

Mennonite Historian

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



For generations this was the back-breaking method of harvesting grain. This harvest supported the relief effort project called *Mennonitisches Hilfswerk Christenpflicht*, headed by Michael Horsch, the elder of the Ingolstadt congregation in Germany. Photo: Courtesy of Arthur W. Slagel (1891–1943), MHC 665-16.0 (see also MAID website detailed on p. 3).

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Why the Majority of Russian Mennonites Did Not Emigrate in the 1870s

by Ernest N. Braun

In response to a wide spectrum of changes impinging upon the Mennonites living in Imperial Russia in the 1870s, roughly 17,000 or one-third of them left for America, both the United States (10,000) and Canada (7,000).¹ The majority, however, did not emigrate, despite the fact that all these changes would also affect those that remained. This situation raises an obvious question: Why then did two-thirds of the Mennonites not leave?

E.K. Francis uses the terms “push” and “pull” to describe the factors that influenced the decision of the emigrants.² “Push” refers to those changes that threatened the future of the Mennonites in Russia, and “pull” to those that attracted them to new opportunities in America. Clearly, neither the “push” nor the “pull” factors affected the Mennonites who stayed in the same way.

“Push” Factors: Military Service Exemption

The primary threat to Mennonite identity was the loss of the universal military service exemption. The earliest response of all Mennonites to the reports of a new conscription law was predictably alarm

and some soul-searching. The leaders met repeatedly and affirmed their stance of nonresistance with respect to participation in the military, and delegations were then sent to the highest authorities to provide an exception for Mennonites.

Nonetheless, discussion in the streets of the villages centered on what to do if the government would not continue to exempt them from military service. Soon it became apparent that even among those who took their faith very seriously and refused to compromise their views on nonresistance, there was a division. Some believed that God had not demanded that they be martyrs, but allowed flight as an option, whereas others held that flight constituted a failure of courage—one should demonstrate one’s trust in God by staying.³

However, as soon as it became clear in 1871 that total exemption from military services was no longer an option and that alternative service was to be the only other option, the debate changed. The majority opinion among the Russian Mennonites shifted towards an acceptance of the Crown’s offer of alternative service financed and administered by the Mennonites themselves. Nonresistance no longer necessarily meant complete disengagement from civil society. This attitude removed the threat to Mennonite identity inherent in the change to conscription laws.

In his 1989 article, “A House Divided,” Harry Loewen argues cogently that the majority of Mennonites in Russia had by 1870 relegated strict nonresistance to lip service, and that much of what happened in the early part of the negotiations was posturing. He argues further that the highly unified and vocal appeal to nonresistance was largely a pretext used to pressure the government on other fronts, particularly to permit the Mennonites to continue their control over their own affairs despite the changes envisioned for ethnic minorities.⁴

One factor that further softened the Mennonite position was the 10-year window of time before conscription would be implemented, a time during which emigration would still be possible. Further, it becomes clear that the Russian authorities had done their due diligence and were reasonably sure that the Mennonites would not emigrate *en masse*, as their history in other countries confirmed that a large majority of Mennonites always ended up



Newer farming methods. This photo shows workers operating a Fordson tractor and binder purchased by the American Mennonite Relief Administration to harvest the barley crop near Chortitza, Ukraine [1922–1923]. Photo: Courtesy of Arthur W. Slagel (1891–1943), MHC 665-98.0 (see also MAID website).

compromising, and staying: e.g., in Holland, and in Poland/Prussia.

Russian authorities also threw the long record of strife within the Mennonite camp in the faces of the petitioners for continued exemption, disparaging the claim that they were in fact still nonresistant in any sense. Furthermore, a strict adherence to the doctrine of nonresistance had already been compromised by the “voluntary” contributions of Mennonites during the Crimean War, both in providing cartage and in billeting wounded soldiers.

The bottom line was that by 1870, the majority of Mennonites were remarkably patriotic and nationalistic, willing to concede that Mennonites owed a significant obligation to the state. This shift constituted a radical change in the theology of the Mennonites, especially their understanding of nonresistance. The forestry option and other alternative service options served as an avenue for discharging their patriotic obligation in a way that many thought was “truer to the Christian confession than payments for substitute military recruits,” as had been done in Prussia.⁵

Religious Change

Aside from the obvious flashpoint represented by the threat of military service, there were other changes that conspired to “push” some Mennonites out of Russia. One overarching change was taking place in the religious landscape, as revivalist emphases moved through the colonies. Only the most conservative Mennonites saw these religious changes as a threat. At the other extreme, only a small percentage of Mennonites in Russia (e.g. the Mennonite Brethren and the *Allianz*) embraced the new emphasis on

(cont'd on p. 4)

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Genealogy and Family History

Discovery MAID

by Conrad Stoesz

Family reunions and wedding portraits, glimpses of farm life in Canada, relief work in Europe, mission and development work in India and Africa, prime ministers “glad-handing” across the countryside, and images from villages in Ukraine. These are just a few of the photographs found in the new Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID). Seven Canadian Mennonite archives contributed 80,000 photograph descriptions to the new site at <http://archives.mhsc.ca>. Almost 12,000 of these descriptions are already accompanied by scanned images.

MAID was launched in March 2015 and is already being noticed. The *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Mennonite Heritage Village Museum, *Winnipeg Free Press*, and a growing list of individuals have ordered their own photos from MAID’s online payment system to help defray the cost of the database. The image has become a pivotal tool for communication today and MAID, with its unique photos, is tapping into this hunger for images.

Genealogy is the second most common use of the internet and MAID is poised to become a key tool in the search of personal identity through family exploration. In its short three-month lifespan, MAID is seeing an average of 200 users per day who spend an average of almost four minutes a session, looking at nine pages per session. Acknowledging that these numbers include internet robots, MAID administrators are still very pleased with the results so far.

MAID’s development team—Laureen Harder-Gissing, Alf Redekopp, Korey Dyck, and Conrad Stoesz—hope that the Canadian public will also be drawn in by the discovery possibilities. “Those of us who worked on this project were constantly distracted by the intriguing images we discovered, not only of Mennonites but also communities, people, and landscapes across Canada and in other countries,” says Mennonite Archives of Ontario archivist and site administrator, Laureen Harder-Gissing.

New photographs are being added on a daily basis. The expandability of the MAID initiative means that other partners can be added to bring more Mennonite heritage photographs into the public eye.

Other archives with significant Mennonite photograph collections are invited to join this growing partnership.

