam Steiner

Now GAMEO? The partners in an Internet-based Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia hope this question will become increasingly familiar in the coming months. The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee and Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission have agreed to partner in the Encyclopedia.

The Administrative Group appointed by the GAMEO partners met June 14, 2005 in Winnipeg, MB to plan the structure and timetable for the project. The goal is to launch the Encyclopedia by the end of 2005.

Initially the Encyclopedia will be English language-only, and will focus on North American content. As global partners are added to the project the range of international subject entries and language possibilities will expand.

An early project, which will require numerous volunteers, will scan and upload the content of the 5-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia* published by Herald Press from 1955-1959, with a supplemental volume in 1990.

Bert Friesen, who chaired the Administrative Group meeting, said GAMEO will always rely on dedicated volunteers for writing and editorial work, but the Encyclopedia plans to find funding to support core administrative work. Although the Encyclopedia will be freely available on the Internet, the partners hope to attract institutional and corporate sponsors who will support GAMEO's expansion and maintenance through an annual donation. Individual donations are also welcome.

GAMEO is an expansion of the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, a project of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada since 1996. Sam Steiner, Managing Editor of the present Encyclopedia, said the almost 2500 articles already in CMEO will provide an excellent base for the expanded Encyclopedia. In addition there are 125 confessions of faith or denominational statements in a "source documents" section. CMEO can be seen at <http://www.mhsc.ca/>.

John Sharp, Director of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, said a

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Ethnic Churches

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ethnic groups. If some are missed I would appreciate hearing about them. Feedback, corrections and additional stories would be most appreciated and welcomed.

Among the first significant efforts by MB conferences to evangelize and plant churches outside the German-English sphere was within Russian-speaking communities in Canada and the US. An initiative of the Mennonite Brethren Conference in North America was begun with the appointment of John F. Harms (*Zionsbote* editor; a Mennonite Brethren publication in Kansas) to work among Russian-speaking people in Saskatchewan and North Dakota. This work among those of Russian descent was certainly made easier by the fact that many of the Mennonite Brethren who had immigrated to North America, among them Harms, were also fluent in Russian. Also, some of these Russian-speaking people had already been converts of Mennonite Brethren evangelism efforts while in Ukraine. Hence contacts were more easily made. These Russian-speaking people had come to Saskatchewan and North Dakota between 1897 and 1903. In Saskatchewan they settled along Eagle Creek (Arelee), west of Saskatoon and south of Blaine Lake.

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In Canada one of the early influential leaders to work with Russian-speaking peoples was Hermann Fast. Married to an Orthodox Christian, he moved to Canada in 1901 where he found work as a teacher among Doukhobors in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan. Among other activities he helped found Rosthern Academy and became its first teacher. He worked among Russian-speaking people from approximately 1906 until the end of the First World War. A concern at the time was the fact that some of the Russian people were susceptible to Seventh-Day Adventism, and some of the Russian-Mennonite Brethren later joined that church group. Personally Fast encountered difficulties within his own conference when he faced opposition to his ordination from the North Saskatchewan District Conference because of having served as a Baptist minister while still in Russia.

The foundation for a long-lasting relationship with the Mennonite Brethren was due to Fast's diligent work. Fast also edited *Golos*, (or "Voice") an inspirational Russian-language paper for 7 some 7 years from 1905-1912. It was published by Harms in Kansas. At the same time there was contact with a similar work being done in North Dakota largely in the community of Kief.

Interest in working among the Russian-speaking people was re-kindled in the 1930s and 1940s. Heinrich H. Janzen who chaired the Board of Foreign Missions pushed for further work among the Russians. Others had joined the cause such as J. Thiessen and Abram Huebert. In 1945 Janzen became the principal of the Russian Bible Institute in Toronto and continued supervising the Mennonite Brethren work among the Russians. He left Toronto to become the president of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg in 1948.

The Mennonite Brethren Conference saw the mission to Russian speaking people of great importance and it paid for the moving of Peter Schroeder and his family to Grand Forks, British Columbia where work among the Doukhobors was developed. Another family, George and Erna Martens, through the influence of H.H. Janzen also moved to Grand Forks to assist the Schroeders.

Perhaps the most notable teacher, minister, evangelist to Russian-speaking people in Canada was David B. Wiens. He began ministering in Arelee, Saskatchewan in 1943 and developed an

itineration ministry. When he moved on to become pastor of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Vancouver he maintained a vibrant ministry in the Russian language on the Gospel Light Hour Radio program that was beamed throughout the former Soviet Union. He maintained that ministry until his death in 1980 when Victor Hamm continued the work.

Over the decades work among the Russian-speaking people had its joys and failures. Some stayed within the Mennonite Brethren Church and others left. As already noted this fascinating story has been largely told by Peter Penner, but really deserves considerably more attention because of what it can teach us about moving into ministry among people of different ethnicity from our own.

It appears that the next ministry begun by the Mennonite Brethren in Canada was among the Jewish people. Interest in working among the Jews went back as early as 1918 when Hugo Spitzer, a Jewish Christian and Missionary to the Jews in Winnipeg, reported to the Northern District Conference (fore-runner to the Canadian Conference). He continued to report to the Conference until 1932. But interest in Jewish missions continued through the work of H.K. Hiebert a member of the Winnipeg North End Church. He received support from the Manitoba Conference for Bible and tract distribution.

In 1947 Jacob H. Pankratz and his wife Margaret were engaged in Jewish ministry in Winnipeg. He came with a background in Jewish missions. But after a few years he faced stiff opposition from the local Jewish community. Meanwhile there was a debate over which conference or committee should oversee this ministry. Overall support began to wane. In 1953 Pankratz moved to Ontario and then later Montreal where he was involved in a similar Mission. By 1957 the brief and passionate ministry in Winnipeg was concluded.

Sources

Penner, Peter. *No Longer at Arms Length: Mennonite Brethren Church Planting in Canada*. Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1987.

Toews, John A. *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers*. Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1975.

Canadian and Provincial Conference yearbooks.

Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

Recent Books

John Dyck and Darlene (Dyck) Buchanan. *The Story of Gerhard and Anna (Redekopp) Wiebe their ancestors and descendants in their migrations from Prussia to Russia, to Canada, USA, Mexico, Paraguay* (Winnipeg, MB: The Wiebe Family History Book Committee, 2005) 561 pp plus name index.

The compilation and writing of this family history began over 10 years ago. Most of the historical research was completed by John Dyck before he passed away in 1999. With the support of the Wiebe Family History Book Committee, his daughter Darlene Buchanan completed the project.

