

Mennonite Historian

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



A 1926 photo of the Gerhard G. and Margareta (Eitzen) Dyck's seven children with their spouses and children in Russia. At the far left stands Hans (a.k.a. John G.) Dyck (1902–1978) with his wife Helena (Wiebe) Dyck (1902–1997) seated in front of him, holding infant son Peter Dyck (1925–1929). Helena Dyck is the daughter of Anganetha (Klassen) Wiebe (1873–1947) and the recipient of many letters from Anganetha, describing her life in the Soviet Union after Helena and Hans managed to immigrate to Canada in 1930. See story on page 2. Photo credit for all five images associated with this story: Mennonite Heritage Archives, Winnipeg.

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Be thankful that you are gone from here

by Dan Dyck, Winnipeg

Imix eggs, milk, and flour for my pancakes while bacon sizzles on the stove. The aroma is doubly appetizing thanks to Anganetha (Klassen) Wiebe. I've been reading her tragic story of survival in Russia, told in a series of letters between 1930 and 1946, now preserved at the Mennonite Heritage Archives. The letters were translated from German to English in 1994 by her granddaughter, Ruth (Dyck) Wood.

At times her stoic pragmatism belies the unspeakable suffering and loss of surviving 17 years of civil and political upheaval in Russia. Food shortages are plentiful, and sources secretive. "Leise and Peter are still able to get flour. Where they buy it must not be told. I am not even allowed to know it," she writes to her daughter Helena and husband Hans Dyck on March 24, 1931. Hans and Lena had to flee the prospect of Hans's death in a prison or labour camp. They have resettled in Canada. Anganetha's son Peter and his wife, Liese (Loewen), along with another daughter and son, both married, have remained on the family farm on the Chortitza Colony of South Russia.

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Editors: Jon Isaak (CMBS)
Conrad Stoesz (MHA)

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

1310 Taylor Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3M 3Z6
204.669.6575
jon.isaak@mbchurches.ca
or
500 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2
204.487.3300 ext. 345
cstoesz@cmu.ca

www.mennonitehistorian.ca

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The collection of Wiebe's letters—80 pages—recently arrived at the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg. Written between 1930 and 1946, the letters are mostly addressed to Helena and Hans. Anganetha had already lost her husband Peter, presumably in the murderous, looting raids of anarchists like Nestor Machno, leader of the Black Army, during the earlier civil war. Peter Wiebe died in 1919. One source indicates that 245 Mennonites in 19 settlements in the Chortitza district were murdered that same year.¹

There is much to read between the lines. Encoded phrases make frequent references to the disappearances of the men in the family over the years: "Dear Lena, I am wondering if the thought goes through your mind that you should not have left. But when you think that, it may well be that Hans would have had to return to the place he was before and gradually his health would have been destroyed and he would die...at least now you can

be together." Here we learn that Hans has already experienced the "place he was before"—a prison or labour camp. Over the span of the letters, we read that all the adult men in the family are taken away and never heard from again.

The ingredients for the breakfast I enjoy in my comfortable home have come to me almost effortlessly. Not so for Anganetha Wiebe and her family in Russia. Conditions deteriorate as a perfect storm of Josef Stalin's fascist regime, droughts, fires, famine, and culture clashes undermine every effort to survive.

As private farms are collectivized, families are forced to partition homes and take in tenants—rent free. The family receives only a small portion of fruits and vegetables harvested from what was once their land, after the deduction from thefts. Anganetha describes how she rises early in the morning "while it is still dark" to guard the gardens against thieves.

(cont'd on p. 4)

Genealogy and Family History

A Simple Explanation of Genealogical DNA Results: Autosomal DNA

by Glenn H. Penner <gpenner@uoguelph.ca>

Autosomal DNA is the DNA tested by Ancestry.com, 23andMe, and FTDNA (Family Finder);¹ it is the test advertised on TV. It looks at the DNA that we inherit from both parents: 1/2 from each parent, therefore 1/4 from each grandparent, etc. This test can be done by men and women. We do not inherit one big chunk or string of DNA from each parent. The DNA gets mixed up and we inherit many small segments. We also share autosomal DNA with our relatives: 50% (1/2) with a sibling, 12.5 (1/8) with a 1st cousin, 3.1% (1/32) with a 2nd cousin, and 0.8% (1/128) with a 3rd cousin. The genealogical DNA companies use the length and number of these identical segments to predict the relationship between genetic relatives.

The question I most frequently get with respect to these DNA tests is why someone with “100% Mennonite” ancestry could get a DNA report telling them that they are 11% British and 20% Scandinavian (these are my results from 23andMe). One must keep in mind that the “Mennonite” DNA a person inherits comes mostly from the hundreds of distant ancestors who have lived in Europe over the last 10,000 years. Not only did the various peoples of Europe move around tremendously during that time, but entire new populations moved into Europe from the east. Mennonites are descended from this mix of populations. The bottom line here is that for someone of “100% Mennonite” ancestry, these breakdowns are more-or-less genealogically meaningless!

Contrary to commercial claims, DNA analysis will *not* tell you where your ancestors lived 500 or even 5,000 years ago. Nor will this type of DNA test tell you anything about your surname ancestors. I am a Penner, but my autosomal DNA results tell me nothing about my Penner ancestry. Why? Most of the people of northern continental Europe did not take permanent family names until the 1400s or later. If I assume that the first person to take the Penner name lived about 500

years ago (about 15 generations back), it means that I would theoretically inherit a tiny 1/32,000 (0.003%) of my autosomal DNA from this person. But since I may be descended from this person in multiple ways—let’s say that I inherit a generous one thousandth (1/1,000 or 0.1%) of my autosomal DNA from him—this is such a small percentage that an autosomal DNA test is highly unlikely to tell me anything about my early Penner ancestry.

This also brings up the question of Jewish or Gypsy ancestry. If I had a dollar for every person of Mennonite descent who told me about a “Jewish great-great-grandmother,” I would be a rich man. If your great-great-grandparent was Jewish, you should inherit about 6% of your autosomal DNA from him or her. However, the Mennonite DNA Project (see below) has yet to find a single person of “100% Mennonite” ancestry who has more than 3% Jewish ancestry, according to the ancestry reports of the various DNA testing companies. The people who show any detectable segments of Jewish DNA (1 to 3%) are descended from a man named Joseph Nowitzky (1776–1844), who married a Mennonite woman and lived in the Chortitza colony in Russia. It seems likely that Nowitzky was originally Jewish.

