

Congolese Mennonite Brethren Names

by Faith Nickel

If your surname is Friesen, Thiessen, Hiebert or Klassen, chances are you know enough about your Mennonite heritage to trace your ancestors back to their home towns in Russia. What if your name is Masolo, Djimbo, or Kulepeta? These names also represent a vibrant historical legacy of Mennonite Brethren brothers and sisters. Though these Congolese names are hard for us to pronounce, they belong alongside the Epps and Reimers we know so well.

A curious fact about the history of missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is that in the early 1900's, the various Protestant churches that were sending missionaries to the Congo agreed to divide up the country into different Protestant zones. This meant there would be no redundancy of church work. It also meant that, if you belonged to a tribe from the northern Bandundu province, you were probably American Baptist. If you were from southern Bandundu, you were Mennonite Brethren. While European Mennonites have a unique, ethnic history, Congolese Mennonites can equally claim a unique, ethnic history. If you belong to the Chokwe, Pende or Lunda tribes, there's a good chance you are Mennonite. Therefore, just as western Mennonites can trace their family names back in history, so Congolese Mennonites can trace their family names back to the earliest Mennonite roots in the rural regions of Congo.

The Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo spread from its rural roots to the capital city of Kinshasa in the 60's. A city that was reserved for the Catholic Church now opened its doors to Protestant churches. Within forty years, forty Mennonite Brethren churches were planted in Kinshasa. The growth of churches in an urban setting introduced a new set of dynamics and an uneasy tension into the M.B. Conference of Congo. Though the conference leaders lived in rural Congo, members of urban churches more often had higher education, and represented a hodgepodge of tribal groups that weren't necessarily Mennonite in origin.

The Batela church is an interesting example of the urban phenomenon. In the 90's, under Dr. Nzuzi's leadership, the

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Baby shower for Sarang Yang, daughter of Kyung Hee Lee and Jae Kyung Yang hosted by Charleswood Mennonite Church, 1997. Photo credit: John P. Braun

Huns and Barbarians: A Korean Mennonite Ministry

By John P. Braun

Ten years ago something new happened at Charleswood Mennonite Church. Ever since then we have been working at a vision of becoming a bicultural congregation. In the opening months of 1997, I began to talk with three Korean families attending CMBC. They had come to me expressing interest in becoming a part of Charleswood Mennonite Church. Hun Lee, a Presbyterian Pastor from Seoul was their spokesperson. They had been attending Charleswood for several months and wanted to find a church home while they studied. As my discussions with them continued it soon became apparent that language was a barrier. They wanted to remain part of the Charleswood congregation but also felt the need to meet once a month for a Korean service. More families joined them.

When the need was expressed to learn more about the Mennonite persuasion of the Christian faith we began to study the confession of faith together. I would teach in English and Hun Lee would translate

into Korean. There were also several people in the group who needed work visas or student visas and we went to work on those problems.

In the fall of 1997 Hun Lee was baptized on the confession of his faith in Christ. He insisted on rebaptism since he had been baptized when he was an infant and wanted to make a statement that he was following the pattern of the early Anabaptists. Sunny Lee, Jae Kyung Yang and Kyung Hee Lee also became members of Charleswood. Bock Ki Kim and Sook Kyoung Park and their family as well as Young Ho Park and Young Gee Na among others also joined a year later. There were others who also attended and this nucleus began to draw more Koreans into the group. All of these leadership people have moved on to other provinces in the last few years and they are providing leadership for Mennonite Korean groups in British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta today.

One of the stated goals of our

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Batela church reached out to the neighbourhood, a largely Catholic area. A significant group of educated Catholic young people were attracted to the church, and soon became active and engaged members of the Batela church. One of the attractions was the pacifist teaching of the Mennonites. Kinshasa youths reap the rewards of mass rioting and pillaging during the early 90's. Jobs are scarce, and funds for education are hard to come by. Pacifism in this context resonates with people who are looking for answers to a complex political situation.

The wealth of Mennonite history in the Congo bears witness to the powerful missionary movement that began in the early 1900's. This era of missions reached its pinnacle in the 60's, and has gradually trickled to a standstill today. The link between churches of the west and church life in Congo has weakened significantly along with the declining presence of western missionaries. Is it time to rebuild the bridge and forge a new relationship with our Congolese family members?

It was my great privilege to live and worship among the Mennonite Brethren in



At Pastor Mbayamvula's church in Ngaba

Kinshasa, DRC from 1999 to 2005. My husband and I moved our family to Kinshasa at a time when the political scene was tense. The Congolese were weary of civil war, and were suffering the disastrous economic effects of a decade of pillaging and military chaos. Some people wondered at the wisdom of bringing our family into such a situation. The most difficult adjustment for me was the poverty outside my door. In North America our generation is cozy with wealth, and we wonder how a suffering church receives God's blessing.