The book consists of 17 chapters – 3 chapters dealing with the historical background of the family of Gerhard Wiebe (1806-1862) and his wife Anna Redekopp (1814-1861) and 14 chapters on the family history of their descendants – one chapter for each of their children and their descendants.

The many family photographs, personal stories and comprehensive name index make this an excellent family history.

Contact Darlene Buchanan, 320 Dunrobin Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2K 0T6.

Edward Enns. *Our Bergen Grandparents Peter & Maria (Dueck) Bergen* (Winnipeg, MB: Private Publications, 2005) 69 pp.

This compilation contains the genealogy and family history of Peter Bergen (1869-1918) and his wife Maria Dueck (1871-1917) who were married in 1893 in the village of Sommerfeld, Manitoba. The family moved to the Herbert-Gouldtown, Saskatchewan area in 1912. Peter and Maria Bergen died of the Spanish flu epidemic in the winter of 1917-1918, leaving a family of six sons and six daughters ranging in age from 3-24 years. The youngest children were raised by relatives in Manitoba after 1918.

Contact: Edward Enns, 115 Oakview Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2K 0R9.

Bev Funk. *Johann Funk Family History 1752-2005* (Medicine Hat, AB: Private Publication, 2005) 126 pp.

This compilation deals with the genealogy and family history of the author's grandfather Johann Funk (1899-

1962) who was born in Gretna. His family homesteaded in Herbert-Gouldtown, Saskatchewan area in 1905. This book contains family photographs originating from the regular Funk family reunions.

Contact: Bev Funk, 186 Carry Drive SE, Medicine Hat, AB T1B 1K5 or phone 403-526-4208.

William Schroeder. *A Genealogical History of Wilhelm Schroeder (1761-1827) and Helena Reimer (1788-1829) and their descendants* (Winnipeg, MB: Private Publication, 2005) 45 pp.

The author of this compilation, William Schroeder (b. 1927), considers himself the sixth in a continuous succession of male descendants bearing the name William Schroeder. His ancestors are Wilhelm Schroeder V (1894-1975), Wilhelm Schroeder IV (1870-1932), Wilhelm Schroeder III (1816-1904), Wilhelm Schroeder II (1761-1827) and Wilhelm Schroeder I (dates unknown and known only by oral tradition). The compilation includes a listing of the descendants of Wilhelm Schroeder (1761-1827). It is enhanced with some anecdotal and biographical information about Wilhelm Schroeder (1894-1975) and his wife a Sara Doerksen (1896-1973), as well as some photographs.

Contact William Schroeder, 832 Wicklow St., Winnipeg, MB R3T 0H7

Eunice Ferbrandt Stobbe. *The Sawatzky-Bartel Connection: The story of Cornelius and Maria Bartel* (Saskatoon, SK: Private Publication, 2005) 214 pp.

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Family tradition describes this photo as a Baptist congregation ca. 1904. Is there a Mennonite connection with these people? The smaller of the two girls is Alexandra Yakovlevna Chernozubova (born in 1899), daughter of Okulina and Yakov M. Chernozubov. Alexandra's brother Michail (b. 1904) (not in the picture) used to sing with a German-speaking (Mennonite?) church choir in Orlovka in the 1920s. In 1934 he married an Agata Reimer. Any further information? Contact: Dr. Davorin Peterlin, Keston Institute, 38 St Aldates, Oxford, UK OX1 1BN or e-mail: davorin.peterlin@keston.org.

Queries

Klassen: We are seeking our cousins Tina Klassen (b. 1929), Maria Klassen, Liese Klassen and Hans Klassen (b. 1941) born in Crimea, whose parents were Franz and Neta Klassen, who immigrated to Canada via Germany about 1945, and with whom we lived from 1938-1941. Contact Gerhard Klassen (or his sister Maria), Adenauer Str. 7, 36039 Fulda, Germany or call 49-661-2504-674.

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

Germany's Diplomatic Efforts during the 1929 Mennonite Immigration Crisis

by Erwin Warkentin

When discussing the 1929 Moscow Mennonite immigration crisis, little has been said in regard to the German relief efforts for the Mennonite and other colonists of Germanic origin. Usually, the German efforts fair little better than a footnote in a narrative describing the event. Moreover, historians have usually relied on the documents available at the archives in either Canada or, more recently, in Russia and the Ukraine. It is not a matter of ignoring the German contribution. It is simply a matter of being unaware of available sources. These new sources will aid in better documenting and providing new perspectives on the events leading to the eventual rescue of over 5000 souls from arrest and exile by the Soviet authorities in the autumn and early winter of 1929.

The overlooked source is the massive collection of German files captured at the end of the Second World War. With the fall of Hitler's Third Reich, the victorious Allies came into possession of all of the surviving documents of the various German ministries that had been responsible for the administration of Germany since 1871. Among these are the files of the German foreign ministry, which was responsible for what the Germans simply labeled as the *Mennoniten Auswanderung*. Each of the four allied powers was allowed to make a copy of those files. In the files are the records of the State Secretary for foreign affairs Schubert, whose collection dating from November 2, 1929 to February 17, 1930 provides a detailed snapshot of Germany's effort to save the refugees around the Soviet capital.¹ There are 85 separate documents (166 pages) in the German language, which address the Mennonite emigration issue. The documents contained in the file consist of encrypted telegrams (in clear copy), letters, and notes, which represent the communications between the ministries, embassies or consulates in Berlin, Leningrad, Moscow, Novosibirsk, and Montreal. There is even a plan for how the orderly evacuation of the refugees was to be carried out, if not for the mass

arrests that started on November 18, 1929. The major contributors to the file were Fritz von Twardowski (Director of Eastern Affairs Department of the Foreign Ministry of Germany), Julius Curtius (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Ludwig Kempff (German Consul in Montreal), Herbert von Dirksen (Ambassador to the USSR), and Oskar Trautmann (Secretary of State for the German Foreign Ministry).

The German documents for the most part confirm the series of events as reported in past histories. However, there are cases where the German sources contradict received opinion and shed new light on the Mennonite emigration crisis. As important, they fill in many details and provide context for the events of the period.

On November 25, 1929 Trautmann prepared a chronology of events for the foreign ministry. According to this source, the Germans first became aware of the situation on October 1 when there were already 1000 colonists in Moscow. By October 10, that number had risen to 3000. This number rose further to about 5000 by October 15 and 13000 on November 14. Otto Auhagen, the agricultural attaché to the German embassy in Moscow, was given the task of monitoring the situation. While Trautmann may have been reporting the situation as he understood it, there was an indication of difficulties earlier. In a secret report written by von Dirksen for the Minister of Foreign affairs on August

1, he indicated that the Soviet policies were driving the "German colonists" off of the land. In it he also outlined how the German government might take advantage of the situation. This document was later leaked to the communist press in Germany and was published. It created considerable embarrassment for the German government of the day. The publication of this document also put the movement of the refugees out of Russia in great jeopardy, since it, according to the Soviet foreign ministry, was evidence of Germany's interference in internal Soviet matters and fomenting rebellion among Soviet citizens.