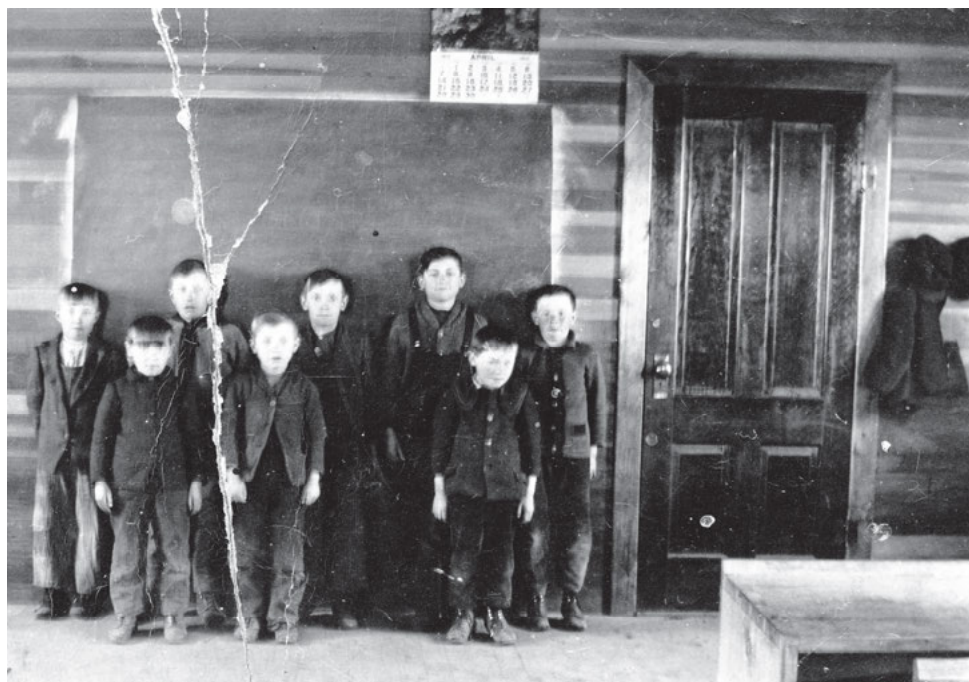
The \$26,000 project is a collaborative, “made in Canada” initiative, sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and Mennonite archives in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario.

MAID is built on the AtoM (Access to Memory) software that was developed by Artefactual Systems in Vancouver. It was customized for MAID by Peaceworks Technology Solutions.

Greg Bak, former Senior Digital Archivist for Library and Archives Canada, believes that MAID “shows the future of digital community archives. It is wonderful to see the Canadian Mennonite community working together, embracing digital technologies.”

Query

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society is looking for your help. Members are working on a project to collect and write histories of the Mennonite villages and districts in the former Mennonite West Reserve. The committee is looking for agricultural records, photographs, diaries, correspondence, school records, etc. Elmer Heinrichs is working on the area known as Schoenau and is trying to compile a list of teachers who taught in the private school there. If you have information for Elmer or the committee, please contact Elmer Heinrichs at eahein@mymts.net. Other villages receiving attention include: Neuhorst, Eigenhof, Hochfeld, Rosenfeld, Blumstein, and Schoenwiese. If you have materials you think other researchers would be interested in, contact Henry Unger at zeke@mymts.net.



This is a photo of eight young boys posing for a photo in front of the black board in their school in the Neu Kronstal district, north of Plum Coulee, Manitoba, on the Mennonite West Reserve (1918). Front row, far right is John Kroeker. Photo: Courtesy of John Kroeker, MHC 031-2.0 (see also MAID website).

Recent Books:

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

Queries:

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

Why majority did not...

(cont'd from p. 2)

personal experience, specifically an emotional repentance/conversion, baptism by immersion, an individualistic understanding of faith, and complete “assurance of salvation.”

However, most of these revivalist groups did not emigrate in the 1870s. In 1872, the Mennonite Brethren numbered only about 600, although they were growing rapidly. Still, by the end of the decade, only one-third had immigrated, and all to the United States.⁶ While the Mennonite Brethren were also threatened by the new military laws, it was for a different reason. They, as well as the Mennonite Templars, were in danger of losing even the right to alternative service unless they asserted their Mennonite identity and returned to the fold. In 1873, Abraham Unger championed the preparation of the first Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith, designed to convince government officials that the Baptist-leaning revivalist church was still Mennonite. This recourse, returning to the Mennonite identity to avoid military conscription, suggests that the alternative service, disdained by the more conservative groups, was perceived as a refuge by the Mennonite Brethren.

A much larger percentage of Mennonites were simply content to live and let live in Russia, although there were small groups with specific religious agendas, such as the Templars, some of whom chose to move to Palestine. Another small splinter group under Claas Epp later migrated to the frontier further east in anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ, and perhaps to seek refuge from military conscription.⁷

In general, the relations between the Mennonites and various Protestant groups in Russia had also changed, as seen in the increasing exposure to German Baptists

and German Lutherans, and in the innovations brought back from institutions of higher learning by young educated Mennonites. Religious ferment may have been somewhat of a shibboleth—the more traditional congregations saw it as an indication that the faith had been compromised, whereas the more progressive ones embraced the changes as a revitalizing factor, and did not regard them as an incentive to emigrate.

An unusual argument for remaining in Russia was articulated by Jakob Wiebe of the Crimea who claimed that many emigrants did not know what nonresistance was and desired only to get rich in America. He expressed a reverse “for-conscience’sake” argument, advocating that Mennonites needed to stay in Russia, to be “salt and light” there, and to “make a positive contribution to the country.”⁸

Socio-Economic Factors

Besides the religious ferment, there were profound socio-economic changes slowly transforming the colonies. The serfs had been emancipated, peasant agriculture was being replaced by entrepreneurial enterprise, and the colonies were increasingly overpopulated. As a result of these and many other factors, the Mennonites were increasingly becoming a class society with three tiers: a small wealthy educated class, a large property-owner middle class, and a surprisingly large landless class—60% of Mennonites did not own enough land to survive. The wealthy drove Troikas,⁹ and sent their children to universities, while the landless lived day by day, selling their labour to the property, estate, and factory owners. Village decisions could be made only by landowners, a policy that left many voiceless and resulted in some exploitive decisions regarding communal land.

These class inequities, however, did not motivate the majority of Molotschna and Chortitza Mennonites to emigrate. One can only speculate that in the absence of a strong religious component, the socio-economic issues by themselves were not enough for Mennonites in general to leave all that was familiar and enter the brave new world in America.

It must also be recognized that for more than a generation, younger Mennonites had often been forced into a wage-earner lifestyle by the absence of available land. The resulting shift was commonplace, and even found to be liberating by some. Successful Mennonite entrepreneur/

tradesmen were beginning to service the larger Ukrainian (and other) communities around them, providing employment there or on large estates or even in the cities.

For conservative Mennonites who insisted on a Russian-style communal village system, the lure of free land in America could rekindle visions of restoring life to that ideal, but for more liberal Mennonites, sacrificing home and familiarity for an ideal no longer valued was not attractive. Likely there were many poor families that would have favoured emigration, but in the absence of colony support, such as provided by the Berghthal and Borosenko groups, the poor could not afford the travel costs. They could only hope that a daughter colony in Russia would soon be created to allow them to acquire land. What should, by all accounts, have been a significant “pull” factor for land-hungry Mennonites does not appear to have served as that for the majority of Mennonites. A conclusion that can be drawn from this may be that the landless issue—as a motivator for emigration—can easily be overstated.

One very specific element in determining the degree of emigration participation was the bumper crop in 1874, following a series of crop failures in the three years leading to emigration. This factor may not have tilted the ground too much for the *Kleine Gemeinde* and the Berghthaler who were committed to leave for ideological as well as other reasons, but may have significantly affected other individuals who were not part of a larger communal move. Like General Eduard von Tottleben’s last-minute 1874 offer of alternative service that persuaded many Mennonites to stay in Russia after all,¹⁰ this bumper crop likewise seemed to support the notion that the lean-years cycle had passed, and farming would again be viable and profitable.

