

Mennonite Historian

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



Building community through eating together during an Amish barn-raising.
Photo: CMBS NP149-01-4792. Used by permission from *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*.

The Poetics of Peoplehood: Mennonite Ethnicity and Mennonite Faith in Canada

by Royden Loewen, University of Winnipeg

*The following is an excerpt from a chapter, by the same title, in the forthcoming book: **Ethnicity and Christianity in Canada**, edited by Paul Bramadat and David Seliack. It will be published by Oxford University Press in early 2007.*

At the root of today's debate in the Mennonite community about ethnicity is a venerated narrative of the history of Mennonite ethnicity. That history begins with Mennonites as a religious group known as Anabaptists, the re-baptizers, and consisting of people of various cultural backgrounds. The Anabaptist beginning is usually placed in 1525 in Zurich, Switzerland, but then, as the story goes, it spread rapidly to Austrian, south German, Dutch and north German regions. They are said to have constituted the radical wing of the sixteenth century Protestant reformation that emphasized adult believers baptism, discipleship of Christ (especially pacifism and a simple lifestyle), and a community-centered or communitarian view of the church. An especially powerful early Anabaptist teaching, rooted in medieval Catholic monastic discipline, separated Christ's disciples from a fallen world and called them to constitute nothing less than the Kingdom of God in small, exclusive communities here on earth. A positive

anthropology suggested to Mennonites that humans were not essentially sinful, but by choosing Christ's transforming power, they could create an idealistic community on earth, "the Kingdom of God." (Snyder) Over time their teachings were codified. The Dutch priest Menno Simons' conversion to Anabaptism in 1536 and subsequent voluminous pastoral writings were important in this regard, but so too were numerous catechisms and statements of faith, most notably the Swiss Schleithem Confession of 1527 and the Dutch Dordrecht Confession of 1632. With the 1660 publication of Thieleman van Braght's *Martyrs Mirror* Mennonites began appropriating their own history as part of their Protestant sub-identity and found in the stories of martyrdom in the sixteenth century a "golden age", a measure of complete and pure religious commitment.

Using history in this way certainly placed the Mennonites on the road to becoming an ethnic group. But so too

did intense persecution of both the Swiss and the Dutch Mennonites which drove them into the countryside and to neighboring countries that welcomed craftspeople and farmers. The Swiss found refuge in the German-speaking regions of the Palatinate in modern southern Germany and Alsace-Lorraine in modern western France, before migrating in large numbers to Pennsylvania after 1711. The Dutch found refuge in England and northern Germany, but especially in northern Poland's Vistula River Delta and in and near the city of Danzig (Gdansk). Between 1788 and 1804 the majority of the Dutch Mennonites migrated even farther east to the steppes of present-day Ukraine, in those days South or New Russia. In each of these places the Mennonites found peace and tolerance and created close-knit agricultural communities where religious teaching emphasized separation from worldly ways of fashion, power and militarism.

It was in this context that Mennonite society began to evolve an ethnic dimension. They shared cultural practices, artistic expressions, foodways, clothing styles and architectural traditions, the latter two often accorded special religious meaning. The Mennonites also developed particular dialects, consisting of their native language (Swiss-German for the Swiss and Flemish for the Dutch) amalgamated with the language of their hosts (West Prussian Low German for the Dutch in Poland and Palatine German for the Swiss). When the Swiss in South Germany moved on to Pennsylvania after 1711 and the Dutch Mennonites in Poland migrated to Russia after 1788 these cultural practices and dialects were transplanted into new settings and took on even stronger ethnic qualities. Sociologist E.K. Francis argues that the political arrangement in Russia that saw Mennonites create their own mini-commonwealths, was especially important in the evolution of a Mennonite ethnicity. In fact by the mid-nineteenth century in Russia, argues Francis, "it became possible for one to be a Mennonite and yet not to be a member of the Mennonite church." (104) Meanwhile, in Pennsylvania the Swiss Mennonites took a similar, albeit distinctive approach; for the Mennonites here, writes Steve Nolt, "as an ethnic identity, Pennsylvania German-ess provided a distinct and primary sense of ordering one's world, establishing distance from surrounding, mainstream American society...." (490) Mennonites

(cont'd on p. 2)

thus had become a people with the defined cultural artifacts of a migrant people.