What segments of autosomal DNA you inherit from each parent is determined by a random process. There are two results of this randomness that have important consequences from a genetic genealogical point of view. First, there is the possibility that some of your relatives, including your siblings, may not inherit the same segments of autosomal DNA. This has occasionally led to some confusion. Second, very distant relatives may inherit the same segments of DNA from an early common ancestor, giving the impression that they are more closely related to you than they really are. This explains why you may have many matches with “3rd cousins,” who are really much more distantly related, and may not have any Mennonite ancestry at all! In other words, the connection between you and that person predates Mennonites as a people.

Ideally, the Mennonite DNA Project would like to be able to track these segments and figure out which distant

ancestor each segment came from. There are, however, four problems to overcome. First, we need many thousands of people with Mennonite ancestry to participate in the Mennonite DNA Project. Anyone who has done this kind of test, even if they are only 1/16 “Mennonite,” should consider joining the Project. At present, we have autosomal DNA results for about 450 people. We need at least 10 times that many in the Project!

The second problem is that of intermarriage through the dozen-plus generations of Mennonite history. This is not a gene pool problem in general, as is the case with the Hutterites. The problem is that, during lengthy periods in Mennonite history, many groups of Mennonites often lived in isolated communities. This isolation was both physical (geographic) and religious. People tended to marry their neighbours and/or people from the same church group. For example, four of my great-grandfather’s siblings married four Wiens siblings (who lived nearby and were also Sommerfelder Mennonites); so, as a result, I have many double 3rd cousins. This sort of thing makes analysis of autosomal DNA extremely complicated.

The third problem is the enormous amount of data generated by these DNA results. In order to sort out the results of hundreds or thousands of people and identify which segments of DNA came from which ancestor, we need powerful and specialized computer software, which has yet to be produced for the public.

The fourth problem is that we also need reliable genealogical information going back many generations.

In the December issue, I will explain Y-DNA and mtDNA.

Dr. Glenn Penner is the administrator of the Mennonite DNA Project (www.mennonitedna.com). The autosomal part of the Mennonite DNA Project is coordinated by Dr. Tim Janzen of Portland, Oregon. If you have done, or are interested in doing, a DNA test and would like to participate in the Mennonite DNA Project, please contact the author.

Endnotes

1. The following companies provide autosomal DNA testing: FTDNA: <https://www.familytreedna.com/> (this is the “FamilyFinder” test); 23andMe: <https://www.23andme.com/en-ca/>; and Ancestry: <https://www.ancestry.ca/dna/>.

Be thankful you are gone

(cont'd from p. 2)

In early August 1930, a tenant sets the barn on fire—Anganetha speculates his careless smoking is to blame. The house is destroyed too, and the family is forced to live in the cellar over the winter. Ration coupons determine inadequate quantities of staples like flour and sugar each person receives—but often these items are not available at all.

My coffee has brewed. The pancakes are on the griddle, and the bacon is crisping up nicely.

“We cooked *Moos* [a fruit soup]² three times with gooseberries, and once we made pancakes; we really shouldn’t do that, as it is too expensive because of the lard. We must always write about these little events, and never mention the most important occurrences; that is why this letter sounds so strange.”

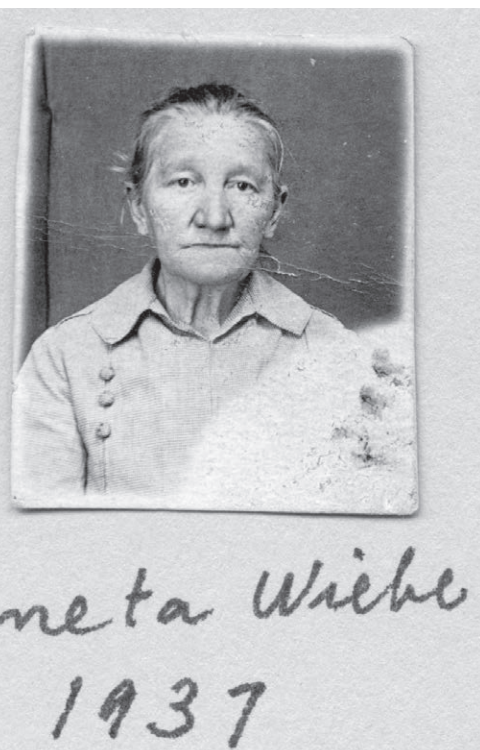
The most important occurrences remain vague. We are not explicitly told what they are. When read as a whole, it’s clear that Anganetha fears repercussions for divulging certain information. She knows her letters are intercepted and read by authorities. More than once she gives instructions to not address return letters directly to her. This would arouse suspicion. Not all of Anganetha’s letters

to Helena reach her. “Dear ones in the distance! We hear that you do not receive our letters. What could be the cause?” How she knows is not revealed. At times there are long gaps in communication.

Conditions grow darker. In 1933: “I went once to gather ears of grain on the road beside a field of corn; I wanted the scattered grains, but I was told this is strictly forbidden. I replied that they will be driven over and thus destroyed anyway; that makes no difference was the answer. Women have been put in prison for this crime.”

I have enjoyed my breakfast in my cozy dining room, cleared the dishes. The deep irony of my sated appetite and my reading do not escape me.

It is 1934. Josef Stalin is solidifying his control in advance of the “Great



Purge.” Citizens are heavily repressed, and there soon will be random executions of Communist party and government officials, along with anyone who shows signs of political disagreement.

Anganetha dearly misses her resettled daughter and family. She bravely writes: “Come, fly over here for once; for awhile it would be fine, but soon Hans would be asked if he would like to go to that place where he already spent some time [prison]. Asked? No! Be thankful that you are gone from here.” But there is also much sorrow in Helena and Hans’s family; three of Helena and Hans’s young children become ill and die after leaving Russia, while enroute to Canada. Her three dead grandchildren are referenced and grieved again and again in the letters.

Early on in the letters, we learn the family is allowed only one cow. Milk too is shared out. Anyone who slaughters a cow is forced to pay a meat tax in the form of a cut from the carcass. In 1937, she writes, “We now have a goat. She does not need much feed, but compared to the cow, she gives little milk.”

In addition to rationed food, garden thefts, and food taxes, beggars arrive at the door and ask for “a piece of crust, for a spoonful of soup... We do hope, with God’s help, to survive; we so much want to do our duty by our fellowman.” Still, one experience of sharing leaves a bitter taste: “Today there was one whom we



Passport photo of Helena (Wiebe) Dyck and their two sons, Peter and Johann, both of whom died on December 31, 1929, in Hammerstein, Germany, enroute to Canada. Peter was four years old and Johann was three years old. A third son, Gerhard, also died in Hammerstein on January 7, 1930, just days after being born. Hans and Helena arrived in Canada in March 1930 with no children.

gave 10 kopek and a mug of coffee, and he wanted milk. As he walked away, he said, ‘Such unfeeling people.’ That is what we are called when we have nothing more to give.”