Despite political and economic hardship, the church in Congo is growing rapidly in numbers. Visitors to Kinshasa are surprised to find a church on every corner, sometimes two or three. When you consider that a century ago the Protestant church was relatively unknown in Congo, it is amazing that today Congo is a largely Christian country. To all appearances, the missions era was a great success. However, a local interpretation helps to temper glowing first impressions. While there are many legitimate churches in Kinshasa, there are sadly many churches that prey on the ignorance and desperation of their members.

Congolese society respects hierarchy, and Congolese respond positively to people in authority. They are quick to respect and give preference to clergy, even if it means foregoing a seat on a bus in favour of a pastor waiting at a crowded bus stop. Jobs may be hard to come by, but a pastor of a church can legitimately collect money from his congregation: pastoring a church can be a lucrative enterprise. 'Eglises de Reveille', or revival churches, are increasingly popular

in Congo. These churches typically have a charismatic leader who attracts a following. A common thread is the teaching that believers who give sacrificially will be rewarded. The reward might be money, pregnancy, finding a husband, or some other much needed benefit. For a people familiar with curses and other spiritual realities, it is not a great stretch to believe in a formula that will bring blessings.

However, it is only a matter of time before disillusioned members look elsewhere for real answers. Mbayamvula, pastor of an MB church in Kinshasa, tells of a poor, illiterate widow in his congregation who was drawn in by a revival church. The one asset she owned was a freezer. She made a small income by selling cold drinks. In her newfound enthusiasm, and in obedience to the teaching she received, she gave her freezer to the pastor of the revival church. She has now returned to the Ngaba church, impoverished and angry about being deceived. Pastor Mbayamvula says it is the job of the MB church to welcome these people with open arms and equip them with a solid understanding of the Bible. First and foremost, he believes the church has a great responsibility to teach Biblical truth. This means teaching about the Bible as a whole, rather than picking out convenient verses here and there and taking them out of context. The Ngaba church has gone the extra mile by starting a weekly program for women in the community. Through UN funding, they provide a lunch after a session in which the women are taught a skill that will help them bring in extra income. They receive lessons on budgeting for their business enterprises and are given time to share their hard experiences of life with other women in similar situations.

By far, the greatest encouragement I take from our time in Congo is that I have seen how our brothers and sisters faithfully pursue God's calling in their lives, regardless of the difficulties they face. I can cite story after story of people who are working, often in discouraging circumstances, to bring testimony to others of Christ at work in their lives. It is both exciting and humbling to see God at work among the Mennonite Brethren in Congo. My sincere hope is that the MB church of the west will find an authentic and effective way of connecting in relationship with our Congolese family heritage.

Faith Nickel, missionary, lives in Abbotsford.

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Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

Queries

Heppner – Looking for descendants of Gerhard **Wall** b. 30 Mar. 1831 and Agata Heppner b. 18 Apr. 1847, and Jacob **Unger** b. 10 Aug. 1850 and Susanna Heppner b. 15. Nov. 1854. Contact: F. Dyck, 17-200 Ronald St., Winnipeg, MB R3J 3J3 or phone 204-897-1031.

Recent Books

Abe Funk. *Johann* (Belleville, ON: Essence Publishing, 2006) 78 pp.

This book contains the story of the author's great grandfather, Johann Funk (1836-1919) who was born in Russia (modern Ukraine), arrived in Canada with his wife Elizabeth (Doell) and four children in 1876, initially living in the village of Neuenburg on the Mennonite West Reserve in Manitoba, and eventually living the final years of his life (1906-1919) in the village of Hamburg, twenty miles southeast of Swift Current, Saskatchewan. The author tells the secret that kept this fine man in the shadows for many years, and how the lives of the family descendants are now much enriched and inspired. Contact: Abe Funk, 27-308 Jackson Road NW, Edmonton, AB T6L 6W1 or phone 780-466-6244.

Menno Wiebe and Dennis Boese. *Our Story: The Boese-Baergen Heritage: A Family History featuring the Pilgrimage of David and Liese (Baergen) Boese* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 2006) 175 pp.

