

# Mennonite Historian

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

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**Mennonite missionaries work with Red Cross, helping wounded in China during the "Era of the War Lords," 1916-1923. See story on p. 2. Photo credit: CMBS-Fresno.**

# Frank and Agnes Wiens: A Remarkable Missionary Story

by Abe J. Dueck

The story of Frank and Agnes<sup>1</sup> Wiens, pioneer Mennonite Brethren missionaries to China, is a story of incredible faith, courage, and adventure. It has intriguing connections to events and people in the United States and Russia, as well as to Canada.<sup>2</sup> The story of Mennonite Brethren (MB) missions in China is not generally as well known, particularly in Canada, as the mission stories in India and Africa, for a variety of reasons. Recent developments in China have spawned renewed interest in recovering the Mennonite story. This brief account is only one of many that deserve further analysis and interpretation.

Frank Wiens was born in 1880 in Henderson, Nebraska. His parents emigrated from Russia in 1879. Agnes Harder Wiens was born in 1883 of parents who had also migrated from Russia in 1875. They were married in 1902 and, after spending one year at McPherson College, they attended Rochester Baptist Seminary, enrolled in a missionary program. Frank's gifts as an evangelist were quickly recognized by the MB Church and he spent a few years as a Conference evangelist. Sometimes he was referred to as the "Billy Sunday" of the

Mennonites on the prairies. Frank and Agnes, however, had their sights set on becoming missionaries in China.

In 1909, the MB Conference voted to open a mission field in China. This decision was reversed a year later, which came as a serious blow to Frank and Agnes. They were determined to go anyway, even if it meant soliciting support on their own.

As a first step, they decided to travel to Russia, where they still had close relatives and family friends. On September 3, 1910, they set sail and soon arrived in the Molotschna colony, meeting their cousins in the village of Sparrau. Regular reports of their sojourn there, as well as subsequent developments, were sent to the *Zionsbote* and the *Mennonitische Rundschau*.

Before long, Frank was fully involved in evangelistic activity throughout the Mennonite colonies, including Samara, Orenburg, and Crimea. He also preached to large crowds among the Russian people. He refused to be intimidated by the fact that he was unable to secure permission from the Russian authorities to preach. He was also sometimes harshly criticized and at times threatened by Mennonites who resented his proselytizing activity.

On July 13, 1911, the Wiens family boarded the train to Siberia. By this time, two children had been born to them—Harold and Adina. They stopped in Omsk, intending to stay very briefly, but strong pleas from the local leaders led them to stay until the end of August. On September 1, they finally boarded the Trans-Siberian Railway bound for China via Manchuria, disembarking at Vladivostok on the southeast coast of Russia. Although Wiens took many photographs of this incredible journey, he was detained by police in Vladivostok and his photos were confiscated.

The final leg of the journey to China was via boat. Sailing from Vladivostok, they arrived in China on the eve of the Revolution. On October 9, 1911, they entered Swatow harbor—the same day that China declared its independence from the Manchu dynasty. The troublesome era of the Republic began. Wiens soon met several Baptist missionaries, Jacob Speicher and George Campbell.

After some delays, on April 14, 1912, Wiens finally left for Shanghang in Fujien province, the city that would become the base of an ambitious missionary program among the Hakka people. Before long



Frank J. and Agnes (Harder) Wiens with children, Herbert and Adina, 1911. Photo credit: CMBS-Winnipeg (NP025-07-041).

Frank and Agnes began Sunday services, even though they had barely begun to learn the Hakka language.

Shanghang was surrounded by a huge wall, with a gate at each of the four corners. Wiens soon purchased a ten-room house near the north gate, inside the city. The main missionary compound, however, was established on property about one mile east of the city. It came to be called *Mi Fa Vien*, which literally meant, "American Chinese Garden."

Before long, Wiens showed his entrepreneurial skills, using Chinese laborers to build a boys' school, a girls' school, a church, and many other facilities. Although the political situation in China during World War I as a whole was unstable, the mission prospered. Agnes Wiens contributed as much as Frank, using her nursing skills, as well as working with a group of "Bible women," who also travelled independently to some of the outstations. Her message was that in Christ, there was no difference between men and women.<sup>3</sup>

Wiens initiated several major economic projects. The first was an attempt to introduce a dairy industry by importing four Holstein cattle from America. The venture proved to be a greater challenge than Wiens had anticipated. When the cattle arrived in Hong Kong to be transferred to a ship for China, Wiens was

(cont'd on p. 4)

**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.

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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

## Query

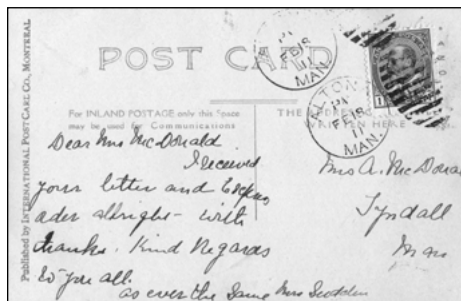
I am looking for information, stories, and photos of the children and grandchildren of Isaac Bueckert (1862–1938) and Aganetha Schroeder (1862–1912) who moved from Russia to Manitoba to Neuhorst, Saskatchewan. Children of Isaac and Aganetha Bueckert include: Isaac (1885–1948), Aron (1887–1964), Johan (1889–1938), Bernhard (1889–1969), Aganetha (1890–1954), Maria (1892–1948), Abram (1893–1949), Peter (1895–1956), Sarah (1897–1955), Jacob (1898–1973), Heinrich (1900–1979), Katharina (1902–1981), and David (1914–1982). Contact: Agie Husul, 1401 McDowell Rd East, RR6 Simcoe, ON, N3Y 4K5 (klassen@kwic.com).

## The Passing Parade: And You Were There

by Ken Kristjanson (kards@mymts.net)

Picture this: in the late 1870s, Europe's middle class was awash in riches from the New World. This Victorian-era leisure class had an affinity for art, communication, and travel. The relatively new photographic technology of the day provided a way to show off wealth and experiences to friends and family far and near. Whole families would have their picture taken and lithographed copies made. They would write all over the front, and for a few pennies, bring far-flung relatives up-to-date on their local happenings. Postcards were deemed to be letters and travelled with letter postage. The undivided back of the postcard could only contain the address; no message was allowed.