Language/Education

German continued to be the language of the Mennonites. But as the level of education improved in the two older colonies, Russian as an additional language became increasingly acceptable, as long as the language of the hearth remained Low German, and High German remained the language of faith. Men also spoke Ukrainian, or at least the local patois, in communicating with their increasingly significant workforce. Prosperity and the social mobility that came with it had already sent representatives of the younger generation to higher education, even to universities,



Mennonite Estate. This is a photo of the Franz Martens yard (*Wirtschaft*) and house in Rückenau, Ukraine, around 1900. Carriage in the foreground shows engaged couple Peter Martens (1882–1972) and Helene Wieler (1882–1967) sitting with Margaretha Wieler (1888–1984) and the driver. Photo: Courtesy of Martens family, CMBS NP108-01-6 (see also MAID website).

where they became invested in the Russian language and culture.

The newly educated young Mennonites returned from Russian universities to become leaders in the colonies, both in secular and spiritual domains, and served as teachers in the local schools. New pedagogy and texts inevitably accompanied them. Moreover, the rise of nationalism during this time did not threaten liberal Mennonites, who had begun to make distinctions between being German and being Christian. They argued that there was no incompatibility between the new nationalistic Russia and the Christian faith.¹¹

Therefore, the so-called “Russification” impetus did not threaten the majority of increasingly assimilated Mennonites living in the more established colonies in quite the same way as it did the newer and more isolated colonies like Berghthal or even Fuerstenland. Furthermore, the attitude of the progressive Mennonites was one that welcomed change, as prosperity began to make choices available, offering higher education for those who wanted it and enabling those with an entrepreneurial bent to pursue other livelihoods. Emigration would have held little attraction for these acculturated Mennonites.

Intellectual Climate

The majority of Mennonites in Russia did not emigrate. They were quite comfortable in a world where improvement, new opportunities, greater wealth, technology, and bureaucratic development were the norm. The exposure to the philosophies of the day allowed them to step outside the confines of the traditional and appreciate the enormous changes effected by the reforms of both their own (Johann Cornies) and Russian authorities.

The reactionary response to the times, one that proposed emigration as the way to return things to the way they were, was not acceptable to the more highly educated and prosperous Mennonite demographic of the 1870s. In a significant way, this became a watershed issue with respect to the emigration, as it had for their grandparents in Prussia. Those more amenable to the shift in the intellectual climate stayed, and those who yearned for the security of the old ways, emigrated.

“Pull” Factors: Economic Opportunity

America as the land of promise held less attraction to established Mennonites in the two older colonies, and few *Vollwirten* (full farmstead owners) from there

emigrated. In fact, there were enterprising individuals who stayed in Russia and benefitted by purchasing land and farmsteads at half price or less from those who left—some goods at 25% of actual value—thus, realizing their own golden opportunity without any migration or sacrifice.¹²

A redistribution of land to the landless had been begun at the time of the emigration to relieve the pressure of overpopulation, even though one opportunity at least went begging—Colony Berghthal was sold to non-Mennonites for a fraction of its value instead of being purchased for landless by either of the older colonies. The norm, however, was that daughter colonies were increasingly employed in the coming decades as a means to deal with the problem of overpopulation. Colonies were set up further north and east every few years until WWI. Even for the landless, there was some hope in Russia.

New Privilegium/Freedoms

Amid intense negotiation with Tsarist authorities during the 10-year window of time allowed before the military service and school reform would be activated, a new understanding of the place Mennonites enjoyed in Russia was developed by those that remained. In this new understanding, the expectations raised by the *Privilegium* no longer played a part. General von Tottleben’s cynical comment about Mennonite “fanatics who have already decided to move at all costs” may also have represented the mindset of those Mennonites who remained in Russia, as it also described their view of the more conservative groups who emigrated “for conscience’ sake.”¹³

Adventure/New start/Wanderlust

No barometer for this element exists to date, and so it is difficult to determine why the option of a new start did not provide more of an incentive for young energetic Mennonites to go abroad and experience the adventure.

Summary

When in spring of 1874 Bishop Gerhard Wiebe was compelled by General von Tottleben to speak for his colony, the reason he cites for the emigration is “*Die Gemeinde ist bang vor der Zukunft*” [The congregation dreads/is worried about the future].¹⁴ To support that conclusion, Wiebe mentions that the landless as well as the landowners left their houses and farms without receiving a cent for them, departing from their homeland because of

this fear. At enormous sacrifice, they left their established life for the unknown, opting for some of the least desirable land (Manitoba) of all the territories examined by the 1873 delegates that scouted the immigration options. Their reason, according to E.K. Francis, was that “above all, they wanted to be absolutely assured that the experiences which now drove them from Russia would never be repeated again.”¹⁵ For the majority of Mennonites in Russia, this fear did not apply, certainly not to the extent that it precipitated emigration.

All the factors noted above may well come down to this reality: the inertia of a settled lifestyle, a known paradigm, and comfortable circumstances—at least for the leaders and trendsetters—could not be overcome by the gradually increasing religious ferment, threats to language and schools, or even commercialization of agriculture and the introduction of a cash economy of paid labour. Only an overwhelming immediate and unforeseen threat to the core of the community could overcome that inertia.

The sudden loss of the military service exemption was the threat that overcame the settlers’ status quo existence of life in the colonies, a community life separate and isolated from the surrounding Russian culture. For the conservative Mennonites, it was the straw that broke the camel’s back. For the progressive, acculturated Mennonites, conscription merely confirmed what was largely tacitly accepted: namely, that an isolated, separate existence apart from any participation in the civic life of their host country was no longer feasible. Compromises—even in the definition of nonresistance—needed to be made, and if so, then of course on the most favourable terms possible.

The Mennonite house in Russia was indeed divided along various definable fault lines in the 1870s. It had happened earlier in the Netherlands, and also in Poland/Prussia, and would happen again in Russia in the 1920s, and later, when societal upheaval would prompt similar fault lines between those that left, and those that stayed. Yet, the Mennonite house stands.

Endnotes

1. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920: The History of a Separate People* (Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, 1974), 200.

2. E.K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The*
(cont’d on p. 8)



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A Week at the Archives

by Korey Dyck

With this month's column, I thought it might be interesting to show you what a week in the life of the archives might look like. While not all weeks are as busy as this one, it might give you a sense of the tasks we do each day.

Monday, May 25: The day began with checking email and answering phone messages. Often there are requests for information—an average of over 40 requests are received each month by in person visits, email, or telephone—coming from people anywhere in the world. This week, the AMA (Association for Manitoba Archives) annual membership renewal paperwork is due. In addition to sending our professional association a cheque, we also need to send them an annual report and financial statements. Another important task was spending time telephoning guests to confirm their attendance at our 2nd annual Dessert Night Fundraiser that will be held Friday later this week. We also confirmed our Otto Klassen German language memoir book launch with Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg for June 14. This event is also a fundraiser for digitizing 16 C.F. Klassen films that we quickly processed last year to prevent decomposition.

Tuesday, May 26: The day again began with checking email. The big task was to complete the AMA re-accreditation process. Every five years, all member institutions of the AMA are required to submit documentation showing how they are complying with professional standards. For this process, a Director training plan and a disaster recovery plan are required in order for the Heritage Centre to meet the requirements. A forty-page disaster recovery plan proposal was submitted along with a detailed list of archival workshops I have taken and plan to take. A second task was to provide Mennonite Church Manitoba with an invitation to place in church bulletins regarding the Otto Klassen event in June.