One of the significant events concurrent with what was unfolding around Moscow is the stock market crash of October 28 and 29. By November 5 billion dollars of stock capitalization had disappeared on the New York stock exchange. By the end of 1929, a further 11 billion dollars had evaporated. These events ensured that North American governments hesitated in reacting to the situation in the USSR. In fact, as noted in a few of the telegrams, there was a strange silence on the part of the United States in terms of financial support. It seems that Canadian Mennonites and Lutherans were the only non-governmental organizations willing to help. The market crash effectively side-lined the U.S. Mennonites.

Canada's role in the crisis is more difficult to assess in light of what the German documents reveal than has been thought in the past. To some extent there appears to have been some, perhaps unintentional, duplicity on the part of Canadian officials. In the communications that the German foreign ministry received from Kempff in Montreal, unofficially at least, the Canadian government was eager to accept the refugees and locate them in the Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Officially, they deferred to the provinces. Of the provinces, Saskatchewan created the greatest difficulties, whereas both Manitoba and Alberta were open to the refugees, with the understanding that they could not accept them until the spring of 1930. Manitoba had indicated to the German consul in Montreal, according to a telegram sent by Kempff to Berlin on November 16, that they could even receive 250 families before March 1, 1930 and an unlimited number after that. Considering that the German government would house the refugees in Germany and the severity of prairie winters, this should



Herbert von Dirksen

not be considered an unreasonable request. In any case, the picture painted by the German documents does not really support the position that the door to Mennonite immigration was officially closed on November 24, 1929 as asserted by some historians describing the period. In fact, these German documents indicate that on November 28, the Canadian government requested a list of refugees from David Toews, which indicate those refugees who had relatives in Canada.

The friendly relations between Germany and the USSR as well as the German origin of the colonists, made Germany a logical intermediary in the negotiations to release the refugees. However, the negotiations did not always go smoothly. As the crisis deepened, political considerations prevented many of the original refugees from escaping to the west. The apparent reluctance of the Canadian government to accept the refugees was often noted as a reason for not releasing the colonists. The Germans suspected that the Soviets were looking for ways to blame Germany and Canada for a crisis of their own making, with no intention of ever releasing the refugees unless they could be used as economic leverage as well. The Soviets even accused the Germans of lying about the willingness of the Canadians to accept the refugees. This was based on the official position taken by the Canadians. However, the Germans were dealing on the basis of unofficial discussions they were having with the highest levels of the Canadian government, which continued to

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Steffen Clock from Siberia

by Ken Petkau

Last June my cousin brought back for me, a clock from the village of Neudachino, Siberia, Russia. The clock was hand made by an 81-year old gentleman using some new and some recycled materials from his workshop, which is located in the living room of his home. He also made the tools that he used to make the clock.

He has been making clocks all his life and apparently still makes about 4 or 5 a year. One of his latest clocks apparently chimes every quarter hour, has a moon phase indicator and some lighting.

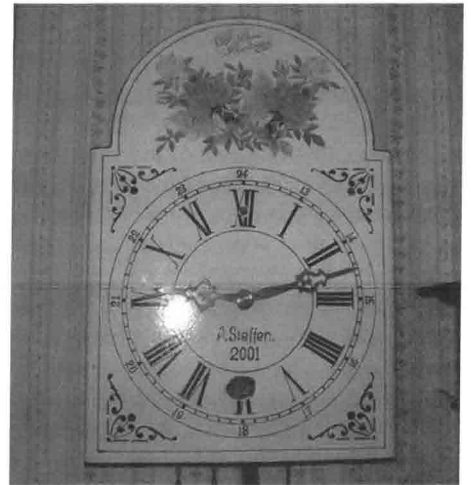
All the working parts in this clock were made from brass except for the short stub shaft that holds the hour and minute hands. This stub shaft is made of steel. The clock chimes on the hour.

My cousin, who has been in Russia a number of times, experienced quite an ordeal bringing the clock with him. He had brought a clock to Canada on a previous trip a few years ago and had no problems.

Both in Omsk and again in Moscow, the customs or security personnel thought the clock was a bomb and went through the clock with a fine tooth comb. In one of the inspections the enamel paint at the 6 o'clock position on the face was damaged. (We hoped to have that repaired, but may reconsider -- the damage is evidence and a reminder of the clock's difficult journey to Canada.) Of course the authorities wanted to be paid



Full view of Steffen clock.



Clock face on Steffen clock, 2001.

for these inspections, so the eventual cost to me escalated somewhat over and above the original cost. At one of the inspections he had a particularly bad experience and the timely intervention of a fluent Russian-speaking German businessman behind him in the line helped him through the process. The suspicions of the security people are understandable, however the "extra" fees indicate that not much has changed in Russia.

There are a number of Mennonite people still living in Neudachino and area. It appears that this and the other clocks he has made are patterned after the Kroeger clocks made in the Chortitza Colony until 1917. This would indicate that at least some of the Mennonites in Russia still have their Kroeger clocks.

For more information contact:
Pineviewfarm@sasktel.net.

Ken Petkau lives in Waldheim, SK



The refugees transfer from Russian to Lithuanian train, 1929. Photo credit: MHC Koop Family Collection No. 500:521.



Mennonite Heritage Centre

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Additional Mobile Shelves

In January 2002, professional conservator Rosaleen Hill wrote in her global assessment report on the Mennonite Heritage Centre, "The archives vault is currently full and the archives continues to process approximately 12 m/year. The lack of storage space is critical particularly for oversize records..." The report went on to recommend that "compact/mobile shelving units should be considered for the archives...This should be a high priority as the archives already exceed the vault space."

In June 2004 one half of the vault floor space was transformed with the installation of a system of mobile shelves. In May of this year everything on the other half of the room was moved around to make way for additional mobile shelves. This system was acquired from the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies when they relocated to their new facility on Taylor Avenue. This year's project was largely made possible by the financial assistance from the Government of Canada through Library and Archives Canada and the Canadian Council of Archives through a financial assistance grant of \$6,650.

The lack of storage space should not be a problem for at least 7 to 10 years, based on the rate of growth in acquisitions of the last 10 years. Also, with the additional space and rearrangement of the remaining traditional shelving, we have created an area for oversize records storage.

A.R.

