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Mennonite Historian

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

Frank H. Epp, broadcaster and radio Bible teacher in the early 1960s. It was this young communicator, newspaper editor, and later academic historian that the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (CMBoC) finally chose to document its history. See story starting on p. 2. Photo credit: Mennonite Archives of Ontario and Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID) CA MAO XV-19.3-1992-14-2905.

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Genesis of *Mennonite Exodus*, the book

by Peter H. Rempel, Winnipeg

At the annual meeting of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (CMBoC) in April 1947, it was noted that the "Board"—as it was commonly called in German as well as in English—was approaching the 25th anniversary of its formation. In May 1922, the Board had been formed as an instrument for coordinating the immigration of Mennonites fleeing the young Soviet Union and settling in Canada. Yet 15 years passed until the publication in 1962 of the Board's history under the title *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Re-settlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution*.

The genesis of *Mennonite Exodus* forms an interesting chapter in Mennonite historiography. It illuminates the aspirations and limitations of a generation of Mennonite leaders from the immigrant generation who were intent on producing a credible history of an inter-Mennonite organizational effort created to address a tragic and complex humanitarian crisis. Also remarkable is that these leaders entrusted this significant and sensitive task to an academic historian and provocative leader from the next generation, Frank H. Epp. Also passionate about his Mennonite people and keen to recount God's intervention in the experiences of his people, Epp was committed to writing a critical, as well as laudatory, historical account. What follows is a description of how that history project unfolded based on the CMBoC archival collection located at the Mennonite Heritage Archives, Winnipeg.

David Toews (left) and J.J. Thiessen of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (CMBoC), 1930s. Photo credit: MAID CA MHC 629-T-24.0.

In spring 1947, the Board already had several historical treatises in hand. Its recently deceased founding and long-time chairman, David Toews (1870–1947), had recorded his memories of the "Russian relief and immigration work" in a 50-page typescript in 1934 (CMBoC File 1184-139; these would not be published until 1973 in the *Mennonite Mirror*). Toews had also written two short accounts of the Board's immigration and re-settlement work in 1939 totaling 20 pages at the request of C. Henry Smith for the 2nd edition of Smith's general history of Mennonites, *The Story of the Mennonites*, published in 1940 (CMBoC File 1393-1548). Additionally, the Board's long-time secretary-treasurer, Daniel P. Enns (1877–1946), had prepared a confidential memorandum in 1946 for new Board chairman, Jacob J. Thiessen (1893–1977), in which he traced the manipulations by various individuals which had—in his view—undermined the inter-Mennonite cooperation and humanitarian goals of the Board (CMBoC File 1393-1548).

At the annual meeting of 1947, two prominent Mennonite leaders were nominated to write the Board's history: Paul Schaefer (1899–1969), principal of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Manitoba, and Benjamin B. Janz (1877–1964), minister of the Mennonite Brethren congregation in Coaldale, Alberta. Over the previous five years, Schaefer had authored a set of three booklets surveying Mennonite history in a popular style for students under the title *Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten!* (Where from? Where to? Mennonites!). Volume 1, published in 1942, covered the European origins; volume 2, published in 1945, covered the history of Mennonites in Russia and the USA; and volume 3, published in 1946, covered Mennonites in Canada. Schaefer had also published in 1945 a short biography of Heinrich H. Ewert (1855–1934), a prominent educator and leader of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

Janz had led the Association of Citizens of Dutch Origins (*Verband Buerger Hollandischer Herkunft*), established by Mennonites in 1921 in the new Soviet Union to promote their interests—at first to survive culturally and economically, and then to emigrate. Upon arriving in Canada, Janz had joined the Board. With Schaefer as a leading educator among the General Conference (GC) Mennonites and Janz as a leading minister among the Mennonite Brethren (MB), this was an astute combination of experiences, aptitudes, and denominational representation. The prospects were very good for producing a balanced and informed history of a significant inter-Mennonite organization.

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Genealogy and Family History

A simple explanation of genealogical DNA results, Part 2: Y-DNA

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

Y-DNA is passed on from father to son, just like traditional European family names. Only men have Y-DNA and can do a Y-DNA test. Family Tree DNA (FTDNA) is the main company doing Y-DNA testing and the only one I recommend. Since Y-DNA follows surnames, it is very important from a genealogical perspective. Unlike autosomal DNA discussed in Part 1, Y-DNA is not scrambled. Each son inherits his father's Y-DNA intact.

The genealogical usefulness of Y-DNA comes from the fact that there is a small probability that a mutation can occur from one generation to the next. If this were not the case all men would have identical Y-DNA and Y-DNA testing would be pointless from a genealogical perspective. The double helix of DNA is held together by so-called base pairs. The Y-DNA strand is very large (about 59 million base pairs) and testing companies look at a few dozen locations on that rather long molecule.