Wednesday, May 27: Most of this day was spent writing and revising a grant application to process Mennonite Church

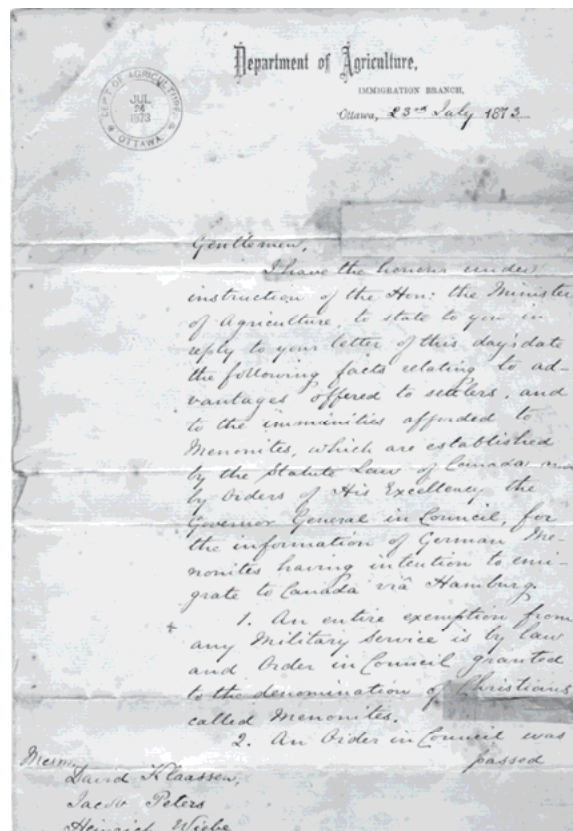
Manitoba's (MCM) upcoming archival deposit. Since the deposit is quite large, we hope to acquire additional funds to hire a contract archivist. MCM is preparing to send a large collection of audio material to the archives for processing, including *Frohe Botshaft* broadcasts and Faith & Life Choir recordings. In addition, Conrad visited the Christian Mennonite Conference (formerly the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference) in Steinbach to discuss a plan to collect and preserve their historical records. At 3:30 PM, Conrad returned with the original document known as the 1873 *Privilegium* signed by the Canadian government and the Mennonite people wanting to emigrate from Russia! A copy of page one of the English language version is displayed in this column. Finally, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference emailed a request for an updated MOU (Memo of Understanding) regarding the possible transfer of the EMC archive collection to the Heritage Centre. On Wednesday evening, I also had the pleasure to present a Manitoba Day Award to Dr. Royden Loewen, the Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg. The awards night was held at the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.

Thursday, May 28: Final revisions were made to the grant application for the MCM material and it was sent priority post to the Foundation. This item took up most of the morning. A second item needing attention was a meeting to clarify our 2015-2016 budget with the finance office of Mennonite Church Canada. It was a routine meeting, keeping us informed on the state of income and revenue. Over lunch, I worked at updating a proposed EMC/MHC MOU to reflect current storage prices at the Heritage Centre. The EMC wanted to have an up-to-date copy before voting for a possible move of their material to the Heritage Centre. The EMC vote on the possible transfer was scheduled for Thursday evening.

Friday, May 29: Preparations began for hosting our 2nd annual Dessert Night Fundraiser, with tables, plates, and food being prepared to host our guests in the evening. Conrad spent the

morning preparing his evening talk, while I spent the morning finishing a book review for the next issue of the *Mennonite Historian* that will be out in June. Also in the morning, we received word that the EMC voted in favour of transferring their archival holding to the Heritage Centre. This move will be fantastic for researchers, as the EMC records will now be more easily accessed during regular office hours. In the afternoon, the MCC Low German program staff dropped in for a tour of the archives. The 30-minute tour lasted closer to an hour. I think everyone enjoyed their time learning about who we are, what we do, and why it is important. Friday afternoon, this column was completed, and I began setting up the chairs and electronic equipment for the fundraiser. I look forward to what both Conrad and Ray Dirks, the MHC Gallery curator, will say. It should be a great time of learning, visiting, and of course eating great cakes.

I hope this walk through a week at the archives gives you a glimpse of how we work hard at collecting, preserving, and making available our histories of faith.



Page 1 of the original agreement *Privilegium* between the Canadian government and the Mennonite delegates that paved the way for Mennonite immigration to Canada, dated 23 July 1873. MHC recently acquired this document from the Christian Mennonite Conference (formerly Chortitzer Mennonite Conference) along with a German version.

Conrad at Sixteen Years of Service

by Jon Isaak

This year marks a significant milestone in the ministry of Conrad Stoesz, archivist at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. Conrad has been job-sharing—half-time at CMBS and half-time at the Mennonite Heritage Centre—for sixteen years!

Visitors to CMBS over the years have come to appreciate his helpful responses to their genealogical or historical queries, his thoughtful interaction on questions of Mennonite theology and social engagement, and his ready smile and quick wit, often sprinkled with Low German humour or some funny story.

When asked about key reasons for choosing to be an archivist, he is quick to point to several early experiences he had while growing up in Altona, Manitoba. Conrad recalls with much satisfaction how his mother instilled in him an interest, aptitude, and desire to know as much as possible about his forebears and his relatives—their stories, their names, their birthdates, and even their wedding anniversaries. He thought all mothers were naturally gifted at being able to recite all these details whenever asked. While he eventually discovered this was not the case, it didn't matter, because he had already “caught” her vision for remembering and telling the family story.

Then in grade eleven, he recalls doing a large genealogical project. His mother took him to visit aged relatives and he was intrigued by the process of collecting oral interviews with them. He managed to keep up quite well with the Low German conversation and was able to collate and diagram the information into an impressive storyboard of his family. Even disturbing accounts of awkward and unsettling occurrences, which were also part of the fabric of the family narrative, were processed and included in his growing understanding and appreciation of the “thick” and “thin” aspects of family life.

During his studies at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, his on-campus job at the Mennonite Heritage Centre was responding to user requests for help locating their genealogical backgrounds. In “those days” this was done mostly “old school,” paging through published genealogies looking for pertinent names, as digital indexes, internet databases, and web-based church

registers and obituaries were not yet available. He took classes and did an independent study while at CMBC, all of which helped him deepen his understanding of Mennonite History.

For several summers he managed to secure Young Canada Works grants in order to work at the archives at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, even after his graduation from college. The key “break” for Conrad came in 1999 when he was hired by both CMBS and MHC to the dual post that he continues to occupy today.

During the years of employment, he managed to take classes on a part-time basis, completing certification as an archivist at the University of Alberta and taking courses toward an M.A. in history in the joint program offered by the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba, which he has almost finished. Conrad has also published important essays on the Mennonite experience of Alternative Service as Conscientious Objectors during WWII and on Mennonite midwifery during the 19th century.

By nature, Conrad is a curious person, collecting as much information as possible on most any topic. He enjoys helping people. Plus, he is convinced that it is not wise to automatically set aside or dismiss “old things.” He admits even a degree of distrust and suspicion of things touted as new and improved. These characteristics make Conrad a natural archivist, skilled in preserving and maintaining documents, stories, and images of the past, both to establish a clearer understanding of what transpired and to chart possible ways through contemporary challenges.

In addition, Conrad enjoys the important dimension of being a church archivist, as it allows him to minister to patrons by having conversations about how archival work resonates with the biblical call to remember the ways of our forebears and to acknowledge our part in the larger work of God's mission. There is a pastoral aspect to the work, says Conrad, as he often is able to help people come to grips with important questions of family, faith, and society from a Christian perspective.

