

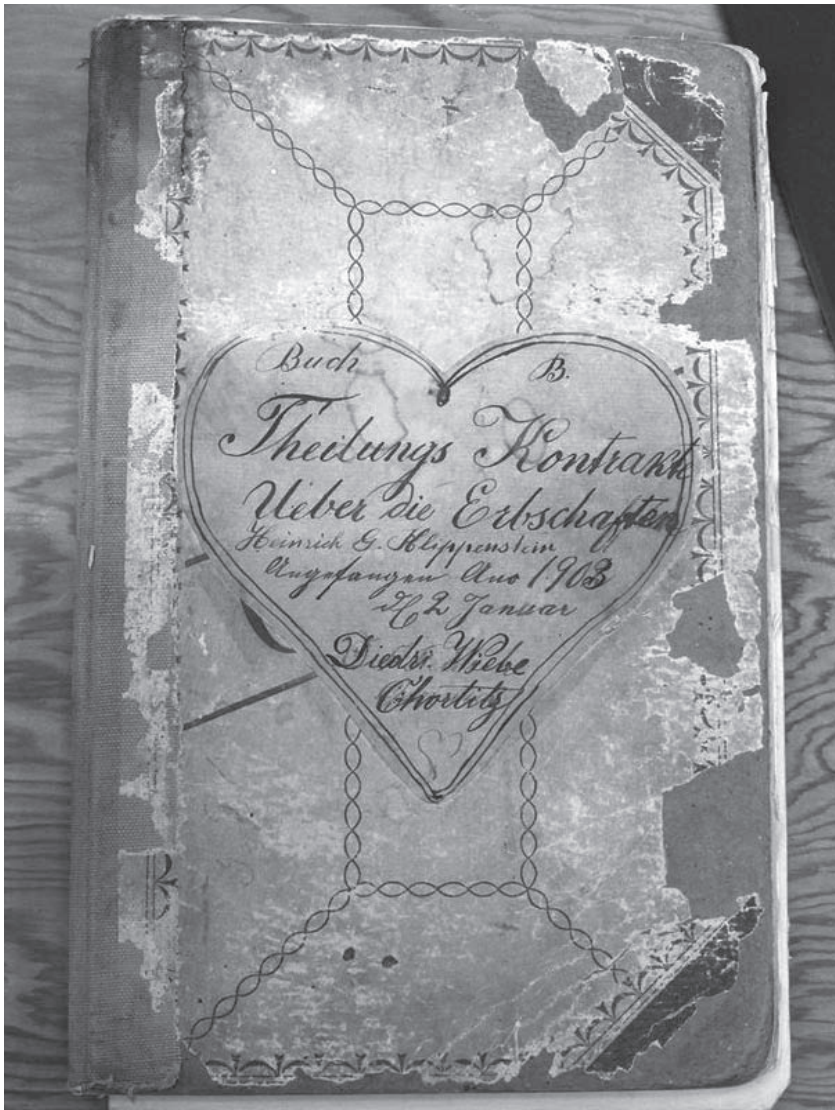
Mennonite Historian

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

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This book is part of the *Waisenamt* materials donated to Mennonite Heritage Centre on 2 November 2016 (see story p. 6). It is a ledger containing the contracts for the division of inheritances following a death. The surviving spouse received 50% and the children equally divided the remaining 50%. The *Waisenamt* was a response to Isaiah 1:17 (*Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow*). Many of the ledgers, some that date back to the 1860s, have a heart glued to the cover, as this one does. In a community that had little ornamentation, why employ a heart emblem? Perhaps it was a reminder of the underlying principle of love guiding the *Waisenamt*. The inscription reads: *Buch B. Theilungs Kontrakt Ueber die Erbschaften* (Book B. Contracts for the division of inheritances), beginning 2 January 1903 in Chortitz. Noted on the cover are Dietrich Wiebe (administrator from 1905 to 1917) and Heinrich G. Klippenstein (administrator from 1917 to 1939). Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.



The Missing Chortitza Gebietsamt Records

by Werner Toews, Winnipeg

During the revolution and civil war period (1917–1920), the Russian Mennonites suffered the loss of a great many of their documents and records. Church registers were lost, burned, or taken away by the communist authorities. Other records and manuscripts were destroyed by bandit gangs, looking for money and valuables. Some records survived, hidden in private homes of Mennonites, brave souls who in the process put their lives in jeopardy. Other records and document collections would be “found” years later in various Russian and Ukrainian archives. They weren’t so much found, but made available to western scholars and historians after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The leading authority on archives in the former Soviet Union is Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, an American historian and a senior associate at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI). Grimsted is an expert on the disposition and restitution of cultural property during and after the Second World War (WWII). The culmination of her 35 years of research on this subject is contained in her 2001 publication, *Trophies of War and Empire*.¹

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Grimsted’s book reveals the extent of Nazi plunder during the war in the occupied countries and the counter plunder by the Soviets. The book also provides a clue to the possible fate of the Chortitza records, the bulk of which has been missing since the end of WWII.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Mennonite historians became more involved with research in the Russian and Ukrainian archives. In 2001, the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) in Winnipeg received 109 microfilmed Mennonite related documents that were located by Mennonite historians in the State Archive of the Zaporozhe region.²

The microfilm collection was presented to MHC director Alf Redekopp by Mennonite scholar and historian Harvey L. Dyck, professor emeritus at the Center for European, Russian, and Eurasian studies at the University of Toronto.