This book prepared for the family recounts the life journey of David Boese (1899-) and his wife Elisabeth Baergen (1901-) who came to Canada from Russia in 1925. In addition to establishing their roots in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition in Prussia, the book provides a portrait of their early childhood and youth within the steppes of Russia. It continues to follow their story through the Russia revolution of 1917, the subsequent famine, their marriage, migration to Canada and the new beginnings in Canada where they eventually settle in the Tofield, Alberta area. The book is beautifully produced

with coloured photographs and well-written stories. Contact: Dennis Boese, 684 Patricia Ave., Winnipeg, R3T 3A6

Elenora (Dyck) Janzen, et.al *A Search for Faith, Peace and Hope: A History of the Bernhard Jacob Family Book* (cover reads "A Search for Faith, Peace and Hope: A History of the Bernhard Jacob & Katharina Martens Dyck") (Calgary, AB: Private publication, 2006) 249 pp.

This book contains the family history of Bernhard Jacob Dyck (1859-1942) and his wife Katharina Martens (1864-1938) who lived in the village of Olgafield in the Fuerstenland Colony of South Russia from the time of their marriage till they emigrated to Canada in 1926. Katharina Martens Dyck died in Osler, SK in 1938 and her husband Bernhard Jacob Dyck died in Kirriemuir, AB in 1942. This book traces the history of their large family. The book includes genealogical data, biographical information, photos and a comprehensive index. Contact: Bill Janzen, 19-1011 Canterbury Dr. SW, Calgary, AB T2W 2S8.

Helen Kornelsen. *The "Baker" Wiebe Family Johannes C. Wiebe 1850-1930* (Watrous, SK: Private publication, 2005) 158 pp.

The compiler of this book traces the descendants of one of her great-uncles, namely Johannes C. Wiebe (1850-1930), brother to her grandmother, Katharina C. (Wiebe) Cornelsen (1862-1939). Johannes C. Wiebe came to Canada around 1891 and lived for awhile in the Morden and Winkler area where he opened a blacksmith shop. The book tells the story of his children and grandchildren, many of whom grew up as orphans. The book will certainly be a precious family heirloom for any descendants who wish to maintain a family connection that often must have become rather weak as a result of the early death of the parents. Contact: Helen Kornelson, Box 1194, Watrous, SK S0K 4T0

Adolf Ens and Kathy Enns, compilers. *Ens : Lineage and Legacy: Gerhard and Margaretha Rempel Ens Descendants* (Winnipeg, MB: Ens Book Committee, 2006) 245 pp.

The writing and compiling of this family history grew out of the interest generated by a large gathering in August 1996 of the descendants of Gerhard and Margaretha Rempel, the grandparents of the compilers. The first chapter traces the ancestors of Gerhard Ens (1867-1949) and Margaretha Rempel (1871-1955) and include photographs of their siblings. This is followed by separate chapters for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd generations --providing the family history of each. The final chapter consists of the genealogical data for the descendants. An index which includes topics and names is a valuable asset. Contact: Ens Book Ctm. c/o Henry Ens, 403-445 Stafford Street, Winnipeg R3M 3V9.

Ruth Sawatzky Bock, editor. *The Abram J. & Maria Martens Olfert Story* (Winnipeg, MB: The Olfert Book Committee, 2005) 450 pp.

This book records the family history of Abram Olfert (1872-1936) and his wife Maria Martens (1879-1964) who lived in the village of Steinfeld, Schlachting Colony, South Russia and moved to Manitoba in 1926. Part I of the book deals with the "collective story" which includes a survey of Mennonite history from the 16th century in Europe, through a period in Prussia and Russia and on to the 20th century in Canada. Part II contains the individual stories for the families of the 6 children. The book concludes with a ten-paged genealogical listing and a 2-paged bibliography. Contact: Ruth Bock, 811 Green Oaks Lane, Headingley, MB R4H 1C5.

Edgar Stoesz. *Our Stoesz Story: From Bergthal to Bergthal with an Ocean in Between 1731-2006* (Akron, PA: Private Publication, 2006) 81 pp.

By changing a few names and places the story could be many people's story. Beginning in Holland, flourishing in Prussia for more than 200 years, a mere 60 years on the steppes of Russia before moving en masse to Minnesota in 1877, the book reconstructs these years, pausing to reflect at critical junctures on what might have been had the ancestors chosen otherwise. A 9-paged genealogical listing of the Minnesota branch of the Stoesz family is included. Book available for \$20.00 from Mennonite Heritage Centre.

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



Mennonite Heritage Centre

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Jacob K. Wiens, 1924-2006



Jake K. Wiens, Mennonite Heritage Centre volunteer, was born into a Mennonite farm family in the village of Tiegerweide in the Molotschna Colony and came with his parents and grandparents to Canada at the age of 3 months. The Wiens family settled in the Herschel, Saskatchewan area and soon adapted to Canadian farming, surviving the dry and difficult depression years, then moving on to becoming good grain farmers over the next decades with sons and grandsons continuing to this day.