For sixteen years Conrad's dual assignment has enabled him to function as a bridge between the sometimes diverse worlds of the Mennonite Brethren Church and the Mennonite Church. Early on, however, that relationship was tested. On



January 6, 2000, Conrad received a telephone call from the chairperson of the CMBS advisory board, asking him if he knew why this particular day was important. After making several attempts—Was it the chairperson's birthday? Was it the birthday of the conference minister?—and getting nowhere, he heard the chairperson say, “Your job depends on getting this answer correct!” That was the only hint that Conrad needed, as he knew that January 6 was the date in 1860 that Mennonite Brethren celebrate as the birthday of this Mennonite renewal movement. “You're right!” exclaimed the chairperson, and Conrad—the Mennonite Church member—has been working at the MB Centre ever since.

Congratulations, Conrad, and thank you for your faithful service these sixteen years. You have seen many changes—you've worked under five different Directors, moved the collection to two different locations, helped in the design of the current location at 1310 Taylor, migrated the digital resources to three different websites, and much more. Through it all you've maintained a positive, helpful, and friendly spirit. We wish you well as you continue to serve.



Conrad Stoesz. Photos: Courtesy of Kyle Thomas

From Earth-Bound Guideposts to Outer-Space Satellites

by Conrad Stoesz

In 1878, Mennonites planted wooden posts along the well-travelled route running from Emerson, the economic hub on the edge of the former Mennonite West Reserve, to the western edge near Mountain City, south of Morden. The posts guided many travelers through zero-visibility snowstorms along the treeless, flat prairie. Today, these posts are long gone, but a memorial trail with markers has been created and recently, geocaches have been added to help educate people about the Mennonite experience (see Conrad Stoesz, "Post Road," *Mennonite Historian* 26/2 [June 2000]:1–2, and "Post Road, part 2," *MH* 26/3 [September 2000]:4–5, 8).

Geocaching is a popular hobby—a kind of hide-and-seek game. Hand-held GPS units (and some smart phones) use triangulated satellite coordinates to help users locate positions on earth. A user can log onto www.geocaching.com, download coordinates for a prepared geocache route, and then use their GPS unit or smart phone to locate a geocache. A geocache is usually some sort of container that holds stories of visitors from the past, perhaps some local historical items, and a logbook for users to leave comments of their impressions. May 2015 marks the 15th anniversary of geocaching. There are over 2.6 million caches around the world, and 6 million users.

On a warm, early spring day in 2014, I joined geocaching hobbyist Weldon Penner on a tour of the historic Post Road. As we traced the route through the former Mennonite West reserve, we traversed lands where our families used to live. Along the way we planted geocaches encouraging others to discover the history of the villages and landscapes along a path from Fort Dufferin, through the R.M.s of Rhineland and Stanley to Mountain City.

It's rewarding to read the feedback from visiting geocachers. User **fmgail** wrote: "Thanks for the road down history lane . . . enjoyed each site on your path. Thanks for placing these." **NovaToba** logged her 1,144th find and commented: "I originate from Nova Scotia so this was a great history lesson for me," and after visiting the former Browns Grand Central Hotel location, "met owner of the farm, chatted

a bit & carried on my way." The Boundary Trail Heritage Region website offers this description of the hotel: "March 1881—Mr. Wm. Brown, previously manager of the Davis House in Winnipeg, took over management of this establishment and it soon became a great favorite among the more affluent travellers along the trail who did not care to partake of the hospitality offered in the nearby Mennonite homes."

Jean Déniche wrote: "Following the Mennonite series of caches gave us greater insight into that aspect of Manitoba history. Snowy owls, bald eagles, and deer put the finishing touch on a pleasant and productive day."

A family travelling through the area from Iowa made one of the caches their 1,000th find. User **tkblossom** wrote: "We loved reading about the history of the Post Road, and thought that there wasn't a better milestone cache for us than this one. While our direct ancestors wouldn't have used the Post Road, it was meaningful to read and learn a little about our Mennonite ancestors."

The geocaches along the Post Road have allowed users to reflect on changes. At the Edenburg Cemetery, user **trag_cachers** wrote: "It is interesting how many small graves are here. It is great to see that technology has come a long way since the old days and babies have a much better survival rate now than they did then!!"

Over two dozen bus tours have since travelled the route, at times modifying the route by including stops at the National Historic site of Neuberghthal, or heading further west into the Pembina Hills to see the leaves on the trees change colour.

To see what some of the locations looked like decades ago check out photos on the new Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID), such as "cairn corner" (<http://archives.mhsc.ca/cairn-corner-site>).

Why majority did not...

(cont'd from p. 5)

Mennonites in Manitoba (D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), 28.

3. Dietrich Gaeddert, "Aus einer Gemeindechronik," *Zur Heimath*, December 1880, 187.

4. Harry Loewen, "A House Divided: Russian Mennonite Nonresistance and Emigration in the 1870s" in *Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*, edited by John Friesen (Canadian Mennonite Bible College Publications, 1989), 129.

5. Johann Epp, cited by Frank H. Epp, "Mass migration from Russia to Manitoba," *Mennonite Reporter*, November 1974, 15.

6. Roughly 400 Mennonite Brethren were part of the 1870s migration (Kevin Enns-Rempel, "Coming to North America: The Immigrants of the 1870s" in *For Everything a Season: Mennonite Brethren in North America, 1874–2002* [Kindred Productions, 2002], 16). See also P.M. Friesen, *Mennonites in North America, 1874–1910*, trans. Jake Balzer (Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 2012), 1–34.

7. James Urry, *None but Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789–1889* (Hyperion, 1989), 228.

8. Cornelius Krahn, "At the Crossroads and on Detours: Why did some go south, some north?" *Mennonite Reporter*, 25 November 1974, 25.

9. A Russian harness driving combination using three horses abreast, usually pulling a sleigh.

10. Gerhard Wiebe, *Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika* (Der Northwestern, 1900), 31.

11. Peter M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789–1910)*, trans. J.B. Toews et.al. (Board of Christian Literature, 1978, rev. ed. 1980), 500.

12. Dietrich Gaeddert, *Zur Heimath*, December 1880, 187.

13. General von Tottleben claimed that there were three classes of Mennonites: "those fanatics who have already decided to move at all costs, the more enlightened who want to stay in Russia but are afraid to speak out, and those who intend to remain but are inciting others to leave so as to be able to buy their farms cheaply," as quoted by Delbert Plett, *Pioneers and Pilgrims* (Delbert F. Plett Publications, 1996), 264.

14. Wiebe, 31.

15. Francis, 36.



Weldon Penner standing next to the Post Road marker #9 at Hochfeld. Notice his GPS unit and screw driver as he looks for a place to locate the cache. Photo: Courtesy of Conrad Stoesz.

To Russia with Love

[This letter was written by an 1870s Russian immigrant to Manitoba, Jacob Wiens (1818–1888). While the concern for loved ones who remained in Russia is evident, note also the almost prophetic warnings. J.K. Wiens is the translator. The letter is part of the Jacob Wiens collection at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Vol. 2335, File #5. Eds.]

Hoffnungsfeld, Manitoba, June 29, 1879

As a greeting, I wish you the peace of God for your hearts, as well as for ours, both now and in the future! Yes, dear ones! Whoever has this peace does not fear, even if the earth sinks and the hills sink into the sea, since Jesus says about them: *Let not your heart be frightened and fear not.* Yes, this peace is essential in these last days and dangerous times; it is doubly necessary for you people in Russia. However, this peace is attained in no other way than by repentance and rebirth. Therefore, we should all strive for this peace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dear nephew David K. No! We have not forgotten about you; and we have received your letter that you apparently thought had gone missing. However, since it was addressed to your brother, J.K., I do not have the letter in hand and, as a result, I had forgotten about it. I wanted to answer your letter long ago, but there is so much to do. A lot of building is going on, so much so that there is not much time left to write. Thus, this is a short letter; but if the dear God gives (gifts) us life and health, we will write more when winter comes. However, you should keep on writing, as the work is not as pressing there.