Despite the hardship and heartbreak, Anganetha finds deep refuge in her faith and family. Scripture verses are quoted frequently. Her son Abram holds on to a teaching job at the Institute for the Deaf some distance away, despite pressure to denounce his faith: “He is the only teacher in the Institute who has not put his name down as godless.” All teachers were required to join an organization she calls *Atheistensirkel*. The word is not easily translated, but at best, it likely means “religion neutral.” Abram’s refusal may have led to his eventual disappearance some time later. He was never heard from again.

Anganetha’s letters are rife with revelations of desperation, but one is especially dark: In fall of 1933, she writes, “In some places it is still sadder than here; there people are beginning to eat one another. That children are slaughtered is the truth, to make soup and sausage.” The “some places” are likely among the Ukrainian communities, which suffered a genocidal famine created by Stalin.

Remarkably, the word “thankful” appears 15 times in her letters; less surprisingly, the word “hope” is found 31 times. Sometimes despair is hope crying for help; despair as hope is abundant throughout the letters.

Anganetha makes virtually no references to the anti-German sentiments of this time period that historians have noted in other publications, most recently in *The Russian Mennonite Story*, a collection of lectures by Paul Toews (Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies, Wpg., Canada, 2018). In fact, she notes the generosity of a Russian fellow who gave some potatoes to a desperate Peter Wiebe family. Elsewhere she reflects on the beauty of songs in the Russian language.

Lack of transportation made it challenging to attend church. But, in one instance, six “very decent” young men in a car offer Anganetha and two friends a ride to a tram stop, after many vehicles had passed them by. At the church service: “It was good; we felt so at home amongst the Russian sisters and brothers. I said to one sister, ‘I am a German.’ She replied, ‘I



Crosses in Hammerstein, Germany, mark the graves of Hans and Helen (Wiebe) Dyck’s two oldest sons, Peter and Johann, who died there in transit from Russia to Canada.

see that, but our hearts are one, and God is one.”

Anganetha’s letters are a treasure trove of detail for historians, a sobering reminder for the casual reader of how wrong things can go, and how little control average citizens have. In 1931, she offers a bit of context as well as foreshadowing: “When Papa was still living, in the good old days, he figured out one evening that we had more than 20,000 in wealth. Then I asked him if he now relied on his riches. He replied, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘We must not do that; it is impermanent.’ But in my heart, I did not believe that we could ever become so poor.”

Anganetha’s last known letter to family in Canada is dated November 7, 1939. After a long gap, we learn that she and her family have been resettled in Poland via a 1944 letter to her brother, Gerhard Klassen in Germany. In her final letter, we learn that her new home is close to the war front; she reports hearing cannons and gunfire. Two of her grandsons have been conscripted into the S.S. “We pray without ceasing for Germany, although it is not deserving. But according to God’s great mercy, we recall Abraham—if 10 righteous people had been found in Sodom, it would have been saved. There was only one soul then and here there are many who call upon the Lord.”

In 1945, the family was returned to Russia, and the letters stop.

Stalin died in 1953. Soon, families were finally able to begin reconnecting across international lines. In 1955, Anganetha’s daughter Netl—overjoyed to have finally found a current address—writes to Helena and other family members. Here we learn that Anganetha died on August 17, 1947, at the age of 73. Netl writes that Anganetha was not yet ready to die, but eventually gave herself “wholly to God’s will.”

In an earlier letter, Anganetha writes, “I no longer feel at home here; as I walked down the street one day, I felt like such a stranger here. Words from Jeremiah 8:22 come into my mind: ‘Is there no balm in Gilead?’” This sense of homelessness prevailed for the rest of her life.

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Endnotes

1. German Settlements in the Chortitza District, Allen E. Konrad, 2007 <http://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/konrad/German%20Settlements%20in%20the%20Chortitza%20District.pdf>.
2. In brackets, translator Ruth (Dyck) Wood frequently adds clarity to ambiguous information throughout the transcription.

New logo and more

by Conrad Stoesz

This year the Mennonite Heritage Centre building turns 40 years old. The building was largely funded by the P.W. Enns family and the program operated by the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (now Mennonite Church Canada). However, the building was designed to be for the Mennonite community broadly speaking. In keeping with the vision, the archival collection today includes materials from communities such as the Reinlander, Sommerfelder, Old Colony, EMC, EMMC, General Conference, Whitewater, Blumenort, Rosenort, Schoenweiser, MCC from across North, South, and Latin America as well as Europe. The building has been a substantial gift to the Mennonite community as a gathering place for people, materials, and memory.

How appropriate then for the new logo of the Mennonite Heritage Archives program to feature the building. The new logo was created by Craig Terlsen of Canadian Mennonite University. It highlights the angular tower of the building and the lettering along the right side giving weight to the word archives. About the colour choice, Terlsen says, "I played with some different palettes, looking for something with both a sense of history, as well as a looking forward... the dark purple colour has a dignity to it, as well as a creative and modern feel—suggestive of the art and other forms of media that is part of the archives." The archives is also working on a new web site which will reside at www.mharchives.ca. Watch for details of when it will be ready.

The summer months are busy, but in a different way than in other months. In the summer, we get many more visitors from outside Winnipeg adding a trip to the archives to their holiday travel plans. One day in early July, the reading room was buzzing with nine researchers from Winnipeg, Winkler, St. Catharines, Texas, and Germany. On August 1st, we welcomed a journalist from Cologne,



This photo is an example of the photos being collected for the Mennonite Photographs Project. It was taken by Peter H. Klippenstein (1878–1960) of Altbergthal village, West Reserve, ca. 1910s, Mennonite Heritage Archives.

Germany, a professor from London, England, an archeologist from Winnipeg, a genealogist from Edmonton, and a history professor from Winnipeg. Our archival collection continues to be used by a wide range of people for a variety of projects.

Through our partnership with Canadian Mennonite University, we hosted Krista Zerbin as part of her CMU practicum. Krista worked 20 hours a week for 12 weeks with us. She organized periodicals and books, helped answer queries, scanned photographs, and sorted index cards. Through her work, Krista gained a new appreciation for the archives and is continuing to volunteer her time with us.

The MHA is participating in a project dubbed the "Manitoba Mennonite Heritage Photography Project." Our team of researchers includes Susie Fisher, Curator of Gallery in the Park; Andrea Dyck, Mennonite Heritage Village; Frieda Klippenstein, Parks Canada; Roland Sawatzky, Manitoba Museum; Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Heritage Archives; and Ankió Szabó, Art Director and Graphic Designer. The three photographers

are Peter G. Hamm (1883–1965) of Neubergthal (West Reserve), Peter H. Klippenstein (1878–1960) of Altbergthal (West Reserve), and Johann E. Funk (1876–1968) of Schönwiese (East Reserve), who were creating images ca. 1900–1930.