Dyck had selected 130,000 pages of Mennonite related documents from the Zaporozhe archives, which were microfilmed during the years 1994–2000. The collection is described in a guide compiled by Dyck and archivist Aleksandr S. Tedeev.³

The contents of the collection are described as being 25% from the Tsarist period and 75% from the Soviet period. Of importance in the collection from the Tsarist period is the *Chortitza Volost Administration Fonds* F-34, 1851–1909. However, there are only two files in *fonds* 34. In the file description for *fonds* 34, there is the following statement: “The Archive of the Zaporozhe Region possesses no documents of the Chortitza district administration before 1861, with one exception: a German-language account book for the period January 1, 1851–January 31, 1852.”⁴

A further statement in the file description provides an answer to the question of the missing records. “Other documents of this *fonds* were removed by the German



Patricia Kennedy Grimsted lecturing at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, on April 28, 2016. Dr. Grimsted is speaking about the books confiscated by the Nazis from individuals and institutions during the 1930s and early 1940s and secreted away in storage facilities around the Third Reich. Photo credit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgsBGDYFTjY>

occupation authorities in October 1943 and were transported to Germany. Their whereabouts are unknown.”⁵

Research into the missing Chortitza files led me to an article written by Glenn Penner using material from village reports (*Dorfberichte*) compiled by the Germans during the WWII occupation of Ukraine in 1941–1943. These reports survived the war and were found among some of the “Captured German War Documents” that were confiscated by the U.S. army after the war.⁶

The *Dorfberichte* were compiled under the direction of Karl Stumpp (1896–1982). He was the head of the *Sonderkommando* and a representative of the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories (*Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete, RMBO*) stationed in Dnepropetrovsk. This 80-member special commando unit was formed to conduct ethnological and genealogical studies in the German (*Volksdeutsch*) villages of Ukraine west of the Dnieper River.

Stumpp was a Russian-born German historian whose ancestors were German colonists, who settled in Alexanderhilf near the city of Odessa early in the 19th century. Stumpp left Russia after the

(cont’d on p. 4)

Genealogy and Family History

Early Russian Mennonite Census Lists

by Glenn H. Penner, chemistry professor at the University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario (gpenner@uoguelph.ca)

Population census¹ lists are a cornerstone for genealogical research, as well as research on population dynamics. Since the whereabouts (or fate) of the early church registers for the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies are unknown, census lists have become of vital importance to Mennonite genealogists.

From 1955 on, the lists published by Benjamin H. Unruh² were all we had to work with. After a gap of over 30 years, two lists were found within the microfilm collections of the Odessa and Peter Braun archival microfilm collections.³ One was the 1801 census of the Chortitza colony⁴ and the other was the 1835 official Russian census (revision list) for the Molotschna colony.⁵ The latter includes the 1816 entries for male members of those families enumerated in 1835.

More recently, a large number of whole colony lists have become available from the Dnepropetrovsk Archive through a project that Tim Janzen coordinated with the Germans from Russia Heritage Society in Bismarck, North Dakota. These lists are being translated by Tim Janzen and Richard Thiessen and are being posted on the Mennonite Genealogy website.⁶

The following tables summarize the current situation (October 2016) with respect to these censuses for the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies. As one can see from the tables, we now have a substantial collection of census lists for the period up to and including 1816.

Year (month)	Language	Comments	GM ⁷
1795	German	In BHU ⁸	Yes
1801	German	posted	Yes
1807	German	posted	No
1811	German	posted	No
1814 (May)	German	posted	No
1814 (Oct)	German	posted	No
1815 & 1811 ⁹	Russian	not posted	No
1816 (Apr)	German	not posted	No
1816 (Oct)	German	not posted	Yes

An important aspect of early Mennonite life in Russia was that many young people did not live with their birth families. This is illustrated by the large number

of individuals who were enumerated as servants, maids, or foster children. The many foster children were primarily the result of the death of a parent that left the remaining parent to care for the surviving children. In most cases, the surviving parent quickly remarried; but this often led to a combined or blended family that could be unsustainable. In difficult situations, the (foster) children were taken in by relatives, friends, or childless couples.

Year (month)	Language	Comments	GM
1806	German	posted	No
1808	German	BHU ¹⁰	Yes
1809	German	not posted	No
1810	German	not posted	No
1811	German	not posted, original on CD ¹¹	No
1814	German	posted	No
1816	Russian	not posted, part of 1835 census ¹²	Yes

Besides the challenges of providing for combined families, some families in the colonies were simply too poor to take care of their large families. Again, this often led to children being taken in by other families. At the age of 12, these children could be hired out as farm hands or house maids, which would have been a source of income for the family. In some cases, young men were apprentices.

The surnames of most of these servants, maids, and foster children are not given in the census lists. For example, in the 1811 Chortitza colony census, there were at least 145 out of 2,190 who were in this category. This is a minimum number, since foster children were sometimes mistakenly listed as children. I would say that at least 7% (or one out of every 15 people) in 1811 Chortitza colony were in one of the above categories and, therefore, listed without their correct surnames.

Another aspect of these early years is that many of the children listed under a father's name were actually stepchildren from the wife's earlier marriage(s). The surnames of these children are also not given. I would estimate that, in any one of these census lists, as many as 20% (one fifth!) of all persons found in a census are not identified with their correct surname. Therefore, using a single list has serious limitations.

The use of multiple lists can be

invaluable for tracking down birth surnames. By comparing censuses that were taken only a few years apart, one can connect stepchildren in one list with their true fathers who were still alive at the time of an earlier census. Young servants in one list can often be found with their birth families in an earlier list. Male servants, once married, can be found in later lists as heads of their own households, and then, identified by their true surnames.

A particularly intriguing census is the one for 1815. It was written in Russian and set up like an official Russian revision

list. Like a revision list, it includes a column (for males only) from the previous Russian census (in this case 1811) and gives the years for any

births or deaths occurring in that family between 1811 and 1815. This census also appears to give the immigration year for heads of households who came to Russia in the 1800s. Most of the 7th Russian revision list was conducted in 1816. However, the official notification was issued in June of 1815¹³ and, in some cases, the revision list was conducted in 1815.

It is known that the 1816 Russian revision lists for the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies have been lost. Only a copy for the village of Schoenwiese¹⁴ has survived. A comparison of the 1815 list and the 1816 censuses for Schoenwiese shows that the two are nearly identical, except for the numbering of the families. I am convinced that the 1815 list was some sort of rough draft for the official revision list. If this is so, the loss of the 1816 Russian revision list for the Chortitza colony is not as catastrophic as has been assumed by Mennonite genealogists.