At the time, the French, Dutch, Belgian, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian Empires



Postcard postmarked February 18, 1911.  
Courtesy of Ken Kristjanson.

liked the idea of showcasing their history and progress in a format that was interesting to look at and easily sent anywhere. Postcards were the new marketing medium and everyone wanted their own. The sudden demand had publishers scrambling to produce better and more interesting cards. German publishers were at the forefront technologically—their chrome lithograph process produced millions of cards depicting every aspect of life at the time. For sharing photos inexpensively with a broad audience, postcards were the *Smartphone* or the *Facebook* of the era.

The first privately-made postcard requiring postage was created in Austria in 1869 and postcards rapidly gained worldwide popularity. Postcards of the Eiffel Tower produced in 1889 and 1890 kicked the postcard craze into high gear. By 1901, postcard production was said to be doubling every six months. The official figures from the U.S. Post Office for their fiscal year ending June 30, 1908, cite 677,777,798 postcards mailed. At that time, the total population of the United States was only 88,700,000.

The “Golden Age” of postcards was from 1890 to 1911—a time that roughly mirrors Winnipeg's own period of dramatic growth. Twenty years after Manitoba became a province, Winnipeg had grown from a backwater Hudson Bay Company post into a large town. With the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway came land speculators, settlers, entrepreneurs, professionals, and others from all walks of life. They were seeking fame, fortune, or simply a place to put down roots. Winnipeg rapidly became the largest city between Toronto and the Yukon and the numbers projected for the city's growth were staggering.

The city of Winnipeg attempted to do its part to keep up with the growth. Streets were paved; running water and electrical services were expanded. A streetcar line was added and the wholesale distribution district was expanded. The watchful eye of the ever-present photographers captured it all—they produced thousands of images, documenting the transformation of the city. The photos were quickly lithographed for a ready market, eager to show the world Winnipeg's new look.

Changes to the postcard rules around 1906 allowed for a divided back, where messages could be written. This feature further enhanced the popularity of postcards. So many high quality cards were produced and in such variety that it became popular to collect and trade them. For many, these images were the only connection people had with western Canada or the rest of the world.

In the 1950s, I remember a TV program called “You Are There.” The series featured recreated glimpses of historical events and it was narrated by renowned broadcaster Walter Cronkite. He always closed the program with the words: “What sort of day was it? A day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our times . . . all things are as they were then, *and you were there!*”

Just like postcards, the TV show made history accessible for millions of people. The show is long gone, but fortunately, we still have postcards to connect us to our history in a personal way. Many of these postcards were saved in family photo albums and so they survived to be enjoyed by future generations.

Postcards provide beautiful snapshots of life around the world at a particular instant in time, from mountains to parades. Many also feature personal notes that share the trivial and the profound, almost like *you* were there.



Postcard front. Courtesy of Ken Kristjanson.

**Recent Books:** If you have recently published a genealogy or family history book, please send us a complimentary copy and it will get noted. Ed.

**Queries:** Send queries to Conrad Stoesz, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 or email: cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca

## Missionary Wiens

*cont'd from p. 2)*

detained under some suspicion of collusion with the Germans. A naïve official at one point asked him, "Who are these Holsteins?" thinking that they were human beings. After a tortuous journey the rest of the way to Shanghang, the health of the cattle was repeatedly threatened. When ticks overwhelmed the herd, Agnes Wiens sewed protective blue garments for them. The attempt to create a dairy industry failed in the long run, however, when disease decimated the herd.

Another significant venture involved the creation of a silk industry. In 1916, Wiens travelled to Foochow to inspect a silk factory and brought back cuttings of a mulberry tree. Soon he established a thriving mulberry tree farm on a fallow piece of land and before long the silk worms spun their cocoons. Two stocking-knitting machines were purchased and there was promise of success. But before long, strong competition with new stocking designs brought an end to Frank's dream.

During times of natural disaster, such as a serious flood in 1917, and during times of civil war and anarchy, Wiens often played a crucial role. In 1917, a major flood enveloped the region and Wiens became the Red Cross agent for relief. In order to get money from stingy rich locals, he posted the names of contributors.

In 1918, during the "Era of the War Lords," Shanghang was alternately under the northern and the southern armies. When the northern forces entered the city in August, a short period of peace was followed by brutality and plundering. About 200 women received shelter in the mission compound. Again, a Red Cross station was set up that was headed by Wiens. Foreigners were held in some awe by the respective conquerors and the missionaries were therefore often able to intervene in difficult situations.

The most dramatic series of events transpired in late August 1918, when the city was under siege by the southern forces. Wiens had entered the city before the gates were closed and could not return home. The southern general came to the mission residence to ask Frank to help negotiate a peace settlement, but found only Agnes at home. Agnes decided to undertake the peace mission herself, after gathering her family and associates for prayer. With caution she proceeded to the

east gate where she held up a flag to signal her peaceful intent. Some shots were fired at her, even hitting the flag. She carried a basket with a message for her husband who was inside the city. The message stated the terms of peace and indicated that the attack on the city would resume by 5 p.m., if the terms were not accepted by morning.

Frank Wiens became the intermediary. He climbed the huge wall on a long bamboo ladder to receive and deliver messages. After seven such successive exchanges, a truce was reached. According to the terms, a sum of money was to be paid to the southern general and Wiens was to lead the northern army out of the city the next day. Quick preparations were made and in due course the officials and their soldiers marched out of the city and boarded 18 boats to head through enemy territory toward the coastal city of Swatow. Wiens knew that he was in great danger, but two weeks later he returned safely. The city residents were extremely grateful and honored him with a procession and fireworks the next day. Several years of peace followed. Daughter Adina wrote that Agnes Wiens never received adequate recognition for her role.<sup>4</sup>

Beginning in 1919, after almost a decade on their own, the mission work was finally strengthened with the arrival of new missionaries, which included several single women, as well as several couples. This made it possible for Frank and Agnes to return to America for a brief furlough. They arrived in San Francisco in July 1921, and after a busy year of deputation work, boarded a ship for their return to China in October 1922.

During their year away, the political landscape had become more unstable in China. Wiens was convinced that the Chinese leadership needed to be prepared to take over responsibility for the church and for evangelism. He worked hard to transfer responsibilities. Early in 1927, the situation became desperate and they were advised to be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. Under difficult circumstances, they soon departed, settling in Reedley, CA. They still hoped to return, but in the meantime, they needed to earn a living and they became involved in other ministries.

The door opened for Wiens to come to Canada in 1930. He was invited to become principal of the Tabor Bible Institute in Dalmeny, Saskatchewan. Frank and Agnes travelled to Dalmeny in

August with their three youngest children, Harold, Linda, and Roland. It is not clear why this lasted for only two years, but they returned to Reedley in 1932.

