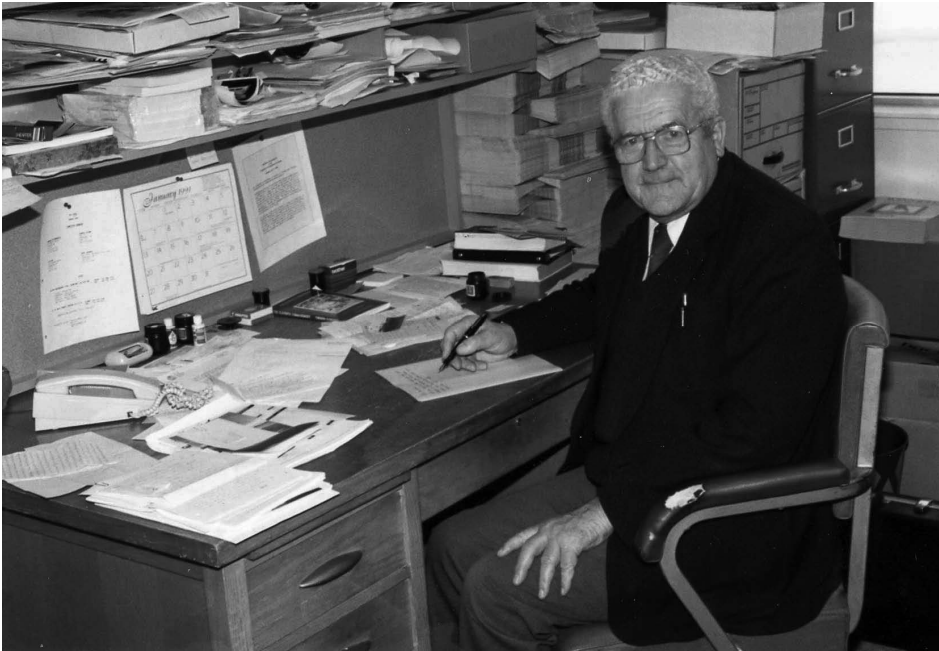


# Mennonite Historian

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



Gerhard Ens (1922-2011) at the office where he served as editor of *Der Bote* from 1977-1991. Photo: Courtesy of Werner Ens.

## Gerhard Ens: Historian, Minister and Educator

by Conrad Stoesz

Each week thousands of people would gather around their radios to hear Gerhard Ens begin his radio broadcast with “*goode owent, leewe frint en nobasch, fonn wiet auf, en fonn diicht’bie. Ekj freid me daut wie fonn’doag dit owent aulwada toop koom kenne. En daut wie unse en bätje äwa onse Je’schijch fetale kenne...*” (Good evening dear friends and neighbors from far away and close by. I am happy that today we can gather and that we can talk a bit about our story). This was Gerhard’s passion - Mennonite history. He was a man who immersed himself into the study of history. He was a voracious reader who not only had a sharp memory but also a keen ability to con-

dense, collate, and organize the information he read with his own thoughts. At his funeral, it was said he was the search engine before Google. Ens had a long career in the church, as teacher at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, editor of *Der Bote*, and radio host for his own Low German history program. Gerhard Ens saw each setting as an opportunity to impart not only historical understanding but also a love for Mennonite history.

Gerhard Ens (1922-2011) was born on August 4, 1922 as the oldest child of Gerhard Ens (1893-1990) and Helena Sawatzky (1894-1992) in the village of Gnadental, Baratov Colony, Russia. The

family immigrated to Canada in 1923 and settled in the village of Reinland, Manitoba where they took up farming. In 1925 the family renovated the machine shed into a temporary home. This machine shed remained their home for the next eleven years. Times were tough starting up a farm as the depression hit in the 1930s and the travel debt for the move to Canada needed to be paid. The farm was a mixed farm with animals and grains.

Travel was limited with short excursions to Winkler for supplies and visiting family members. It was not until his late teens that Gerhard first visited Winnipeg.

At the age of six, Ens started his school career in the one-room, one-teacher, public school in Reinland along with 60 other students in eight grades. Ens finished grade 8 and then moved on to grades 9 and 10 in the nearby village of Gnadental on the insistence of his father. Here Ens lived with his grandmother and took a great liking to studying. He went on for grades 11 and 12 at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna. From here Ens went on to Normal School in Winnipeg to receive his teacher’s certificate.

The move to Winnipeg proved to be a big cultural shock. “The lifestyle of non-Mennonite students seemed strange to me”, he said. After receiving his teacher’s certificate, his first teaching post was in the village of Gnadental in 1941, where he once went to school. Then in 1942 Ens received his call for military training. This was a significant point in his life. He applied for conscientious objector status and was successful. However, when the Department of Education found out that Ens had applied for conscientious objector (CO) status they arranged an interview with him and revoked his teaching certificate for fear he would inflict his views on the children. He worked a few weeks on the family farm and then in summer got his assignment to work on the Jack Wurmnest farm near Sperling. At his request he was transferred to work in a mental hospital in Portage la Prairie, where he worked as an orderly along with other COs. The work was not always pleasant but it was necessary. Near the end of his service he began to take correspondence courses through the University of Manitoba and he taught himself to type. It was hard to plan for anything because the service term was for the duration of the war and no one knew how long that would be. The war ended in

(cont’d on p. 2)

## Gerhard Ens

(cont'd from p. 1)

1945 but Ens was not free from his duties until 1946. Ens later reflected, "... those two years have been really meaningful years of my life. I learned to know another group of people... which has given me a great many insights for later years.... I would recommend this type of alternative service for the future."

During the war the Ens family had some contact with people in Russia through letters in the 1930s. Ens believed that communism was evil and that perhaps Germany would bring some relief to the Mennonites and their situation in Russia. However Ens remembers thinking "...how could a civilized nation like Germany fall for a man and a party like Hitler and the Nazis? How did the Germans realize their mistake? How could a people of poets and thinkers become a people of judges and executioners? I identified with German culture and I got this from my father."

After the war, in 1946 the MCI called Ens to teach at the school. Ens accepted, and because it was a private school, he did not need his teacher's certificate. While Ens had requested on several occasions to have his certificate reinstated, he decided to try another route. He went to see W.C. Miller, the Minister of Education and the Conservative party MLA for the area. Miller called in the deputy minister and



Gerhard and Anni (Niebuhr) Ens

said "I have known this man since he was this high (motioning with his hand showing he knew Ens from a young age). I want him to get his teaching license back. Can't you fix that up?" After a short interview Ens got his license back.

In 1948 a friend introduced Gerhard to Anni Niebuhr while he was taking summer school in Winnipeg. A courting relationship started and during the school year Ens traveled by bus to Winnipeg to see Anni. The two were married in 1950 and had five children between 1951 and 1961.

At the MCI he taught with his former teachers such as Paul J. Schaefer. Gerhard thought he was there to "help out", but it turned into a long tenure at the MCI. His teaching load was very heavy at times and he did not always feel academically prepared. Gerhard was interested in Mennonite history and in the early 1950s he was a part of the *Mennonitische Historische Vereins* which worked at republishing the *Woher, Wohin, Mennoniten* series by Paul Schaefer. In 1958 this committee became the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and Gerhard Ens remained heavily involved by being on the board, which went on to establish the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum in Steinbach in 1964, in time for the 1967 Canadian centennial celebrations.

One of Gerhard's other interests was the church. He was baptized in 1946 and was given the opportunity to preach in the Blumenorter Mennonite Church, near Gretna. In 1958 he was ordained. Gerhard Ens was also involved with the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba. As early as 1949 he was a member of the provincial youth organization, *Manitobaer Jugendorganisation*, and by 1952 the recording secretary. He became a popular guest speaker in churches, anniversary celebrations and historical

events. In 1955 he was elected to the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba radio committee. In 1956 he led a half-hour Sunday German radio program, *Frohe Botschaft*, on the Christian radio station KFNW in Fargo, North Dakota. This program was later produced by Faith and Life Communications in Winnipeg and after 1974 Ens was one of the regular speakers. He was commissioned to produce German Sunday School lessons which were widely-used in churches.