Since there are few records of births, marriages, or deaths from this time period, these census lists become particularly important. A set of closely spaced censuses can narrow down the timing of these events. For example, using the May and October 1814 lists, one can identify at least 43 births, 8 marriages, and 26 deaths that must have occurred in the Chortitza colony during this time period. The movement of individuals and families from one location to another can then be tracked using

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Missing Chortitza Records

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revolution to continue his studies in history and geography at Tübingen University in Germany. In 1922, he earned a doctorate for his study of the history of the German colonies in the Black Sea region, formerly "New Russia."⁷

The *Dorfberichte* revealed disturbing details about the fate of many Mennonite records. The report confirmed that many village records were destroyed. Glenn Penner's 2005 essay provides the following quotation from the *Dorfberichte*.

*No church registers can be found any more. They have all been brought to Zaporozhe where it is said they have all been burned by the Bolsheviks. On May 2, two men went to Zaporozhe to search for the books. Church registers could not be found, but the very old archive of the Chortitza Gebietsamt was found in the city archives, including statistical records for the years 1801–1806. We must and will search more thoroughly and intensively in Zaporozhe to determine what is on hand. In addition, the entire archive must be sorted and organized, which will take much time but would be historically worthwhile, since Chortitza is the oldest German settlement on Ukrainian soil.*⁸

This particular excerpt is of great importance to this article. The Chortitza *Gebietsamt* records, once thought to be lost, were discovered in 1942 in the Zaporozhe city archives. However, the *Dorfberichte* did not have a contents list for the archival materials. It would be years before this list was found. The list would reveal that many of the Chortitza *Gebietsamt* records had survived the Russian revolution and civil war period.

Now the question remains, "What happened to the archival documents after they were found in 1942?"

Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg

In 1940, a Nazi Party organization was established in Paris under the direction of Alfred Rosenberg to regulate cultural products. The *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR) was involved with the confiscation of books, art collections, and other cultural property in Nazi-occupied countries.⁹

In *Trophies of War and Empire*, Grimsted also refers to German

genealogical materials found in Ukrainian archives by the *Sonderkommando*, Karl Stumpp. Her study is of great interest to Mennonite historians, since it provides further information on the type of records and documents related to German colonists that are found in the Ukrainian archives.

From all accounts, Stumpp worked for the RMbO and not directly with the ERR organization. This distinction is important as both organizations were involved in the same type of work but had their own bureaucracy and reporting systems. This became evident when RMbO records were deposited among ERR records that were confiscated by the Soviets after the war. Some of the ERR records found their way to Kyiv and were located in the Central State Archive of Highest Agencies of Power and Administration of Ukraine (TsDAVO).

Grimsted's 2011 research paper provides additional information on the content of the ERR files in TsDAVO. The RMbO records pertaining to Mennonite or *Volksdeutsch* archives were found in two ERR *fonds* in TsDAVO (3676 and 3206).¹⁰

A file description of *fonds* 3676, opis 4, provided by Grimsted, aptly describes how files that are of different provenance were found in this *fonds*. This opis (i.e., finding aid) contains a major group of files from Stumpp and his research unit. These files contain detailed information with maps on German settlements in Ukraine, dating back to the 18th century.

The relevant files in this group were later identified by Mennonite historians. However, a list of the Chortitza *Gebietsamt* records was not located in this *fonds*.

It should be noted that the files in opis 4 were received by TsDAVO from the MVD/NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) in 1960.

However, there was another collection of records described in Grimsted's 2011 research of *fonds* 3206. It is called *Provincial Administration for Libraries, Archives and Museums* (LV ABM).

The (LV ABM) was a cultural agency of the *Reichskommissariat* Ukraine based in Kyiv during WWII. These files are described as the surviving office records of



Dr. Karl Stumpp (r) with David J. Miller (l), pictured at the second annual convention of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR), held in Lincoln, Nebraska, June 1971. Stumpp was the guest speaker that year. They are holding Stumpp's book, *The Individual German-Russian Settlement Areas in Russia*, which Miller translated from German. Photo credit: Adam Giesinger Collection, 2011.36, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

that agency.

They were found by Ukrainian archivists in Troppau, now called Opava (Czech Republic). Also found with these files were evacuated Ukrainian archives. The agency head was Georg Winter, a German archivist. Winter was the director of the archive in Dnepropetrovsk and the author of the 16-page "Catalog" of the Chortitza *Gebietsamt* archive. Included in these files are lists of archival holdings in Ukraine that were prepared for the *Reichsarchiv* in Berlin.¹¹

This is the *fonds* where the original list of contents of the Chortitza *Gebietsamt* archival materials would eventually be found.

The List

When *Trophies of War and Empire* was published in 2001, the ERR records had not yet been digitized. In 2010, 140,000 pages of ERR documents were put online. The project was sponsored by the Claims Conference (Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Inc.)¹² These were the documents that were held by TsDAVO. The Claims Conference arranged for the documents to be digitized and adapted for the Internet.

The online ERR records can be found on the TsDAVO website.¹³ The contents of *fonds* 3206 and 3676 can be viewed from this website in PDF format. *Fonds* 3206 is divided into 37 PDF files. *Fonds* 3676 is divided into 240 files. Some of the individual files contain hundreds of pages. The contents of the files are in the German

language. The website itself is in the Ukrainian language, but can be computer translated to English.

A breakthrough in the ongoing quest for the missing Chortitza records came in 2012. While searching through the ERR records on the website, I found that the Chortitza *Gebietsamt* archive inventory list was contained in *fonds* 3206, opis 5, file 21.

The description of file 21 states, “Documents on the activities of the Dnipropetrovsk regional party archive in the occupation period (reports, information, lists, maps, chart, and orders).”¹⁴

A report in *fonds* 3206, opis 5, file 21, revealed that in the spring of 1942, *Rayonchef* (District mayor) Johann Epp had “appropriated” the files of the former Chortitza *Gebietsamt* and moved them from the Zaporozhe state archive to the Chortitza administrative offices.¹⁵

A report on the contents of the archive was written by Georg Winter on June 14, 1942. He described the archive and its contents as being records of the *Verwaltung des Gebietsamts Chortitza* from 1792–1915. The documents were separated into two parts: Part 1, *fonds* 33, 1792–1874 and Part 2, *fonds* 34, 1874–1915.

Part 1 was in the German language and Part 2 mostly in the Russian language. The quantity of documents in Part 1 was described as being divided into 30 large bundles. The files were found to be in disarray with many loose papers mixed in with existing files and some non-recorded files. The archive was subsequently organized and documented by archival staff members between June 10 and June 13, 1942. Of importance in the report was the discovery of empty folders, indicating that there were missing documents from the archive.