Periodical and Serial Listings on the Web

The MHC possesses copies of over 600 periodical titles, many in a bound format. Canadian-based periodicals form a major portion but there are also periodicals from Europe, the United States, Mexico, South America and Russia. The list of titles and the specific

inventory of each title is now available on the Centre's website.

Among the numerous Canadian-based periodicals are official publications of a Mennonite conference. There are titles that are not officially conference publications but have a quality and breadth that make them significant. This category would include such titles as *Das Bergthaler Gemeindeblatt* (1936-1972), *Der Bote* (1924-), *The Canadian Mennonite* (1953-1971), *Canadian Mennonite* (1997-), *Der Christliche Familienfreund* (1935-1984), *Der Christliche Jugendfreund* (1878-1951), *CMC Chronicle* (1980-), *EMC Messenger* (1963-), *EMMC Recorder* (1964-), *Der Leitstern* (1943-1967), *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (1962-), *Mennonite Observer* (1955-1961), *Mennonite Reporter* (1971-1992), *Die Mennonitsche Rundschau* (1880-), *Der Mitarbeiter* (1906-1934) and *Ontario Mennonite Evangel* (1956-1971).

The MHC serials collection also includes a number of journals devoted to cultural, historical or theological topics, ranging in style from popular to scholarly. They include *Conrad Grebel Review* (1983-), *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (1983-), *Mennonite Historian* (1975-), *Mennonite Mirror* (1971-1991), *Mennonitische Lehrerzeitung* (1948-1950), *Mennonitische Volkswarte* (1935-1938), *Mennonitische Welt* (1950-1952), *Rundschau Kalendar* (1927-1935) and *The Voice* (1952-1971).

The MHC has also collected community newspapers of communities

with large Mennonite populations in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. These include *Altona Echo*, *Carillon (News)*, *Morris Herald*, *Pembina Times*, *Red River Valley Echo*, *Saskatchewan Valley News*, *Scratching River Post*, *Steinbach Post* and *Winkler Flyer/Progress*.

A number of periodicals published in the U.S.A. have significant Canadian coverage and readership. Among these, the MHC collection includes, *Christian Living*, *Chrisitan Monitor*, *Gospel Herald*, *Herald of Truth*, *The Mennonite*, *Mennonite Life*, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* and *Der Zionsbote*.

The origins of many Canadian Mennonites lie in Europe and Russia and there are ongoing ties to Mennonites in these areas as well as in South America. Hence the MHC has acquired copies of periodicals such as *Mennonitische Blaetter*, *Die Friedensstimme*, *Der Botschafter*, *Die Odessaer Zeitung*, *Unser Blatt*, *Der Praktische Landwirt*, *Bibel und Pflug* and *Mennoblatt*.

The MHC serials collection also includes the yearbooks of Mennonite educational institutions – high schools, Bible schools and colleges and newsletters and bulletins of historical associations, mission and relief agencies, student groups, conscientious objectors, congregations and youth groups.

Archives Administrative Assistant Connie Wiebe continues to update the inventory as she has for the past 12 years. Check it out at:

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives/holdings/serials/>.

A.R.



Participants at a mini-symposium held at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Wed. June 22 on the subject of the confrontation of the delegates, Jakob Höppner and Johann Bartsch, with the Flemish Mennonite Church Ministerial Council in the Chortitza Colony during the first years of the settlement of Mennonites in New Russia (ca. 1790).

Ed Hoepfner read excerpts from his research paper which included translations of primary source material such as letters to the editor in the *Odessaer Zeitung* written nearly a century after the events occurred. Hoepfner tried to show that the delegates were wrongly indicted and that the Ministerial Council had not always acted in good faith. Photo credit: Bert Friesen.

Vision for the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada

Stories are a basic fabric of life in all cultures. While we believe in, and attempt to live the concepts, theologies and philosophies of Christian life, what brings them to reality is their concrete exemplification within stories to which we can personally relate. Jesus knew this and used it in his ministry constantly. He not only told stories, he elevated them into the exceptional communication form of the parable, i.e. a short story that illustrates a religious principle.

How better to remember our Anabaptist Mennonite heritage than to illustrate these principles with the stories of people who have lived or are living them.

My vision is to help congregations incorporate the faith stories of their members into the corporate culture of their congregation and the broader Canadian Conference church life. The goal is to move from the "my" story to "our" story. As Mennonites of Russian descent, we have done that fairly successfully. While I am an extract of Lutheran/EMC/MB/1870s extraction, I have incorporated the stories of the 1920s and 1940s immigrants into my self-understanding. How did that happen? In large part it happened because I kept hearing those stories. I also knew people who had lived those stories. They were people in my church who were ministers, deacons, friends of the family and Sunday school teachers. They became part of the

fabric of our church life. Just so the church needs to hear the stories of the Chinese, the Laotian, the Vietnamese, the Latin Americans, the Africans whose stories of faith and resilience in times of war, disaster and triumph are now part of who I am as a Christian in a Mennonite Brethren Church somewhere in Canada. "Their" story is now "our" story. Soon it will be "my" story, the story of "my" church.

A part of our problem in becoming a people in mission is the fact that once we have become part of the church and have incorporated "their" story as "our" story, we feel we have arrived. There can be a tendency to now keep that story static. The story of the brokenness with which we came into the church, once accepted, can soon become a way to exclude others. In part that has happened rather unintentionally with the "Russian-Mennonite" story. It can develop into a club of insiders who share a common experience.

I feel strongly that the church can never lose sight of its brokenness. The stories of its people always need be renewed. As we add new stories it should remind us that we are a broken people, constantly coming together, and **becoming** together. In a sense the church never arrives at a static state. It never becomes "pure." It is a journey of renewal with broken people and we never try to keep the brokenness out—rather we try to constantly work towards renewal as we keep adding more brokenness to the church.

At the heart of all this is still the ongoing function of an archives/study

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CENTRE FOR
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Studies** IN CANADA

1310 Taylor Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6

CMBS selected accessions

1. Linda Banman's 3 photograph albums with photos pertaining Brazil and Canada. -- ca. 1930-1990. 2003-019.
2. C.F. Klassen correspondence 1929-1964. 2003-025.
3. The Harder Family Review Index issues 1-64/ Ron Isaak. 2003-038
4. John Lester Voth fonds (grandson to H.S. Voth) including diaries, certificates, photos, correspondence etc. -- 1908-[2003?]. -- 5 cm. 2003-041.
5. A.A. Unruh (Abraham A. Unruh) materials consisting of reports, correspondence and sermons created by Unruh that deal with theology, church polity around missions in India and the MB church in Canada. -- 1952-1974. Included is a 16 mm film. 2003-048.
6. Herbert Bible School photographs of students and faculty. -- 1928-1942. 2004-003
7. Herman Neufeld materials re: the story of his abduction with translation by Walter Regehr.
8. Transcription of vital statistics of the Hepburn Community Cemetery. 1995, 348 names. 2004-008.