While at the MCI Gerhard became involved in the Manitoba Mennonite Centennial committee which planned celebratory events around the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mennonite settlement in Manitoba. In anticipation of this, Gerhard was asked to start a 15 minute radio broadcast in Low German about Mennonite history. Soon this was increased to half an hour. Ens kept to this task of promoting the Mennonite story on the air in Low German for 34 years. It aired from 1972-2006, airing some 1400 programs, on three radio stations without remuneration. He built up a large following of listeners who would tune in each week to listen. He is known to have teased professional recording engineers that he could produce a radio program with his little tape recorder and microphones while they needed a whole room of equipment. In 2008 Ens reflected on the Low German language saying "Mennonites of the Low German persuasion have no homeland in Europe they call their home. Low German has become a home where people can move in and out and express themselves".

In 1967 principal Paul Schaefer retired and the job was offered to Gerhard. He remained principal until 1977. He considered these hard years. His students fondly remember Ens as witty, versatile, and well-prepared. He was a teacher who taught 10 different subjects. During his time as principal he oversaw the expansion of the music and sports programs and the shift from German to English instruction. The students knew him as "General". One former student recounted how Ens would come into history class without any notes or textbook and ask the students where he had left off last class. From there he picked up the subject and carried on.

In 1977 Ens resigned from the MCI and moved to Winnipeg after accepting an invitation to take up the editorship of *Der Bote* with the editorial office of the paper moving from Saskatoon to Winnipeg. Ens

(cont'd on p. 8)

**Mennonite Historian** is published by the Mennonite Heritage Centre of Mennonite Church Canada and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

Editor: Alf Redekopp (MHC)

Associate Editor: Conrad Stoesz  
(CMBS/MHC)

All correspondence and manuscripts should be sent to the editorial offices at:

600 Shaftesbury Blvd.  
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4  
P: 204-888-6781

E: aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca

W: www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives  
or

1310 Taylor Avenue,  
Winnipeg, MB R3M 3Z6  
P: 204-669-6575

E: cstoesz@mbconf.ca

W: www.mbconf.ca/mbstudies

Subscription rates: \$15.00 per year, \$28.00 for two years, \$40.00 for three years. Individual subscriptions may be ordered from these addresses.

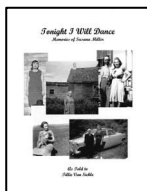
ISSN 07008066

# Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

## Recent Books

Tillie Van Sickle, *Tonight I Will Dance: Memories of Susana Miller* (Westland, MI: Bear Publications, 2010) 132 pp.



Set in southern Manitoba in 1922, this is the story of Susana (Doerksen) Miller (b. 1916 in Plum Coulee). A tragic accident when she was six years old, resulting in the death of her sister, a teenage pregnancy, running away from her family, experiencing the death of her mother, becoming married, having more children, moving to Ontario, immigrating to the United States, and living with a husband stricken with a debilitating heart disease, which results in a return to Manitoba – all these events, primarily difficult times, are told in this touching story of survival. The photos, an ancestry chart and typical “Mennonite” recipes make this book a rather unique family history. Contact: Tillie Van Sickle, 35650 Florane St., Westland, MI 48186-4144.

Erna Schmidt Unrau, *There were Thirteen: Stories of the Peter and Anna Schmidt family Ancestors and Descendants* (Waterloo, ON: Private publication, 2008) 222 pp.



This book contains the stories of the children of Peter Andreas Schmidt (1873-1916) and Anna (Lehn) Schmidt (1871-1923) who died in Gregoryevka, Naumenko and Neuenburg, Chortitza (S. Russia), respectively. They had 13 children born to them between 1895 and 1913, of which seven survived to adulthood and five lived through the Second World War and came to Canada, where they lived in places like St. Catharines, Leamington, Burlington and Vancouver. One son (Jacob) who lived to be 98 years old, had the experience of being re-united with his wife and children in 1966, after 22 years of separation due to the war. Photographs, genealogical data and copies of recently discovered archival documents were used to enhance this book.

Erna Schmidt Unrau, *Sara's Family – My Family: Stories and Pictures of the Funk and Neufeld Von Niessen and Penner Ancestors and Descendants* (Waterloo, ON: Private publication, 2010) 375 pp.

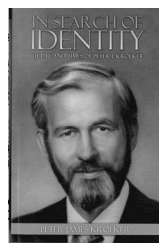
This book is about the ancestors of Sara Neufeld (1911-2001) whose father

Heinrich Neufeld died when she was 2 and whose mother, also a Sara, daughter of Johann J. Penner (1861-1889) and Maria von Niessen (1865-1901), died in 1933, two years after she had married Jacob Schmidt (1906-2004). Sara Neufeld's father, Heinrich, was the son of Jacob Neufeld (1857-1919) and Sara Funk (1856-1892). Thus the surnames Funk, Neufeld, von Niessen and Penner are in the sub-title, and this book is also about their descendants. The book is rich with photos, both historic and recently taken ones from Ukraine, maps, and reproductions of archival documents, making generous use of available sources in archives and on the internet. The book even has a recipe for pickling watermelon! Contact: Erna Schmidt Unrau, 145 Weston Place, Waterloo, ON N2J 3W2.

Helmut T. Huebert, *The Braun-Willms Family of Hierschau* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 2011)

This item is primarily a compilation of biographical sketches of the children and step-children of Gertrude Plett (1869-1924). It includes a biography of Johann A. Braun (1852-1899), her first husband, and biographies of his children with his first wife, Susanna Driedger (1857-1891). Then the book continues with the biographies of the children that Gertrude and Johann Braun had together, and ends with biographies of the children which Gertrude had with her 2<sup>nd</sup> husband, Johann Willms (1865-1914). Photos and maps were added to enhance the stories. This item may be consulted at the Mennonite Heritage Centre or Centre for MB Studies.

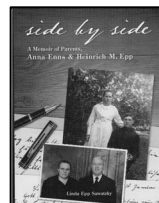
Peter James Kroeker, *In Search of Identity: The Life and Times of Peter J. Kroeker* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 2010) 330 pp.



In this autobiography, Peter Kroeker traces his Mennonite roots and tells the fascinating story of his life. In Part I, he gives historical background by documenting the lives of “Those Who Went Before Us.” Included are the Kroeker, Wiens, Harms, Nickel and Hiebert family histories. The subsequent sections are titled: “Our Life before Marriage,” “Our Lives Together in Winkler on the farm, 1948-1957,” “Our Lives Together – Abroad,” “Our Lives Together in Winnipeg with MBS/I, 1976-

1988,” “Our Lives in Retirement,” “My Life Alone” and “My Life with Alvina”. Peter Kroeker (1923-1910), agronomist and anthropologist, grew up on a farm, worked in a successful family business, served as mayor of Winkler for 6 years, made a life-changing decision at age 47 which led to completing a Ph.D. in anthropology and working in international development. He was married to Ruth Hiebert for 57 years, until she passed away in 2005. He was married to Alvina (Jantzen) Block for 4 years. Contact: Del & Lucy Epp, Box 581, Niverville, MB R0A 1E0.

Linda Epp Sawatzky, *Side by Side: A Memoir of Parents, Anna Enns & Heinrich M. Epp* (Winnipeg, MB: Episode Publishing, 2010) 183 pp.



In this book, the author tells the story of her parents, Heinrich M. Epp (1904-1958) and Anna Epp (1902-1958), who were both born in Russia and came to Canada in 1924, just months after marrying.