These disparate traits of Mennonite ethnicity were transplanted to Canada, where they soon became even more fragmented. Swiss-Pennsylvania Mennonites migrated to Upper Canada after the American Revolution, beginning in 1788, but in sizeable numbers after 1800. They came speaking the Palatine-Pennsylvania German (erroneously dubbed "Pennsylvania Dutch") and embraced a distinctive set of foodways, clothing fashion, vehicular styles (especially the blue-coloured Conestoga Wagon), architectural forms, musical traditions, folk medical traditions, and artistic expressions they had honed in eighteenth century Pennsylvania. (Berkey and Hunsberger, Beck) The purchase of a large land block from what some historians suggest were uninformed Six Nations Aboriginals allowed Mennonites to create separated, homogeneous communities. (Good) Adding to their distinctiveness a creative and energetic early leader Benjamin Eby, rewrote German hymns, penciled a German catechism, created a network of German-language church-run schools and church conferences in three distinct communities in Upper Canada.

When the Dutch Mennonites came to Canada from Russia in three distinct

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waves in the 1870s, 1920s and 1940s (and even as they continue arriving today in a series of prolonged chain migrations via Low-German speaking places in Latin America and Kazakstan), they bore distinctive ethnic features which they replicated in isolated communities. In the 1870s they arrived in western Canada after treaties with Aboriginal people had ushered the First Nations onto reserves and at a time when the ready availability of farm land allowed them significant social distance from other Euro-Canadian settlers. Numbering 7000 persons, speaking Low German (a mixed Flemish-West Prussian dialect) and settling on exclusive land blocks, they named "reserves", the East and the West Reserves, they made a cultural impact. On these land blocks they also replicated old world farm villages, including conjoined house-barns. Here too they recreated a set of institutions; not only schools, but fire insurance agencies, mutual aid societies, village councils, and farm cooperatives. Geographer John Warkentin notes that "perhaps nowhere in North America has a peasant culture from Europe been so completely re-established" so as to constitute a "virtual transplanting." (1)

Women's roles in maintaining the cultural cohesion of these early Canadian communities is apparent in several ways. Among both the Swiss Mennonites of Ontario and the Dutch in Manitoba, an egalitarian inheritance system and teachings about agrarian self-sufficiency provided Mennonite farm women with special status in everyday life, even though their churches were completely patriarchal. In Manitoba, for example, the transplanted institution of the "Waisenamt," usually linked to providing credit to the poor, was in fact more directly linked, as its name "The Orphans Bureau" suggests, to the enforcement of a religiously-sanctioned and elaborate inheritance practice. Under it boys and girls shared equally in an estate and both wives or husbands were allowed ownership of (or entitled to) only one half of the farm property after the death of their spouse. This unusually gender neutral system guaranteed that both genders and children of all ages were equally motivated to stay within the community where they had reasonable expectations for an economic standing. Then, too, it allowed a high degree of matrilocality, a phenomenon in which the bride attracted the groom to come to

reside in her village, providing the young wife with status not found in patrilocality societies. Especially, significant, this system allowed the ethnic group itself to guard against being overtaken by a strictly clan-based society. Women in these communities were also accorded a measure of status by their active roles in self-sufficient farm households, being in charge of the dairy and poultry aspects of the farm, activities that not only provided them with the status of economic productivity, but with knowledge that they were contributing towards the maintenance of social boundaries. (Loewen 1993, 2001) Finally, it was also the women who taught Low German folklore and "street songs" to their children during the first seven years of their lives; during the second set of seven years before the age of majority, that is age 7 to 14, the children were taught the religious texts in High German by the male village schoolteacher. (D. Klassen)

When the second wave of Dutch-Russian Mennonites, numbering some 20,000 souls, arrived in Canada between 1923 and 1929 as refugees of the Russian Revolution, they reflected a culture that had begun evolving from a Low German to a High German-based ethnicity. Similar patterns characterized the third wave when some 8000 people arrived as refugees of the Second World War between 1948 and 1952. James Urry argues that integration in Russia had encouraged these Mennonites intentionally to cultivate the formal High German, a more forceful social boundary from their Slavic neighbours than the earthy everyday Low German. Then, too, these Mennonites had encountered and developed certain loyalties to the German state; it was the German army that occupied the Mennonite colonies during both the First and Second World Wars, restoring Mennonite religious culture as well as peace and order. Some of these Mennonites even toyed with National Socialism and its idea of a global German "Volk". But even this affinity with things German had its limits. James Urry writes that with the passage of the anti-German laws in Russia, many "Mennonites attempted to prove their 'Dutch' ancestry, ransacking family archives for Old Dutch books and journals" (249) and that after the Second World War, to avoid reparation to the Soviet Union, Mennonites "often claimed Dutch ancestry, crossing into the Netherlands and [thus] eventually