The fields and the gardens look very beautiful, nearly as beautiful as never before. If God protects the fruits so that we can successfully harvest them, then without doubt, we will have a very bountiful harvest. At present, we are eating a lot of strawberries. I still have not received the card, since I have not driven anywhere. I am thinking about going to Emerson in the near future. I have traded my oxen for a pair of geldings, 2 arch 5 wasch tall. They are very work oriented and civilized. Thus, it is much easier to drive than earlier.

What you write, concerning the difficulties with emigration, is partially right. It hurts to separate friends. But what will happen when a husband has to leave his wife and children to go into the military service? That will certainly happen. Or what about when the Nihilist

movement takes over and tears down everything that stands?

Oh, if you only knew what we know! But you do not have freedom of the press. Here is a little piece of what a Russian from Riga wrote to our papers:

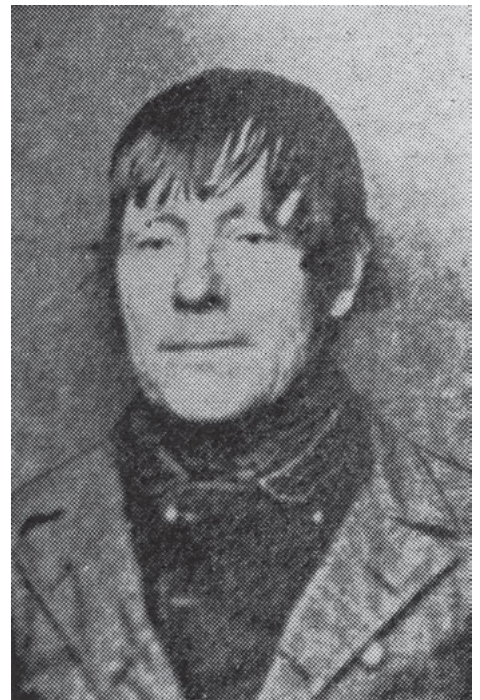
The Mennonites are a very intelligent people. We do not believe they emigrated because they thought they could not reach a satisfactory agreement with the Emperor. But the Mennonites rightly fear the violent social revolution that will come and its consequences. Once the communist lords take over and establish their bloody worldwide "improvements," they will neither ask about Privilegium or peace. Eat! Or you will be eaten! This will be the slogan of those in power. There will be no exceptions. No religious minority will be able to escape this until a more moderate form of government grows out of this chaos. But this could take decades; and by then the whole existence of Mennonites would be destroyed. Thus, they are doing the right thing by emigrating, since they want to remain as they are.

Russia in the near future is entering a very frightful period. There will be a violent and powerful revolution in which most of the population will take part. This terrible drama will happen at the end of the 19th century. The French Revolution of the 18th century will be mild compared to this one. Nihilism is on the track! Nothing is holy! Nothing can stand in its way!

So far about Russia! Terrible enough! But these are timely plagues and all will come to an end when the Judge comes in the last days: *I have given you the opportunity to take a path so that you will not have to give up your faith, but you valued your timely and worldly goods and possessions and friends more than Me. Therefore, you are not worthy of Me.*

In my view, you will not be able to maintain your faith there. But enough of this. Accept everything in love, since it is written in love. We are afraid and anxious about the things in Russia, based on what we read in the papers. Then, we think of our friends; yes, we think about the Mennonites in Russia.

We thank God that we, including all our children, are healthy and well and everything is going well. From our hearts, we wish you the same. On the 12th of this month, two sons were born to the Driedgers, Johann and Isaac.



Jacob Wiens (1818–1888). Photo: Courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register* (Regehr's Printing, 1963), 4.

Greet all our siblings, and also all our friends; you know them all. But in particular, greet our siblings: namely, your dear father and the dear mother, and Doerk Klassen, Mr. Jacob K., and the other friends and people we know, such as my neighbour Mr. P. Harms.

W. and P. Harms are healthy. L. Esaus and Jacob K. are also healthy. Esau now wants to build a large wooden house. Isaac Dycken[?] now also lives here in Hoffnungsfeld.

Greet also the friends and people we know in Kronsthal.

I should write a lot more, but cannot because we are now building a school and I have to repair my barn. I do not have time to build a new one.

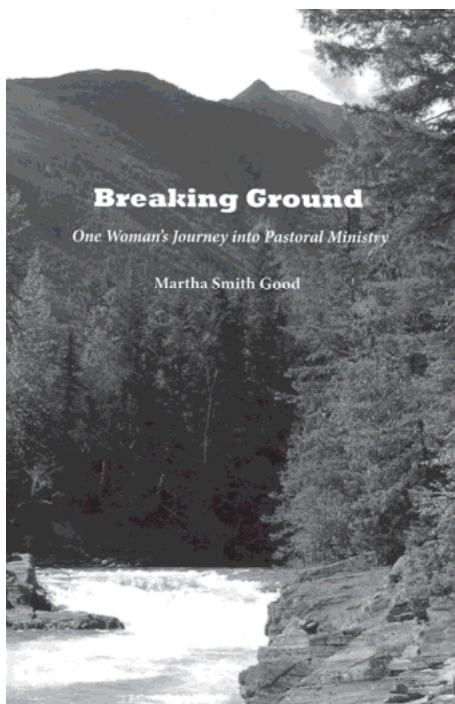
Because of the apparent great danger that you are in out there, I write this. Otherwise, the peace of God is just as necessary for us, and also repentance and rebirth, because we are no less sinners than you are.

Book Reviews

Martha Smith Good, *Breaking Ground: One Woman's Journey into Pastoral Ministry* (Pandora Printshop, 2012), 178 pp.

Reviewed by Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder

Some time ago, I watched a CBC documentary in which Peter Mansbridge interviewed the recently



deceased former prime minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's apparel was flawless, her hair meticulously styled, and her makeup perfectly applied. Her fashionable apparel did not detract but rather it enhanced her aura of complete self-confidence. Here was a woman who had it all together, and she knew it. Her sense of call never wavered. Several times, she eyeballed Mansbridge intensely and said, "I knew I was right when I made that decision, and history has proved that I was right!" A Soviet journalist once called her the "Iron Lady" and that label stuck, because that is who she was!

That picture of the "Iron Lady" came to mind when I read Smith Good's book. Like Thatcher, who grew up in a flat above her father's grocery store, Smith Good is of humble origin. She spent her childhood and adolescent years in a Mennonite farming community in Ontario. The conservative Mennonite church from the Waterloo-Markham conference to which her family belonged had "endless restrictions" concerning women's apparel, and as a teenager, after her baptism, she was required to wear a cape dress. About this experience, she writes, "Was this a penalty for being born with a body that would develop breasts? Was it a penalty that I had to serve for the rest of my life?" Listening to a sermon, she ponders, "If what I heard about freedom in Christ was true, then why did it feel so restricting? Wasn't truth supposed to be a freeing concept?"

Before she began school, Smith Good knew that she wanted to be a medical doctor. That thought did not leave her, even though her mother tried to prepare her for the fact that she would never go to high school because their church believed a worldly education would endanger her faith.