By 1934, Frank and Agnes were determined to return to China, even though the Mission Board was not willing to support them. At the 1933 General Conference, both Frank and Agnes indicated their strong desire to return to China.<sup>5</sup> Even though they understood that financial help would not be forthcoming, they pled for moral and prayer support.

The Reedley church and a number of individuals pledged to support them financially and by the end of August 1934, they were back in China. Initially, the Board also promised to provide \$200 per year. This support, however, was soon terminated. Frank and Agnes clearly felt abandoned (Adina indicates that a Board member referred to Frank as a "maverick"<sup>6</sup>). When they arrived in Shanghang, they found that almost the entire mission compound had been destroyed. Agnes was already encountering health problems, and after a period of suffering, she passed away in June 1935.

Frank spent the next while in itinerant evangelism and also served with the church in Shanghang. At the 1936 General Conference, a letter from Frank was read that apparently raised the question of Conference support again. The Board recommended against further involvement in China, because "circumstances



**Wedding photo of Frank J. and Agnes (Koop) Wiens taken in Hong Kong on June 7, 1937. Photo: Courtesy of Linda Cheever.**

were not clear or promising.”<sup>7</sup> Also, the situation in India was becoming much more promising.

Frank was clearly very lonely. His good friend, C.N. Hiebert, who was then in Winnipeg, came to his rescue. Via correspondence, he introduced Frank to Agnes Koop, a nurse at Concordia Hospital in Winnipeg, who was considering mission work.<sup>8</sup> After a brief visit with some of the children in California, Agnes was on her way to meet Frank in China.

Frank and Agnes Koop’s wedding took place in Hong Kong on June 7, 1937. A month later, on July 3, Agnes was commissioned for mission service by the First Chinese Baptist Church in Hong Kong. Frank wrote that because of time constraints, it had not been possible to have the commissioning at the Ministers’ Conference in Winnipeg.<sup>9</sup> The marriage proved to be a happy one.

A month later, in July, the Japanese attacked Beijing. Shanghang was spared from attacks until May 1939, when the first bomb fell on the city. Once again, the couple became involved in Red Cross work, with Agnes taking a lead role.

Ultimately, all formal mission work came to an end by the beginning of World War II. Frank and Agnes finally left in early 1941, primarily because by that time Frank’s health was deteriorating. They settled back in Reedley, where Frank passed away in 1942. Agnes (Koop) Wiens passed away several decades later, in 1984.

The story of Frank and Agnes (Harder) Wiens, and the story of Frank and Agnes (Koop) Wiens, together with their families, and the Mennonite mission work in China as a whole is a fascinating and important story of Christian faith and remarkable courage.

The middle son, Harold, had a distinguished academic career as a geographer, specializing in China. He graduated from Tabor College, studied at Yenching University in Beijing, and received a Ph.D. degree from the University of Michigan. He spent time as an academic in China, and as well as nineteen years on the faculty of Yale University.

Roland (the youngest son) and his wife, Anna, went to China as missionaries in 1948, but were forced to leave in 1951. Thereafter, they served in Japan for a number of years. They made renewed contact with the Chinese Christians, beginning in 1980. Their culminating experience was a return visit to Shanghang in 1988.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the story of the Wiens family parallels the story of other early Mennonite missionaries in China, such as the Henry and Nellie (Schmidt) Bartel. A recent novel by Bo Caldwell provides the casual reader with an excellent entrée into this dramatic and significant chapter of the Mennonite mission in China.<sup>11</sup>

#### Endnotes

1. Frank was married twice, first to Agnes Harder and then to Agnes Koop.
2. Frank Wiens wrote an account of their experiences, including the first two terms in China. See F.J. Wiens, *Fifteen Years among the Hakkas of South China* (1925). Frank’s frequent reports were also published in the *Zionsbote* and the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. See also a detailed account of the family’s experiences based on the above as well as private correspondence and interviews by Adina Wiens Robinson, *China Beckoning* (unpublished manuscript, 1992).
3. *China Beckoning*, 164.
4. *China Beckoning*, 215.
5. *Yearbook of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America*, 1933, 24f.
6. *China Beckoning*, 368.
7. *Yearbook of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America*,

1936, 27.

8. *China Beckoning*, 391ff.

9. “Aus der Ferne,” *Zionsbote*, 1 September 1937, 2–4.

10. For details see an unpublished manuscript by Roland and Anna Wiens, *China then and Now* (1993).

11. *City of Tranquil Light* (Macmillan, 2010).



Yoshio Fujii

#### Summer 2014 archival intern announced

Yoshio Fujii is this year’s recipient of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission’s archival internship. The selection committee chose Yoshio from a strong field of candidates from various universities and colleges in the US and Canada.

As intern, Yoshio will spend a total of five weeks visiting each of the MB archival centers in North America (Fresno, Hillsboro, Winnipeg, and Abbotsford) during the months of May and June, 2014. In addition to experiencing a functioning archive, he will explore the stories and images housed in these church archives, especially as they relate to the church in Japan.

“We are very pleased to award Yoshio the archival internship. We hope that he will find this an enriching experience and that it will also provide insights for the Commission, as we document and communicate the story of God’s work in our world,” says Don Isaac, chair of the Historical Commission.

Yoshio is a Japanese graduate student completing an MDiv degree in May at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California.

The internship is made possible with support from US and Canadian Mennonite Brethren Churches ([www.mbhistory.org](http://www.mbhistory.org)).

Jon Isaak



Mennonite Brethren  
HISTORICAL  
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Mission House *Mi Fa Vien* built by Frank J. Wiens, 1918. Photo credit: CMBS-Fresno.



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## MHC News

### International Research Project

On September 18, 2013, and again during February 3–5, 2014, the Mennonite Heritage Centre hosted an international seminar on “Regional Development, Collective Work, and Transnational Networks in Mennonite areas.” Professors Wolf-Dietrich Sahr and Cician Luiza Loewen Sahr of Brazil came to these seminars looking for Canadian partners for their research project. Dr. Francisco Llera Pacheco of Mexico joined the conversation via Skype. In short, the research group includes eight professors from Mexico and Brazil. They are collaborating on a project aimed at finding out if there is something unique to the Mennonite groups in Mexico and Brazil that contributes to their economic success and what the accompanying environmental impacts have been. It is already clear that Mennonites in both countries have a higher standard of living, compared to their local neighbours. While the researchers are looking only at Mexico and Brazil, eventually they hope to expand the scope of the project to include Canada, Paraguay, and other Latin American countries where Mennonites live. We look forward to seeing Profs. Woody and Cici on their next visit to Winnipeg in October 2014.