(cont'd on p. 8)

Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

Queries

Braun / Jantz – Looking for information about **Catherine Braun** born May 7, 1892 in Henderson, Nebraska to Mr. and Mrs. Braun nee Catherine Buschman. Catherine had one brother Johann Braun born November 2, 1884. The family moved to the Mountain Lake, Minnesota area in 1895 and later to Saskatchewan where she married **Peter Jantz** in 1912. The Jantz family later lived around Cooked Creek, Alberta. Contact: Mable Gunter, PO Box 213, Pouce Coupe, BC V0C 2C0.

Recent Books

Peter Pauls, editor. *The Stone House Memoirs: The Story of the J.M. Pauls Family* (Winnipeg, MB: Private Publication, 2005) 281 pp.

This book contains some of the memories of the children of minister and Bergthaler Mennonite bishop Jacob M. Pauls (1903-1961) and his wife Maria (Funk) Pauls (1905-1997). The book produced mainly for the grandchildren and great-grandchildren begins with a look back at the “idyllic existence” in South Russia, something of which the parents tried to re-create, through their life in Canada, where their first more permanent home was the “stone farm” just west of Morden, Manitoba. The book includes translations of letters, excerpts from diaries and reflective writings by the children. Photographs, ancestry charts, descendant lists and illustrations provide additional context for the story.

Carolyn Epp-Fransen. *A Family Story: Katie Rempel & Edward G. Epp* (Winnipeg, MB: Carolyn Epp-Fransen, 2005)

The booklet begins with the story of the author's mother, Katie Rempel, born in 1926 in Schoenau, Molotschna, South Russia to Peter Rempel and Justina (Hildebrandt) Rempel. Based on her mother's memoirs, she chronicles the struggle for survival during the 1930s as the father is arrested and exiled and food

is difficult to get, followed by the trek eastward in 1943 and the eventual immigration to Canada in 1948. This story is followed by a compilation of the story of the author's father, Edward G. Epp born 1924 in Waldheim, Saskatchewan, son of a school teacher, Gerhard Epp. In 1946 Edward began working in Ontario in seasonal farm work. In 1952 Katie Rempel and Edward Epp were married in Ontario. The book continues the story of raising their family and experiencing the joys of grandchildren. Photographs and genealogical data are also included. Contact: Carolyn Epp-Fransen, 780 Waterloo St., Winnipeg MB R3N 0T6

Catherine (Enns) Kirkland. *The Lineage of Peter Johann Schroeder (1859-1933) and Katharina Janzen (1862-1941): Their ancestral families Wiens, Schmidt, Janzen, Schroeder and some of their Descendants* (Regina, SK: Private Publication, 2006) 60 pp.

This publication begins by tracing the ancestral lines of Peter J. Schroeder (1859-1933) and his wife Katharina Janzen (1862-1941). Schroeder was born on the Neutich Estate near Tashtchenak (South Russia). Later he developed the Shelannaya estate near the Memrick colony. Peter J. Schroeder died in 1933 in Kuban, North Caucasus, Russia. The final section includes a listing of their descendants. Contact: John & Catherine Kirkland, 5 Tibbits Road, Regina, SK S4S 1N5.

Peter Unger 1812-1888 A Work in Progress

A compilation of the descendants of Peter Unger's 22 children of which 14 married. Over 750 pages. Price \$50 plus postage and handling. Contact:

F. Dyck, 17-200 Ronald St.,
Winnipeg, MB R3J 3J3
Phone: 204-897-1031

Genealogy List-Serves

by Tim Janzen with Charlotte McRae

E-mail lists are a great way to exchange information with others who have similar interests. When someone posts a query to a list you subscribe to, you will receive that message in your E-mail and can respond to their query. The two most popular E-mail lists that focus on Mennonite genealogy are the Menno-Roots list on RootsWeb and the Menno.rec.roots list on MennoLink. The Menno-Roots list is free and currently has 200 subscribers. In the past year this list has been averaging about five messages per month. To subscribe to the Menno-Roots list visit: <http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/other/Religion/MENNO-ROOTS.html>. There is also a Volhynian Mennonite list on RootsWeb, but it has been very inactive the past several years.