In Canada they lived in Winkler and Lena in Manitoba, and Mt. Lehman and Clearbrook in BC. Heinrich M. Epp was called to the ministry in 1928 and was serving in West Abbotsford Mennonite Church in 1958. Containing maps, tables, photos, genealogical data and an index, this book is a good account of the public and private lives of Heinrich and Anna, and will be of interest beyond the immediate family. Contact: Linda Sawatzky, 14 Macalester Bay, Winnipeg, MB R3T 2X5.

Jennifer Kroeker and Ed Kroeker, *Memories of Peter L. Kroeker's Cars* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 2010) no pagination.

The author's great grandfather Bishop Jacob B. Kroeker (1882-1978) of the Mennonite Kleingemeinde at Rosenort, Manitoba consistently bought black cars and used cars, in an attempt to uphold the church's beliefs of nonconformity to the world and humility. His grandson, the author's father, became familiar with many makes and models as he fixed vehicles in his shop, called Ed's Auto Body. With this love for cars, the author collected stories and photos related to all the vehicles that her grandfather, Peter L. Kroeker (1907-1973) owned or drove in his life time – from Henry Ford's Model A to the 1969 Ford Galaxie 500 – all Fords. The last car purchased was a 1973 4-door Dodge Polara. Contact Jennifer Kroeker at [jkroeker@cmu.ca](mailto:jkroeker@cmu.ca).

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

## Archives, a Vault Full of Stories : Margaret Suderman (1902-1991)

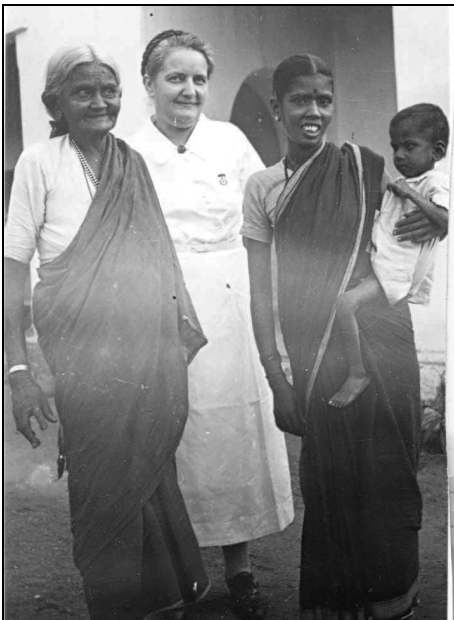
By Tamara Dyck

I have a love of stories -- film, theatre, books, opera -- it doesn't matter, as long as it's a story. The genre doesn't really matter either. Some might say I'm indiscriminate, but I would argue that I'm open to new experiences and adventure.

This past year working at the archives I was invited into someone's story, and it captured me. Dusty boxes filled with old notebooks, letters and photos held my attention and worked their way into my soul. I was pulled into a world full of goodness, pain, hope, hard work, success and adventure.

As a young woman, Miss Margaret Suderman was called by the strong yearnings of her heart to be a nurse and a missionary in India. She prayed, she trained, and she planned. By the time she was 27, Margaret was an educated nurse and ordained as a missionary in her home town of Winkler, Manitoba -- always her homeland, but only a stepping stone to the next 33 years of her life.

The photo portrays a vibrant young woman with an engaging smile and a smart sense of style. Standing on the docks, she had yet to face the poverty, degradation and disease of India. She was determined to heal, not only their bodies, but their souls as well. The mission station in Wanaparty welcomed her, and put her to work.



Margaret Suderman in India, 1950s. Photo credit: CMBS NP189-01-019.

Lesions, tumors, pregnancies and sickness were dealt with professionalism, and care. Often it was a losing battle, fear keeping people from seeking treatment early and arriving with illnesses far beyond the point of healing. Margaret often called on God's help to sustain her. Despite the losing battles, Margaret very quickly developed respect among the people and was soon 'nurse, doctor, and administrator for a very busy hospital without a building'.

There was no shift work at the hospital in Wanaparty, there was only Margaret, and she often worked through the night caring for her patients. Margaret trained locals to help, giving them responsibilities and a sense of self worth. They tended bandages, swept floors and carried water. Later she trained nurses and a pharmacist. No matter your age or size, if you were there, you were helping.

Patients make a captive audience and they soon learned that time in the hospital was not only a time of healing, but also of learning. Their respect for her medical skills demanded their respect for her evangelistic words. Each morning after rounds, Margaret held devotions for patients and their families. Outside on the hard packed ground, in the shade of a tree, she spoke of God and read the teachings of the Bible. She ministered to the peoples souls and taught Sunday School to a group of teenage boys. The people listened, learned and turned their hearts toward God.

The patients came in large numbers, and with them, their families. There was no room. So Margaret built a house, and then another. Eventually, the buildings were upgraded to a larger hospital, living quarters, maternity ward and a dispensary. Fresh water was hard to come by, so Margaret had a well dug. There are many photos outlining the process it took to build each brick, lay them side by side and create the system that would operate by hand or by oxen, and provide the people with fresh water.

Furloughs were not spent idly. Often Margaret would go home to family and speak at various meetings. Margaret's sense of adventure was not limited to her mission activity, and she also spent many hours in travel.

The photo collection is extensive. It includes photos detailing the daily life of an East Indian, the caste system, laundry boys, snake charmers, idol worshippers, markets and more. The life of an East Indian in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century is captured in black and white, and it is arresting.

There are photos of Margaret standing beside an extraordinarily tall ant hill, making her look quite short, photos of her dangling her feet off the back of a houseboat in Kashmir and photos of her standing at the foot of the Taj Mahal -- all with a smile on her face.

Margaret's accomplishments were both small and grandiose, and always inspiring. Despite the frustrations of sanitation and local culture, everyone's physical and spiritual needs were important and attended to. She was nurse, doctor, administrator, builder and preacher. And I will always remember her story.

*Tamara Dyck, archival assistant at Centre for MB Studies, also works as library technician at Canadian Mennonite University.*

## Mennonite Distillery in Prussia

by Bert Friesen

The Heinrich Stobbe KG, Tiegenhof, was founded in 1776. Tiegenhof is between Danzig and Elbing, about 25 km north west from Elbing.

The distillery was started by Melchior Weyher 1574-1643 at about 1600. He was not likely a Mennonite. This liquor would have been produced using some fermented grain and some form of distillation by boiling.

Weyher may well have had Mennonite descendants, such as the Weier family-name people. He sold his business in 1617 to an unknown buyer. This person, in turn, sold it to Cornelius Gronau in 1714. So this unknown expanded the business over nearly 100 years.

Gronau did not operate the distillery very long before he sold it to Johann Bestvater in the 1720s. It is very likely that both Gronau and Bestvater were Mennonites from the Gross Werder.

Bestvater operated the distillery for a generation. In his declining years he decided to sell the business. He sold it to Johann Donner 1730-1773 in 1763. Donner's brother, Heinrich, 1735-1805, was the Ältester of the Orloffelfelde Gemeinde from 1772 until his death in 1805. Heinrich Donner was succeeded as Ältester by his son, Johann Donner, 1771-1830. After Johann Donner's, 1730-1773, death, the business was carried on by employees until the Stobbe family purchased the distillery and all the rights connected with it.

Erdmann Stobbe 1710-1761 and his wife Agatha Penner 1718-1761 had a son Peter

Stobbe 1751-1823. In 1776, as a 25-year old, he took on the headship of the distillery. He was the second surviving son. He married the previous owner, Johann Donner's, niece, Adelgunde Donner, 1758-1839, the daughter of Ältester Heinrich Donner, 1735-1805. They had 12 children, three of whom survived infancy and had descendants. The business expanded in the first generation of the Stobbe family leadership under Peter. He built a new distillery in Rosgarten and a brewery in Tiegenhof.