CDS



A group of 36 Low German Friends from Germany visited the Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in late August. Interested in preserving and promoting the Low German language they, among other things, publish a quarterly magazine entitled *Plautdietsche Frind*. Most visitors were members of Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren or Baptist and related churches. The tour was organized and led by Gary Waltner, Peter Wiens and Toni Klassen. They were most impressed by the vastness of Canada and the many Mennonite church organizations and church-related projects. Photo credit: Lorie Mayer

1929 Diplomatic Efforts

(cont'd from p. 5)

work on getting the provincial governments onside. The unofficial/official dichotomy led the Soviets to mistrust the position of the German diplomats in Moscow. On the German side, sources clearly indicate that they felt that the Soviet government was simply looking for excuses not to release the refugees.

There were further political missteps that the Soviets used to place the blame for the situation on the Germans. As noted earlier, Ambassador von Dirksen had written a secret report dated August 1, 1929, that was intended for the German foreign minister Curtius. This report was more widely disseminated than had been von Dirksen's intention. As a result a photographic copy of the report was passed on by a communist sympathizer within the German bureaucracy to the Communist newspaper in Berlin, *The Red Banner*. The publication of this document allowed the Soviets to go on the offensive in regard to the Mennonite emigration issue. According to the German documents, the publication of this secret report allowed the Soviets to, however tenuously, connect the emigrants streaming into Moscow with alleged German interference with the internal politics of the USSR.

Another political difficulty was the so-called "press politics" around the Mennonite emigration problem. While past studies have often concluded that the international press was in part responsible for ensuring that at least some of the refugees in Moscow were saved, one might also argue on the basis of the German foreign ministry documents that the sometimes overly zealous and yellow press reporting of some of these newspapers prevented more of the refugees from being rescued. There appears to be a direct correlation between when the arrests and deportations began and when the Soviet government brought what they characterized as unfair news reporting to the attention of the German embassy.

Of particular concern for the Soviets were the reports of a journalist by the name of Scheffer, who was denied reentry into the Soviet Union, and Auhagen who appears to have been a particular thorn in the side of the Soviet bureaucracy. While Scheffer could be denied entry and even arrested, Auhagen enjoyed diplomatic



Decorative wall hanging created with pine branches by refugees expressing thanks. Credit: MHC Photo Collection 500:546.

status and was thus immune from Soviet sanction. This is not to say that he did not come under the scrutiny of the German foreign ministry. He was asked to explain his activity, but he rebuffed them by demonstrating that he had done this on his own time and used his own resources. While von Dirksen informed the Soviets that the German government did not exercise the same kind of control over the press as did the Soviet government, he did note that the press should be convinced to ease up on the emigration issue. In this context, not surprisingly, as the press coverage subsided, so did the arrest of refugees.

Of interest is the manner in which the Mennonites are referred to in relation to their nationality. The German documents consistently refer to them as German refugees or colonists. The Soviets, however, consistently identify their heritage as German, but insisted that as Soviet citizens they were not really the concern of the German government. While one might wonder why the Soviets did not simply let them go, the solution to that question is quite simple. Both the Germans and the Soviets were concerned with the impact of allowing them to leave on their "co-religionists." There is, however, another reason. Allowing them to leave would have potentially shown the Soviet government as unable to control their own population. This could have had a disastrous impact on a regime that had not yet been able to assert itself fully in a land that was as geographically and ethnically diverse as it was. A further reason was that they did not really object to the relief efforts of the international organization and the smaller individual

aid packages sent from the "prosperous" families abroad. These proved to be a good source of added income for many of those in positions of responsibility.

Once the emigration of those around Moscow had been completed, the German embassy continued to monitor the situations. Von Dirksen made certain that his staff made their way to the refugees sent back to their villages. Oddly, their reports indicate that they had been well treated on their return. Even if this were only a short-term situation while the Germans were watching the Soviets, it does not quite square with how the situation has been portrayed in the first-person accounts that have been recently collected and published.

A final note must be made in regard to the tone of the messages sent back and forth between Germany, USSR, and Canada. While for the most part they are fairly objective in their reporting, there is a surprising humanity evident in these diplomatic messages, when read as a continuous narrative. One can feel the frustration and anger of these men who could see disaster coming, but were unable to save the lives of people, who had come to them in fear of their lives.

Endnote

1. The captured German files used in this article are located at the Public Records Office at Kew. The reference for the files used in this article is GMF 33-1981. A photographic copy of the file is available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

Dr. Erwin Warkentin of Brandon is director of Campus Manitoba and an adjunct professor at the University of Waterloo.

Recent Family History books

(cont'd from p. 3)

Eunice Stobbe, the author of the *Bartel Connection* presents the story of her parents, Cornelius Bartel (1888-1964) and Maria Sawatzky (1894-1983). Her father was born in Kansas and moved to the Drake, Saskatchewan area in 1906. Her mother was born in Hoffnungsfeld, Manitoba and moved to the Herbert area in 1905. The Bartel family origins are in the Deutsch Wymyshle area of Poland before coming to Kansas in 1876. The Sawatzky family lived in Neu Osterwick, Chortitza Colony in South Russia before migrating to Canada in 1876.

Contact: Eunice Stobbe, 417-1622 Acadia Dr., Saskatoon, SK S7H 5H7.

Waldheim's celebration of Saskatchewan's centennial

by Harold Jantz

If you drive 50 kilometers directly north of Saskatoon, you'll pass the town of Waldheim. It would have been hard to bypass the place August 12-14, because those days it was celebrating Saskatchewan's centennial. For the town of 900 and hundreds of visitors from across the continent, it was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with old friends and neighbours and enjoy a wide range of activities.

Waldheim--"home in the woods"--was first settled around 1893 and received its largest influx of settlers between 1899 and 1901. At the time of the First World War a further movement of American Mennonite draft resisters moved into the community. The village was organized in 1908 and reached town status in 1967. Throughout its history it has been animated by a strong Mennonite community and in recent years all three churches in the town—a Mennonite Brethren, Mennonite Church and a former KMB (now a part of the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches)—have erected new sanctuaries and have sizeable congregations. A Seventh Day Adventist Church in town no longer holds services, though the speaker on the SDA international television ministry, Henry Feyerabend, hails from Waldheim and until recently lived there.