Jake's time on the farm after high school was brief, but in a manner of speaking, his shoes and pant cuffs were never quite free of farm soil and dust. He later acquired part of the family farm, and although he did not do the actual farm work anymore, he retained a keen interest in it as his nephews farmed it for him and he made regular trips back there to renew the "feel" of the soil and of the growing crops.

It was this 'farm blood' in him that motivated his studies in agriculture at several universities, that later won him the esteem and respect of several Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Agriculture in successive governments over more than 30 years, including a term of service under CIDA in Zambia. And a picture taken this past summer shows him standing tall and smiling in a field of wheat at Herschel.

Even though his work took him away from home as his assignments changed, home was primary for Jake and Katherine as they raised their three children, providing for Christian secondary education and opportunities to prepare for their careers and professions. Jake supported Mennonite schools by serving on the board of Rosthern Junior College, on various conference and local church committees over the years and took a keen and supportive interest in CMBC, CMU



Jake K. Wiens will long be remembered at the MHC for his hours of voluntary service, translating documents and interacting with staff and researchers. MHC Archives photo.

and MCC.

It was in retirement years that four grandchildren came along whose delight in their grandfather, and his in them, was something special to observe. His latter years on a curling team with sons and nephews were very special to him.

Jake was a churchman in terms of his activities in the several congregations they were members of. He participated in practical and program activities, in fundraising, in committee work, in ushering and teaching — all in a stance and attitude that showed his personal faith and his concern for the church.

And when retirement years came, he turned once more to his Grandfather Wiens' diaries and sermons harking back to Tiegerweide and Herschel. He developed a great respect for that generation of fathers and leaders and took a keen interest in the historic period out of which they came. He read history books of Mennonite life and story, especially the 19th and 20th centuries. As an expression of this or, as an active outlet for these interests, he volunteered at the Mennonite Heritage Centre where he contributed time and skills in translating old letters, diaries, articles, sorting and indexing letters and materials many of which were handwritten in Gothic script. His thoughtful and thorough responses to what he was finding and what he was reading showed an empathy and a pride for his people and their story.

Jake's and my friendship goes back some 40 years when I took on the pastoral leadership of First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. when as chair of the search committee, his was a distinct part of the formula that persuaded us to enter that ministry. Later they left for Regina and

we for other parts, but our friendship was renewed and deepened again in the years of our retirement here in Winnipeg when we met frequently, talked much, and together with our wives, Katherine and Elizabeth, had many coffees and breakfasts and other occasions together and with others, that were meaningful and covered a multitude of topics, both light and heavy.

I, we, miss him very much as a great friend, fellow pilgrim and brother in Christ, one who walked with us a goodly mile and more! Our thoughts and prayers for Katherine and the family continue to reflect their loss and ours!

Edward Enns, Winnipeg

MHC News

Selectd books sold through the Centre are now available via **e-commerce**, as a partner with Mennonite Church Canada's Resource Centre's One Stop Shop. To see the selection and purchase one of these items, use the following URL: www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/76

The Centre has entered into an agreement with **Mennonite Genealogy Inc.** (MGI) with regards to the disposition of their holdings. MGI was begun during the 1940s by A.A.Vogt in Steinbach, Manitoba when he began collecting and organizing Mennonite genealogical information for public use. By 1978 the organization had moved to Winnipeg and the work was largely being continued by his daughters, Hannah Rempel and Margaret Kroeker. As of December 1, they have formally ceased operations and are donating their holdings to our Centre.

AR

Pastoral Trends

Some nine volunteers at the Centre helped to compile the Pastoral Trends Research Survey which was recently released to the public. A year ago the conference received a Lilly Foundation grant via the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary to make this study a reality. The Centre was responsible for administering the study in Canada, with Dieter Schonwetter from the University of Manitoba designing the research instrument. Once the results from approximately 300 MB pastors and former pastors were received, these 9 volunteers helped enter the responses into a database for Professor Schonwetter's analysis. All volunteers worked within strict confidential guidelines.

The first results were published on pages 12-14 in the November 24, 2006 *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. The Centre felt privileged to assist in this research project. These results will provide the information for better leadership planning within our congregations and its various agencies for years to come. A special thanks to Conrad Stoesz, Centre staff person, who spent many hours guiding the administrative process of the survey.

KR

Thanks to volunteers

As with almost all heritage organizations, the Centre for MB Studies would not function nearly as well as it does without the many able volunteers together with part-time and summer staff paid for by various grants. This past year some 13 volunteers and 4 summer and part-time staff worked over 2,500 hours at the Centre. This is a huge involvement of assistance in addition to the regular salaried staff component of 1.5.