Mennonites got involved in the distillery business almost without many other options. Many occupations were closed to them in Royal Prussia, either under pressure from the authorities of the church, city government, or the crown. At the time of the partition in 1772 between Austria, Russia, and Prussia, Mennonites were quite involved in this industry. The 1776 census lists among a total of 12,603 Mennonites, twenty seven engaged in the liquor business in Danzig and its suburbs, five in the Grosse Werder district, thirteen in Elbing, three in Memel, and four in Tilsit, for a total of 52 head of families.

With the Stobbe family, there was also a close connection to the leadership of the Orloffsfelde Gemeinde. Peter Stobbe, 1751-1823, married the daughter of the Ältester of this Gemeinde. His son, Hermann 1790-1867, took over the business on the death of his father. Hermann's sister Adelgunde, 1794-1869, married Wilhelm Giesbrecht, 1790-. His other sister Elisabeth, 1796-1856, married Cornelius Lepp 1792-. Giesbrecht took over the distillery in Rosgarten and Lepp took over the brewery.

Hermann's era was one of expansion. The business expanded technologically and diversified. New products such as gin, brandy, and other liquors were introduced. They also diversified into the lumber business. The new products required building new production facilities. Construction required materials and so they decided to expand into the lumber business. They also needed raw materials

for the new products, such as grains, and so they expanded into the grain and flour business. Herman handed over to his sons a much larger enterprise in 1866 than he had received in 1823 when he took over the business from his father. A year later he died. His era had also been one of much uncertainty with the partition of Prussia, the Napoleonic wars, and the establishment of rule from Berlin. He was a high risk leader under these circumstances.

Four of Hermann's sons got involved in the business. Heinrich, 1825-1910, headed the firm and directed the liquor business. His brother Robert, 1820-1904, was also involved in the liquor side of the business. His brother August, 1817-1892, took over the beer business. Carl, 1819-1878, another older brother, took over the lumber business. It may have been that, Heinrich, the youngest of the brothers, took over as head, because he was the most inclined to work in the accounting department where he had spent the most time as a son working under his father.

Heinrich married a Claassen daughter, Johanna, in 1855, the year of the great flood in the Marienwerder. His wife died after child birth in 1869 after the birth of Paul, the 11th child. Thereafter, he had to hire a person to take care of the children. He hired a Frau Stein, in 1874. She remained with the family until her death in 1909. She managed the household and tutored the younger children.

Heinrich, 1825-1910, expanded the business to Danzig with production facilities there. He also opened sales offices and distribution centres in various major cities of Europe. Heinrich moved from Tiegenhof to Danzig in 1888 with one daughter, Martha, 1867-1928, and Frau Stein. Martha married a year later and moved to Königsberg. After her husband's death in 1902, she moved back to Danzig to be with her father.

Heinrich's son, Heinrich, 1860-1932, the oldest surviving son, took over running the Danzig production factories in the 1890s. He made Danzig the headquarters

of the firm's specialized trade in liquors. After his father's death in 1910, he took over the firm. He expanded production facilities to Marienburg in 1921. Each succeeding generation had more

sons to keep employed in various sectors of the firm. However they managed it, only one person was always chosen from each generation to head the firm.

Heinrich, 1860-1932, had four sons who became involved in the business. His youngest son, Bernhard, 1901-1982, took over the management of the firm in 1926, the 150th anniversary of the founding, and the 66th year of his father. When his older brother Heinrich, 1889-1928, died, he was given the Marienburg facilities to manage which Heinrich had managed from 1921-1928.

Bernhard, 1901-1982, remained at the firm's headquarters in Danzig, throughout WWII. He sent his family to safety in the west. After the war he was interned by the Soviets, 1945-1949. Upon his release, he made his way west and was reunited with his family in Oldenburg.

The firm was re-established in Oldenburg in 1951. They were fortunate in having preserved the recipes for their liquors. Therefore, they could continue with the same products as before the war.

Bernhard's son Ott-Heinrich, 1930-, joined the firm in 1954, after completing his education. The Stobbes were given some financial assistance from the American Marshall Plan. In the 1960s they contracted with the firm G. Vetter OHG, a firm founded in 1850, to produce their glass bottles. In 1969 the two firms merged under the name of G. Vetter. Ott-Heinrich, 1930- worked for the Vetter firm 1970-1982. This firm also acquired the recipes for the Stobbe products, with the purchase. In 1976 the new firm celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stobbe firm.

So, six generations of the Stobbe family headed this liquor business. They were: Peter, 1751-1823, Hermann, 1790-1867, Heinrich, 1825-1910, Heinrich, 1860-1932, Bernhard, 1901-1982, and Ott-Heinrich 1930-.

## Sources

- Ott-Heinrich Stobbe, *Stobbe Machandel*, Danziger Getränke-spezialitäten, 1992  
 Johann Donner, "Zum Andenken für meine lieben Kinder (Selbst-Biographie)", 1825 in *Christlicher Gemeinde-Kalender für das Schaltjahr 1932*, p.71-103  
 Peter J. Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland & Prussia*, 2009  
 Gerhard Driedger, *The Werder, The Land between the Vistula and the Nogat*, 1995  
 Horst Penner, *Die ost- und westpreussischen Mennoniten*, 1978

*Bert Friesen works as an indexer and special project archival assistant.*







**Mennonite  
Heritage  
Centre**

600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

## Arthur W. Slagel Photo Collection

The Centre recently acquired 267 photographs which it has processed as the Arthur W. Slagel Photograph Collection No. 665.

Arthur Slagel (1891-1943) was one of three American Mennonite Relief (AMR) volunteers sent to Russia with Orie Miller and Clayton Kratz. The three volunteers left the U.S. on September 1, 1920. Their first destination was Constantinople, which became the place to gather supplies. Slagel remained there to organize the shipment of relief goods, while the others went on to visit the Russian Mennonite colonies. (Kratz never came back.)

From 1922-1923 Arthur Slagel supervised the feeding program for 75,000 people, including 60,000 Mennonites. Food delivery orders were made for three Mennonite centres – Chortitza, Ohrloff and Halbstadt.

Slagel took many photographs of his experiences during the three years on this assignment. The collection has photos of the relief work in Russia showing various aspects of the work including workers, headquarters, storage, distribution, seeded and distributed crops, transportation, buildings and homes. The photos were taken in locations such as Chortitza, Alexandrosk, Schoenwiese, Rosenthal, Halbstadt, Gnadenfeld, Ohrloff, Nicopol, and Sagraadowka. There are images of the



**Mennonites bound for Canada boarding a train on 2 July 1923 in Russia.** Photo Credit: MHC Coll. 665.109



**Oxen hauling relief supplies to the food distribution centre in Halbstadt, ca. 1922.** Photo credit: MHC Coll. 665.144.

1923 emigration group from Schoenwiese leaving for Canada. There are general scenic photos of the Dnieper rapids, the Kremlin and other sites in Moscow. Some photographs were likely given to Slagel from Mennonite workers in Russia, such as the Solomon Ediger family, the Peter Nikkel family, the Johann Janzen family, the Ohrloff teachers and others. And, finally there are photos of travels taken in England, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Austria, Poland, Egypt, Palestine and Syria.

The Centre received these photographs as part of the A.A. Vogt's Mennonite Genealogy Inc. collection. Margaret Kroeker is of the opinion that her father, A. A. Vogt acquired them from his friend John P. Klassen of Bluffton, Ohio, sometime during the early 1960s. Klassen and Vogt were long-time friends from Russia. Both got involved in the early emigration movement in 1923. Just prior to his immigration, A.A. Vogt had worked closely with Slagel in the relief effort. Slagel had appointed Vogt as the chair of the Schoenwiese committee in April 1922 and also accepted his resignation as the time of emigration drew nearer.