The Project includes images produced on glass plates and some on film. About 75% of the images to be used in this project come from the Mennonite Heritage Archives. Project team lead Susie Fisher says, "This book will contain photos and essays that will facilitate learning about the photographers, their work, and the unique historical lenses their photographs offer. We believe this project is extremely relevant to the history of Mennonites in Manitoba, the West and East Reserves, and prairie settlement in Western Canada. Hamm, Klippenstein, and Funk were amateur photographers whose pictures, collectively and individually, present an unparalleled lens into daily life and culture in Mennonite village settings throughout Manitoba." Thank you to the Plett Foundation and Friesens Corporation for their financial support of this project.

Historical Commission awards four research grants

by Jon Isaak

The Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission met June 8 and 9, 2018, for its annual general meeting—this year in Hillsboro, Kansas, at Tabor College’s Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies. The Commission heard reports from its four archives, awarded grants and scholarships, and planned for ways to continue to serve M.B. congregations in both the U.S.A. and Canada with “useable” historical research.

An Archival Development Grant of \$2,500 was awarded to **Bert Friesen** for his computer coding project that links a search mechanism with the original source image of the indexed *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 1910–1919. This online tool will link an index entry to the scan of the referenced page in the *Rundschau*. For readers with limited facility in Gothic German print, this tool will be a valuable resource. The *Rundschau* has been called the “Facebook” of early 20th-century Mennonite communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

An M.B. Studies Project Grant of \$2,500 was awarded to **Anicka Fast** for her Ph.D. dissertation project: “Living in the same house: Contested ecclesial identity in the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren missionary encounter in Congo, 1912–1989.” Like other sectors currently receiving attention (e.g., Mennonites and the Holocaust, Mennonites and Canadian “Indian Day Schools,” etc.), Anicka’s project considers Mennonites and the mission sector, exploring aspects of the Mennonite story that may be disturbing, given our contemporary sensibilities.

A second M.B. Studies Project Grant of \$1,200 was awarded to **Christine Longhurst** for phase one of her project that explores the rise of contemporary worship patterns in Canadian Mennonite Brethren churches over the past 30–40 years, specifically, the shift from traditional, hymn-based congregational song to contemporary worship music. In this first phase, Christine will collect first-hand accounts of the process from those who held leadership roles in M.B. churches and institutions during the transition years.

A Katie Funk Wiebe Research Grant of \$650 was awarded to **Lisa Cornish** for her M.A. thesis project: “Listening for the female ministry voice: Mennonite women

sharing faith through cookbooks.” Lisa plans to explore the relationship between food preparation/recipes and theological reflection/articulation. While Mennonite cookbooks typically don’t designate much space for theological comment, the theological drivers are often still visible. Her project will bring scholarly attention to women’s roles in Mennonite churches and to the importance of material culture (food and recipes) in everyday Christian faith.

At the Hillsboro meeting, the Commission also heard **Emma Sorensen** report on her five-week archival internship. She helped with the normal archival tasks at each of the four M.B. archives and explored the formation of the institutions that became part of the Mennonite Mental Health Services, staffed initially by Conscientious Objectors (Canada) and Civilian Public Service (U.S.A.) workers during the Second World War.

AJ.B. Toews \$1,000 college scholarship was awarded to **Andrew Regehr** of Canadian Mennonite University.

The Commission agreed to continue funding the six initiatives that it has developed in the recent years (archival internships, Katie Funk Wiebe research grants, M.B. studies project grants, J.B.



Toews college scholarships, G.A.M.E.O. stipends, and archival development grants), even as the subsidies from its two owners have been reduced. For details about all initiatives—and the news releases announcing the recipients and their projects—see the Commission’s website (www.mbhistory.org).

The Commission works with a network of four Mennonite Brethren archival centers: Center for M.B. Studies (Hillsboro), Mennonite Library & Archives (Fresno), Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. (Abbotsford), and Centre for M.B. Studies (Winnipeg).

Since its formation in 1969, the Commission has helped coordinate the collection, preservation, and interpretation of Mennonite Brethren archival records: congregational meeting minutes, conference proceedings, personal papers, periodicals, and photographs.



M.B. Historical Commission gathered in Hillsboro (June 8–9, 2018) for its annual general meeting. Pictured in the back row (l to r): Richard Thiessen, Jon Isaak (executive secretary), J Janzen (vice chair), Julia Reimer, Don Isaac (chair); (front row) Peggy Goertzen, Valerie Rempel (recording secretary), Hannah Keeney, Patricia Janzen Loewen, and Emma Sorensen (summer archival intern). Missing from the photo are Dora Dueck and Kevin Enns-Rempel. At the July 2018 national convention in Saskatoon, Chris Koop of St. Catharines, Ontario, was elected to replace Dora Dueck whose term has now expired. Photo credit: Diane Steiner.

Werner Toews receives the 2018 Joseph S. Height literary award

by Conrad Stoesz and Jon Isaak

On April 27, 2018, Werner Toews was named as the recipient of the 2018 Joseph S. Height literary award from the Germans from Russia Heritage Society (GRHS), based in Bismark, North Dakota. The award was given in recognition of Werner's essay, "Lost Records of the Russian Mennonites: The Missing Khortitza *Gebeitsamt* Archive," first published in the December 2016 edition of the *Mennonite Historian* (vol. 42, no. 4).

The essay was later submitted to the Germans from Russia Heritage Society by Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, who believed the essay would be of interest to its members. The essay was then published in the June 2017 edition of the *GRHS Heritage Review*.

By way of background, the Joseph S. Height Award was established to promote writing and research related to the communities of German-speaking settlers who immigrated to North America from Russia. According to the Society's webpage, articles considered for the award "must be original writing (short story, essay, biography, poetry, autobiography, etc.), which expand or broaden knowledge of, or give weight to, the history of the Germans from Russia." In addition, "the articles should be of interest to members of the Germans From Russia Heritage Society."¹

Although the essay pertains to the lost records of the Mennonite community in Russia, the article also contains information on the state of the archives in the former Soviet Union during the German occupation of Ukraine in World War II. The article goes on to mention the work of Dr. Karl Stumpp (1896–1982) who was the head of the *Sonderkommando* and a representative of the Ministry of the Occupied Eastern Territories stationed in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. 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. This involved searching the archives in the occupied territories

for any documents relating to German colonists. His research and findings later became of great interest to the descendants and families of the Germans from Russia now living in North America, Europe, and elsewhere.²

Stumpp himself was a Russian-born German historian whose ancestors were German colonists. He left Russia after the 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."