### Archival Interns

In September 2013, the archives welcomed Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) student Emily Thornton of Fort Langley B.C. as our new archival intern, working 7 hours per week. Throughout her practicum placement, Emily has worked on a variety of items, getting a sense of what activities happen at the Centre. Her completed projects include: processing 14 scrapbooks recording Jac Schroeder’s life, including his involvement in the early credit union movements in southern Manitoba and B.C.; cleaning and describing a series of glass negative photographs created by Peter H. Klippenstein; and processing the collection of Isby Bergen. Emily is currently updating the congregational records of the Carmen Mennonite Church. She

and our second intern CMU student, Rodger Toews of Paraguay, were chosen as the youth representatives for the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada meetings hosted by the MHC in January 2014.

Rodger Toews began his intensive practicum in January 2014, working 20 hours a week. He, like Emily, has been given a number of projects as an introduction to archival work. Rodger has processed pictures from Edgar Stoesz’s book, *Garden in the Wilderness*, processed the holdings of the Mennonite German Society, and rewritten its inventory list. He is currently learning to read and write in the German gothic script to better understand some of the Centre’s collection of German letters. The Heritage Centre is thankful to have two wonderful interns to help us with collecting, preserving, and sharing the story of God’s work within the Mennonite community. Thank you to Emily and Rodger.



**Archival Interns Emily Thornton (top) and Rodger Toews.**

Photos: Courtesy of Conrad Stoesz.

### Digital Archives Pilot Project

Through a conversation at their children’s swimming practice, Conrad Stoesz started talking with another parent at the swimming pool, Prof. Greg Bak of the archival studies program at the University of Manitoba. What began as a friendly conversation, turned into an opportunity for the Heritage Centre to host an MA student from the university’s archival studies program. The plan is for the student to conduct a pilot project on preserving digital-born records. From April to December 2014, this student will learn the archival digital management program known as *Archivematica*, a software program designed to create preservation and user copies of a variety of sample digital records, including audio, video, and website. We hope this project will help MHC explore the complexities of archiving digital media. This software is compatible with other archival database

programs, which means that we could see some of this digital content available online in the future. We are thankful to Mennonite Church Canada for their financial support in this new initiative.

Korey Dyck

### Recent Family Books

(cont’d from p. 12)

Doris Warkentin and Art Hooch, *Elias Book* (Abbotsford: Art Hooch, 2013), 108 pp.

This binder of Elias materials follows the life stories of Jacob Elias (b. 1868) and his wife Maria Reinke (b. 1872) and their children. Jacob and Maria both died of typhus in Rosenthal, Chortitza, in 1920, leaving eight children between the ages of 24 and 4 behind. The book narrates the life of the siblings who came to Saskatchewan in 1923, and includes a large collection of photos and detailed captions.



## Ida Toews<sup>†</sup> (1921–2014)

by Bert Friesen

Ida Hildegard Toews was a teacher at the elementary and secondary levels in English and German language arts subjects in Winnipeg. She was born on 1 September 1921 in Blumenort, Sagra-dovka, South Russia and passed away recently on 11 January 2014 in Winnipeg.

Ida was the fourth child of parents Rev. Abraham Henry Toews and Martha Susanna (nee Friesen). In 1922, they moved to the family home in Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, Southern Russia and later immigrated to Canada in 1925.

In 1933, the family moved to Winnipeg where better education facilities enabled her to complete high school and Normal School in order to become a teacher. Through continued studies she eventually obtained both B.A. and B.Ed. degrees from the University of Manitoba.

After her retirement in the 1980s, she volunteered at the Centre for M.B. Studies, then located at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College on Henderson Hwy. in Winnipeg.

Ida researched and published her family history as *A short illustrated narrative of the family of Abraham Heinrich Toews and Susanna Martha Friesen* (1989).

She was also a diligent and meticulous translator. Some of her published English translations of German works include: *D. B. Wiens: a life for the Lord*, by Erich L. Ratzlaff (1988); *Heinrich H. Ewert: teacher, educator, and minister of the Mennonites* by Paul J. Schaefer (1990); *Anna Thiessen, The City Mission in Winnipeg* (1991); and *Recollections from the Life and Work of the Late Elder Abraham Unger, Founder of the Einlage*



Ida Toews (1921–2014)

*Mennonite Brethren Congregation* (1907), by Heinrich Epp (1991).

In my own work of indexing the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, she was always willing to help me understand the nuances and broader meaning of certain articles in that newspaper. Of special interest to her were the articles of the Great Trek of Claas Epp and his followers to Central Asia in the 1880s.

During this time she also adapted and learned the new technology of the computer world to use as a tool in her work.

I also recall her stories about walking her dog. One dog in particular had been difficult to train, and she often noted how difficult it was for her to keep control of the animal. Once, the dog got away on her and disappeared. The dog was only returned to her days later. Rather than be discouraged, she was all the more determined to conquer the control issue, which she did.

She was a delight to work with, always cheerful, and very skilled. I will have good memories.

## CMBS works with Diocese of Rupert's Land on Truth and Reconciliation Commission

by Karla Braun, associate editor, MB Herald

**"I** can't imagine what we would have done without the hospitality you showed us here," Gloria Romaniuk, archivist at the Anglican Diocese of Rupert's Land, said to Jon Isaak, director of Winnipeg's Centre for MB Studies at a thank-you tea Feb. 26, 2014. Romaniuk was already negotiating an agreement for long-term storage in CMBS's vault when renovation to the diocesan building created an urgent need for temporary off-site storage of archival materials over spring and summer 2013. CMBS "stepped into the breach."

Romaniuk and several volunteers returned to CMBS to thank Isaak and the Centre with the presentation of a quilted wall hanging, story-sharing and snacks.

Shortly after several metres of boxes moved to CMBS in 2013, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission asked the Diocese of Rupert's Land for a review of exactly those holdings. CMBS opened not only its vault doors but also the Centre's workspace for a team of volunteers who came from the diocese every Wednesday in summer 2013 to uncover information



relating to the Indian Residential School experience.

In the Centre's spacious and well-lit reading room, the volunteers perused sacramental records, annual reports, synod journal reports, newspaper articles, photographs and personal records. Then they scanned and processed the information following the TRC guidelines.

"It's been a godsend," said John Deacon, synod registrar, who joked the Centre's space was so hospitable to the work that "we've had a hard time getting everybody back."

With the diocese office renovations complete, CMBS's temperature-controlled vault continues to house some diocesan materials, including handwritten church record books dating back to the 1820s.

"We have been given this gift," said Isaak, referring to the Centre's custom-designed vault built in 2005, one of the newest in the province. "This building is a resource; why not find ways to share it?"