The celebrations in mid-August were packed with events. Ball games, class reunions, family reunions, a monster parade of nearly a hundred entries, a large craft display in the Zoar Mennonite Church, open house at the local museum and at the group homes associated with the Menno Home facility, a barbecue dinner at the Westview Jubilee Seniors Centre, a Show and Shine display of vintage tractors, trucks and cars that filled the local baseball park, a late night fireworks that rivaled any put on by a city, a Sunday morning joint worship service sponsored by the churches that brought together a congregations of around 700--all formed part of the weekend. The events concluded with a giant birthday cake Sunday afternoon.

Waldheim's population has changed over the years. Its churches have embraced people of a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. An annual missions

THE JOHN AND MARGARET FRIESEN LECTURES IN ANABAPTIST/MENNONITE STUDIES

Presents

Recovering a Heritage: The Mennonite Experience in Poland and Prussia

Featuring **Peter Klassen**, Professor Emeritus of History, California State University, Fresno

November 9-10, 2005, Chapel, Canadian Mennonite University

"A Royal Welcome" (Power Point pictorial presentation) – Nov. 9, 7:30 p.m.

"Courage Amidst Uncertainty" – Nov. 10, 10:30 am

"When Caesar Looks Like God" – Nov. 10, 7:30 p.m.

During the Reformation in Europe, toleration of religious differences was rare. Coercion in matters of faith was common. When one point of view could not establish its dominance over another, a military stalemate frequently resulted. For those without military guardians, as was usually the case with early Anabaptists and Mennonites, the options were few. Yet there was a country in Reformation Europe where the nonconformist beliefs of Mennonites were broadly tolerated. From the early 16th century until its dismemberment late in the 18th century, Poland offered Mennonites a homeland where they could practice their faith, establish homes, earn a living, and build their churches. Despite discordant elements in parts of society, Mennonites always found friends who valued and supported them. And yet acceptance by society also created challenges for Mennonites, especially after Royal Prussia became part of Frederick the Great's Prussia. How much did they owe to a country that welcomed them? And when the dominant elements in that society seemed to present so many positive options, how far should believers accede to the wishes and demands of rulers? Did toleration and acceptance bring obligations that transcended long-held beliefs? How could demands of the state and beliefs of the church be reconciled?

Peter Klassen has lectured and published widely on the story of Mennonites in Poland and Prussia, including *A Homeland for Strangers: An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia* and *Europe in the Reformation*.

conference was 53 years old this year. One of the families that came back for the weekend were of French origin, the Thuriens. They spoke of occasionally feeling like outsiders during their time in Waldheim, yet it held many warm memories for them and they were greeted with hugs by dozens who knew them.

Credit for a well-planned weekend went to Velea Baerg, Charleen Hinz, Cori Anne Lund, Ruth Peters, Wes Hack, Jim Bergen, Neoma Dirks and Dianne Ens, and especially to Mayor Kelly Block and her husband Milton Block, who hosted a number of the events.

Harold Jantz of Winnipeg is the former editor of MB Herald and Christian Week and does some freelance writing.

Gerhard Lohrenz Publication Fund Committee Invites Applications for Publication Grants

Gerhard Lohrenz Publication Fund was established by Gerhard Lohrenz, Mennonite historian, educator and pastor, prior to his death in 1986, to assist in the publication of works dealing with Mennonite life, with preference given to those that relate to the Canadian Mennonite experience. Consideration is given to manuscripts under the broad categories of memoirs, biography, literature (drama, fiction, poetry) and history.

Inquiries about applying for a publication grant should be submitted to the Gerhard Lohrenz Publication Fund Committee, Attn. Paul Friesen e-mail: pfriesen@cmu.ca, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg MB R3P 2N2, 204-487-3300.

Letter to the Editor

Re. Book note on p. 3, 6 on *Mennonite Historian* (June 2005)

I recently received a copy of a book entitled *Die Volkszaehlung im Molotschnaer Mennonitengebiet von 1835*. This book was compiled by Johann Epp of Bielefeld, Germany, and was published last year. This book is a German translation of the 1835 Molotschna Colony Census (Revision List). Overall, I think that Johann Epp did a pretty good job with this book. However, I did some comparison of the book with the original microfilm for just the village of Schardau and found a fair number of errors in the Schardau section. I will list these by family number as follows:

10. The age for Jakob Heinrich Nickel is given incorrectly as 43, when it is actually 45.
14. The age for Gerhard Kornelius Kliever is given incorrectly as 41, when it is actually 42.
16. The first name of Jakob Peter Janzen's first stepson is given incorrectly as Bernhard, when it is actually Peter.
16. The first name of Jakob Peter Janzen's second stepson is given as ?, when it is actually Abraham.
18. The age for Heinrich Johann Abrahams' wife Sara is given incorrectly as 38, when it is actually 32.
26. The entry for Johann Peter Loewen, age 16, omitted the comment for him found in the original: "1847 nach Muntau".
27. The year of transfer of Isaac Martin Fast to Fuerstenwerder is given incorrectly as 1828, when it is actually 1821.
31. The age for Isbrandt Isbrandt von Riesen is given incorrectly as 35, when it is actually 30.

I also found a few minor spelling errors in the Schardau section. For instance, under Family #8 Justina is incorrectly spelled as Jusina and under Family #15 Landskrone is incorrectly spelled as Lanskrone.

I also note that Mr. Epp did not include any of the comments that were added to the original document at a later date, likely at the time the 1850 Revision List was compiled. For instance there are multiple comments about people who died between 1835 and 1850 found in the

original that are not included in the book. Additional comments about people who got married between 1835 and 1850 found in the original are also not included in the book. For instance, under Family #15 a notation is added next to Anna Voth, age 28, that says "Schlabach". This indicates that Anna Voth married a Mr. Schlabach between 1835 and 1850. This information would strongly suggest that this Anna Voth, who is #55400 in the Grandma database, is the same person as Anna Voth #278250 in the Grandma database, who married Christian Schlabach. While some of these comments are barely readable due to the fact that the handwriting is fairly light, at some point all of the comments that are readable should be included with a published version of the census.

It seems clear to me that researchers are going to need to use Mr. Epp's book with caution and preferably should review the original on microfilm if they want to be make sure that the information found in his book is correct for a particular family. It is not clear to me at this point whether the English translation of the 1835 Census published in 1995 by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society will prove to me more accurate in general or if Johann Epp's translation will prove to be more accurate. I suspect that overall, Johann Epp's translation will prove to be more accurate than the MMHS version.

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GAMEO

(cont'd from p. 1)

U.S. editorial board will be established to parallel the current Canadian board. It is hoped the two boards can meet jointly in December 2005, but most of their work will take place by email. The appointments to the U.S. editorial board are incomplete.