The Y-DNA base pairs form a pattern. That pattern repeats itself, usually from 6 to 40 times. On either side of that pattern will be two other patterns, each of which repeats a certain number of times. There are many thousands of these repeating patters on the Y-DNA strand. A standard Y-DNA test might look at 37 locations and report the number of times a pattern repeats at each of these 37 locations.

A minor mutation will change the number of times the pattern repeats. DNA mutation is random. This means that analyzing Y-DNA results is not a cut-and-dry process. One must always think in terms of probabilities. Some Y-DNA locations have a high probability of mutation, some have very low probabilities. A DNA company like FTDNA choses locations on the Y-DNA that mutate at different rates. By doing this the company can estimate the probability that two men have a common male-line ancestor for a given number of generations back. Unfortunately, this is, in my opinion, more of a guesstimate and one should take these probabilities with a grain of salt. As more men are tested this process will be refined, and the ability to predict how many generations back two men are related will improve.

One aspect of Y-DNA testing that many find confusing is the matches reported by companies like FTDNA. One sees not just matches with other men with the same or similar surnames (most of whom have known Mennonite ancestry), but also matches with men of ancestry from other parts of Europe. Many Mennonite men match men of English ancestry (who have no known Mennonite, Dutch or German ancestry). This does not necessarily mean that your ancestor was English. Remember, the British have their origins in northern continental Europe just like the majority of Low-German Mennonites. Also note that there has been a lot of movement into and within Europe over the last 2000 years. Your match with an Englishman, Frenchman or Russian is likely because you have a common male ancestor as far back as thousands of years.

So, when should one take a match seriously? 1) If you and that person have the same or similar surnames. One example of this is the match between Koop men of Mennonite ancestry and an English family named Cobb. The Cobb family can reliably trace their ancestry back to the 1300s. On the other hand, the Mennonite Koops can only go back to the early 1700s. 2) If your matches are dominated by men of a particular background. For example, Penner men have many matches with men of Hispanic descent and men from North Africa. With respect to this situation, it is worth noting that the Netherlands were under Spanish occupation (and the Spanish inquisition) during the time many Mennonites fled to the Danzig region (1500s). And Spain was occupied by the Moors of North Africa for nearly 700 years (from the 700s to the 1400s).

In some cases, such as Braun, Dyck, Friesen, Kroeker, Loewen, Neufeld, Penner and Wiebe, the vast majority of men match each other fairly well. In other cases—such as Schroeder, Peters, Janz/Janzen, and Goertz/Goertzen—their groups of matching men are within each family name. The men within each group match each other, but they do not match the men with the same surname outside the group. In the case of Schroeder, this can be explained. The Schroeder men can be split into two groups. One has ancestors who belonged to the Frisian Mennonite church in Prussia and were likely of German origin, while the other group have ancestors who belonged to the Flemish church and were likely of Dutch origin. Hence, we have two totally unrelated sets of Schroeder families of Mennonite background.

For surnames that were derived from what were fairly common Dutch first names (Janz/Janzen from Jan, Goertz/Goertzen from Gert, Peters from Peter, etc.), the explanation of the results is also simple. For example, the non-matching groups of Goertz, Gertz/etc. men are simply descended from unrelated men named Gert! Even within a matching group, not all men have exactly the same Y-DNA results. For example, all 24 Loewen men who have been tested so far belong to one related group. Within this group is a subgroup of three men whose pattern of base pairs at a location designated as DYS390 repeats 24 times, rather than the 23 times observed for the other Loewens. These men are part of the "Kleine Gemeinde" Loewens and have a common ancestor in Isaac Loewen (1787–1873). Similarly, all the male Braun descendants of Gerhard Braun (1755–1801) have a repeat of 13 rather than 14 at location DSY393 observed for the other Braun men.

One area of confusion that Y-DNA testing is clearing up is the connection between families with surnames that are similar and not simply spelling variations. For example, Y-DNA analysis shows that the following traditional Mennonite family names are unrelated: Voth/Vogt, Buller/Buhler, Kroeker/Kroeger, Cornies/Cornelsen, Hein/Heinrichs, Heide/Heidebrecht, Gedde/Geddert and Berg/Bergen/Bergman.

Although we have well over 800 men in the Y-DNA part of the project, we are still looking for men from about 50 surnames, including Albrecht, Bartsch, Delesky, Elias, Lohrenz, Neustaedter, Schwartz, Siebert, Striemer, Werner, Weiss and Worms. Part 3 will cover mitochondrial DNA.

Note: you must first purchase a DNA test from one of the companies mentioned in this or the previous article before you can join the Mennonite DNA project. Please email me if you want to participate.