The report on Part 1 states it contained approximately 215 files from the years 1792–1874. Files 1–25 are described as journals and registers from the years 1801–1830. Files 56–110 are listed as records on the economic condition of the colonies from the years 1801–1832. There was also a list of general records pertaining to the colonies in files 111–215. As stated before, within each list or category, there were missing documents.

The report on Part 2 states that it contained 60 files from 1874–1915. There were also missing documents in Part 2.

An example of a file in this collection is a file from 1879–1909 listing the number of colonists in 5 colonies. There is also a file from 1880 containing the registration book of Mennonite migrations and immigrations.

A review of this list and the files located in the Zaporozhe archives in the 1990s by Harvey Dyck revealed that the two files from *fonds* 34 were not in the 1942 list. Of further note is that the Tsarist period documents located by Dyck were in the Zaporozhe archives in 1942. This was confirmed by a further search of *fonds* 3206, opis 5, file 21.

This brings us to the question, “Were the Tsarist Period documents located by Dyck taken from the archive in 1942 and later returned or were they never evacuated?” Further research will have to be conducted for the answer to this question.

Transportation West

On October 3, 1943, the Chortitza *Gebietsamt* archive was taken from the district office and placed on a train bound for German-occupied Poland. Chortitza district mayor Johann Epp was on that train along with most of the residents of the Chortitza village. Their destination was the town of Kattowitz and surrounding villages. Mayor Johann Epp ended up in the village of Hindenburg.¹⁶

According to several memos from September–October 1943 in *fonds* 3206, there were orders from the administration staff that the Chortitza archival materials were to be transported to Kamenez-Podolsk, because the German administration was to be evacuated from Kyiv to Kamenez-Podolsk in late 1943.

However, the Chortitza archive was not transported to Kamenez-Podolsk; instead, it stayed with Johann Epp in Hindenburg. On Monday, December, 20, 1943, Benjamin H. Unruh visited Johann Epp and examined some of the Chortitza files.¹⁷

B.H. Unruh (1881–1959) was a Russian Mennonite teacher who was born in Russia and later settled in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 1920. During the time of the visit, B.H. Unruh was working on a book with Franz Harder of Danzig that was eventually published in 1955, *Die niederlandisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (= Background of the Dutch and Low German Mennonite



Benjamin H. Unruh ca. 1921. Photo credit: Harold Jantz Collection NP 007-03-13 CMBS.

migrations in the 16th, 18th and 19th centuries).

In the details of the report that B.H. Unruh wrote in 1944, it appears that some of the Chortitza archival documents were used for this book. For example, the book gives detailed lists of Mennonite settlers in the first Chortitza villages in the years 1795–1808.¹⁸ What happened to these documents after they were used for the book is unknown. There is some speculation that the Chortitza documents used in the book made their way to a German archive, but that cannot be verified at this time.

According to B.H. Unruh’s 1944 report, the bulk of the Chortitza archival files were destined for Georg Leibbrandt’s *Publikationsstelle Ost*, affiliated with the *Ostministerium* in Berlin.

The Germans transported many of the looted archives from the eastern occupied countries to Kattowitz, Ratibor, and surrounding villages. Troppau (Czech Opava) was another destination for looted archives, as it was a major Nazi center for archival records that were shipped from the USSR.¹⁹ There are no reports to date indicating whether the Chortitza archive ever arrived at any of these destinations.

B.H. Unruh’s own personal archive, which included valuable documents on Mennonite history, was packed up in late December 1944 and shipped by rail to Hildburghausen in Thuringa. Unruh and his family also left Karlsruhe and didn’t return until 1946. His archive was never found after the war. Chortitza

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Why a Mennonite Church archive? Part Two

by Korey Dyck

In our June 2016 issue, we began a two-part column on the significance of operating a Mennonite Church archive. In part one, the column described what the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) archive is, what the archive staff does, and

why archives are important. In part two, we explore the value of a church archive.

In general, the objective of a church archive is to document the common experience of a faith group whose everyday activities flow from their identity as a Christ-centred community. An archive collects the records of these activities, be they of individuals, families, congregations, conferences, schools, or societies, all for the purpose of curating examples useful for the ongoing life of the church. These historical examples can be utilized in many ways by the church—locally, nationally, and globally. Various mass communication platforms can use archival materials like unique documents, photos, and videos to help generate both

the ongoing memory of past mission and ministry initiatives, and the foundation for new iterations of the same for a new generation.

By collecting, preserving, and sharing stories of Christian faith, a church archive becomes an important tool in pastoral, educational, and ministry settings. Archival materials document both the direction taken by churches of the founding generation, while at the same time offering necessary examples for next-generation churches.

As a memory institution, an archive is a storehouse of culture, ready for researchers and storytellers to use in the service of the church's mission. Said differently: an archive is like the computer hard drive of a church, gathering and organizing data that is useful for addressing current and future questions about the church's activities, development, and prospects.

For the Mennonite Church in Canada, the MHC archive is privileged to function as the church's "hard drive," storing and making accessible that which our spiritual ancestors produced, concerning social, cultural, and environmental issues of their time. What type of witness did they have? What can we learn from them? How can those learnings be leveraged for use today with our current challenges?

The value of the MHC archive can be judged by how well it transmits the church's values, and how well it presents the themes of the church's ongoing witness in new and different contexts. Currently, the MHC archive curates church, school, and personal records that represent the diversity of Mennonite engagement with the world. MHC helps to bring together these pieces of history for the purpose of enabling Mennonite faith communities to construct ongoing examples of ordinary and extraordinary Christian witness in our shared community life.

The new MHC documentary, *The Last Objectors*, tells the story of WWII conscientious objectors and shows the value of a church archive. We interviewed 17 conscientious objectors on film, collected their letters and photos, and professionally produced a documentary film that churches are asking to see. There is no greater satisfaction for a church archive than to be about the business of collecting and sharing such stories for the benefit of the church now and the church to come.