Correspondence between Klassen and Vogt from 1962 and 1963 mentions and describes immigration papers related to the negotiations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> train load of 1923

emigrants, as well as photographs which Klassen has in his possession. He tells Vogt the photographs will be of interest to him and that he will know what to do with them.

It seems quite likely that Klassen was referring to these photos taken by Arthur W. Slagel. Klassen visited Manitoba in 1965. A.A. Vogt made some annotations on the photos before he died in 1968. The Mennonite Heritage Centre acquired the A.A. Vogt Mennonite Genealogy Inc. collection in 2007. *A.R.*



**Russian peasants waiting for food at a Russian Molokaner village AMR kitchen ca. 1922.** Photo credit: MHC Coll. 665.136



**Volunteers Margaret Kroeker and her daughter Caroline Brandt help MHC Director Alf Redekopp, flatten some rolled documents pertaining to the House of Heinrich, Sara and Justina Epp family. An updated genealogy of the family is available from the Heritage Centre in the form of a computer database on a CD ROM for \$20.00. These charts constitute one of the sources of the data.** Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

## Historical Commission appoints new executive secretary

Winnipeg, Manitoba. — The Historical Commission, a bi-national agency of the United States and Canadian MB conferences, appointed **Andrew Dyck** as executive secretary effective Jan. 1, 2011.

The Historical Commission is charged with the task of helping to preserve and interpret the history of the Mennonite Brethren church and to apply it to the mission of the church in the world today. In July, it sponsored the “Renewal of Identity and Mission” (RIM) consultation at Celebration 2010 held in Surrey B.C.

In this quarter-time role, Dyck will replace Abe Dueck, who has been the interim executive secretary since the resignation of Ken Reddig in April 2009.

“The Historical Commission is delighted to appoint Andrew and looks forward to having him devote his energy and creativity to this challenge,” says Dueck, board chair. “Andrew is convinced of the importance of the commission’s work and is thankful for the opportunity to serve the constituency in the commission’s various endeavors.”

Dyck will continue as one of two pastoral elders at Highland Community Church in Abbotsford, B.C., while also working on his PhD studies at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague.

—from a CCMBC news release

## CCMBC appoints new CMBS director



Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches (CCMBC) appointed **Jon Isaak** as the new director for the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS) on August 7, 2010.

The primary work of CMBS involves preserving Mennonite Brethren congregational and conference records, including theological writings. This allows the Centre to help leaders when addressing current issues facing MB churches. Theological and historical resources for individual research or churches engaged in theological reflection and conversation are also available through CMBS.

Isaak holds a PhD in Early Christian History and Literature from McGill University. He has been a professor of New Testament at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (MBBS) since 1998. Prior to that, he was a missionary under Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services International (MBMSI), teaching math and physics at the Mbandu school in Kikwit, DR Congo, and later teaching Bible at St. Petersburg Christian University in Russia.

Isaak will begin his duties on June 15, 2011, after completing a teaching contract



CENTRE FOR

**Mennonite  
Brethren  
Studies** IN CANADA

1310 Taylor Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6

at Fresno Pacific University. Isaak will replace Doug Heidebrecht, who left the post at the end of August to begin mission training in B.C. with MBMSI.

“We’re all very enthusiastic about Jon coming to be part of the CCMBC staff. It’s exciting to see someone of Jon’s calibre come to build on the Centre’s position as a theological resource to our conference,” said David Wiebe, former CCMBC executive director.

Isaak says of his leadership at CMBS: “As a Mennonite Brethren early-Christian historian, my goal is to continue to explore with others how this kind of Anabaptist-evangelicalism could renew our churches. I am especially interested in applying my organizational, research, and writing skills to directing the Centre for MB Studies in its ongoing mandate of helping Canadian MB churches ‘tell their story’ and ‘shape their story’ through critical engagement with both the Canadian and global contexts.”

Jon is married to Mary Anne, who will pastor at River East MB Church, Winnipeg. They have two adult children who attend Canadian Mennonite University (CMU).

—from a CCMBC news release

## Can You Help Identify this Saskatchewan Congregation?



On the back of this photo was the inscription “D.R. Klein - Meadow Lake Ebenezer MB Church”. Presumably, this refers to the Meadow Lake Ebenezer MB Church in Saskatchewan. Please contact Conrad Stoesz (cstoesz@mbconf.ca), if you can provide any additional information about the name, place, date and occasion. Photo credit: Centre for MB Studies, NP029-01-13.

## Bible School in Herbert, Saskatchewan, Canada.



**Herbert Bible School students and faculty, 1914-1915. Hermann Fast, author of the article, is believed to be the bearded man in the front row.** Photo credit: Centre for MB Studies, NP165-01-22.

*Recently Bert Friesen at the Centre for MB Studies processed some early records from the Herbert Bible School, which operated from 1913-1957. The following article found in the **Zionsbote** tells what students could expect to learn when the school opened, and what was expected of them in 1916.*

*Translated by Bert Friesen*

Nov. 1, 1916.

The four month course will, God willing, begin on 4. December 1916. Our intended students are the mature youth of our people. Our two curricula goals, as set by the school, will include a thorough learning of the mother tongue and – as the name of the school indicates – knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. We will seek to make the students familiar with church history, world history, natural history, and geography, only in so far as they fall within the context of our textbook. We will maintain, with practice, the use of the eyes and hands in writing and drawing. We will offer tuition in singing by reading notes [as opposed to numbers/*ziffern*] as well as playing organ (with notes), although the latter will have an extra charge. If available, each student should bring along a Bible and gospel song book. Biblical history and reading books, as well as notebooks, can be purchased in the school.

Students will be offered room, board, heat, and lighting as space allows. Local students should bring along a single bed frame, as well as a mattress, bed linen, pillows, blankets, and towels. Non-local students will receive a bed and mattress here. The course tuition will be \$2.50 per month; for lighting, heat, and other material, the cost will be \$1.50 per week. For the four-month educational term, each student should bring: 80 pounds high

quality flour, 40 pounds meat, 8 pounds lard or cotton oil, and 2½ bushels of potatoes. For non-local students, these items can be covered by fees. Students, who live in the town, can take their noon meal at the school for \$1.50 per week. It is expected, that all accounts will be settled in advance monthly. Extra meals will be charged at 20¢.

Since the curriculum constitutes a coherent whole, it is desirable that all students of this school appear promptly on the 4. December, and remain until the end of the school term on the 4. April 1917.

It is the request of the undersigned, that the friends of Christian education in this Bible school in Herbert remember us in their intercessory prayers.

*Hermann Fast*

*--from the **Zionsbote**, 29 November 1916*

### Gerhard Ens

*(cont'd from p. 2)*

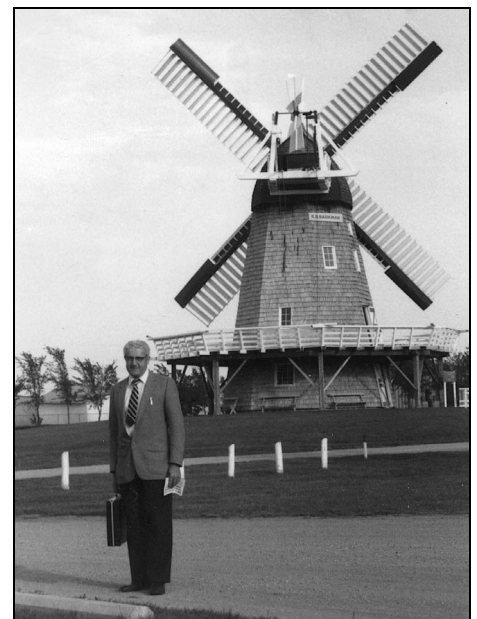
looked forward to more contact with the larger constituency. He saw the mission of *Der Bote* as facilitating communication among the various groups of Mennonites in North America, South America, and Europe; and to provide a forum for discussion. Ens brought an interest in Mennonite history to the paper with articles on schools and the national conference, for example. Ens later said of his time as the “Bote Onkel”, “...[It was]

the most immediately satisfying work I did. It was one of those things where when you finished an issue and put it to bed and mailed it out there was something visible. One had the feeling of having accomplished something.”