"We felt genuine warmth and kindness from each and every staff member on all occasions," said Romaniuk. "They always took time to encourage us in our records in a spirit of true Christian fellowship."

*Reprinted with permission from the MB Herald.*



Isla Marsh and Jon Isaak with quilted wall-hanging that Isla made. Photo: Courtesy of Laura Kalmar.

## Mennonite historians gather to celebrate and plan

by Conrad Stoesz

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada met at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg for its annual meeting January 16–18, 2014.

Royden Loewen headlined an event open to the public on Thursday evening called “Celebration of Words.” Sixty-five people attended to recognize 16 books published in 2013 by authors from the Mennonite community. Loewen launched his new book, *Village Among Nations: Canadian Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916–2006*. The book analyzes the movement of Mennonite people and their traditions across international boundaries from Canada to Mexico and various countries throughout Latin America. After Loewen’s presentation, the participants interacted with him and the other authors about their books.



**Royden Loewen at book launch on January 16, 2014.** Photo: Courtesy of Conrad Stoesz.

On Friday, the members of the Mennonite Historical Society toured Friesens Corporation in Altona, Manitoba, an hour-and-a-half drive south of Winnipeg. The visit to the large book printing company marked the Society’s long relationship with Ted Friesen, former co-owner of Friesens. Ted was one of the founders of the Society in 1968. The 24 members of the Society, representing societies in each of the provinces from BC to Quebec, were impressed with the technology and the high-quality books produced by industry-leading Friesens Corp.

While the Society continues to value research and the publication of books, such as Esther Epp-Tiessen’s Society-sponsored and newly-released book, *Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: A History*, the society heard the need to



**Harry and Gertrude Loewen. Harry receives MHSC Award of Excellence for 2014.** Photo: Courtesy of David Giesbrecht.

tell the Mennonite story visually as well. Youth delegates Rodger Toews (Paraguay), Emily Thornton (Vancouver), and Kate Woltmann (Winnipeg), gave credence to the call for more work with video to bring the interesting stories of the Mennonite people to a wider audience.

At the meetings, the Society also gave the green light to the pan-Canadian Mennonite photo database project and to continuing the work on a new genealogy website that will feature source documents and transliteration of the documents. The Society also heard reports from members of the provincial societies, institutions, and organizations.

Member organizations continue to speak into current-day issues. For example, the Quebec Society co-sponsored a conference on the proposed Quebec Charter, where Anabaptist and French Protestant histories were used to promote religious liberty and respect for others. The conference attempted to provide a forum for various points of view related to faith and to encourage constructive dialogue on political issues. The Saskatchewan Society, along with MCC, reported on its ongoing dialogue with First Nations people.

Space consideration was the concern of several archival centers. The Saskatchewan Society reported that its move into a newly renovated and enlarged space was almost complete. The Mennonite Archives of Ontario is anticipating a move into a greatly enlarged and enhanced area on the campus of Conrad Grebel University College in the next months. The BC Society is working on a plan for more space and the Mennonite Heritage Centre is also looking at its space needs in Winnipeg.

Longtime contributor and advocate for Mennonite history Dr. Harry Loewen, former chair of Mennonite Studies at the

University of Winnipeg and founding editor of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, was named this year’s recipient of the Award of Excellence. In addition, the Society welcomed the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, as a new member of the Society.

The cold Winnipeg weather did not undermine the warm reception extended to the out-of-town guests, thanks in large part to the local hosting committee and generous partners, Friesens Corporation and Canadian Mennonite University. Next year’s meetings will be held in Waterloo, Ontario.

## William (Bill) Schroeder† (1933–2013)



Bill Schroeder was born 2 December 1933 and passed away in Winnipeg on 11 December 2013 at the age of 80. Raised on a farm near Horndean, Manitoba, he earned a BA and BEd at University of Manitoba and taught high school for many years, first in Clover Plains, Manitoba, and later in Winnipeg. In addition to guiding Mennonite tours to Ukraine and preparing many village maps, Bill also contributed practical help at the Centre for MB Studies, building shelves, binding books, and preparing the *Mennonite Historian* for mailing. Since 1969, Bill volunteered at the Centre for a total of 44 years. In 2013, Bill received the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada’s Award of Excellence (see MH, March 2013, p. 7). According to Helmut Huebert, “Bill was a pioneer in the field of Mennonite history. *The Mennonite Historical Atlas*, which we produced together, became a bestseller by Canadian standards. Through the dedicated work of William Schroeder, Mennonites now have easy access to much of their interesting heritage.” Photo credit: CMBS-Winnipeg (NP025-06-041).



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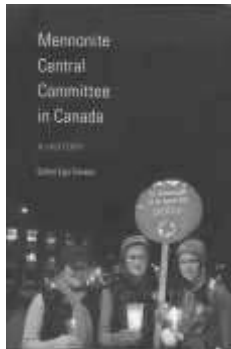
## Book Reviews

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Esther Epp-Tiessen, *Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: a History* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2013), 328 pp.

Reviewed by Lucille Marr

*Mennonite Central Committee in Canada: a History* is a commissioned book. The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada asked Esther Epp-Tiessen to write a history of MCC Canada's first 50 years. This book represents the fruit of that commission.



Organized into two parts with eight chapters, the book gives special attention to the gender and generational dynamics integral to the history of Mennonite Central Committee in Canada. Staying with the tried and true MCC method of story-telling, Esther begins each chapter with a tale illustrating the gendered nature of the human agency that has propelled and shaped the organization's discourse. In what was, for most of its history, a male-run institution, with no female voices at the decision-making tables, through story, Esther has illustrated women's foundational roles in MCC's ministry, right from the outset.

We learn that women's agency shaped both direction and discourse. Soon after MCC was founded, Ontario Swiss Mennonite women were writing to Akron asking how they could help the needy in Russia (p. 19). Without women opening up their homes to extend hospitality to their Russian cousins, Western Canada's Board of Colonization would have been much less effective in extending aid to their household of faith. Beginning with these early initiatives, the long history of women-initiated relief and service had begun. In World War II, Mennonite women would become increasingly independent, as illustrated by Ontario women establishing a Cutting Room that would prove foundational to MCC's relief work during that war and afterwards.

We learn also of the gendered nature of a history that generations of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ have heard rehearsed from pulpits and around dinner tables from the perspective of young men.