Following the war, Stumpp continued his historical research and went on to publish articles and books on the German settlers in Russia during the colonial period. He also worked with members of the American Historical Society of Russia and other Germans-from-Russia historical societies.

Interestingly, Dr. Joseph Height provided Stumpp with the English translations of the historical sections of Stumpp's major work, *The Emigration from Germany to Russia 1773–1865* (1973). Joseph S. Height, in whose honour this award is given, was the son of German immigrants who came to Canada in 1900 from the Black sea colonies of Mannheim and Strassburg. Height was born in 1909 at Tramping Lake, Saskatchewan, and for many years taught German at Franklin College in Franklin, Indiana.³

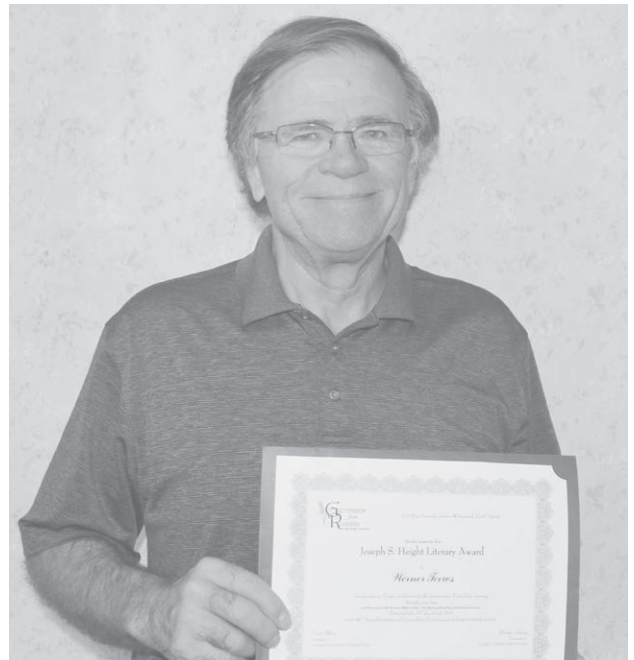
Werner Toews has published articles in several publications on Russian Mennonite themes and his book, *Sketches from Siberia: The life of Jacob D. Sudermann*, will be released this fall.

Endnotes

1. http://www.grhs.org/aboutus/leadership/documents/Height_Literary_Award_Goals.pdf.

2. Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *Trophies of War and Empire: The Archival Heritage of Ukraine, World War II, and the International Politics of Restitution* (Harvard, 2001), 324. See also a brief biography of Stumpp on the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection website (<https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/>).

3. <https://library.ndsu.edu/grhc/articles/newspapers/intouch/2018/intouch0318.html>.



Werner Toews with 2018 Joseph S. Height award. Photo credit: Linda Toews.

The Virtual Museum of Mennonite Clocks

by Elizabeth Kroeger

The Kroeger Clocks Heritage Foundation is continuing the work of the late Arthur Kroeger (1922–2015), formerly of Winnipeg, Manitoba. In April 2018, the Foundation launched the website called "The Virtual Museum of Mennonite Clocks" (www.kroegerclocks.com) with the goal of presenting an ever-growing virtual collection of historical clocks made by Mennonite clockmakers from the mid-eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, beginning in the region around Gdańsk, Poland, and continuing in southeastern Ukraine/Russia.

Mennonite wall clocks are an important part of Mennonite material heritage and serve as cultural touchstones and family heirlooms. They have travelled with Mennonites as they migrated around the world during the tumultuous twentieth century.

In 2012, Arthur Kroeger published the book *Kroeger Clocks* (Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Manitoba, ISBN 978-0-9783937-1-7), which was able to treat only a small portion of the Mennonite clocks still to be found in North and South America, Europe and Siberia.

Arthur Kroeger estimated that the six generations of Kroeger clockmakers alone may have produced and repaired several thousand clocks. According to him, as



The clockmaker Peter Kroeger stamped the date and punched his initials into the hour wheel, providing a clue as to whose hands have touched this clock. Photo credit for all three images: Anikó Szabó.

many as 500 Mennonite clocks may have found their way to North America. The documents, files, and records he collected during more than 30 years of research—and now held by the Foundation—attest to the certain existence of as many as 275 Mennonite clocks currently held in private collections and museums in North and South America and Europe, as well as in Siberia. But there is reason to believe that more clocks have survived. The growing number of submissions to our website since its launch is evidence of that.

The Virtual Museum of Mennonite Clocks project's mission is to collect, compile, and catalogue these historical clocks and related materials and to create an accessible website for the general public, scholars, and horologists. We have begun with the digitization and cataloguing of

thousands of pages of documentation and images, as well as documenting the various clocks held by the Foundation itself or its community.

The Kroeger Clock website will soon become a searchable database and archival collection and will provide a forum in which information and knowledge on Mennonite clocks can be collected, disseminated, and enhanced. In turn, it will become a vital resource on historical Mennonite clocks and the related cultural heritage. We encourage and invite all who either possess a Mennonite clock or have knowledge of one to contribute information, stories, and images to our curated website. To contact the Foundation or submit information online, please go to www.kroegerclocks.com/about-us/.

The Kroeger Clocks Heritage Foundation is currently partnering with the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach on an exhibition called The Art of Mennonite Clocks. The exhibit features 33 Mennonite clocks from all periods of Mennonite clockmaking and runs until April 2019. It is a stunning exhibition and is required viewing for connoisseurs of Mennonite history, for horologists, and for anyone who loves a good story.

Dr. H. Elizabeth Kroeger, LL.M., Rosmarin Heidenreich, Ph.D., and Kathleen Wiens, Ph.D., are founding directors of the Kroeger Clocks Heritage Foundation. The project team is headed by Roland Sawatzky, Ph.D. (Curator of History, The Manitoba Museum, Winnipeg), and Anikó Szabó (Art Director/



This 1798 clock was made by Peter Kroeger (ca. 1781–?). The circular style is referred to as a “Werder” style after the Werder plains of Prussia where the clocks were first created.

Graphic Designer). Alexandra Kroeger (Curator and Administrative Coordinator at Dalnavert Museum and Visitors' Centre, Winnipeg) leads our research work. To see the whole team, please go to www.kroegerclocks.com/team/.