To say thanks for the commitment of these volunteers and part-time workers, the Centre held its annual volunteer appreciation evening in mid-November at the Conference Ministry Centre. Catered by Helen Schellenberg, we ate holupchi, mashed potatoes, roasted veggies and a wonderful chocolate cake for dessert. Both Cam Rowland, Director of Church Health and Communications as well as David Wiebe, Executive Director of the Canadian MB Conference, thanked the volunteers and part-time staff for their involvement and dedication to their tasks. A tip of the hat to these dedicated people. We could not do it without you.

Russian Letters

By Aileen Friesen

An extraordinary new collection at the Centre of Mennonite Brethren Studies documents the growth of the evangelical movement and personal experiences of faith in the Soviet Union throughout the turbulent years of its collapse. During this period, Mennonite Brethren Communications continued the work it started decades earlier, by broadcasting religious radio programs in Russian and providing religious literature to the region. Viktor Hamm, the voice and impetus behind these programs during the 1980s and early 1990s, received letters from across the former Soviet Union from people who listened to his radio program, or heard of him from colleagues and friends. In recent years, MB Communications deposited thousands of the letters sent to Viktor Hamm and MB Communications between the years of 1987-1993 at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. This collection offers the unique opportunity to hear from their own words the joys and trials of people living in the former Soviet Union, as they experienced a period of intense personal, social and economic dislocation.

Letters arrived at MB Communications in Winnipeg from most regions in the for-



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mer Soviet Union. While the bulk of the letters came from Ukraine and the Central and Eastern regions of Russia, Viktor Hamm also received letters from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Baltic States and Poland. People from all ages wrote to request religious literature and to share with Viktor Hamm their personal spiritual journeys, as well as their concerns for the spiritual and material well-being of their families. Many letters expressed excitement at being able to communicate with someone in a Western country and appreciation that strangers around the world had not forgotten about them. Other letters described the growth of new spiritual communities, as people began churches in their local neighborhoods. The personal memories contained in these letters present a rare glimpse into the lives of ordinary people during a period of extraordinary change.



Aileen Friesen, CMBS staff, reads these Russian letters and sorts them by region. She is fluent in Russian. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

New Russian Materials

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Some archival and historical material come to us from Russia and Ukraine in large new acquisitions. Others come in smaller lots. I will mention some of the recent latter items here.

In fact not so little is a set of four CDs which brings together an extensive collection of mainly Ukrainian documents related to church history - mostly Baptist-related, but some Mennonite also. It comes under the heading *History of the Euro-Asian Evangelical Movement - Primary Sources*. The project of collecting these documents was in progress for several years. Dr. Sergei Sannikov from the Odessa Theological Seminary in southern Ukraine was with the directorate for doing this work. Dr. Walter Sawatsky of AMBS in Elkhart, USA, also participated in getting the project underway and done.

With it, in a sense, comes a relatively new 125-page history of Baptists in Ukraine (written in Russian) which is titled *A History of Russian Ukrainian Baptists* written by S.N. Savinsky and published by the Odessa Theological Seminary in 1995. It is actually termed an "educational handbook". The opening materials, with Table of Contents have been translated by Ella Federau, and are attached to the MHC copy of the book.

Still part of the total package, as it were, are the first issues of a new theological journal published bilingually, in Ukrainian and English, and titled *Theological Reflections*. Each issue contains ten to twelve serious theological studies, mostly by Baptist scholars connected with higher theological education in the Ukrainian Baptist community. Six issues have appeared so far. Mary Raber, now of Kherson, and seconded to the publishing office by MCC, has been editing the materials so far. Sergei Sannikov is the editor-in-chief and Alexii Melnichuk of Kiev, chairs the editorial committee.

It may indeed be quite appropriate here to mention yet another recent 300-page publication, *Mission in the Former Soviet Union*, edited by Dr. Walter Sawatsky and Dr. Peter F Penner. It consists of a series of essays which were papers given at a conference on mission in the Former Soviet Union which was held at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, Czechoslovakia, in

February, 2003. It is a very fine example of the important and professional missiological academic work being done at the seminary and circles connected with it in recent years. The book was published by Neufeld Verlag of Schwarzenfeld, Germany, in 2005.

Korean Mennonite Ministry

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congregation is to be a bi-cultural church and to strive for this goal we matched Korean and English speaking families, and continued with catechism classes with Korean translation. For several years the Korean group hosted a Korean cultural night and invited the whole congregation. We became fond of Korean food. Hun Lee was elected as one of our deacons. Others succeeded him. Eating together and being patient with translation problems strengthened the tie between us.