The Menno.rec.roots list is hosted by MennoLink, an independent service that provides a variety of E-mail lists of interest to Mennonites. This list has been busier in the past, but currently seems to average about one or two messages per month. Another E-mail group, the Menno.rec.study.history list, focuses on Mennonite history and occasionally messages are posted that would be of interest to Mennonite genealogists. It had been very inactive the past year. There are 366 subscribers to these lists. MennoLink charges \$25 per year for its basic service, but one can join these two lists as a non-paying member. Non-paying members receive messages two days later than those who pay for the service. Visit www.mennolink.org for details.

A comprehensive list of E-mail lists pertaining to genealogy research may be found at www.rootsweb.com/~jfuller/gen_mail.html. Another great source of information is www.rootsweb.com. If one goes to <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com> one can access a database containing over 420 million names where many Mennonite researchers have uploaded files.

Tim Janzen is a family practice physician and avid Mennonite genealogist who lives in Portland, Oregon.

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



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Cornelius Krause Mexican Photo Collection

At a family roots genealogy day in 2002 at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba Jacob Doerksen showed me a large number of photographs of Mexico taken in 1923. Some of the photos were long panorama style photos which measure 33 x 10 cm. Most of them were badly faded. I was excited to see these photos as I had not seen such early photos of the Mennonite areas in Mexico before. I was also concerned about the deterioration of the photos.

Doerksen's grandfather, Cornelius Krause of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church, together with Jacob Froese and P.A. Friesen of the Old Colony Mennonite church took a trip to Mexico to visit relatives and, for Krause, to consider settling in Mexico where members of the Old Colony and Sommerfeld Mennonite Church were pioneering rather than in Paraguay. The Chortitzer Church had sent a delegation to Paraguay in 1921 and decided to move there but only did so in 1926. These church groups moved to Mexico and Paraguay because they believed they could not trust the Canadian government after the negative experiences during World War I including the school crisis (1916) which forced children out of community governed schools into government schools.

Once in Mexico Krause was taken to various locations where he took photos and others were given to him by a



Peter A. Friesen ranch, in Sommerfeld, Santa Clara Mexico, taken October 6, 1923.
Photo: MHC Collection 590:84 (digitally enhanced)

Mexican land agent presumably in the hope of convincing more immigrants to come to Mexico. The photos which Krause took himself show people and places visited on the trip in Mexico (MHC collection 592). These photos tend to be of people and personal interest. A few photos are identified including the house of Sommerfeld Bishop Abraham Doerksen, Bishop Doerksen's son and his family, and a photo of Krause himself. Other photos include orchards, live stock, machinery, and Mexican urban centres.

The photos by the land agent (MHC collection 590) were taken before the

arrival of the Mennonite delegation and during their visit to Mexico. They show road and railway construction, wide open wild areas, rivers and ponds, villages, homes, and fields successfully developed by the Old Colony and Sommerfeld Mennonites in the Santa Clara area. Lot numbers are used and in a few cases villages and owners of the land are named. When people are depicted on the photos they are unidentified and in many cases faces are not visible.

The Doerksen family wanted the photos to remain in the family so the Heritage Centre selected the best photos for duplication. A two-step approach was adopted. The photos were scanned in color at 300 dpi and saved as high quality tiff files and saved on archival quality CDs as well stored on a server that is backed up regularly. Because of the uncertainty of the long-term viability of electronic media a negative was also made of the photos using a 120mm film camera for the panorama photos and a regular 35 mm film camera for the smaller photos Krause took himself. The photos were then described in our photo database and the negatives and CDs stored in the archival vault.

With this approach we hope that these unique and rare photos of Mennonites in Mexico will be preserved long-term for people to see and learn from.

Conrad Stoesz



Steam powered well drilling machine traveling along a road through a treed area. Six men stand beside the machine posing for a photo. A wagon with a water tank is behind them. Photo: MHC Collection 592:27



Removing old, cracked cement stairs to make room for new ramp sidewalk. This summer there will be a number of upgrades to the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Work is already completed replacing the front and back sidewalks decreasing the grade and taking out the steps in the front. Still on the slate is re-shingling the east roof and installation of a new fire alarm.

Photo by Conrad Stoesz



CENTRE FOR

**Mennonite
Brethren
Studies** IN CANADA

1310 Taylor Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6

Two projects coming to completion at the Centre

Since October the Centre has assisted in the development, delivery and now has completed tabulating a comprehensive *"Pastoral trends and needs assessment"* questionnaire. It was sent to over 1,300 Mennonite Brethren pastors who are currently serving, or who have served in the past.