Abe Dueck, Executive Director of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission, said GAMEO's ultimate goal is to provide reliable information on all facets of Anabaptist Mennonite life, from 16th century Europe to 21st century Africa and Latin America. Unlike a print publication, GAMEO will continue to be updated and expanded as long as constituency support continues.

Persons wishing to donate to GAMEO, to volunteer for writing or editorial work, or simply to stay informed on the progress of the Encyclopedia can contact any member of the Administrative Group (Bert Friesen (bfrie@mts.net); John Sharp (JohnS@MennoniteUSA.org); Abe Dueck (ajdueck@mbconf.ca); Sam Steiner (mhsc@uwaterloo.ca).



GAMEO Administrative Group: (l-r) B. Friesen, J. Sharp, S. Steiner and A. Dueck

Mennonite Hosts and Refugee Newcomers:

1979-the Present

A Weekend History Conference

30 September – 1 October 2005

Eckhart Gramatté Hall

University of Winnipeg

In 1979 and 1980 thousands of Southeast Asia refugees, escaping the ravages of the Vietnam War and war in neighbouring countries, came to Canada. Many of these newcomers were hosted by Canadian Mennonites, creating new relationships and changing the nature of the Canadian Mennonite churches. Twenty-five years after this moment in history, this conference analyzes, evaluates, reflects and celebrates. This conference features presentations from scholars, hosts and newcomers. The first session begins Fri. Sep. 30, 2005 8:30 a.m.

Hosted by the Chair in Mennonite Studies

Sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites Project) and Mennonite Central Committee Canada

Book Notes

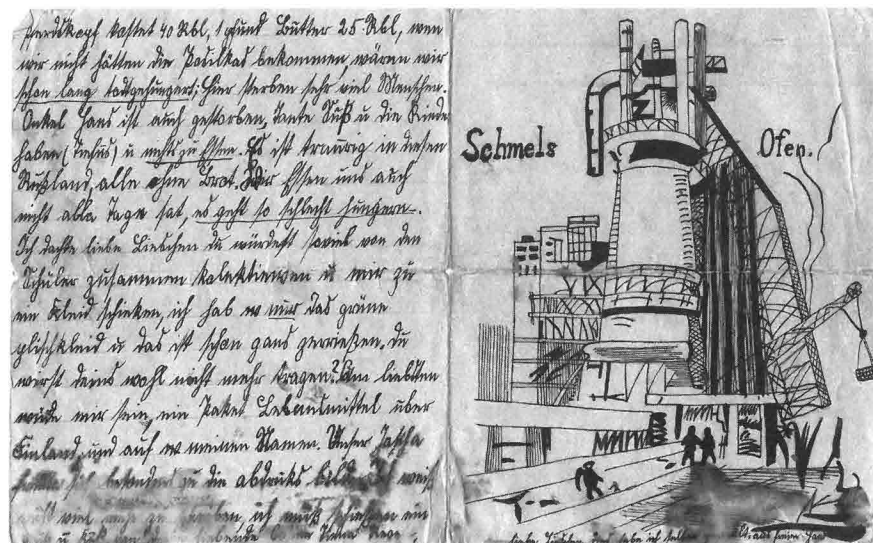
by Adolf Ens

2005, the centennial year of the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, should see a flurry of anniversary publications. For Grace Mennonite Church of Regina it is the 50th anniversary. Tony Nickel, *Celebrate the Journey: Grace Mennonite Church 1955–2005* (Regina: Your Nickel's Worth Publishing, 2005) has made a rich contribution to mark this milestone with a 384-page book, generously illustrated and full of interesting stories. Those who have been part of the congregation will see their story told and interpreted. Other congregations in Mennonite Church Canada may find a challenge in the degree to which GMC has moved from a congregation gathering together rural Mennonites in the city, to become a broadly multicultural body.

The 1954 graduating class of Rosthern Junior College used the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its graduation to publish *RJC Memories: 1954–2004* (Rosthern: Reunion Committee, 2005), 34 + 7 pages of photos. The 8½ x 11 coil-bound booklet consists of biographical sketches of class members in addition to photographs of earlier decade reunions. RJC is also celebrating its centennial this year.

In Manitoba, Loewen is celebrating its centennial. From a sawmill in the woods of southeast Manitoba set up by Cornelius Toews Loewen in 1905, to a lumber and hardware enterprise (C.T. Loewen & Sons) in Steinbach, to Loewen Millwork, the family enterprise begun to specialize in building windows. *Loewen Centennial 1905–2005: Reflecting on the past. Looking to the future* (Steinbach: C.P. Loewen Enterprises Ltd, 2005), 11 x 15, 36 pp. saddle-stitch is an attractive view book with historically informative captions.

Wally Kroeker's *An Introduction to the Russian Mennonites* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2001) provides a well-written brief (122 pages) journalistic overview of the Mennonites who came to America in successive waves beginning in the 1870s. In addition to some historical background of the immigrations, Kroeker surveys the contemporary Mennonite scene not only in the USA and Canada but also in the various Latin American countries in which Russian Mennonite descendants settled.



The spring 2005 issue of *Geist*, a magazine of Canadian ideas and culture, includes a series of letters written 1930 to 1932 by Jasch and Maria (Goosen) Regehr from a Soviet concentration camp. "Remember us as we remember you: Letters from the Gulag," (pages 39–45), is part of a collection of 463 letters accumulated by a family in Carleton Place, Saskatchewan during 1931–1938. Ruth Derksen Siemens mentions in her introduction that she is working of a book whose working title is "Writing Through the Flowers" from Stalin's *Gulags* (1930–38). Liese Regehr's sketch of a smelter, in her letter from Tarabunk on March 8, 1932, accompanied by a note: Dear Liese, this I have drawn with a free hand. Credit: MHC Peter Bagen Letter Collection, Vol 4233:1 (F30). (This issue of *Geist* may be ordered from the MHC, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd. Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 for \$4.50 plus GST.)

Robert L. Klassen, *Life and Times of a Russian-German Mennonite Teacher: Cornelius A. Klassen (1883–1919)* (Arlington, Virginia: by the author, 2005), 8½ x 11, Sirlux- bound, pp. 198, is based in part on diaries kept by Cornelius and his brother Gerhard and the memoirs of their niece Louise. It reflects life in Molotschna, Crimea and briefly in the Amur River region from which the family escaped via China and eventually settled in California. It is an interesting account giving close attention to the broader social-political context of the period of World War I and the upheavals of the Communist revolution.

Henry P. Wieler, *The Quiet in the Land. A Volga-German's Christian Journals: Russian Revolution Years 1916–18*. Edited and abridged by Arthur L. Pavlatos and Michael C. Upton. (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2005), 128 pp. In contrast to the above book, this volume is a much more direct reproduction of diary entries. The author frequently comments on the religious climate and seems to have close involvement with the emerging Siberian Baptist Conference. A number of sermons are included in the diaries.