On December 3, 2000 Hun Lee was ordained as a Mennonite Minister and served here until he moved to London Ontario in 2004. He was succeeded for one year by Young Ho Son. The key for working at unity at that time was a good relationship between myself and the Korean pastor. Koreans were elected to positions on the worship committee and also to the deacons ministry. Since 2004 the Korean group has been served through lay leadership within the group alongside the English speaking pastors. ESL classes have been offered here from time to time and this has also established relationships between English speaking and Korean speaking people. The nature of our bicultural congregation is ever-changing and evolving.

In the ten years of this venture there has also been a lot of change in terms of people. At the beginning most of the group was made up of CMBC/CMU students. Today there are almost no former theology students in the group. New people have come and many people have moved on to different provinces. This means that we often have to start over again forming new relationships. The Korean assembly has been as large as 80 several years ago and now it is about 40 in this transient group. We have one Sunday School program together and continue to work at ways of integrating Korean speaking people into our congregation. It remains a challenge and offers many benefits to the congregation as a whole.

One benefit is that we can do more

thinking about how Christian faith takes on flesh and blood in various cultures. There are distinctions between Korean and Canadian Mennonites and yet there is also the strong desire to remain one congregation. I think that this is a healthy tension. Koreans also face many challenges in learning a new language and living in a new land. For a good number of Koreans here this is their first introduction to faith in Christ. Their questions and struggles help the rest of us to see Christianity in a fresh light.

Sometimes I think of our special relationship in terms of the ancient past. Koreans may have some ancestry with the ancient Huns. Mennonites of European background have a Barbarian heritage going back a few thousand years. The Huns and the Barbarians tried to destroy each other around the 4th century of the present era. It's a miracle of history now in my estimation that for the last ten years (1997-2007) in our small corner of the world in Winnipeg that the descendants of Huns and Barbarians worship the Prince of Peace together.

John P. Braun is the pastor of Charleswood Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

Remembering Russia

Remembering Russia 1914-1927: War and the end of Mennonite Tranquillity (Winnipeg, MB: Otto Klassen Productions, 2006) (43 minutes)

A new DVD has been released by Winnipeg film-maker, Otto Klassen. In it he describes the story of Russian Mennonites between the years of 1914-1917. He portrays how the Mennonites in southern Russia had become affluent. They worked hard in their tight-knit communities, bound by a common language and faith. The level of cultural and social achievement had surpassed their Russian neighbours. For most Mennonites, life was what they made it, largely undisturbed by national or international events.

That all changed with the beginning of World War I in 1914. Political, social and economic events in Russia had eroded the authority of the Tsarist regime in the years leading up to Russia's entry into the war. Dissatisfaction with the regime and Russia's military performance in the war eventually led to the 1917 Russian Revolution. A bloody civil war followed,

churning through the country and ending the Mennonite's way of life. Farms, enterprises and churches were expropriated and families died at the hands of marauding anarchists. As their world crumbled around them, thousands of Mennonites fled to Canada.

Winnipeg film-maker Otto Klassen was born in Russia and has spent a lifetime chronicling the Russian Mennonite experience. Remembering Russia 1914-1927 offers a historical snapshot of the cataclysmic events leading to the immigration of the Russian Mennonites to Canada in the 1920s. The DVD is available for viewing from all MCC regional and provincial offices free of charge—though a donation to MCC would be appreciated.

KR

Correction re. Manitoba MB Women's Network Article (*Mennonite Historian* Sept 2006, p.2)

It was stated in that article that the Board of Faith and Life did not bring the women's issue to a vote in 2005 as the writer thought should have been done. It should be noted that since the Canadian Conference of MB Churches only meets every two years, there was no opportunity for the issue to be brought up in 2005. However, the BFL did bring the matter before the next conference in 2006 and a motion giving local congregations the choice of selecting male or female leadership was passed by 77%. Our apologies for not catching the error.

KR

Mennonitische Rundschau To Cease Publication.

The *Mennonitische Rundschau* will cease publication with the January 2007 issue. It is the oldest Mennonite periodical published continuously under one name, with its first issue printed on 5 June 1880. It was the direct successor to the *Nebraska Ansiedler* (first issue June 1878), and was established by the Mennonite Publishing Co. (John F. Funk) to serve the newly established Russian Mennonite communities in the prairie states and Manitoba.

Declining readership because of the language transition from German to English within MB churches has put the MR close to closure before. However, a

1998 task force study concluded the paper "continues to nurture an important segment of the constituency." It was suggested at that time to continue the paper until readership fell below a "base level of 1,750," assuming funding remained relatively constant. Current circulation of the *Rundschau* is about 1,500.