The largest stockpile of original documents from the Mennonite community in Russia, known to exist in Canada, was donated to the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) and marked by a reception hosted by MHC director Korey Dyck on November 2, 2016. Pictured above are the 22 boxes of documents created by the Chortitzer *Waisenamt* (Orphans' Bureau), dating from 1812 to the latter part of the 20th century. Included in the collection are: inheritance documents, financial ledgers, loan records, receipt books, and correspondence. The D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation provided funds to purchase the 22 archival-quality banker boxes and the many acid-free folders needed to house the rare materials.

In spring 2015, after having been involved with an earlier sorting, Rev. Corny Martens urged Christian (formerly Chortitzer) Mennonite Church (CMC) bishop David Reimer to initiate a formal inventory of the *Waisenamt*. Bishop Reimer called together a group of church and community historians—Peter K. Reimer, Bruce Wiebe, Jacob Doerksen, Ernie Braun, and ministers Corny Martens and Frank Doerksen—to help organize the materials, construct an inventory list of the contents, and digitize large portions of the collection, under the supervision of MHC archivist Conrad Stoesz.

Pictured are the signatories to the document transfer agreement (left to right): CMC bishop David Reimer, CMC historian Jacob Doerksen, MHC director Korey Dyck, and Mennonite Church Canada executive director Willard Metzger.

Unique among Mennonite migrations, the Bergthal Colony of Mennonites came to Manitoba from South Russia as a community in a controlled and planned manner in 1874–1876, allowing them to bring along vital community documents such as these. People interested in economics, migration, and family or community history will now have access to these important records at MHC. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

McIvor Ave. MB Church Beginnings

by Allan Labun, Harry Olfert, and Clara Toews

North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren (NKMB) church in Winnipeg at 217 Kingsford Ave. had two problems in 1974: the church building was too small to accommodate the weekly attendance and many people in the congregation needed an all-English service.

At the time, the worship services in NKMB were an hour and a half: the first hour was in English, followed by half an hour in German. Typically, there would be a large exodus when the German service was about to start by people who did not understand German or who felt that one sermon was enough for one Sunday. The commotion was covered by providing what came to be known as the "organ break," which functioned as a transition into the German half hour of songs and sermon.

It was decided that NKMB would build a new church. Church member and businessman Henry Redekopp had land on McIvor Ave., which he donated to the project. A building committee was struck. Another member, architect Helmut Peters, was commissioned to draw up a design. The building would cost \$500,000 and construction would begin as soon as \$200,000 was raised in cash and pledges.

The identity and number of people who would comprise the new congregation remained unknown and the construction was undertaken by the still-undivided NKMB church. Whichever congregation was smaller, the all-English or the bilingual, would become the congregation of the new church building, thus solving the dual problem of overcrowding and the unpopular exodus during the organ break. The projected completion date was the end of September, 1976.

Pastor William Neufeld and Assistant Pastor Allan Labun approached the church council with the observation that there would not be one new church, but two, and that consequently they would both be out of a job. The council agreed and proposed to the church that Pastor Neufeld be the pastor of the remaining members of a bilingual NKMB church and that Pastor Labun be appointed to the new all-English church. The proposal was accepted.

In July, letters were sent out to all 750

members, stating that a new all-English church with Allan Labun as pastor was being established. Any members of NKMB who wished to become part of the new church should sign and return a tear-off slip at the bottom of the letter. All others need not reply and would remain as members of NKMB by default. The specific church building in which each one would meet would depend on numbers. The cutoff date for a reply was the end of August, 1976. By the end of August, responses had been received from 248 members, almost exactly one-third of the church membership. This group, being the smaller, would move to the new building.

Allan Labun promptly announced a membership meeting of the new church two weeks into September, to be held in the basement of NKMB church. The new church had a building, 248 members, and a pastor, but nothing else: no name, no council, no Sunday School, not even pews or any other seats to sit on. People walked into the meeting and eagerly picked up the membership lists, looking around to see for the first time who they would be worshipping with. Those were exciting and heady days for us. The first item on the agenda was to elect a recording secretary (Frank Penner), then we went on to join the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, elect a moderator (Harry Olfert), a council, adopt a constitution (that of NKMB, for the time being), a Sunday School



Superintendent (Abe Reimer, who by the end of the evening had already recruited half his Sunday School teachers). We began talking about a name, a matter that was not settled until another meeting the following week.

The church dedication was carried out on October 10 by NKMB, the mother church, in the new building. About 800 people squeezed in for the event, sitting on borrowed stacking chairs. Our first independent service was held on October 17, 1976.

The final cost of the new building came in at \$525,000 and at the time of the dedication there was still an outstanding debt of \$122,000. This is quite amazing considering that no one knew who would occupy this new building until two months prior to dedication.

The question of the remaining \$122,000 was addressed by a joint committee of the two churches. The committee proposal was that NK accept \$35,000 and McIvor Ave. would accept the remaining debt of \$97,000. The proposal was voted on and accepted by each church.



The McIvor Ave. MB Church at the time of its dedication in October 1976. The view is from McIvor Ave. The street address is 200 McIvor Ave. Photo credit: CMBS NP149-01-4726.

Family books and queries

by Conrad Stoesz and Jon Isaak

George B. Elias, *The Peter F. Klassen Heritage, 1885–1965* (2016), 136 pp. Contact George at gbe@mymts.net.

This family history book follows the descendants of Peter Klassen, who had children with three successive wives: Anna Krahn (1886–1910), Katarina Krahn (1888–1919), and Agatha Elias (1885–1937). Peter Klassen's parents came to Canada in 1875 and pioneered on the West Reserve, part of the *Reinlaender Gemeinde*. The book features family synopses, vital statistics, and high-quality colour photos. The extensive appendices provide important genealogical data for related branches of the family, starting with earlier generations. There are also extra charts, photos, and document reproductions.