Smith Good excelled in school, moving from grade four to grade six and winning a public speaking contest. However, to her great disappointment, her parents did not allow her to go on to the county finals because of the church's standards regarding competitions.

Sometimes her parents, especially her father, made exceptions. He allowed her to go to a school skating party even though her mother had reservations. Smith Good was excited to go, but once on the ice she could not enjoy the party because guilt and remorse overwhelmed her. Uncomfortable in her church and in her school she sometimes wondered, "When will I feel the love of God I heard preached from the pulpit?"

Resourceful and tenacious, Smith Good put aside her dream of becoming a medical doctor, and as a young adult, she enrolled in a ten-month Registered Nursing Assistant course, which required a grade eight diploma. She lived at home and worked for several years in a small local hospital, but she became restless and felt a need for complete independence.

A patient's question about her Mennonite faith helped her to realize that she really didn't know much about why she was a Mennonite or what she believed. Thus began a journey to find spiritual meaning in her life, which eventually took her to Goshen Biblical Seminary where she received her Master of Divinity degree and began her pastor and chaplaincy work. She completed a Doctor of Ministry degree at the University of Toronto, and became one of the first ordained women in the Mennonite Church in Ontario.

When I finished reading the book, I couldn't help but wonder how different Martha's life would have been had her leadership and intellectual skills been validated as a youngster, and had she been encouraged to fulfill her dream of becoming a medical doctor. However, I did not sense any bitterness or resentment on her part toward her family. In fact, they attended her graduations and were proud of her achievements. Possibly, it was a learning process for them as well.

Although the dialogue in the book is a bit wooden and didactic at times (especially the part where Martha seeks counsel from a friend about dating a widower) the book as a whole is well written and kept me reading with interest. Photographs in the centre section of the book help the reader to identify with Martha and her family.

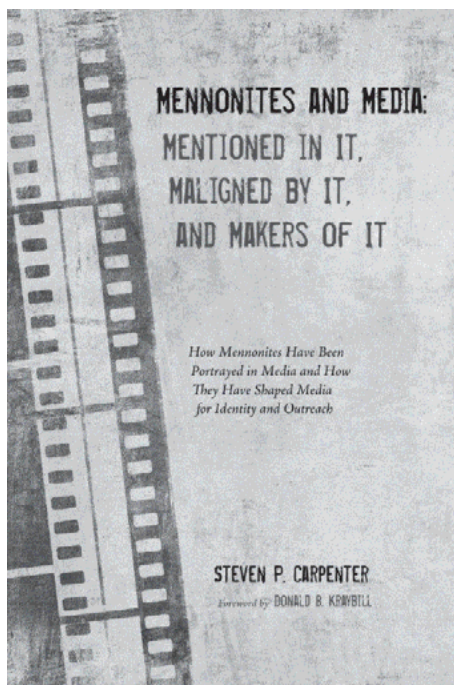
At the beginning of her memoir, Smith Good shares a dream in which she is driving a bus filled with women. The journey becomes fraught with danger when a raging river threatens to capsize the bus. With much struggle, she manages to drive the bus across to the other side, where she faces a hedgerow of intertwined brambles almost impossible for her to untangle. Eventually, there is a breakthrough and she and her fellow passengers manage to enter a magnificent peaceful green valley. This dream is a metaphor for her struggle to find meaning and purpose in life as a woman with leadership ability and skills (in spite of the teaching she receives that these are not desirable attributes for women). Smith Good's memoir tells her readers how she meets this challenge with courage and a sense of call, pioneering a path for other women to follow.

Steven P. Carpenter, *Mennonites and the Media: Mentioned in it, Maligned by it, and Makers of it* (Wipf and Stock, 2014), 194 pp.

Reviewed by Dan Dyck, Director of Church Engagement: Communications, Mennonite Church Canada

It's not often I recommend a book by telling readers to start at the end first. But knowing that author Steve Carpenter is a first generation Mennonite from a Presbyterian faith tradition with a military history, who was introduced to Mennonites via the *More With Less* cookbook, only added to my fascination. Carpenter's personal story lends an authenticity and objectivity to the work that is appealing.

Carpenter's thesis is that Mennonites bat well above average for their size when it comes to media references, compared to other groups. The down side is that these same references most often are cultural and do little to inform the audience about even the essentials of Anabaptist faith. Serious journalists in the secular media who find themselves regularly covering Mennonites would do well to study this book.



The work is well organized and thorough in hitting the high points of Mennonite impact on the media in the context of the USA. It also includes some Canadians such as Rudy Wiebe, Miriam Toews, and Cindy Klassen whose notoriety leaks across international borders. Have some references been missed? Undoubtedly. But comprehensive inclusion is not the end game of this effort.

A few highlights: Mennonites or Anabaptists are referenced in or to in works by Voltaire (*Candide*), Oscar Wilde (*The Importance of Being Earnest*), James Michener (*Centennial*), Joseph Heller (*Catch 22*), Garrison Keillor (*A Prairie Home Companion*), and Matt Groening (*The Simpsons*).

Carpenter's thesis is supported by more than anecdotal citations. He uses Ngram, an online culturomic tool developed by Harvard and Google that tracks the frequency of certain words over time using a database of 5 billion words in more than 5 million books published over the course of the last 500 years. Tracking the occurring frequency of words such as "Mennonite" or "Anabaptist" compared to "Jew," "Mormon," and "Catholic" and comparing the data to the size of the tribe, Carpenter shows that Mennonites relatively have a much larger media footprint than one might guess.

The book also offers some historical insights. In 1924, the Virginia Mennonite Conference deemed it wrong for Mennonites to have a radio in the home. By 1951, the popular Mennonite Hour radio program emerged from the same

conference. At its peak in 1972, the Mennonite Hour was carried on 135 stations.

For decades now I've been intrigued by Mennonite and Anabaptist references in culture and society. Hats off to Carpenter for writing the book I've often thought of writing.

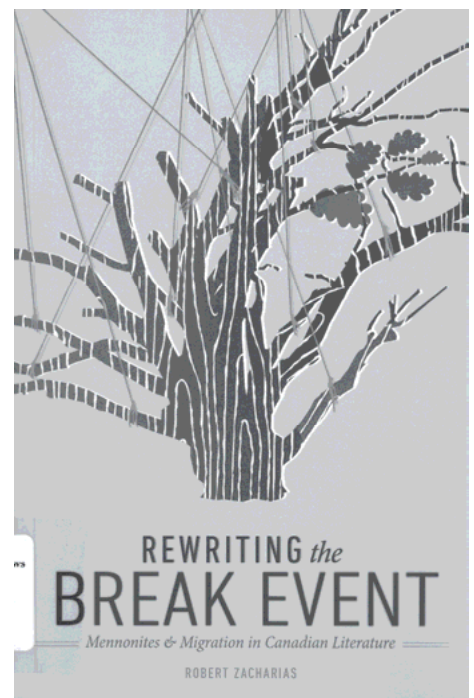
Robert Zacharias, *Rewriting the Break Event: Mennonites & Migration in Canadian Literature* (University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 227 pp.

Reviewed by Korey Dyck

A recent PhD graduate, Zacharias has done a remarkable service for readers interested in exploring and understanding Mennonite Canadian literature. In this book, originally his dissertation, the author explores how four novels—each representing a specific theme in Russian Mennonite history—convey particular aspects of the Mennonite "commonwealth" in Russia in order to construct a communal Mennonite identity in Canada.