Shortly after settling in Winnipeg in 1977, Ens was invited to share his teaching and preaching gifts with the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church “for the time being.” Ens later remarked that “nothing is as permanent as something that starts for the time being”. He continued this service until 2006.

At an event thanking Ens for his ministry at Sargent Church, fellow minister, Martin Friesen, said of Ens, “[he] has enriched the life of the congregation as a preacher who made his sermons relevant, a teacher who developed a special bond with his Bible study students, and a historian who made the church’s past come alive”. It was estimated that Ens preached over 2,000 sermons. Another fellow lay minister, Menno Wiebe, recounted how one Sunday Gerhard sat down in the pew and his wife Annie showed him the church bulletin which listed Ens as preaching. Gerhard responded with “*was ist geschrieben ist geschrieben!*” (What is written is written). He went to the church office, picked up a Bible and took his place at the front of the church. That Sunday he preached a magnificent sermon.

Ens, while in Winnipeg, continued his involvement with the Mennonite Village Museum in Steinbach. In 1988 the organization undertook a 3 million dollar expansion in time for the 1990 Mennonite



**Gerhard Ens at Mennonite Heritage Village**



World Conference to be held in Winnipeg. Ens became president of the board in 1989 and oversaw the elimination of the debt. He resigned as president in 1998. He served on the board for over 40 years.

Gerhard Ens' contributions to the Mennonite community were recognized on a number of occasions. In 2004 he was named past president emeritus of the Mennonite Heritage Village and in 2010 the "Gerhard Ens Gallery" was named in his honor. In 2005 Ens was given an honorary lifetime membership into the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. In 2008 he was given the "Award of Excellence" by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

In 2008 Gerhard moved from his home to Donwood Manor Personal Care Home where he received daily visits from his wife and family. The next 4 years were difficult for him. He died on February 13, 2011 at the age of 88, leaving behind his wife, 5 children and their families. He will be missed by many "...dear friends and neighbors from far away and close by".

## Sources

*Canadian Mennonite* July 6, 1998 p. 26; June 16, 2003 p4, July 31, 2006, p.22-23.

*Heritage Posting*, No. April 2005 #48, April 2008 #60.

*Mennonite Reporter* April 11, 1988 p. 13.

"Interview with Gerhard Ens, 2002, <http://members.shaw.ca/gghens/Interview.htm>, accessed September 7, 2007.

E-mail, Arnold Reimer to Conrad Stoesz, October 19, 2007.

E-mail, CFAM radio station to Conrad Stoesz, October 26, 2007.

GRANDMA (The Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry) Database, 6.0 ed. Fresno, CA: California Mennonite Historical Society, 2009: #176553

Anna Ens, *In Search of Unity: Story of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba*, 1996. p. 97, 101, 220.

Lawrence Klippenstein, *That There be Peace: Mennonites in Canada and World War II*, 1979. p. 47-53.

Gerhard Ens memorial service bulletin, Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, 18 February 2011.

CMM History Project MHC volume 4476 file 32.

*Conrad Stoesz works as an archivist at the Centre for MB Studies and the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.*

[Editor's Note: *The MHC Archives has some of Gerhard Ens' archival collection—sound recordings, writings and other files from his various activities.*]

## Book Notes

by Harold Peters-Fransen

Herald Press' *Tongue screws and Testimonies, Poems and Essays inspired by the Martyr's Mirror*, (2010, 309 pages) edited by Kirsten Beachy, is a collection of literary pieces, in response to the seventeenth century book, *Martyr's Mirror*. *Martyr's Mirror* was itself written to reclaim a heritage for the Dutch Mennonite people in their time of becoming wealthy. This 21<sup>st</sup> century work in some ways displays the vast diversity of literary expressions among the daughters and sons of Menno, at least in North America, as they reflect on *Martyr's Mirror*. Arranged under the themes of book, fire, water, wounds, memories, tongues, enemies, and heirs, the pieces reflect admiration, critique of the martyrs themselves or the literary approach of the telling of the story, humour, awe, spiritual reflection, and intellectual curiosity. The writers include young adults and seniors, and they themselves have various levels of closeness and distance to the faith and the church. Some are reprints from other works, some have been written for this anthology. Ian Hubert's drawings at the beginning of each chapter, parody Jan Luyken's image of Dirk Phillips rescuing the jailer from the ice. The very range of viewpoints of the writers would make it impossible for anyone to agree with every writer. This work inspires, questions, and disturbs our understanding of martyrology in our collective story.

Abram Teichrib writes, *Der Weg zur Heimat, Erinnerungen meiner Mutter* (The way home, memories of my mother), self published, 285 pages, 2005. It is the biography of Elisabeth (Pätkau) Teichreb, 1915-1997. Born in the Russian Mennonite settlement of Orenburg, her father was a minister. Her father was sent into the gulag when she was fourteen. She married a teacher in 1933. He was taken from her four years later, and she never heard anything about him again. She moved in with her in-laws in the Ukraine in 1938, and so was there during the German occupation. Together with her remaining son, (a daughter died in infancy,) she retreats with the German army, telling of the trek, their stay in Poland, and the ultimate return to the Soviet Union. She also experiences some time in the gulag, before settling back in Orenburg. It is in the 1980s that she with her son and family end up in Germany.

The story is told with a strong faith perspective. There is much pathos, but also moments of compassion and humour in this story. It is anticipated that there will be an English translation, which will make this compelling story available to a new audience.

*Under the Shadow of the Almighty: Eleven Years in Exile* is the autobiographical writings of Isaak and Olga Reimer, 196 pages (translated into English by Esther Patkau, Saskatoon), originally written in 1974. The story begins in the German occupation of Ukraine, where Isaak takes on administrative posts. Retreating with the German armies, and eventually ending up under the Soviet zone, they were separated from each other in January 1945, and did not see each other for a little over 10 years. Isaak chronicles his becoming a prisoner of the Soviets, his eventual transport to the gulag, and when they realized his administrative skills, his assignment to office duties through much of his gulag experience. Details of judicial proceedings, his and others, life in the camps, and slow improvement in living conditions and diet are chronicled. In all his experiences, Soviet officials and fellow prisoners become human, including many with positive traits. He also tells the stories related to the reduction of the scope of the gulag, 1955-1956, and his reuniting with his wife. Her story is told more briefly, but does include exile and deprivation. They left the Soviet Union in 1966.

*An Enduring Faith: Mennonite Stories, their History and Persecution*, 288 pages, self published, is primarily the story of Emma Salmon-Plett, born to Russian Mennonite immigrants, part of the 1929 Moscow exodus group, to Paraguay. She does contextualize her story within the wide sweep of Mennonite history, but the strongest part of the book is telling her own story. Growing up during the early years of deprivation in Paraguay, she becomes a teacher in colony Fernheim. She is baptized and received into the Mennonite Brethren Church in Paraguay. Emigrating with her family to British Columbia in 1957, she eventually receives her PhD in Germanic studies at University of British Columbia. She served with Mennonite Central Committee in Berlin 1962-1964, working with the Mennonite Church in East Berlin. Upon return to Canada, she eventually marries John Salmon. They have two children. John is

(cont'd on p. 10)

## Book Notes

(cont'd from p. 9)

diagnosed with MS, and dies in 2001. After his death, Emma spends several years in Ecuador involved in a radio ministry. In a final chapter, she chronicles her many travels to many places in the world, from her single life, their married life, and her life after John's death. Illustrated with many photographs.