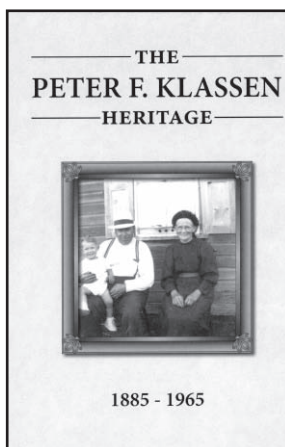


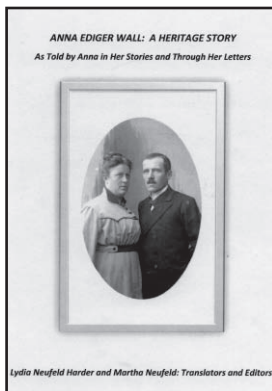
Photo Query: George Elias is asking for help to identify the people in these two photos (ca. 1890s). The photo of the couple (above) was taken by George Viertel in Gretna, Manitoba. The photo of the family (left) was taken by T.C. Birnie & Co. on Steven St. in Morden, Manitoba. They may be Penner or Krahn families. If you can confirm or clarify, please contact George at gbe@mymts.net.

Lydia Neufeld Harder and Martha Neufeld, *Anna Ediger Wall: A Heritage Story as told by Anna in her stories and through her Letters* (2015), 101 pp. Contact Lydia Harder, 8 Mystic Ave., Scarborough, ON M1L 4G7.

This book narrates the life of Anna Wall (1879–1949), based on her letters to family and friends. It follows a path through marriage, life in the difficult Stalinist era, flight to Germany, immigration to Paraguay and then to Canada. Anna Wall was married to Franz Wall (1882–193?) and they adopted two children from Siberia, Jakob and Waldemar. Franz and Anna took over responsibility for operating the Muntau hospital that Franz's father established.



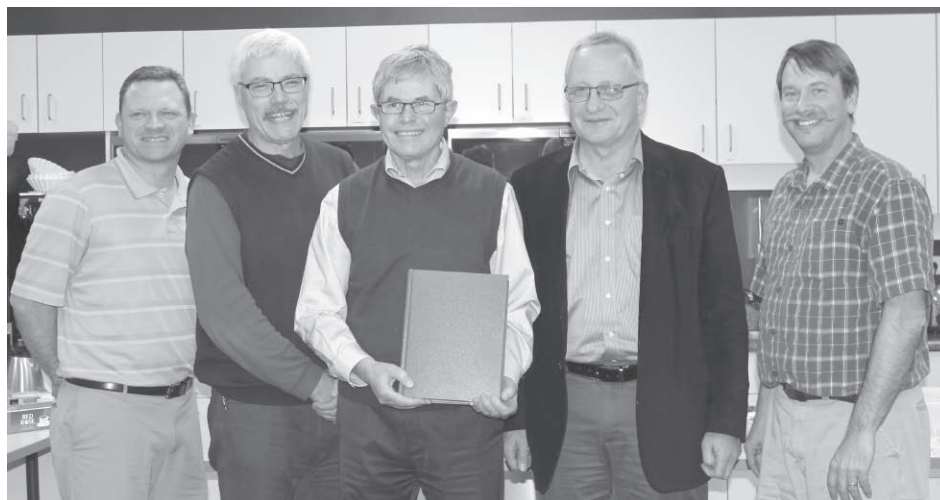
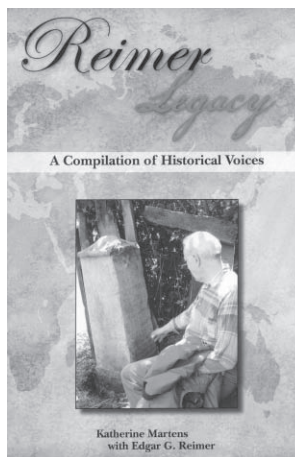
Here is where the well-known Dr. Tavonius worked. Franz was exiled and eventually killed. With great resilience, Anna managed to make her way to Germany, Paraguay, and finally Canada. Her biographical materials and correspondence provide an intimate glimpse into a remarkable life.



Katherine Martens and Edgar G. Reimer, eds., *Reimer Legacy: A Compilation of Historical Voices* (2015), 142 pp. Contact Katherine at gertmart@mymts.net.

Katherine Martens long recognized the richness of the ancestral stories in her husband's family. Her fascination with that personal history, increasing with each dramatic story that Edgar Reimer sent her, resulted in this compilation. It traces five generations of descendants of Wilhelmine Strauss (1818–1889) and Jakob D.

Reimer (1817–1891). The couple came from Gnadenfeld, South Russia, where the Mennonite Brethren church had its beginnings. They migrated with a group of devout followers, mostly Reimer families, to found a new village they named Wiesenfeld in 1880. The account of this spiritual journey and the ensuing challenges is followed by a series of stories about two of Jacob and Wilhelmine's twelve children, Maria and Cornelius, and their descendants, who lived through tumultuous times of war, revolution, imprisonment, and migration to Canada, Paraguay, and Brazil. These accounts provide insights into not only a family history but also the four countries that were part of the Reimer family odyssey.



Bert Friesen (centre) was recognized by the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) and the Centre for MB Studies (CMBS) on November 8, 2016, for the publication of the *Mennonitische Rundschau (MR)* Index, vol. 4 (1910–1919). Following an appreciation dinner for the nine volunteers who donate their time to work at CMBS, Friesen told interesting stories about the articles that appeared during that decade in the *MR* newspaper. Later, he posed for a photo holding a copy of the 1,394-page Index, which was then given to the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation in gratitude for the six years of grant funding that made the indexing project possible. Vol. 4 accompanies vols. 1–3, 5, and 6. Friesen has been the driving force behind the indexing project that saw the first volume published in 1990. He is responsible for vols. 1–4. One of the longest-running German-language Mennonite publications in North America (1878–2007), the *MR* functions as a primary source for congregational news, reporting on political and cultural events, and death notices on both sides of the Atlantic during those years. Friesen's index makes this material, all printed in Gothic script, much more accessible (see news release, *MH* [June 2016]: 9). Standing (left to right): Korey Dyck, MHC director; Jon Isaak, CMBS director; Bert Friesen; Hans Werner, director of the Plett Foundation; and Conrad Stoesz, archivist at MHC and CMBS. Photo credit: Michelle Stoesz.

New Mennonite Monument

by Anne Konrad, Toronto, acknowledging Catherine Danilina as a source for this article

Mennonites interested in their history in Tsarist Russia have a new historic marker. On 16 September 2016, on the initiative of local Ukrainian historians and village officials, a bust of the influential Mennonite reformer Johann Cornies was unveiled at Sosnovka, the site of the Novoberdyansk Forest, Melitopol district, Zaporozhye region.