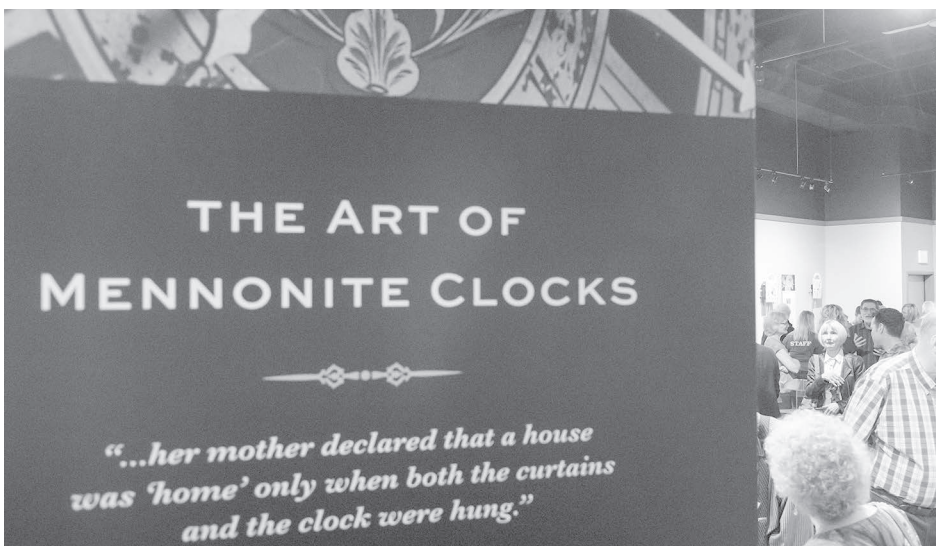
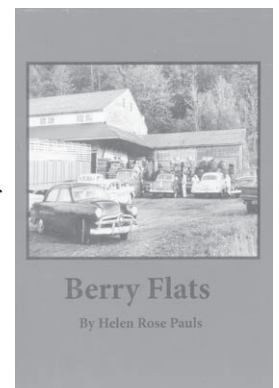
The Virtual Museum of Mennonite Clocks is sponsored by the Kroeger Clocks Heritage Foundation and is funded in part by The D.F. Plett Foundation, The Winnipeg Foundation, and the Government of Manitoba, as well as private donations. Please consider donating to this exciting cultural heritage project by emailing Liza Kroeger (liza@kroegerclocks.com).

Book Notes

by Jon Isaak

Helen Rose Pauls, *Berry Flats* (2017), pp. 132.

Helen Rose Pauls is a retired school teacher and farm partner with her husband Ernie in Chilliwack, BC. She has many happy memories growing up in the Mennonite community of Arnold on the Sumas Flats in Abbotsford, BC. *Berry Flats* is a collection of 17 short stories that she wrote depicting life in the Mennonite villages of the Fraser Valley in the 1940s

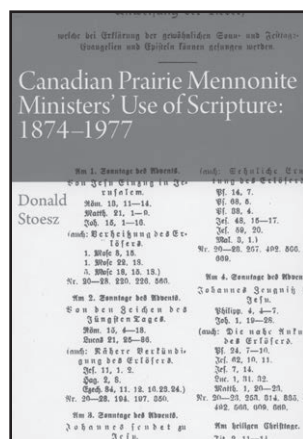


An exhibition of Mennonite wall clocks and their stories spanning more than two centuries runs until April 2019 at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba. A joint exhibition of the MHV and the Kroeger Clocks Heritage Foundation.

and 1950s. With many remarkable photos, this work of fiction brings much laughter, and perhaps a few tears, as readers are introduced (or reminded) of Mennonite village life for these depression-weary farm families from the prairies. The faith, unity, and hard work that characterized village life on the small dairies and flourishing orchards is brilliantly portrayed in each of these short stories.

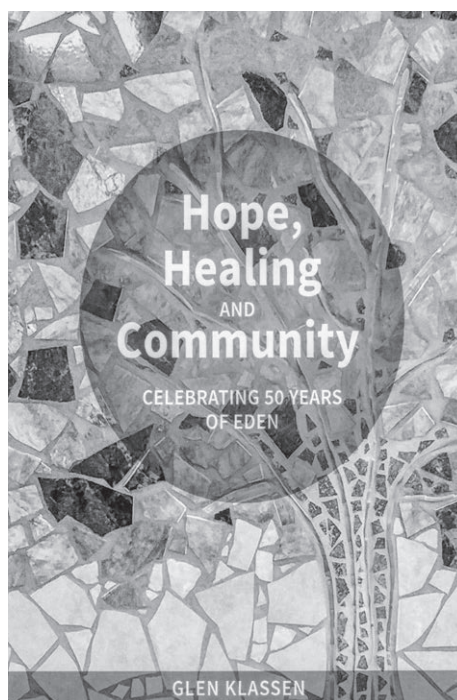
Donald Stoesz, *Canadian Prairie Mennonite Ministers' Use of Scripture, 1874–1977* (Friesen, 2018), pp. 307.

This book is the result of Don Stoesz's analysis of the 457 Scripture texts used in sermons by 17 Mennonite ministers in Manitoba and Saskatchewan over the course of a century (1874–1977). He organized the Scripture texts used as the principal passages for sermons according to the church calendar year. His surprising conclusion is that this broad range of Mennonite ministers—Chortitzers, *Kleine Gemeinde*, Somerfleder, EMMC, Old Colony, and General Conference—were actually using (over 40% of the time) a “lectionary” or *Anweisung der Lieder*, often located at the front of their German-language hymnbook (*Gesangbuch*). Stoesz traces the history of the one-year lectionary back to Pope Gregory of the 6th century, who designed the reading list to make the Bible more accessible during worship in



from 1 Peter. While many ministers in recent decades have discontinued use of the “lectionary,” opting to choose their own Scripture passages, Stoesz’s discovery is especially interesting at this time when many Mennonite churches are rediscovering the rhythm of the church year through its seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Passion, Easter, Pentecost, and Trinity Sundays.

Book Reviews



Glen Klassen, *Hope, Healing and Community: Celebrating 50 Years of Eden* (Eden Health Care Services, 2018), pp. 224.

Reviewed by Ken Reddig, Pinawa

Organizations that have long-term success are those that can encompass a diverse group of people to meet common needs. Such was the case of Eden Health Care Services. Born out of the felt needs of a number of Mennonite denominations in southern Manitoba, today it has grown to become a mental health service provider for all residents of south central Manitoba. The genesis of Eden came from several key sources. First was the experiences of Mennonites in Ukraine who 40 years earlier had founded Bethania, a mental health facility that lasted well into the Communist era. There was also the influence of Mennonite Mental Health Services in the US that emerged out of the WWII Civilian Public Service of Conscientious Objectors. And last, but not least, was also the trusted Mennonite Board of Colonization that had been instrumental in bringing many Ukrainian Mennonites to southern Manitoba.