Edna Hunsberger's story gives voice to that generation of young women who responded to conscience not out of threat of conscription, but solely from conviction (p. 41). Through this gendered lens, we see how MCC's gift of voluntary service to the church was initiated by women. It was young women responding to "an inner compulsion to serve," that continued to be the majority of volunteers reaching out in the face of "human need." They "express[ed] Christian love, and witness[ed] for peace" during the Cold War. Indeed, between 1940 and 1970, of the over 900 Canadian Mennonite and Brethren in Christ who served for at least a year, almost twice as many were women as men.

These examples from early in MCC history illustrate the female agency in the discourse that led up to the formation of MCC Canada in 1963. The establishment 50 years ago of such a committee became the front line for conversations with the government regarding CO status and consolidated inter-Mennonite relief efforts regarding immigration, service, and peace. Regretfully, but not surprisingly, given the outlook of the mid-sixties, women's agency in the ministries and developments that brought Canadian Mennonites to this point, were invisible in the way the new MCC Canada organized itself (p. 91). It continued to be marked by the irony that "although women were intensely involved in the work of relief, service, and mission," decades would go by "before they would find a place at the MCC Canada Board table" (p. 73).

And yet, we continue to see many examples of women's agency, illustrations showing how women continued to write themselves into the MCC story, with evolving and imaginative service. For example, it is well known that Self-Help crafts, begun by Edna Ruth Byler, was primarily promoted by women. Women also got fully behind MCC's evolving global response by supporting relief sales and developing a new vision of Thrift Shops, where used clothing and goods no longer desired overseas could be sold in North America and converted into cash designated for material aid.

What is less well known are the ways in which women began to overtly challenge the organization's structure and discourse. Young voices like that of Jean Hillborn, an Ontario high school student who won MCC Canada's 1967 speech contest, began to articulate the "turbulent spirit of

the sixties and seventies." In her words, "A Christianity that does nothing, costs nothing, and suffers is nothing, is worth nothing" (p. 83). Although this young woman's challenge won a prize, it failed to prepare MCC officials for women's assumption that they had a place at meetings. Kathy Hildebrand's attendance four years later at MCC's annual meeting in Chicago seemed to come as a shock to executive director Bill Snyder. His trouble comprehending that she came, not to visit friends or go shopping, but to learn what she could about the aftermath of the Middle East Six-Day War, seems odd to us now (p. 98). It does provide a good example of the mindset of his generation, however, and the gender dynamic that began a painful and slow shift to more balance.

Through the 1970s and into the '80s, as MCC Canada worked at "Growing a Ministry," the administration continued to be exclusively male, including the growing staff employed to coordinate justice initiatives in work with Canada's aboriginal population, criminal offenders, persons with disabilities, refugees, and Mexican Mennonites. While the board tables would be slow to open up, we continue to see strong expressions of women's agency cutting through the discourse. Throughout the years of MCC's exponential growth in Canada, a plethora of women workers, albeit mostly on the margins at home and abroad, are fully present in the story.

Perhaps the most poignant is the experience of Peggy Regehr in her brief time at the centre. Representative of its "Coming of Age," in 1985, a dozen years after MCC bi-national had set in place its Task Force on Women in Church and Society, MCC Canada rather belatedly established a Women's Concerns Desk. Looking back, it seems obvious that an important function of Regehr's role was to challenge gender inequities. That this included her own inadequate salary, allegedly because she had a well-paid husband, may seem like a reasonable challenge for contemporary readers. Not so for the MCC executive of the late 1980s, people of their time with a Mennonite understanding of gender roles. Within four years of her appointment, Peggy Regehr was dismissed (p. 179).

Finally, as MCC in Canada maneuvered the end of one millennium and faced the new, cultural changes forced attention to the uncomfortable gender dynamic still in place. In the midst of "Searching for a

Purpose,” as the final chapter is called, MCC’s relationship with Canada’s International Development Agency forced “attention to women’s leadership” (p. 216). By this point, MCC had come to rely heavily on the organization for funding. In 1993, CIDA challenged the gender imbalance in MCC Canada, and offered strong advice on ways it “should advance women in leadership in middle and senior management and move towards better gender balance on boards and committees” (p. 219).

This was a bitter pill to swallow. We learn that “attitudes and behaviours reflecting male dominance died hard, even among those who gave intellectual assent to gender equality” (p. 219). And yet, CIDA’s push brought significant changes. These included increased attention to the family violence and sexual abuse that often results from power imbalance. And women began to call “for a theology that promoted equality, mutuality and respect between women and men, and a peace that confronted evil and injustice.” They challenged “the irony of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ—as peace churches—resisting participation in war but allowing abuse to occur,” thus suggesting “the potential of change, and inspiring small changes at home and abroad” (p. 219).

Despite the challenges as they moved into leadership, women have played a significant part in MCC’s “Adapting to Change” demonstrated in its most recent decade. Some women have taken their places around the board tables, while others have continued to work with their hands. As this story suggests, the history of gender continues to be foundational to MCC’s work in Canada as it attempts to adapt, generation to generation, to the complexities and changes demanded in a world bombarded by wars, racial struggle, and changing identities.

Esther Epp-Tiessen’s deep love for MCC is evident, based on lifelong and broad experience with the organization. At the same time, the book demonstrates her ability to step back and be objective. Esther’s analytical skills are strong and she writes with clarity and insight, even acknowledging that others may have differing views of the events she narrates. In my view, the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada chose the right person to chronicle MCC in Canada.

*This review essay is an abbreviated version of “Gender and Generation in the MCC Story,” given at the MCC in Canada History Conference in Winnipeg, Dec. 14, 2013.*

Sarah Klassen, *The Wittenbergs* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 2013), 404 pp.

Reviewed by Eleanor Chornoboy

Sarah Klassen is best known for her poetry, winning the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award for her 1988 book of poetry, *Journey to Yalta*, which highlights her mother’s struggles during the Russian Revolution. Additional books of poetry in her list of accomplishments include *Violence and Mercy*, *Borderwatch*, about her time in Lithuania, *Dangerous Elements*, and *Simone Weil: Songs of Hunger and Love*, *A Curious Beatitude*, and *A Feast of Longing*. She also published *The Peony Season*, a collection of short stories.

*The Wittenbergs* is Klassen’s first novel. Although she credits her mother for “embedding her memories in a work of fiction,” Klassen has not spared in her historical research efforts.

Klassen masterfully weaves a story of a past family history with a more recent time. Her characters reveal unsettling, real-life situations that haunt the Wittenberg family.

The book spans the time from the early Mennonite experience in Russia, to the time of fatal and ruthless attacks on Mennonites by the Bolsheviks, to a Mennonite family in Winnipeg in the 1990s. The stories range from the Russian steppes, to the seaside in Yalta, to Winnipeg, Canada.