The unveiling event, held on a local holiday honouring foresters, was proclaimed Johann Cornies Day. Several hundred local residents, village and state officials, and foreign guests watched as the new bust was unveiled by historian emeritus professor Harvey Dyck from Toronto and Rita and Vladimir Dick, descendants of Johann Cornies from Germany.

Novofilippovsky village council chair Viktor Fedorchenko and Professor Nickolai Krylov of Melitopol were driving forces behind the event.

An international conference on "Mennonites and their neighbours 1804–2004" marking the 200th anniversary of Mennonites in Ukraine and Russia was the catalyst. While in Ukraine to prepare that event in 2004, Professor Dyck had suggested to forestry officials that it would be appropriate to recognize Johann Cornies' role in the establishment of forests on the steppes of Ukraine. Twelve years later, now in a climate where Ukrainians were reclaiming their history, ridding the country of Soviet symbols and names, the time was right. Ukrainians wished "to remember our history and respect our traditions," and this included recognizing Johann Cornies for his role in planting forests in southern Ukraine.

A tribute to Johann Cornies by Professor John Staples of New York State University also recognized Ukrainians for their forestry contributions.

As there were no photos and only one drawing of Johann Cornies (1789–1848) as a young man, sculptor Vladimir Parshin needed talent and imagination to create a bust. The final design was made in agreement with the Cornies' descendants.

The monument was funded locally and with contributions from funds of

of the *Vereinigung Deutscher Mennoniten* on January 7, 1944 (Unruh Nachlass, folder 21, Mennonite Forschungstelle, Bolanden-Weirhof, Germany).

18. B.H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: B.H. Unruh, 1955), 257–277.

19. *Trophies of War and Empire*, 201.

20. P. Letkemann, email correspondence, 2016.

Early Mennonite Census Lists

(cont'd from p. 3)

these census lists. One can follow as an older household head disappears from a particular property number and is replaced by another, younger, family.

It did not take even a single generation for there to be a landless problem in the Russian Mennonite colonies. These census lists help tremendously in keeping track of the many young landless families as they moved from village to village, looking for better opportunities and seeking the ultimate economic goal—a full *Wirtschaft*!

I look forward to these lists appearing on the Mennonite Genealogy website. After that, the information in these lists must be incorporated into the GRANDMA database. This will need to be done with great care and will require much time and effort, but will certainly be worth it.

Endnotes

1. For the purposes of this article, the term “census” refers to a list that includes the names of all individuals in each family as well as their ages.

2. Benjamin H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe, 1955).

3. The Odessa Archive microfilm collection is found at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg, Manitoba, among other locations. The Peter Braun Archive microfilm collection is found at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, among other locations.

4. http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza_Mennonite_Settlement_Census_September_1801.pdf

5. <http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/1835cens.htm> and http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Molotschna_Census_Corrections.pdf

6. <http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/>

7. Indicates if the census has been incorporated into the GRANDMA database.

8. B.H. Unruh, 237–244.

9. This census has a column for the previous official Russian census of 1811 in addition to years for any births and deaths that occurred between 1811 and 1815.

10. B.H. Unruh, 304–330.

11. The Russian Mennonite Source Materials CD-ROM is available from the California Mennonite Historical Society: <http://calmenno.org/sale.htm>

12. This census only includes those family units from 1816 who were still together in 1835.

13. http://www.bfcollection.net/fast/articles/rus_census.pdf

14. <http://chort.square7.ch/Pis/Sw1816.pdf>

Book Reviews

Samuel J. Steiner, *In Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario* (Harrisonburg, Virginia; Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 2015), 877 pp.

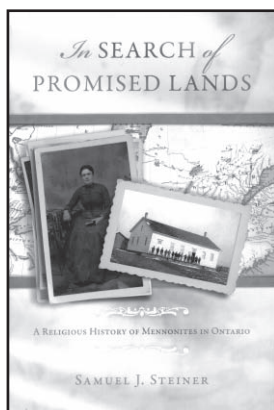
Reviewed by James Neufeld, Winnipeg

Sam Steiner's book, *In Search of Promised Lands*, brings a wide-ranging survey together with detailed documentation (maps, tables, photographs, endnotes, bibliography, and index) to describe and assess the ways that Mennonites and Amish have made Ontario their home.

The first settlements of Swiss German Mennonites from Pennsylvania came in the aftermath of the American Revolution and during the Napoleonic wars, 1790s to 1820s. Then in the 1920s, and again in the 1940s, Dutch German Mennonites came to Ontario from Soviet Russia following the First World War, Russian Revolution, civil war, famine, and the Second World War. The refrain was always the same; it was a search for a better life and the freedom to practice their Christian faith in peace, a search for promised lands.

Steiner's book gives an insightful portrayal of the many sub-groups of Mennonites and how their responses to contemporary challenges, including various theological movements, caused further divisions. These stories of migration, resistance, assimilation, and nonconformity among Ontario Mennonites reflect the “push and pull” of Mennonite inclination toward separation from the world, often resulting in Mennonite churches also separating from each other.

An archivist by profession, having served for over thirty years at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College on the campus of the University of Waterloo, Steiner demonstrates his skill at bringing organizational order to a vast, and often confusing, array of



Mennonite sub-groups. In his taxonomy, he divides Ontario Mennonites into four categories: 1) Assimilated Mennonites, 2) Separatist Conservatives, 3) Evangelical Conservatives, and 4) Old Orders. In each case, he identifies the group's characteristic markers and reflects on their future prospects.