Utilizing a methodology that draws on diaspora studies, Zacharias uses what he calls the "break event"—the Mennonite migration of over 20,000 Russian Mennonites to Canada—as the point of origin for the formation of a new collective identity in Canada. With immigrants experiencing a variety of different life-changing events, each novel shapes how the events are remembered. Complementing historical works documenting this time, these Mennonite literary authors each produce works dealing with the ethnic, traumatic, religious, or metanarrative aspects of those Mennonites who left Russia. As a new "beginning point," the break event also marks the different ways Mennonites now living in Canada understand themselves.

With bookend chapters on rewriting and reading migration into the larger context of Canadian literature, Zacharias devotes four chapters to four novels and their authors. Chapter two focuses on Al Reimer's novel, *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* (and to a lesser extent Janice L. Dick's *Out of the Storm*), and argues that it can be understood as a "theopedagogical" narrative. In other words, both novels and the events contained in them can be understood using a theological lens. Dick's novel, while well written and researched, openly promotes an Anabaptist understanding of faith, even



through severe hardship. For Reimer, moral choices are less clear-cut, with the religious focus conveyed through the dialogues of characters struggling with and then making decisions that question received understandings of faith. Both novels parallel Job's story of faith, a path through blessing, testing, and then restoration to prosperity.

Chapter three focuses on the concept of Mennonites as a distinct ethnic group, as a people set apart. Within the boundaries of then South Russia, Arnold Dyck's novel, *Lost in the Steppe*, produces a people forever stuck in time. Writing about a world on the brink of destruction, though not yet seen, Dyck's novel attempts to shape a mythic reminiscence of an industrious, farm-based *Volk*. According to Zacharias, an ethnic retelling of the height of the Mennonite Commonwealth period helped to galvanize the resolve of Russian Mennonite immigrants and their descendants after arriving in Canada. Indeed, for many refugees, Dyck's novel serves as a usable past for building or rebuilding bonds of communal identity in a new land.

If indeed the communal aspects of identity were privileged in chapter three, then chapter four is about rallying around an individual's experiences. Sandra Birdsell's novel, *The Russlaender*, aligns an individual's private sharing of her experience leaving South Russia with that of public newspaper accounts of the massacres in Mennonite villages. Having experienced traumatic events herself, Katja Vogt, the main character in the novel, tells her personal story in her later

years as a way of making sense of the things that happened to her and her family. For Zacharias and for Mennonites coming to Canada, the spectre of trauma is often underlying the corporate retelling of this history—present though rarely discussed. In reading *The Russlaender*, the audience is reminded that these historical events happened to real people who saw and felt what it was like to live through such difficult times.

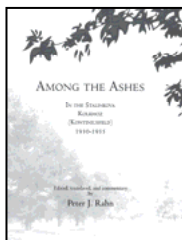
The fifth chapter discusses Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China*, which Zacharias sees as offering the reader a metanarrative about the exodus of Mennonites from Russia. Instead of a novel following one or two characters, Wiebe's novel follows a patchwork of people telling how they are related to this communal history. Rather than living it themselves, the novel explains how descendants of immigrants come to own this history. The story itself serves to unify descendants of Russian Mennonites regardless of where they live. Though dispersed over time and place, the migration story serves to connect a wide variety of people, even if the interpretation of events changes over time.

In sum, after explaining the four different narratives found in novels by Mennonite Canadian authors, Zacharias argues that Mennonites do not neatly fit into the popular genre of ethnic literary studies. Instead, Mennonite Canadian writing is a critical construct, one that is connected to migration, diaspora, and postcolonial themes, all moulded by historical events and political decisions. By bringing Mennonite Canadian literature into conversation with wider literary theories, Zacharias provides readers with a new way of understanding how their inherited communal identity has been shaped. *Rewriting the Break Event* is an excellent new work by a promising young academic.

Book Notes

by Korey Dyck

Peter J. Rahn, ed., *Among the Ashes: In the Stalinkova Kolkhoz (Kontinuisfeld) 1930–1935* (Pandora, 2011), 299 pp.



The letters collected in this book are derived from the correspondence received and preserved during Jacob Peter

Rahn's lifetime (1910–1991). These letters were sent from southern Ukraine, where some of the Rahn family continued to live, to Jacob Rahn who had immigrated to Canada in 1930. From 1930 until 1942 the Rahn family recorded in their letters the entire spectrum of events that transpired in their Soviet village during the period of *dekulakization* and collectivization. These are not the writings of extraordinary individuals, accomplishing exceptional things, but merely letters of ordinary people desperately trying to survive Stalin's grand communist experiment. Jacob's son, Peter J. Rahn, is the translator and editor of the letter collection. His lucid commentary on the letters and the history of *dekulakization* provides a comprehensive portrait of one family during a significant time in Mennonite History.

Luann Hiebert, *What Lies Behind* (Turnstone, 2014), 93 pp.

What Lies Behind is a collection of Luann Hiebert's poetry, poems that explode the notions of the common and the everyday. They are seductive songs of motherhood, love, and springtime on the prairies, confronted with illness, death, and the coldness of time marching on. With the weight of history behind her, Hiebert arrests the patterns of daily life and in their place leaves a beautiful truth that is more awesome and delightful than memory could serve. Born in Winnipeg, Luann Hiebert now lives in Steinbach, Manitoba. This is her first collection of poetry.



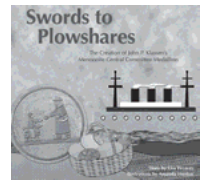
Henry A. Friesen, *Johann Friesen of Poland and his Descendants: Telling Their Stories* (2014), 156 pp.

In this account of Friesen descendants, Henry Friesen offers not only a family history, but also a study of cultural dynamics, the relationship between faith and the wider culture. The heart of this narrative is the story of a family dealing with changing times. *Telling Their Stories* also touches on the impact that contemporary social forces have on a faith community, with references to agriculture, transportation, politics, and leadership styles. Henry is currently the

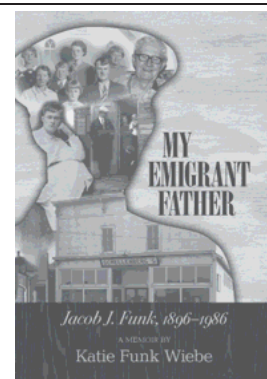
building manager at Regina Christian School in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Lisa Weaver and Amanda Huston, *Swords to Plowshares: The Creation of John P. Klassen's Mennonite Central Committee Medallion* (Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center of Bluffton University, 2014), 48 pp.

This is a children's book that tells a true story of violence turned to hope through the eyes of a fictional boy in 1920s Ukraine.



Swords to Plowshares uses the simplicity and colourful illustrations of a picture book to recount how art teacher John P. Klassen—later a Bluffton art professor—collected bullets scattered throughout his Ukrainian village, melted them down, and moulded them into a lead medallion. In the book, young Isaak assists Klassen with the creation of the medallion, which was presented to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) workers as a token of appreciation for sending food and relief supplies to the village following the Russian civil war. The medallion depicts an MCC representative handing out bread to children in Ukraine as part of a North American relief effort in the region.



NEW RELEASE

"Katie Funk Wiebe's extended eulogy to her father in these pages is affectionate, honest, and compelling. It unfolds in stories—stories about ghosts, tragic deaths, family separation like 'a toothache in the heart,' uprooting from one country, re-rooting in the next." —Dora Dueck

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