Mia Wittenberg, a grade twelve student, balances multiple family and personal concerns in her young life. Her sister, Alice, has a young son diagnosed with Fragile X Syndrome, and an infant who is suspected of having the same diagnosis. Fragile X is the most common inherited cause of intellectual disabilities. Fathers can carry the gene without having symptoms of the condition. They can pass it on to their daughters and not their sons. The daughters are then at risk of giving birth to children with Fragile X. The mystery for the Wittenberg family is the origin of Fragile X, particularly since Mia’s biological uncle and his wife have a son with Fragile X.

Mia has learned that her father Joseph, the vice principal of the high school she attends, is having an affair with her

teacher. That coupled with her mother Millicent’s depression leaves Mia in the position of being a significant caregiver in the family.

While emotionally caring for her family, Mia has also been tasked since early on in life with caring for a disadvantaged boy who has made himself at home in the Wittenberg family. While trying to support him and his escalating needs, Mia is torn because his demands on her have caused her to make sacrifices beyond her resources, and she is still not able to save him.

Her life takes on a new dimension when she convinces her teacher to let her conduct an independent school project. Her project is to write an in-depth family history and her main source of information is her grandmother, GranMarie.

Through regular interviews with the failing matriarch, Mia writes her grandmother’s story as GranMarie chronicles her life from her charmed childhood in a Mennonite village in Russian-occupied Ukraine, to her temporary escape with her brother and parents to Yalta in the Crimea, and ultimately from the Bolshevik ravages of Mennonite communities. Despite her occasional bouts of confusion, GranMarie is able to tell her story in detail and with passion, but she does not tell Mia about her life in Winnipeg. Winnipeg was not all work and no play for GranMarie, but she saves her own story of indiscretion to tell her adult son, Mia’s father. Her story draws the family to visit the region where GranMarie grew up, helping them to better understand their own heritage and to spread her ashes.

While Klassen’s historical research is strong, *The Wittenbergs* does not present as a Mennonite history lesson. Her story moves forward effortlessly, taking the reader along in the dual journey of Mia and her family, and GranMarie’s life. Klassen’s career as a high school English teacher no doubt contributes to her keen sense of the teenage Mia and her friends. She has drawn an exquisite panorama of Mia’s transformations from a studious teenager to a student with little concern about graduation, to her roles from being a solicitous aunt, to being her grandmother’s strength and confidante.

*The Wittenbergs* combines vivid storytelling with rich characters on the backdrop of historical integrity. GranMarie, although often confused, relives her childhood and forgets about



her aches as she spends time with Mia; Joseph's veneer of being an upright choir member and school principal fades with his indiscretion and resurges with strength when he reconnects with his family; Alice, always upbeat, shows her humanness when she finally exposes her deep grief over the weight of having two sons with Fragile X; and Millicent finds qualities in herself she had forgotten about.

Klassen's sense of place is cinematic as she takes the reader to locations in Winnipeg and effortlessly shifts back and forth to the Russian steppes and to Yalta in the Crimea. Her first novel will hopefully be the first of many.

### Through Floods

*Reviewed by Jake K. Balzer*

*(In 1938, Peter P. Dueck of Headingley, Manitoba wrote a romantic novel to share with his family. The story, entitled *Durch Fluten* [Through Floods], was one of the many stories he told to his children. The manuscript is written in flowing Gothic cursive script in four, 48-page, black "notebooks" or Hefts. Unfortunately, it is the only story that survived a fire on the property some years ago.<sup>1</sup> Eds.)*

Last year, I was asked by the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg to translate the Dueck novel from German to English. Having recently completed the translation, I offer the following summary of the narrative plot.

The actors central to Dueck's story are colorful characters, who encounter multiple challenges, involving conflict, romance, violence, intrigue, discrimination, and tragedy. The action of the novel takes place in a German Mennonite colony in Russia during World War I and the post-war Revolution. The structure and layout of the described villages are thoroughly Mennonite, but the main characters have national German names.

The central plot involves two wealthy families from one village, the Veldens and the Langes, both having a son and a daughter. Oscar Velden and Heinz Lange are fellow students at a university, where they live in adjacent apartments.

Developments begin during summer vacation, when Oscar invites Heinz to the estate owned by his father, Friedrich Velden. During his stay, Heinz proves to be a respectable gentleman, joining the workers at hay baling and assisting the machinist, Wolodja, with his motor

problems. At music-making intervals, Heinz happens upon a photo of the sixteen-year-old Lore Velden, and is inextricably engrossed with her beauty.

Heinz and Lore decide to meet secretly, but are frustrated by Lore's brother, Oscar, who considers it his duty to prevent them from meeting. They do manage to meet in the park, however. When Mr. Velden learns about the encounter, he expresses absolute opposition to the relationship; so the stage is set for conflict.

This is only the beginning of trouble. The "floods" become ever more boisterous with the interference of a rival suitor, the school teacher, Ernst Reichert, who is rejected and takes revenge. He contacts Mr. Lange and depicts Lore Velden as a double murderess and degrades the reputation of the Velden family.

Mr. Lange believes the lies and reacts by telling Lore that her relationship with Heinz is hopeless; for him, sharing a dwelling with a double murderess is unthinkable. Of course, Lore reports this to Heinz, who is overcome by hopelessness. Eventually, Ernst is shot dead by Wolodja, the self-appointed executioner in Velden's employ.

Sitting in his room one day, Heinz writes a verse on a slip of paper:

The heavy burden deep at heart,  
Ever to be one's lot;  
On the wide, hopeless road,  
To wander lonesome and hopeless.

Accidentally, a breeze wafts the slip of paper out through the open window, where it is lost to Heinz. But Lore finds it later, and so they share their despondency. Circumstances are such that Heinz has to report to conscription and goes to the war front as an ambulance attendant for some two years. While he is there, Oscar Velden is fatally wounded and Heinz manages to carry him to safety and to put him on a train bound for home. At home, Oscar passes away and is buried. Ambulance service proves to be a great strain on Heinz's health, especially his nerves. When he returns home on leave, he is nurtured back to health by a kind woman.

Lore's prospects have also suffered. The Machno bandits devastate the Velden estate, killing Mr. Velden and causing Mrs. Velden, with infant daughter, Ella, and Lore to flee. Ella is entrusted to the care of Lore, who has taken position as a maid to a Mr. Wiens under the name of Lydia Frei. Eventually, Lore meets an

unscrupulous fellow, who succeeds in withdrawing money from the German bank where Mr. Velden had deposited the family's assets. So, Lore takes Ella and travels to Berlin and then to London, where she must take a job.