The titles of the sixteen chapters illustrate the scope of Steiner's encyclopedic treatment and give the reader of this review an idea of the treasures to be found. 1) European Mennonites and Amish Venture to North America, 1680s–1790s; 2) Settling on the Canadian Frontier, 1780s–1830s; 3) Religious Renewal Divides Canada West's Mennonites, 1830s–1870s; 4) Assurance of Salvation versus Faithful Living: Diverse Theological Lands, 1870s–1890s; 5) New Frontiers in Missions and Service, 1890s–1910s; 6) World War I Unites, Theology and Nonconformity Divide, 1910s–1920s; 7) Mennonites from the Soviet Union Enrich Ontario Mennonite Culture, 1920s–1930s; 8) Maintaining Separation from the World, 1920s–1930s; 9) Ontario Mennonites in Wartime, 1939–1950; 10) Reshaping and Preserving the Mennonite Promised Lands, 1945–1960s; 11) Faithfulness as Assimilation, Faithfulness as Nonconformity, 1950–1970; 12) Identity Preservation through Institutions, 1945–1970; 13) New Participants in the Promised Lands, 1950s–1990s; 14) Nonconformity Leads to Growth, 1970 into the Twenty-First Century; 15) Assimilated Mennonites Join the Mainstream, 1970 into the Twenty-First Century; and 16) Looking Back, Looking Forward.

Growing up in Waterloo, attending George Street Mennonite as it was called then, and going to Silver Lake Camp and summer vacation Bible School at Erb Street Mennonite gave me personal experience with the spectrum of Mennonites that Steiner describes. I found his four-fold analysis to be a helpful categorization, one that helps me make sense of my own experience growing up Mennonite in Ontario. Returning to the area after graduate school and reconnecting with my Mennonite faith tradition, I recall many wide-ranging conversations at Conrad Grebel College. We had thoughtful and intense discussions about the future of Mennonite churches in Ontario at the end of the European migration era at the close of the 20th century.

I am especially appreciative of Steiner's discussion of the different ways that Ontario Mennonites have navigated symbols of separation. For some, plain clothing was an issue of Christian discipleship, non-conformity with the world. Since red coats had a military connection from the 19th century, red became an unacceptable colour for clothing. But then the Salvation Army's use of military-style clothing, without lapels, as the uniform for mission and evangelism may well have influenced the plain coats worn by some of these same Mennonites, intent as they also were to give faithful testimony to the mission of God. Thus, it seems that Christian discipleship could at times also be demonstrated by assimilation. Steiner's assessment of the different ways that non-conformity and assimilation were chosen by Ontario Mennonites is particularly insightful and clarifying.

While some may be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of detail in the 877-page volume, the comprehensive index should make it possible for most to navigate to those sections of particular interest.

Congratulations, Sam Steiner, on the completion of this pioneering effort to describe the Mennonite and Amish landscape of the province where I grew up. It will certainly be for many years the "go to" resource for understanding this religiously diverse and fascinating segment of the Christian church.

Royden Loewen, *Horse-and-Buggy Genius: Listening to Mennonites Contest the Modern World* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 243 pp.

Reviewed by John J. Friesen, professor emeritus, Canadian Mennonite University

Between the years 2009 and 2012, Royden Loewen together with seven researchers interviewed horse-and-buggy women and men in Canada and in various countries in Latin America. The study includes both the 8,000 Old Order Mennonites who are part of the Swiss Mennonite tradition, and the 100,000 Old Colony Mennonites who are part of the Dutch Russian Mennonite history.

As Loewen states in his Preface to the book, the focus of this oral history project was "to record what members of these communities remembered about changes that they had made to preserve their communities within the modern world."

Questions were designed to be open-ended, and to allow respondents to tell stories. The respondents thus told stories that were important to them; they self-selected. The text captures these stories in their own words, and the reader gets the sense of hearing from the respondents directly.

The book consists of seven chapters; two deal with Old Order Mennonites in Ontario, and five focus on the much larger number of Old Colony Mennonites in four different countries in Latin America: Mexico, Belize, Bolivia, and Paraguay. The topics covered in the various chapters include changelessness, a new Orthodoxy, vows of simplicity, community survival, family, boundaries, race, and moral economy. The book concludes with a chapter on the "Othering" of English North America. To the horse-and-buggy people, the two English-language North American countries—the United States of America and Canada—embody the antithesis of a simple, community-based life by holding up the ideals of progress, efficiency, and modernity. These two English countries also serve both as a warning to those within the Old Colony world about the dangers of the modern world, and as a welcome escape for some who are crushed by poverty or in some way marginalized by their communities.

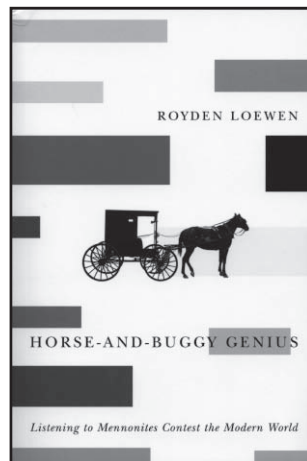
So, what is the "genius" of these horse-and-buggy people? How are they able to create and recreate successful communities in very inhospitable areas of the world? How have they been able to create economies that defy the capitalist pressures of the societies around them to become ever bigger? How have they been able to instill in their people the values of simplicity, humility, and self-sufficiency, when societies around them emphasize consumerism and modernity? How have they been able to pass on their faith and lifestyle values to a large percentage of their young people from generation to

generation?

Loewen suggests some answers. The horse-and-buggy people have an integrated view of life. They do not separate or compartmentalize their life into religious, economic, and cultural spheres. How they farm, go to church, create communities, learn the catechism, and decide the style of clothes they wear are all woven together into an integrated whole. They are people who do not debate with outsiders, nor try to show they are better than others, nor try to convince others to join them. They communicate who they are by being generous, hospitable, humble, and close to nature. When they are asked to tell stories of their lives, instead of talking about personal progress and achievement, they are more likely to tell stories of where their community did not support the poor or the widowed in times of need. They are concerned about the quality of the community, rather than the achievements of the individual.

And about change and changelessness? The people interviewed told many stories of never ending adaptations and changes they needed to make to maintain their old ways of community, simplicity, fairness, and separation from modernity.

This is a fascinating, informative, enjoyable, and insightful book about the everyday life of horse-and-buggy people in Canada and Latin America.



Mennonite History Advocate Passes. On November 21, 2016, Dr. Helmut T. Huebert, orthopedic surgeon, died of a massive stroke in Winnipeg. With mapmaker William Schroeder (1933–2013), Huebert edited, annotated, and published the extremely successful *Mennonite Historical Atlas* (1990, rev. 1996). Huebert published ten books and atlases related to Mennonite history and gave leadership to several Mennonite Brethren organizations. Born on February 23, 1935, he was 81 years old. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.