This research project, a first for Mennonite Brethren, is being conducted under the direction of Dieter J. Schoenwetter, a Winnipeg-based social scientist and assistant professor at the University of Manitoba.

The survey instrument was constructed to reveal MB ministry demographics, attrition rates, current needs of pastors, as well as get at the causes of pastoral success or difficulty. It is hoped that the results will reveal a fuller picture of the ministerial path in order to create an environment in which people can exercise their leadership gifts.

The results have been entered into a database and Dr. Schonwetter is currently analyzing the results. Those who completed the survey will get to see the initial results first and the results will then be presented at the Canadian Conference *Gathering* July 6-8 in Calgary.

The project was initiated by and being funded by the MB Seminary's *Hearing the Call* project. The Centre managed the process.

The second project is the annual statistical survey of Mennonite Brethren congregations. Results have been gathered from congregations and the statistics have largely been entered into the database and will be released at *Gathering* in Calgary. These results are a yearly checkup on who we are, and how we are ministering and growing as a conference and as individual congregations. The Centre hopes in the future to make the statistics from each congregation collected over the past 20 years available in digital format to the congregations themselves for their own use.

KR



Winkler Opens a new Concert Hall

by Bert Friesen

The P. W. Enns Centennial Concert Hall will be officially opened 11 June 2006. It was originally the Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church. It was purchased recently by the City of Winkler with a major donation from the P. W. Enns Foundation. A city management team has overseen some \$2 million in renovations. It will seat 510 patrons on two levels.

Additional features of the hall are spaces for teaching and dressing rooms for performers.

The facility will host a theatre school and a music conservatory. Another educational component is a cooperative effort with Red River College. Credit will be given for courses in audio and video technology, stage lighting technology, and back stage management. The audio and video technology will be helpful for the many congregational volunteers who operate audio and video systems within their respective congregations.

Bert Friesen is a Winnipeg researcher.

Summer Staff and changes at the Centre

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies continues to be a busy place for staff, researchers and a new crop of volunteers. Our staff of Ken and Conrad have enjoyed the company of Abe Dueck, executive secretary of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission as well as David Perlmutter who is working on various tasks in the archives including data entry, indexing, filing, and creating new book spine labels for books in the J.A. Toews library.

This summer we are pleased to welcome back Donovan Giesbrecht for a sixth consecutive summer thanks to a Young Canada Works grant from the Department of Canada Heritage. He will be working on the annual statistical compilation from the various congregations, updating finding aids, and creating new finding aids. Another student will start in July thanks to a grant from the Canadian Council of Archives

through the Association for Manitoba Archives for the production of finding aids.

We are pleased to have four new volunteers that have been helping us at the Centre. Ed Lenzmann comes once a week and files periodicals, sorts organizational and congregational records, and helps with various research projects. Clara Toews, Kathy Ewert, and Lois Wedel have started coming to the archives on a monthly basis--more often for special projects. They have worked through collections of records getting them ready for archival processing. They, together with others, have been a major help in entering the data for the *Pastoral trends* research project.

While there has been an increase in staff, researchers, volunteers, and projects there is always room for more people to become involved.

KR



Register your stained glass windows

Over the past few years a number of older church buildings in Manitoba have been destroyed by fire or significantly vandalized. Most had beautiful stained glass windows that were destroyed or damaged to the point of requiring expensive repair.

As a result, a Winnipeg based firm, Prairie Stained Glass Ltd., has begun **The Historic Stained Glass Registry**. This free registry for Manitoba churches presently, is very easy to use. Simply fill out a brief registration form, along with photos and the approximate sizes of the windows. As much as possible the photographs should be taken directly against the windows, and in colour, so that any future restoration work can be as accurate as possible.

Brian McMillan of the firm notes that; "The biggest challenge we had was trying to replace missing glass pieces when there were no existing photographs of the windows in their original state."