The *Rundschau* was the paper of the Russian Mennonites for decades, and still carries something of this general character, although on 24 October 1945 it came into the ownership of a company composed of men from the Mennonite Brethren Church who made it more of a Mennonite Brethren organ, though it was not yet conference-owned.

The circulation of the *Rundschau* in 1957 was 7,400. A few years earlier an English companion to the *Rundschau* called *Mennonite Observer* was published by the Christian Press as a 12-page weekly beginning 21 September 1955. This was the forerunner to the current *Mennonite Brethren Herald*.

There is nostalgia with the closing of this long-running and influential paper. But Cam Rowland, Director of Communications for the Canadian Conference of the MB Churches noted that a survey of readers noted that fully half of those receiving the *Rundschau* also received the *MB Herald*.

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Book Reviews

(cont'd from p. 8)

Judenplan Colony which appears to use the 1852 list of Mennonites living outside the Chortitza Colony as a starting point. This list is also available on the MMHS genealogy website.

The first version of this book suffered from a complete lack of any kind of index. This new version contains a name index which is particularly useful for navigating through Part III, although a full index is still lacking.

Gerhard Lohrenz Publication Fund Committee Invites Applications for Grants

Established to assist in the publication of works dealing with Mennonite life, with preference given to those that relate to the Canadian Mennonite experience.

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

Book Notes

by Adolf Ens

Not yet finished your Christmas shopping? Mennonite Church Manitoba may have what you are looking for in a collection of 50 sermons by Jake F. Pauls. *A sower went forth ...* (Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Manitoba, 2006), 316 pages, \$28.95 pb, offers "the best of" what a noted minister of our time preached over the past 45+ years. Topically arranged, with subject and scripture indexes, this volume would serve well as a guide to weekly devotions.

Ilse (Gottwald) Schreiber, a widely published German author, became fascinated with Canada through her sister who lived at Frenchman's Butte near Lloydminster in Western Saskatchewan. One of her "Canadian" novels has been freely translated by Sarah Dyck and published as *Many Are The Voices of Home* (Waterloo, ON: Klandyck Books, 2006), pb, 355 pages. The German version was published in Hamburg in 1949 as *Vielerlei Heimat unter dem Himmel*. This story of two Russian Mennonite families, who fled Soviet Russia and settled "on isolated homesteads on the edge of the wilderness," may be fiction, but it contains much truth. Dyck's good literary style makes for the kind of easy reading a novel usually provides.

A book note in the March 2006 issue of *MH* announced that Helmut T. Huebert was working on urban Mennonites in Imperial Russia and announced that monographs on Barvenkovo, Melitopol, Millerovo, and Orechov were already available. The first bound volume, *Mennonites in the Cities of Imperial Russia* (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 2006), pb, 8½ x 11, 456 pages, is now off the press. In addition to the above-mentioned four cities, it includes Berdyansk, Pologi, Sevastopol and Simferopol. A detailed table of contents for each chapter provides a quick overview of the settlement aspects discussed. For persons whose ancestors lived in one of these cities there is a wealth of background information, and quite possibly also family data in the relevant chapter. For social historians this volume has enough material to begin to construct a picture of urban Mennonites of the imperial era. Sources cited allow for further research on many of the topics studied. Work on a second volume is already underway.

Book Reviews

Ronald Friesen. *When Canada Called: Manitoba Mennonites and World War II* (Steinbach, MB: Ronald Friesen, 2006), 353 pp.

Reviewed by John Derksen, Menno Simons College, Winnipeg, MB

This self-published book, based on interviews, letters, archival sources, government reports and secondary sources, recounts the experience of Manitoba Mennonites in World War II. The author accomplishes two goals: to tell of Manitoba's 3000 conscientious objectors (CO) (out of 10,000 Canada-wide), who chose alternative service, and "to document the military service of Mennonite men from southeast Manitoba." (xiii).

The book's seventeen chapters fall into three parts: 1) the broader context in which Manitoba Mennonites experienced the war (chs. 1-6), 2) the experiences of individual COs (ch. 7), and 3) the experiences of individuals who served in the armed forces (chs. 10-17). In part one, Friesen describes the political and media mobilization (ch. 1), the response of Mennonite clergy (ch. 2), Judge John Adamson, before whom many CO applicants had to appear (ch. 3), Canada's fundraising efforts with Victory Bonds (ch. 4), the wartime rationing of gasoline and food (ch. 5), and the resurgence of agriculture after the difficult 1930s. (ch. 6). Chapter seven relates the experiences of eighteen COs in various CO camps. Chapters 10 to 17 tell of the five Manitoba Mennonites who died in military service, several who survived, and one who left the CO camp to join the forces and died in combat. Chapter 16, on non-Mennonites in the army, diverts from the book's focus and could be omitted. Chapter 8, on differences among Mennonites regarding noncombatant service, and chapter 9, on other Manitobans' attitudes toward Mennonites, would fit more smoothly in part one on the wartime context.