As interest in mental health services grew, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) took particular interest and began to push the idea of mental health services in the West Reserve of Manitoba. At an EMC ministerial

meeting in 1955, Bishop David P. Reimer introduced the topic by stating, “Isn’t it time to think of building a place where we can provide a place for our mentally ill.” Notably, the initial emphasis was on a “brick and mortar” location within which various mental health services were to be conducted.

The next years focused on finding a location and building the facility, with doors opening to the new hospital in Winkler in June of 1967. By this time, a total of six Mennonite denominations had joined as “founders” with another eight denominations as “participants” who later were supporters. The project was on its way.

The author of this book, Dr. Glen Klassen, follows the development of Eden from these early beginnings up to the present day. Klassen is not fixated on describing the growth of the organization structurally, but he reviews many of the ministries and services, including stories of people who were beneficiaries of these services. He is aided at times by having several other writers who were leaders of different Eden services tell the story as they engaged with it.

Eden seems to have begun just as Canada was beginning more fully to understand the foundation of good mental health. New concepts were developed into programs that moved outside the walls of the new hospital and led to enhanced community services. After all, the goal was for Eden to help people successfully move out of the hospital environment and live meaningful lives within their own families and communities.

One such program example began in the 1980s, as Eden began following the lead of Mennonite mental health in the United States by developing a ministry around transitional housing. The understanding was that for a person to live with good mental health, they also needed a safe and secure place to call home. Over the years such housing was developed in the communities of Winkler, Steinbach, and more recently in Winnipeg.

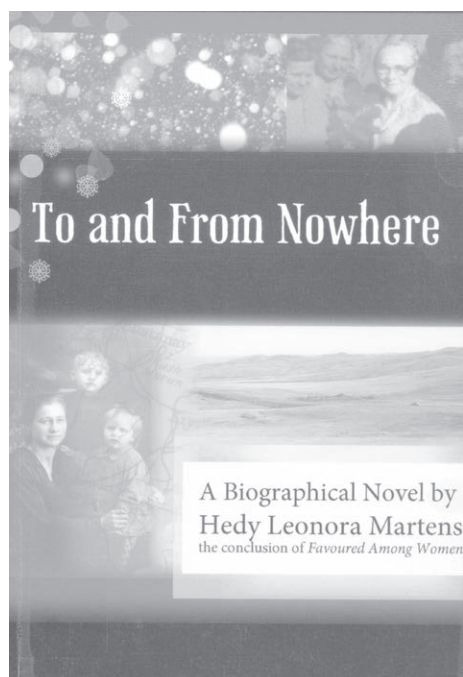
Eden was beginning to move services outside the walls of the institution with more and more of its programs. Following good housing came the necessity of good jobs for Eden clients to achieve self-sufficiency. For this the Trainex program was established, which included both adult

education and job training. Today Trainex has morphed into Segue, a program that works with businesses and agencies to develop skills to assist people to enter the job market.

Another example of community-based services was counseling as a professional discipline, which became a part of Eden in 1989. Initially focusing on marriages in trouble, called Recovery of Hope, it expanded and today includes a broad spectrum of counseling services in southern Manitoba.

As the author makes clear, Eden has been both a leader and at other times a responder to mental health trends in Canada. A fascinating part of the book is the story of Eden and its relationship with the Manitoba government—namely Manitoba Health. While at times a real struggle, Eden did eventually emerge as the primary mental health provider for Manitoba's southern health authority.

But it is the humanizing touch of personal stories sprinkled throughout the book that captured my attention. Institutional growth and success always make a good story, though not overly memorable. However, to hear the stories of lives that have been positively changed by Eden staff and services is refreshing. After all, as the title of the book indicates, this is a story of hope and healing within one community. I recommend it heartily.



Hedy Leonora Martens, *To and From Nowhere: A Biographical Novel*, the

conclusion of *Favoured Among Women* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2015), 502 pp.

Reviewed by Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder

In the second volume of Greta Enns's life story, *To and From Nowhere*, author Hedy Martens traces the harrowing journey of this Mennonite woman from eastern Ukraine to Kazakhstan. Together with her children and some of her siblings, Greta is sent into exile during the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941. The director of Greta's work brigade tells her without prior warning that in three days she and all of the Germans in her village will be sent to southern Kazakhstan, on the other side of the Ural Mountains. By this time, Greta has lost her beloved husband, Heinrich, and given up her dream of going to Canada. On October 7, 1941, Greta's family boards a train, for a destination unknown to them.

The novel is divided into four "books," the titles of each summarizing its theme. Book One: Where? Dedicated to the disenfranchised and deported everywhere. Book Two: From Kolkhoz to Sovkhoz. Dedicated to Lora. Book Three: Flee to the Next. Dedicated to all who stand strong in their integrity when standing strong can cost them everything. Book Four: All the Way from Nowhere. Dedicated to Greta and Heinrich.

As in her first volume, *Favoured Among Women*, Martens periodically adds historical background information to remind us that the events in this novel actually happened, even though they seem as surreal to the readers as they were to the people who experienced them (see March 2011 issue of *Mennonite Historian* for my review of *Favoured Among Women*). Martens informs us that the Mennonites were only one small group among the many ethnic nationalities in Ukraine deported during World War II. Their homes were taken over by others and they disappeared as if they had never existed. Their relatives who had escaped to Canada lost track of them. Where did they go?

Keeping family members' names straight proved to be a challenge, and I often turned to the charts at the beginning of the book illustrating both Greta's and Heinrich's families of origin (as of 1941), and the later charts of Heinrich's family of origin as of 1960 and 1976. Family photos at the beginning and end were helpful, as were the maps.

The theme of disorientation already

expressed in the title (*To and From Nowhere*) is evident throughout the book and haunts both the readers of the novel and the characters in it. Herded into cattle cars without windows, the fugitives panic: *Suddenly, the absolute lostness of not knowing where she was overwhelmed her... She began rocking to and fro, trying to stifle her sobs... Helplessly, she heard the children's frightened voices join in...and soon it seemed as if the whole train would float away in their tears* (p. 24).

It is their faith in God, expressed through the hymns they have learned in childhood, that helps them get their bearings. This never becomes mundane or didactic but is realistically as well as beautifully described by Martens throughout the novel: *She looked, then, at the faces of her children, and what she saw was beyond words... A glimpse of pure sunlight, unchanged, unchanging...while they sang, song after song, in their clean, clear voices, almost drowning out the sound of artillery fire outside* (p. 25).