The East European Genealogical Society (EEGS) and the **Federation of East European Family History Societies (FEEFHS)** will hold an international genealogical conference on August 4-6, 2006 at the Victoria Inn, 1808 Wellington Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Presentations include the following topics among others:

Mennonites and Hutterites – Beginning & Early Developments (John J. Friesen)

Mennonites and Hutterites – Migration and Settlement (John J. Friesen)

German Migration to Linguistic Enclaves in the East (Ed Brandt)

Genealogical Records in the Prussian East (Ed Brandt)

Die Ahnenstammkartei des Deutschen Volkes (Central Index of the German People) (Ed Brandt)

Hands-on Approach to Learning the Cyrillic Alphabets (Matthew Bielawa)

1897 census of Imperial Russia (Thom Edlund)

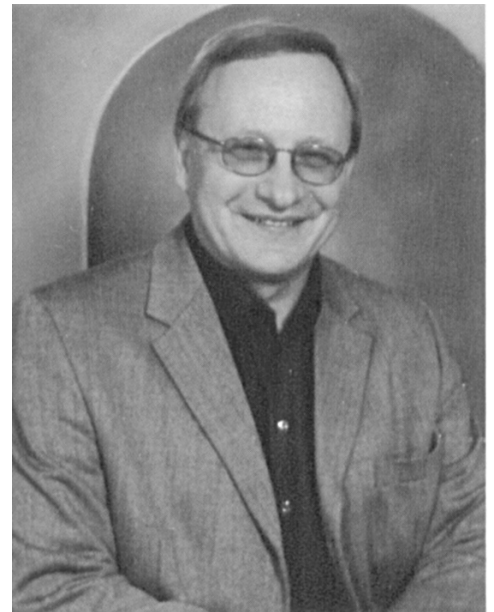
For further information check EEGS website at www.eegsociety.org
phone EEGS Voice Mail at (204) 989-3292 or e-mail at info@eegsociety.org

The firm does not charge for this service nor do they expect to be asked to work on any future restoration. They simply feel that stained glass windows are sometimes some of the most valuable and most meaningful artwork that churches have. It is often what people remember most about a particular church building.

If your Manitoba congregation has windows that you would like to register simply contact Prairie Stained Glass Ltd. by emailing psg@mts.net for their registration form. Depending on their Manitoba response they may extend the registry to all of Canada.

Interestingly McMillan also noted that stained glass windows, even if very simple in design, require regular maintenance work. The lead that holds the stained glass pieces in place can disintegrate over time and cause windows to buckle and fall apart. While stained glass windows have a fairly long lifespan—they still need to be checked every five years for maintenance. Catching some early deterioration and fixing it can avoid major costly repairs later.

He also noted the value of these windows. Some of the more ornate and complex windows are easily worth over \$100,000. Collectors and theme restaurants love to obtain windows from churches that are no longer in use and will pay premium prices for them. It is rather sad that windows that began as beautiful aids to worship can, over time, become mere art objects.



Hans Werner Appointed D.F. Plett Foundation's First Executive Director

The D.F. Plett Historical Foundation Inc. is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Hans Werner as its first executive director. The decision was ratified at the Foundation's spring meeting held on May 8 at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba.

Werner, 53, a native of Steinbach and past resident of Winkler where he was part owner of a farm corporation and served as chair of the local Credit Union, now resides in Winnipeg with his wife Diana. Hans and Diana attend Bethel

Mennonite Church and have three grown children.

Werner who speaks Low German and High German, has just completed a history book on Winkler, *Living Between Worlds*. In 2002 he received a doctorate degree from the University of Manitoba with a comparative study of the migration of German Protestants from Eastern Europe to Canada and Germany and their struggle in establishing a sense of home in new places. Over the past few years Werner has taught Canadian and Mennonite History at the University of Winnipeg.

Werner's duties with the Plett Foundation will include administering its grants program, co-editing the *Preservings* magazine, overseeing the publication and distribution of history books on Old Colony and other conservative Mennonite groups, and general administrative tasks. The Plett Foundation office will be located at the University of Winnipeg. As his position with the Plett Foundation is a half-time placement, Werner has also been granted a half-time position by the University of Winnipeg teaching Canadian and Mennonite History.

Werner can be reached at 204-786-9295. All correspondence to the Foundation as well as letters to *The Preservings* magazine can still be sent to D.F. Plett Foundation, Box 1960, Steinbach, MB.

In accepting his new appointment Werner expressed his enthusiasm for the mandate of the Foundation. He noted that "I am pleased to be involved with this important work to recover, preserve and tell the story of the Mennonites who migrated to Canada in the 1870s and then spread to Saskatchewan and Alberta, and from there to Mexico, Paraguay, Bolivia and other Central and South American countries, with many descendants returning to Canada." Royden Loewen, chair of the Plett Foundation board noted: "We are very pleased that a person with Hans's range of abilities and interests, and his energy and sense of integrity, will administer the foundation's programs. We are confident that the Foundation's mission to further a respectful approach to the history of conservative Low German Mennonites of the Americas will be enhanced with Hans's appointment."