Apart from occasional comments that reveal Friesen's pacifist convictions, his presentation is fair to pacifists and non-pacifists alike. Although the title speaks of Manitoba Mennonites, most of the book focuses on men in southeastern Manitoba. That the towns of Kleefeld and Steinbach, and the Kleinegemeinde church, receive particular attention reflects Friesen's own identity as a Kleinegemeinde Mennonite from

Kleefeld. Mennonites from Winnipeg or Winkler or points further west hardly appear, and Mennonites of other conferences receive disproportionately little attention. Women are mentioned mostly in passing. It would be good also to explore how the war influenced Mennonite women whose sons, brothers, husbands and fiancés faced military induction.

Unlike other writers who recount stories of war or conscientious objection, Friesen includes both, and much of his material is new. But the book needs stronger analysis. Friesen does not seek to resolve the division over war among Manitoba Mennonites, nor should he. But it would be good for him to reflect on it deeply in a chapter that draws the book's issues and stories together. For example, what does he mean that in the CO service, "the pacifist Mennonite community found its collective conscience and purpose" (xiii)? Why did some Mennonites choose CO status and others chose the armed forces? To what degree did awareness of their Anabaptist heritage, or assimilation into society, influence their choices? What correlation appears between their economic, educational, church or family backgrounds, and their choices for or against military service? How did Mennonites behave toward conscientious objectors, and war veterans, upon their return home after the war? What lessons lie in this history for Mennonites of the future?

Along with valuable new material, the book sometimes includes unnecessary details. For example, too much space (nine pages) is devoted to Judge Adamson's childhood, much of which is unconnected to the war and the Mennonite youth who stood before him. Despite instances of awkward sentence and paragraph structure, the book is very readable. Endnote and bibliography formats are somewhat unorthodox. 143 photos enliven the text. Students of Manitoba, Mennonite and peace history will appreciate this book.

Henry Schapansky. *Mennonite Migrations (and The Old Colony)*. (New Westminster, BC: The Author, 2006) 813 pp.

This book is a corrected and significantly expanded (from 519 to 813 pages) version of Schapansky's earlier book *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia*.

The first part on the Mennonites of West Prussia is one of the few significant

English histories of the Mennonites in Poland/West Prussia. The only others being Gerhard Driedger's "The Werder" (1995) and Peter J. Klassen's "Homeland for Strangers" (1989). Schapansky provides much useful information that is not found in these other two books or in the various relevant articles in the Mennonite Encyclopedia.

The second part of Schapansky's book is on the Mennonites in Russia. Although the emphasis in this book is on the Chortitza Colony the author has added three interesting chapters on the Molotschna Colony, with a focus on the Mennonite Brethren church in that colony. It appears that Schapansky's thesis is that the Flemish Mennonites in West Prussia held more closely to the original Mennonite vision whereas the Friesians were somewhat more liberal (in terms of intermarriage with non-Mennonites, having portraits done, and age of baptism for example) and that the Friesians of the early 1800s were influenced by Pietistic teachings and this, in turn, had a significant influence on the early Mennonite Brethren movement.

Part III entitled "The First Settlers in the Old Colony" is now 446 pages, about 110 pages more than in his first book. This section is of significant interest to the genealogist as it contains Schapansky's reconstruction of the early Mennonite families in the Chortitza Colony, based on data available from the books by B. H. Unruh, Peter Rempel, the 1801 Chortitza colony census (online at the MMHS genealogy website) and the immense correspondence that Schapansky has carried out over the last 2 decades. This section in the first version contained a tremendous number of errors. It appears as if most or all of these have been fixed. He does, however, maintain the same convoluted style of the first version in which the families are listed first according to the year the village of residence was founded, followed by the suspected year of arrival of the family in Russia. In some cases families are buried within the listing for another family. This results in a fair bit of repetition. For example Johann Schroeder (b. 1763) who is listed in Neuendorf (family 39) with some information is listed again, with children, in Rosenthal inside the family of Isaac Kasdorf (family 8) and then again in Kronsthal (family 15), where all of the Neuendorf and Rosenthal information is repeated. There is also a new list on the

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