With no hope of finding Lore, Heinz decides unexpectedly to immigrate to Canada and boards a transatlantic ocean liner. Lore, in London, learns from a newspaper of Heinz's departure, and decides to join the voyage, which she is luckily able to do.

The last scene of the novel takes place on the ocean liner, where the characters scarcely recognize each other, due to the lengthy passage of time. Soon the surprises of recognition bring the couple together. The story closes with Lore and Heinz standing in fond embrace and softly singing:

I know who, at the dark stream,  
Faithfully abides at our side,  
Who bans all the horror,  
And with loving hand,  
Disperses the floods of death.

Oh, Jesus, you lead through floods and  
billows,  
Across to the better land.  
Your loving hand leads us to the glad  
strand,  
Across to the better land.

### Endnote

1. The four notebooks, along with the English translation by Jake K. Balzer, are part of the Peter P. Dueck personal papers fonds (vol. 926) at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg. The notebooks came as a donation to the Centre from Bill and Linda Dueck, Oak Bluff, Manitoba. Bill is Peter's son.

### Book Notes

*by Jon Isaak*

Linda Janzen Unruh, *Remembering our heritage: the story of Anna and Cornelius Janzen* (2013), 217 pp.

Twenty-five years ago Linda Janzen Unruh started to write down stories that her mother told of her life, stories of struggle, risk, poverty, fear, and also of faith and trust in

God. Anna Wiebe Janzen was born 7 April 1925 in Andelsheim (a.k.a. Dolinowka), Ukraine, and her husband Cornelius Janzen was born 23 May 1913 in Andelsheim also, and died 3 May 1996 in Abbotsford. Linda (6 Feb 1956) is their



fourth child. Other children include: Walter (27 Nov 1946), Adina (14 Feb 1948), Erica (22 Sep 1951), and Harold (6 Dec 1959). The book is well documented with photos and lively narrative, covering the periods of Anna's childhood, World War II survival, immigration to Canada, and family life. An extensive genealogical appendix gives details of grandparents, children, and grandchildren.

Henry Fast, *Where the pavement ends: (mis)adventures in international rural development* (2013), 135 pp.

Henry graduated from high school in 1960 and took a two-year posting in Greece with PAX, MCC's alternative to military service program in Europe. It was a life-changing assignment for Henry, leading to a career in agricultural economics and international development. In the book he recounts stories of the many people he met and the experiences he had during his life of service, including 23 years with MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates). Full of vibrant pictures and moving stories, the book is divided into sections on travel, food & drink, accommodations, health, cross-cultural surprises, corruption or poor management, rural development on the ground, and personal reflections. Looking back on the many development projects, Henry remains convinced that "people can and will make things better if given the tools and the opportunity to do so."

Marlene Epp, *Bridging Mind & Spirit: Conrad Grebel University College, 1963–2013* (2013), 96 pp.

This is a commemorative coffee-table book documenting the first fifty years of Conrad Grebel University College's existence within the University of Waterloo campus network in Waterloo, Ontario. Packed with great images, memorable quotes, and engaging essays, Marlene narrates the five decades as follows—the sixties: learning to walk; the seventies: a growth spurt; the eighties:



coming of age; the nineties: the trials of maturity; and the 21st century: the best is yet to come. Several features will make this a treasured volume for college alumni and friends, including: a timeline of key "Grebel" dates, listing of all faculty and staff, listing of board of governors, tributes to student leaders, and reflections from all seven college presidents. The photos are stunning and capture well the rich and dynamic character of this innovative college.

David A. Wiebe and Paul D. Wiebe, *The Colors of the Mennonites in Andhra Pradesh* (Kindred, 2013), 164 pp.

David and Paul grew up in India as children of long-time missionaries, John and Viola Berghold Wiebe. In active retirement after full professional lives, David from a career as an orthopedic surgeon and Paul as a social anthropologist, they have collaborated on two photo-journal books on India. The first was published in 2010 and documents the early years of the church, *In another Day of the Lord: the mission days of the Mennonite Brethren Church of India in pictures* (Kindred). This is their second volume and it features photos taken between 2006 and 2013, documenting the contemporary Mennonite Brethren church in Andhra Pradesh. The key distinguishing feature of this book is the photography of Rufus Gurugulla, a world-class photographer, who is also a leader in the MB church of India. The brilliant photos bring out the vibrant colors of the markets, clothing, worship services, and everyday life in India.



## Recent Family Books

by Conrad Stoesz

Margaret Irene (Voght) Ediger, *Another Vogt Family History: The Descendants of Peter Andreas & Katharina (Nickel) Vogt* (Kelowna: Margaret Ediger, 2012), 173 pp.



Peter Andreas Vogt (1865–1922) was born in Schoenweise, Chortitza Colony, where his father Andreas was a weaver. In 1899, Peter Vogt married Katharina Nickel (1867–1941). The couple settled in the Ignatyev Colony. Here they farmed and Peter also worked as an accountant for the Peter Unger flour mill in the village of New York. Later, he would move the family to Millerovo. Peter died in 1922, leaving eldest son Andrew as head of the household. Brother Bill records many of these events in his memoirs, also published by Margaret Ediger, *My Life in the Twentieth Century: Memoirs of William Peter Voght* (2005). In 1923, the family immigrated to Rush Lake, Saskatchewan. In 1924, together with 11 other families, they purchased a large farm north of Rush Lake, which they called Farresfield. Between 1890 and 1908, Peter and Katharina had nine children. In the book, a chapter is dedicated to each child and their descendants. For more information contact Margaret Ediger, 426 West Ave., Kelowna, BC V1Y 4Z2.

Elvira (Kroeker) Heppner, *Kroeker Family* (Brandon: Elvira Heppner, 2011), 176 pp.

This book recounts the life stories of the descendants of Klaas Kroeker (1907–1992) and his wife Helena Wiens (1907–1988), with background information on the Kroeker and Wiens families. Klaas was born north of Plum Coulee, Manitoba, to Peter Kroeker (1865–1940) and Elizabeth Hiebert (1871–1956), 1870s immigrants from Russia. In 1929, he married Helena Wiens, daughter of Jacob Wiens (1867–1933) and Katharina Fehr (1870–1949). Klaas and Helena Kroeker encouraged music-making in their home and usually had an organ or piano for accompaniment. Gardening and woodworking were also important to the family.

Klaas and Helena were members of the Rudnerweider Conference (EMMC) and lived most of their lives in the Altona area. Together, they had seven children. For more information, contact the author (ehppner@mys.net).



(cont'd on p. 6)