The Plett Foundation was founded by the late Delbert F. Plett of Steinbach, and is funded by an inheritance from his estate. For more information on the Foundation visit plettfoundation.org.

War and the Conscientious Objector: A History Conference: 20-21 October 2006

During the Second World War, 10,000 Canadians sought alternatives to military service. Their story remains virtually untold, having been largely relegated to short print-run books and contributions to archival collections.

On October 20-21, 2006, a conference will highlight the experience of Canadian conscientious objectors in the Second World War, when about 60% of Mennonite men who were called to military service refused to participate in active military service and sought options for alternative service through a program negotiated by Mennonite leaders with the Canadian Federal Government.

Though their experience reflects the teaching of the Mennonite church, many people know very little about the story and significance of the conscientious objectors, even within the Mennonite community.

This conference will take a critical look at the experience of the Canadian conscientious objector in the Second World War and interpret it in today's context, a time in which war is widely offered as a way to peace and democracy.

The *War and the Conscientious Objector* conference will feature speakers from various Mennonite denominations as well as from the Jehovah's Witness, Doukhobor and Quaker denominations. In addition experts on pacifism in Canada, university students, peace activists and Second World War conscientious objectors will engage the topic.

The 65-year-old story of the Second World War conscientious objectors offers one model of dealing with war in today's world and forces people to ask, "What is the right response today to war and violence?"

The Chair of Mennonite Studies will host the lectures at the University of Winnipeg. All sessions are free. Selected lectures will be published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.

The planning committee includes John Derksen, Esther Epp-Tiessen, Royden Loewen, Conrad Stoesz, and Hans Werner.

For further information contact Royden Loewen r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca, phone 204-786-9391 or visit www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies. CDS

Anti-slavery petition unearthed by Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust

May 25, 2006. PHILADELPHIA — The manuscript of the first protest against slavery in North America written in Germantown in 1688 by a group that included Quakers and former Mennonites has been rediscovered more than 50 years after it was last seen.

The document was uncovered this spring in the vault at the Arch Street Friends Meetinghouse in downtown Philadelphia, according to Randy Nyce, director of the Germantown Mennonite Historic Trust.

The text was composed by four men who wrote that they objected to "the traffick of men-body" in the colonies.

According to retired Goshen (Ind.) College history professor Leonard Gross, one of the men was a Lutheran Pietist named Daniell Francis Pastorius. Two others — Derick and Abraham upde Graeff — were Quakers who had been Mennonites in Europe. The fourth, Garret Hendericks, was presumed to be of Mennonite heritage, Gross said.

Since there was no formally organized Mennonite congregation in the colonies until 1698, the document is generally regarded as being Quaker in origin.

Slavery was an issue of some contention among colonial-era peace churches. While some Quakers owned slaves, most Mennonites did not.

Historians know of only one North American Mennonite, a baker named Cornelius Bom, who owned a slave. Gross said little is known about Bom, except that he immigrated to Germantown from the Netherlands in 1683 and died before 1689. Slave ownership was rare among Pennsylvania Germans in general, Nyce said, because landowners who needed and could afford labor preferred German-speaking indentured servants rather than slaves. The anti-slavery petition did not have a very broad base of support. After being circulated among several Friends meetings in 1688, it was judged too weighty a matter to be dealt with at the time. As a result, it was largely forgotten. When the petition was rediscovered in 1841, the issue was treated with greater urgency because the abolitionist movement had started in the United States. Reprinted by permission from *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

Book Reviews

Brock, Peter. *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Reformation to the Second World War* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2006), xii, 462pp.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

Of Dr. Peter Brock, emeritus professor of the Department of History at the University of Toronto, it has been said: "He has long been and now clearly remains, the premier historian of conscientious objection not only in his main areas of concentration.... (Eastern Europe, Holland, Britain, the US) but ...for the whole field of war resistance". (Michael Nagler, from the University of California, Berkley).