The coil bound *Memories of Hal's War, Be a Good Soldier*, 40 pages, self printed, written by his brother, Paul Siemens, 2010, tells the story of Hal, who grew up and was baptized into the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church, and chose to enlist into the Canadian army in World War II. The document relates the struggles of church and family around the enlistment. Drafted and initial training in Alberta, stationed first in London Ontario where he met his wife who he would marry after the war, stationed in England, and eventually serving with the intelligence unit in France and Holland, he settled in London, Ontario after the war.

The appendices include documentation from the MB church in Coaldale, (it is not clear that he was excommunicated for his enlistment, although he was led to believe that he had been), and war related documents.

A history master's thesis, *From Refugee to Suburbanite: The Survival and Acculturation of North Kildonan Mennonite immigrant Women, 1927-1947*, 143 pages coil bound, by Olga Dyck Regehr, 2006, tells the stories of the ordinary lives of Mennonite Brethren women as they acculturated to the Canadian way of living. Through interview and personal experience, (both her own interviews, and transcripts of earlier interviews by Heidi Koop) she describes the personal struggles, the role of the women's groups, issues such as clothing and food, and the changes in their relationships to the men and to the largely patriarchal church. Influences to the culture included living close to the city, those women who had served as maids, and their children attending schools.

*Pioneers of Cheese: A social and economic history of the cheese industry in Southern Manitoba, 1880-1960*, written and published by Ronald Friesen, 418 pages, tells the story of the development of the cheese making industry primarily in the Mennonite and Francophone communities of Southern Manitoba. He chronicles various ups and downs in such an industry from its earliest days. The first

producers came from Ontario and Quebec to Manitoba. Innovations like the steel milk can, and later pasteurization provided both new businesses and the closing of old businesses. Sometimes cheese-making was a cooperative endeavour, sometimes very much an individual endeavour. Although initially Anglos were involved, eventually the primary groups were the French and the Mennonites. One interesting difference between the two communities is that the calling of cheese-making, as all endeavours, became occasions for faith celebrations, whereas the Mennonite community saw it as more secular. The interaction of the two communities certainly exists at the provincial organizational level, but there are also some stories of Mennonite dairy producers selling to francophone cheese-makers, and some personal interactions between them. Various communities, individuals and businesses are highlighted, as well as the various dairy and cheese associations, and pertinent government agencies. Lavishly illustrated with photographs and 10 appendices of lists of names, communities and various documents, Friesen conveys his love of this story to the reader.

## Book Reviews

(cont'd from p. 12)

table of groups organized by country, listing congregations and number of members. An index is also included.

For being originally conceived as an American focused book and later including the rest of North America, the content is well researched and concisely written. There are occasions where the Canadian content is not as full as is needed or is missing altogether. While Mennonites make up 63% of the groups listed, the entries for Hutterites are sparse. It would have been good to include information on the various colonies.

One may wonder if there is a need for another encyclopedia after the five-volume *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, which has been incorporated into the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO) [www.gameo.org](http://www.gameo.org). In some cases entries in these sources are dated and lengthy. Kraybill's book is current and compact which provides a helpful and easily accessible resource in one volume.

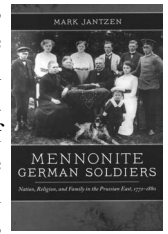
Mark Jantzen, *Mennonite German Soldiers: Nation, Religion and Family in the Prussian East, 1772-1880* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pb., 370 pp.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein, former MHC Director.

On the one hand, this is a study of the development of German nationalism, instrumented by the growing thrust of Prussian hegemony in the German states of Central Europe. On the other, it is a study in microcosm of one group of subjects, i.e. how state pressures were exerted upon Prussian Mennonites to become loyal citizens of a new German nation. That meant among other things to bring them to fall in line with its military policies, and Mennonites accommodating themselves otherwise as necessary to become accepted citizens generally.

The author thus sets out to depict how state actions served to make useful subjects/citizens of its Mennonite population component in the nineteenth century. Especially difficult for many Mennonites were restrictions placed in various ways on their property rights, and to a somewhat lesser degrees on marriage and other social freedoms in the community. These restrictions could only be avoided by giving up resistance to military service which some Mennonites continued to sustain right up to the 1870s, and even beyond.

Before the establishment of complete Prussian control of Mennonite settlement areas, Mennonites had been able to benefit considerably from various jurisdictions-bishoprics, city ordinances, and policies of the Polish royal court which, though wary of Mennonite influence at times (and, of course, reactions of other religious groups to royal decisions, saw fit frequently to offer benefits and support to Mennonites for their services and productivity. That variety of local and sometimes broader "tolerance" was essentially abolished by Prussian state policies as soon as those took precedence over the earlier regimes of one kind or another. Mennonites generally sought to maintain a consistent position of seeking exemption from military service throughout this period of very significant political and socio-economic change.



Jantzen explains in a way not as clearly done before what internal and external factors contributed to the gradual erosion of the influence Mennonites could exert to uphold their anti-military service views. These erosive factors went beyond the alluded to state restrictions of various kinds to include growing influence among Mennonites of more liberal thinking among some better-educated leaders, the shift of certain entire congregations such as the one in Krefeld, and eventually Danzig also, to accept military service, and particularly the readiness of Mennonite parliamentarians like Hermann von Beckerath to exchange support of national goals for traditional Mennonite views on military service, and the promotional pro-actions of the Mannhardts, for example, in the Prussian Mennonite press to undergird this new non-traditional approach.

Continuing resistance to state policies persisted for a time, ultimately leading to essentially two remaining options for the Mennonites – give up resistance to military service or emigrate. In actual fact, a noncombatant service within the military existed also, and a few people would take advantage of it. As it turned out, a significant number of families under the leadership of persons like the elder Gerhard Penner and elder Wilhelm Ewert did leave, mostly moving to Russia, but ultimately to North America and other countries as well.

It should be noted however that disagreements between bureaucrats within the emerging German nation also provided certain balancing elements within the new nationalistic program. Occasionally such persons could promulgate restraints on anti-Mennonite policies re military service, which might otherwise have meant even greater hardships for population pockets resisting nationalization pressures on existing or potential citizens alike.

The story of the emigrations is placed clearly within the context of the larger political struggle though left in many of its details to other studies. Indeed, the dispersion of the entire Prussian Mennonite community in its four hundred plus year-long existence (ca.1535-1945) is ready for another scholarly overview done as carefully as Jantzen's topic is dealt with here. Other monographs such as the recent study by Peter J. Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland and Prussia* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009) will give such further work solid

footing and a strong boost otherwise.

By the end of the nineteenth century the great majority of Prussian Mennonites were ready to accept military service, with a relatively small minority taking the emigration route. During World War I Mennonite periodicals in Germany regularly listed the "Gefallenen" (the fallen) Mennonite soldiers and when called for, celebrated German military victories as they occurred.

The outcome of the nationalizing struggle as far as Prussian Mennonites are concerned raised serious questions as to whether ways could have been found to mitigate the powerful influence of very influential but accommodating Mennonite leaders who became the vanguard for creating strong and almost total Mennonite support for German military service in the end.

Jantzen's definitive study is a masterful example of how an exhaustive examination of archival sources, along with secondary materials can shed new light on old themes. This work also includes well-done maps, charts, some well-chosen photos, an index and other related data, including an up-to-date bibliography, especially of non-Mennonite related material. As a very clearly, well-written volume, it creates a benchmark for the kind of scholarly work on such themes that invite other research and publication in the future.