Lawrence Klippenstein's paper, "Mennonites and Military Service in the Soviet Union to 1939," first appearing in Peter Brock and Thomas P. Socknat, eds. *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918 to 1945*, has been reproduced

in Russian translation in Daniel Heinz and Denis A. Sdvizhkov, eds. *The Quest for Ideal: Essays on the History of Peacemaking and the Intelligentsia*. In Memoriam *Tatiana A. Pavlova* (Moscow: IGH RAS, 2005), pp. 37–62.

Sarah Klassen, ed. *Lithuania Christian College: A Work in Progress* (Winnipeg: Leona DeFehr, 2001), pp. xvi + 238. Most of the hundreds of volunteers who have spent a term or more teaching at this institution will no doubt have seen this book since it came out four years ago. This note is for those (like I) who somehow missed it when it was first published.

Vision for CMBS

cont'd from p. 7

centre—a place dedicated to the preservation and study of documents—whatever form they may take—that tell the story of the people and programs that make up the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. For the Centre, to stay relevant to the mission of the church, it must also reach out to its people in new ways in order to gather, preserve and then communicate the growing and fascinating story of the people who make up that church. During my time at the Centre, that is what I hope to accomplish.

Ken Reddig

Book Reviews

David M Quiring. *The Mennonite Old Colony Vision: Under Siege in Mexico and the Canadian Connection* (Steinbach, MB: Crossway Publications Inc., 2003) 190 pp.

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

Canadian Mennonites have often viewed the Old Colony Mennonites of Mexico as a religious group, and this has caused much of the misunderstanding and mistrust between Canadian organizations and the Mexican colonies. The Old Colony Mennonites are very much an *ethnic* group, with religion being one important element in the structure of that society. The colonists themselves have been adamant in the construction and maintenance of social boundaries that create an (evolving) ethnic identity, knowing that this will help protect their social structure.

As Quiring points out numerous times in his well-researched and sympathetic account of these settlements, the "missionary" nature of MCC work over the last four decades in Mexico has fostered a view of the Old Colony people as practicing an incorrect form of Christianity, rather than as a cultural group with their own forms of logic, worldview, and social relationships. While MCC has in 2003 softened its stance towards change in these settlements, the accusations on the part of Quiring of the missionary agenda in Mexico deserve serious attention. Would MCC make the same assumptions about a non-Mennonite culture they are assisting in another part of the world?

The author provides readers with a detailed and nuanced history of the migration to Mexico, and pays particular attention to the issue of boundary maintenance through cultural practices and material culture. This is extremely useful, as it provides evidence of the unique Old Colony logic of separateness. Policies and practices that may seem irrational to outsiders retain significance when contextualized in history and cultural setting. An example is the prohibition on rubber tires, as opposed to the sanctioned steel wheels. It is not the rubber they object to as a form of advanced technology, but the implications of widespread, faster transit: influences

from the outside world, as well as out-migration, would be dangerous for a society intent on isolation. Quiring also outlines the various forms of rebellion that Old Colonists regularly practice against such prohibitions, whether it is jogging at night or storing rubber tires in case the rules change. Many of these rebellious acts are a conscious mediation of restrictions on observable behaviour and material culture.

Acceptance of change occurs at the community level. Leaders only reluctantly allow these changes: they do not direct them. This brings to light an issue often outlined by critics of the Old Colony society. Leadership, as the author points out, is often characterized as authoritarian and theocratic, working to maintain ignorance and poverty in the population. In fact, leaders are democratically chosen (by men) from among the people. More importantly, authority lies as much in community vigilance and practice, where orthopraxis consistently trumps orthodoxy. The declarations of leaders are not openly thwarted, but collapse slowly under the slow pressures of social change.

Quiring is optimistic that despite the crises and disintegration wrought by economic hardship, increasing contact with non-Mennonite society, and Canadian Mennonite influence, the Old Colonists can survive as a strong and unique society. More importantly, they *should* survive, as a culture in their own right.

Gustav Dueck. *Chortitzer Mennonite Conference 1874 1990* (Steinbach, MB, Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, 2004), hdc., 122 pp., \$30.00 CND.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein, retired and former Historian-Archivist, Conference of Mennonites in Canada

The Chortitzer Mennonite Conference could claim to be the first Mennonite Church "conference" of western Canada. Its original members constituted the Bergthaler component of the Mennonite emigration from South Russia (Ukraine) to Manitoba in 1874 to 1880. This emigration and its background are major themes of Chapters 5 to 7 of this study. Earlier chapters relate the Russian and earlier history of the Mennonites who came to Canada during those years.

The development of the conference, as explored by Dueck in his story, presents the conference in its work and worship at eight main centres in the former East Reserve: Grunthal, Weidenfeld, Niverville, Blumengard/Hochfeld, Silberfeld, Rosengard, Mitchell and Steinbach, as well as three sites beyond those borders: Winnipeg, Prespatou (British Columbia), Osler (Saskatchewan), and the Zion Mennonite congregation at Winkler.

A major facet of the total scene as depicted here has to do with the lives and ministries of bishops, ministers and other leaders in the various congregations. Chapter 12 is given solely to such profiles. Bishops included in the survey here include Bishop Jacob Braun of the Bergthal Colony in south Russia and then Bishops Gerhard Wiebe, David Stoesz, Peter Toews, Martin C Friesen, Peter S. Wiebe, Henry K Schellenberg and Wilhelm Hildebrandt. The current leader, Bishop Diedrich Wiebe, ordained as bishop in 1999 is also listed with the above, and has provided the foreword for the study.

Chapters 9 to 11 are given then to a discussion of worship services and ordinances, missions in Canada and abroad and two institutions – the Waisenamt and the Brandordnung. It is easy to forget that these organizations played a very significant role in the life of church communities at one time, and the CMC Waisenamt is still functioning today.

The spreading of Chortitzer conference members over the years to form the core of other groups notably those of the West Lynne (West Reserve) Gemeinde (later the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church and the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba) is a story closely linked to this one here. Henry Gerbrandt's *Adventure in Faith* (1970) with *Postscript to Adventure in Faith* (1986) and Peter Bergen's *History of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church* (2001) notably, have brought all this together in one larger body of information which may all be integrated more closely one day. One could say that the pioneering work of doing this has been completed with Dueck's work being added to that of the other two.

The Chortitzer Conference office in Steinbach makes this book available to others who might wish to celebrate the work of this conference, and its vision for what it hopes to do in the years to come.