Here we get a collection of twenty five essays, revised from materials which have been published over a period of many years, and are serving ably now to update information for a world wide community that continues to be torn by violence and war without end. The countries of Poland, Australia, France, Canada, the US, Norway, Hungary, Russia and Britain especially, Slovakia, Japan, New Zealand and Germany are all represented in the chapters that comprise the book. Some interesting other aspects of conscientious objection, like the production of CO prison *samizdat* ("underground writing") are discussed as well.

Mennonite readers who possibly may find the one chapter on the Doopsgezinden of The Netherlands somewhat modest for discussion of the contributions of their co-religionists, will discover as they check the index of this volume, and as they read other volumes by Dr. Brock, that he has quite a good knowledge of (and much respect for) these COs too, all the way from Anabaptist times right to the last century (see *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (1972), chs. 2, 3, 6 and 11, and *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918 – 1945* (1999)), chs 1, 14, 16, and 19, for example).

To examine individual chapters in detail is not possible here. However the sweep of countries covered in the research clearly shows that conscientious objection is by no means just a Historic Peace Churches' "thing". COs have appeared in a myriad of church and indeed other types

of different communities. And while the total numbers may be relatively small (compared to non-COs), they have made an impact in many settings which is well worth knowing about – and quite astounding, and inspiring, in many ways.

It should also be noted that alternative service has not been a legal option in all the settings where COs have emerged. Many of them have simply suffered the consequences, even when, notably in the case of Jehovah Witnesses in Germany, where, in Nazi times particularly, that meant almost certain death. It has been observed (most recently in Dr. Abraham Friesen's latest study titled *In Defense of Privilege*), that many Mennonites in the post-Anabaptist (sixteenth century) period basically lost their readiness to suffer and die for this particular cause, so that they have often tended to think that if great suffering and death must be the only alternative then being a CO was not an "option".

That reality gives us room to reflect on what price Mennonites are really ready to pay for the cause of resisting war or any other forms of violence, for that matter. Dr. Brock's "bigger picture" is most needed, and instructive, when it comes to giving a Christian witness in the form of conscientious objection to violence anywhere and all the time.

All in all, the University of Toronto Press has done all COs, everyone who supports their cause, and the author of this very fine study, most proud indeed.

Mennonite Ethnicity

(cont'd from p. 2)

found new homes in Canada or Paraguay." (255) Nevertheless, the High German language was a crucial ethnic marker for these early twentieth century immigrants and engaged in rancorous church struggles to protect the "Muttersprache" from disappearing. (Ediger) Elaborate church conferences, especially the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (also known as the General Conference or the GCs) and the more pietistically-inclined Mennonite Brethren (the MBs), were expanded, complete with youth organizations, mission boards, mutual aid associations, and church choirs, all of which reinforced the High German language. (Ens, Toews)

To sum up matters in the most simple of terms, part of the identity of most Canadian Mennonites is interwoven in

Peter Brock Passes Away

Peter Brock, professor emeritus of History at University of Toronto and "the world's foremost scholar of pacifist history," died in Toronto on May 28, 2006 at the age of 86.

Brock was a conscientious objector in Britain in the Second World War, was briefly imprisoned and then performed alternative service, followed by volunteer relief work in postwar Poland. Brock was read and admired by many Mennonite scholars and readers who learned much about themselves and other pacifist movements in his thirty books and numerous articles. Among these are *A Brief History of Pacifism from Jesus to Tolstoy*, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century*, and *Freedom from Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War*.

About Brock, it was said, "No ideology owes more to one academic than pacifism owes to Peter Brock, whose scholarship on the topic began when pacifism was an unfashionable subject."

Brock was married to Quaker Carmen Williamson, who died in 1998.

this two-fold historical narrative: first, Mennonites began as Anabaptists, the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation, a purely religious movement; second, over time as a result of secluded agrarian life, their faith was undergirded by ethnicity, by the Pennsylvania "Dutch" culture for the Swiss Mennonites in Ontario, the agrarian Low German for the Dutch Mennonites who arrived in southern Manitoba in the 1870s, and the more urbanized High German for Mennonites who arrived from the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1940s. Importantly, Canadian Mennonite society today is no longer divided along these three lines, but along lines of relatively progressive, English-speaking and urbanized Mennonites (of Dutch, Swiss and German decent) and conservative, agrarian 'old order' and Low German or Pennsylvania "Dutch"-speaking Mennonites.

Editors note: The composition of the Mennonite community in Canada is now changing significantly. While the above notes the roots of Mennonites in Canada, today congregations in Canada worship in approximately 20 different language groups. The largest growth currently is among non-European Mennonites.