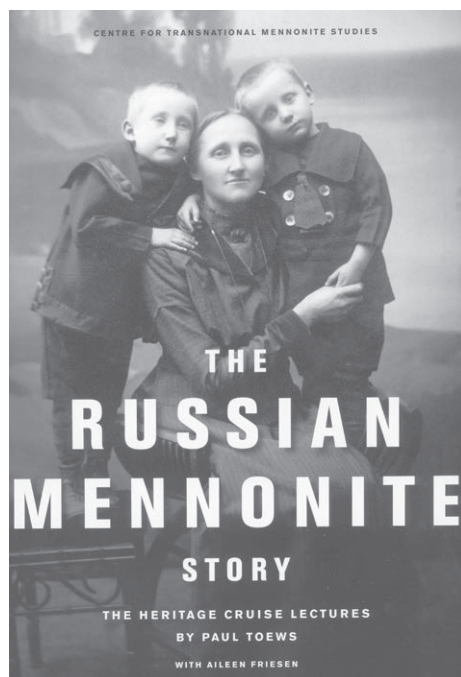
There is so much sadness and misery in this novel that there were times when I felt overwhelmed and had to stop reading. Loss after loss—lack of food, clean water, clothing, warm blankets, privacy—and still, the will to live prevailed.

The author does manage to bring relief to the unrelenting saga of suffering with some humorous incidents, such as the time Greta thought someone was reading Heinrich's beloved Bible only to discover that its pages were being used for cigarette paper: *For there, on the thin paper of Alexander's cigarette, she'd glimpsed words, familiar words: "Thou makest me to lie down in green pastures...thou leadest me..." When she opened her Bible, there was no Psalm 23. Nor 24. Nor 25. Some other Psalms were missing. Perfect paper for cigarettes... They were smoking the leaves of Heinrich's Bible* (p. 237).

The discovery of a pinprick in Stalin's eye on his portrait hanging on the schoolroom wall, and the resulting accusation that the Mennonite teacher had done it, shows the bizarre character of the situation. It was so ludicrous that it actually caused them to forget for a moment the gravity of their misery. However, it did add a fear factor to their already overwhelming physical suffering—people could be arrested for such ridiculous things (pp. 307, 312).

Greta's story could have been my story, and that made the book especially poignant for me. The novel is "dedicated to the disenfranchised and deported everywhere" (Book One). It is also "dedicated to all who stand strong in their integrity when standing strong can cost them everything" (Book Three). It is a reminder for us to "do justice" and to "love mercy" (cf. Micah 6:8) in our present world situation.

Elfrieda was born in Chortitza, Ukraine, just before the German invasion and consequent flight of her family to Poland and Germany. Her family spent five years in the Paraguayan Chaco before immigrating to Canada in 1952. She and her husband lived many years in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaïre, ex-Belgian Congo), returning to Canada in 1984. They moved from Ontario to Manitoba in 2008. Elfrieda received her PhD in German Language and Literature in 2001. She is a translator, freelance writer, and grandmother of eight. You can read more of her writing in her blog: ensintransit.blogspot.ca/.



Paul Toews with Aileen Friesen, *The Russian Mennonite Story: The Heritage Cruise Lectures* (Centre for Transnational Mennonite studies, 2018), 106 pp.

Reviewed by Peter Epp, Winnipeg

In *The Russian Mennonite Story: The Heritage Cruise Lectures*, Dr. Paul Toews's three Heritage Cruise lectures are set alongside vivid photographs of

Mennonite life—past and present—in Russia (now Ukraine).

While the book is surely welcomed by former Heritage Cruise members for providing a reminder of their tour—Toews gave the lectures during the 16 years he accompanied the Mennonite Heritage Cruise (1995–2010) down the Dnieper River into the heart of the former Mennonite homeland—its impact will extend much farther. Its bold use of large, stunningly (sometimes shockingly) high resolution photographs allows it to serve as a virtual tour for those who have never taken the tour.

Toews never had a chance to finish or publish his lectures—he died in 2015. However, Dr. Aileen Friesen agreed to edit, complete, and gather photographs for the production of a published version of Toews's lectures. The result is a well-organized, easy-to-follow presentation. *The Russian Mennonite Story* is a worthy addition to the growing catalogue of introductory Russian Mennonite history books that serve those who want pass their story on, quickly review it, or discover it for the first time.

Toews's three lectures mostly proceed in chronological order, with each section adding another layer of interpretation. The first lecture, "Power and Promise," describes the arrival and pre-First World War life of Russian Mennonites, emphasizing their relatively rapid rise to economic success and cultural confidence. Here, Toews asserts that traditional assumptions of Mennonite simplicity are themselves too simple. Rather, Mennonites were "emulat[ing]...the industrial elites of Western Europe and America" quite successfully (34).

The second lecture, "Pathos and Tragedy," describes the horrors that followed the First World War, as Mennonites suffered through that war, the Bolshevik Revolution, the resulting civil war, and Soviet oppression. Toews uses the lecture's title to explain how contemporary Mennonites might understand this part of their story. On the one hand, their suffering was the result of them being victims to an external pathos, which Toews asserts to be a kind of madness that overtook the understandable goals of the early revolution. On the other hand, their suffering was the result of Mennonites' tragic choices—hard decisions that Toews

suggests were "the lesser of two evils" or had hidden consequences—that can be both pitied and admired (64).

The third lecture, "Paradox and Irony," provides a concluding interpretation of the first two lectures and subsequent events. Here, Toews asserts that the Russian Mennonite experience can be understood through the lenses of paradox and irony: a move to Russia for preservation produced radical innovation, a German identity that provided stability later led to displacement, a search for permanence later produced exile, significant Mennonite innovations eventually "drew attention to... 'foreignness'" (77), and an attempt to preserve a free church led to a *Privilegium* that produced something of a *Volkskirche* (people's church). To conclude, Toews suggests that the most significant irony is one of Mennonite resilience: the Soviet attempt to "consign [Mennonites] to the ash of history" has recently given way to a reclamation of the Mennonite story by Mennonites and non-Mennonite Ukrainians.

Finally, Aileen Friesen (who also provides a preface) completes the book with a necessary conclusion of her own, carefully suggesting that Toews's narrative, while foundational, will benefit from the natural historiographical process of engaging "fresh approaches and challenge[s]." Friesen outlines many of these, including the need for more social history, which could tell us more about Mennonite women, everyday lives, and Mennonites' connections to non-Mennonite neighbours. She also notes that Toews's narrative will benefit from further research on Russian Mennonite colonialism and class, research that challenges the traditional Mennonite narrative. Toews's interpretive use of pathos and tragedy limits a more complete understanding of Mennonite accountability and the portrayal of current Mennonite humanitarian aid and Ukrainian attitudes towards Mennonites reflect a somewhat colonial tone.

Overall, however, *The Russian Mennonite Story* is not designed for nuanced historical debate, but to capture one of the foundational ways Mennonites came to tell this part of their story as they began to fully engage it. It does this eloquently and beautifully. Preserving this crucial, accessible piece of Toews's work is a gift for generations to come.