Hedy Leonora Martens, *Favoured among Women : the Story of Greta Enns : A Biographical Novel* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2010) 406 pp.

*Reviewed by Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder, translator and freelance writer who recently moved from Ontario to Manitoba.*

*Favoured among Women* is Volume One of the story of Greta Enns. In the author's words it is "as true as fiction can recreate it, as factually accurate as word-of-mouth accounts can shape it, woven with care out of personal interviews, diaries, journals, and letters."

When I first held this book in my hands, I knew that it was a treasure I could hardly wait to explore. Between the covers is the story of a woman who lived at the same time and in the same place as my parents and grandparents -- Leninist and Stalinist Russia in the first decades of

the 20th century. I have no memory of this place where I too was born and where my ancestors spent the days of their lives. Martens helped me fill in some of the gaps.

Although eager to begin reading, I was somewhat apprehensive because I know the outcome. I have heard bits and pieces from my grandmother and my mother, and I have felt and absorbed their agony.

To my delight and surprise however, pain and suffering, though unavoidable in an account of Mennonite women in Stalin's Russia, are not the focus of Martens' book. Instead, she chooses to shine the spotlight on friendship, faith and love -- Greta's strong friendship with Neta Martens and the love she finds with Neta's brother Heinrich. These relationships and commitments provide Greta with the strength and courage she later needs in times of great adversity. This focus on faith and love mitigates for the reader the horror that the protagonist experiences, though it never does so in a didactic or sentimental manner.

In her prologue Martens writes, "So how can I help but stare, fascinated, at this woman whose children walked where I might have walked -- except for one small, gigantic fork in my parents' road and in hers, that led her one way and us another." The author continues to "stare" at Greta's life by being present throughout the novel as the omniscient narrator. Martens' voice is not an intrusive, distracting one, but rather one that belongs to and enriches the narrative -- she does so through personal comments, reflections, questions, historical explanations, and even the occasional poem.

Ever since reading Charlotte Hofmann-Hege's *Alles kann ein Herz ertragen* (the life of Elisabeth Thiessen, written and published in Germany in 1989), I've wished for a similar book written in English. Martens' story parallels it in many ways and I can hardly wait for Volume Two to appear.

Come explore  
**Family and Local  
History Day**

Sat. April 9, 2011

9:30a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Mennonite Heritage Village  
Steinbach, MB

Displays and Presentations

For more details contact:

aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca



## Book Reviews

Henry Poettcker, *A President's Journey: The Memoirs of Henry Poettcker* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2009), paper, 230 pp., \$26.50. ISBN 978-0-920718-83-4

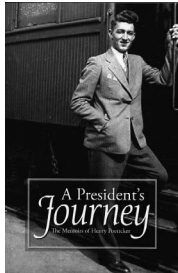
Reviewed by Jim Pankratz, Dean, Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

It is common to say that you cannot judge a book by its cover. But you can.

You can judge this book by its back cover. The short summary of the book and the two endorsements by former colleagues of Henry Poettcker inform readers that his story “reveals a modest life of devotion to God”, that he “exemplified faithful, humble obedience to God’s call”, and that this is the story of “the winsome faithfulness of a humble leader.”

That provides the perspective to interpret the front cover. The cover photo depicts a young Henry Poettcker, smartly dressed, standing at the steps of a train car, ready to travel to Winnipeg to study at the MB Bible College. The picture could as easily have been Poettcker departing on one of his many trips to preach in a church, report to a conference, chair a board meeting, or make a speech at an educational consultation. This is the story of a President who was on the move and at the centre of the religious and educational life of Mennonites for nearly forty years, a President who was modest, humble, and faithful.

For all of that, he was a leader. Others knew it. He never needed to apply for jobs. He was “called”; always, it seems, to his surprise. While he was studying in colleges, Bible schools, and seminaries, local congregations invited him to preach and provide pastoral leadership. He was offered an opportunity to teach in a Bible School in Didsbury Alberta, but before he finished his studies and started to teach there he was invited to join the CMBC faculty and even offered financial support to continue his studies. He joined the CMBC faculty in 1954 and was appointed President five years later, at age 34. Then, after twenty four years at CMBC, he was invited to become President of Mennonite Biblical Seminary. He retired twelve years later. He was a President for thirty-one years.



Poettcker tells his story from boyhood in Russia to his retirement in 1990. He tells it simply, kindly, and with gratitude. He tells it like memory – sometimes there is only a brief reference to a person or event, at other times the vivid detail is like someone parsing a photograph.

There are three interwoven chronological narratives. The institutional reports of faculty, facilities, programs, enrolment, constituency relations, board meetings and conference work are matter-of-fact and modest. The stories of family and friends are told with affection and appreciation. The reports of travels and sabbaticals are recounted with diarist’s detail and obvious delight.

The tone of the book and the character of Poettcker are best illustrated by an anecdote that he reports. He had been invited to become President of Mennonite Biblical Seminary, so in June 1977 he flew to Chicago to visit the seminary. On the two hour drive from the airport he asked the two Board members who were his hosts why they had chosen him. They described his education and administrative experience, his wide ranging roles in conference activities, his many speaking engagements, and their own positive experiences with him over many years. Poettcker then writes, “Put all together, this was almost heady stuff!”

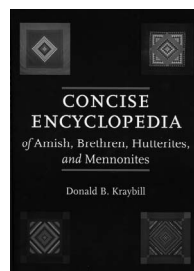
“Almost”, but not enough to go to the head of this modest, humble, devoted servant of God.

Donald B. Kraybill, *Concise Encyclopedia of Amish, Brethren, Hutterites and Mennonites* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), hardcover, 302 pp.

Reviewed by Conrad Stoesz, Archivist at CMBS and MHC

Many people find the plethora of Mennonite related groups, individual distinctions, and core beliefs confusing – 205 to be exact - and that’s only in North America! This book by Donald B. Kraybill, is able to give considerable clarity to this issue.

The book is the result of a ten-year project by Kraybill, a distinguished professor from the Young Centre for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies in Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania. Originally conceived as an American



research project, it soon grew to a North American focus, describing groups who gain their spiritual inspiration from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist reformation. Today Anabaptists can be found in 17 of the 23 countries in North America with 8,711 congregations and an estimated membership of 809,845 baptized adults.

The book was written as a succinct guide for journalists, students, scholars, and others interested in learning about Mennonites, Amish, Brethren, and Hutterites in North America. The introductory overview includes a few tables and information on key terms. Throughout the book Kraybill places groups and practices on a traditional – assimilation continuum. Traditional groups assert moral authority through the community and find ways of separating themselves from society in ways such as dress. Assimilated groups are individualistic and blend into their surrounding culture. These two extremes impact religious rituals, church organization, leadership, gender roles, education, political involvement, acceptance of technology etc. It is not that assimilated groups have no tradition Kraybill points out, it is that they freely borrow from their surrounding culture rather than continuing with their native traditions.

The encyclopedia portion is the largest part and is arranged alphabetically with helpful cross references throughout the text to other entries. At the end of each entry is a short bibliography for more information. The entries focus on cultural topics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century rather than historical or religious ones; of course there is substantial overlap. Entries were also chosen on the basis of Kraybill’s perceptions of what people outside the Anabaptist tradition would like to know, such as topics related to traditional groups.

Topics cover theology, practices, groups, and a few biographies and events. A smattering of sample entries includes atonement, beards, cookbooks, foot washing, Jacob Hutter, Mennonite Foundation, jury duty, simplicity, shunning, World War II, worship etc. The entries are all written by Kraybill giving the book an even feel to it. This is followed by a directory of current groups organized geographically, giving a synopsis of the group’s origins, size, and often where it fits on the traditional – assimilated spectrum. The last section is a

(cont’d on p. 10)