Genesis of *Mennonite Exodus*

(cont'd from p. 2)

J.J. Thiessen summarized the hope of the Board in his letter to Schaefer and Janz dated April 24, 1947: namely, that "the dear God would give you strength and grace to see this work of faith, which was founded in a time when our people had entered into great need, in the right light, and to retain it for the coming world, so that the historical facts will not get lost and that the name of our highly revered Lord will be honored for His goodness and mercy." (This and all correspondence between the board chair and potential authors in this article, unless otherwise noted, are located in CMBoC file box 1336.) In the opinion of the Board's executive, Janz could work on the European portion, that is, the preparations in and emigration from Russia, and Schaefer would recount the Canadian portion, that is, the reception and settlement in Canada.

The Board was simultaneously pondering another major history project: a biography of its founding chairman, David Toews. A slim biographical sketch had been published in 1939, but the Board, together with Toews's children, felt that a more comprehensive biography was warranted. On January 16, 1948, Thiessen wrote a letter to Jacob H. Janzen (1878–1950), author of the sketch of Toews's life, inquiring about his willingness to write the Toews biography. Janzen, also an immigrant of the 1920s, was now the *Ältester* of the United Mennonite congregation in Ontario and had been a pioneer in Russian Mennonite literature, having already published a novel in Russia and then, after settling in Canada, sermons, short stories, plays, and re-tellings of stories from the Bible and Mennonite history. Janzen promptly expressed willingness but indicated that he would write in his usual literary style, remaining consistent with the historical facts but filling in with imagined conversations and incidents.

A sensitive point raised by Thiessen was his concern about citations from Toews's personal diary. In the diary, Toews had expressed some opinions of his co-workers, which, if published, could stir conflict. Therefore, the Toews family, as well as the Board, insisted that some portions of the diary be treated confidentially. Janzen promised to respect confidentiality while reporting on the "critical episodes."

A biography of David Toews was also of interest to the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC), because Toews had chaired that church body for several decades (1914–1940). Thiessen had also succeeded Toews as chairman of the Conference in 1943 and would hold that role until 1959. Conflating his leadership of both organizations, Thiessen wrote to Janzen on February 12, 1948, reporting that a meeting of the Conference executive on the previous day had resulted in the decision to formally ask Janzen to begin on the Toews biography, to appoint a committee of three to work with him, and to cover the costs. However, though Janzen made several plans to travel to Saskatchewan to conduct research that spring, he withdrew from the project in June, citing persistent ill health, and suggested that the Board find another author. (This and all correspondence in this article related to the David Toews biography project is located in CMBoC file 1184-139.)

Within two months of Janzen's withdrawal, Bernhard J. Schellenberg (1879–1966), an avid collector of Russian Mennonite historical documents and previously appointed by the Conference of Mennonites in Canada as its volunteer archivist, began correspondence with Thiessen about writing the biography of his "Uncle Dave" (CMBoC file 1393-1548). At a meeting in October 1948, the Board agreed to reimburse Schellenberg for his work and proposed to name a committee to review his manuscript. By spring 1949, Schellenberg had produced an 84-page manuscript that Thiessen forwarded to two board members for review: Dietrich H. Epp and Johann G. Rempel. Epp (1875–1955) had been a teacher in Russia, and, after immigrating to Canada, had started *Der Bote* in 1924, a newspaper for his fellow immigrants that would become the official paper of the Conference. Rempel (1890–1963), a long-time member of the Board and successor to Toews as the *Ältester* of the Rosenorter Mennonite Church based in Rosthern, was intimately acquainted with Toews and the work of the Board. As secretary of the Conference from 1930 until 1947, Rempel had already contended with Schellenberg's independent style and unrealistic expectations of remuneration for his work as Conference archivist.

Epp and Rempel criticized numerous points in the Schellenberg manuscript—the overly familiar and defensive tone, and its several digressions from the main subject. Their comments were forwarded to Schellenberg by Thiessen in June, with encouragement to modify the manuscript accordingly. Schellenberg, however, resisted such criticisms and suggestions. Though Toews was generally held in high esteem by the Board and its constituency, the Board concluded that Schellenberg's biography was too biased in favour of Toews and too critical of any persons who had disagreed with Toews to be published by the Board. However, it retained ownership of the manuscript. After extended correspondence and procrastination, the Board finally decided in March 1950 not to publish Schellenberg's work, thereby postponing one component of the plan to publish its history.

In the meantime, Schaefer and Janz were unable to report any progress on the tasks for which they had been commissioned. At the same meeting in August 1949 in which the Board promised support for Schellenberg's biography of David Toews, the Board resolved to appeal again to Schaefer and Janz to proceed. It also proposed Johann G. Rempel and Franz C. Thiessen as co-workers for them. Franz C. Thiessen (1881–1950) had trained as a teacher in Russia and had served for one year in the Mennonite office in Moscow, assisting would-be emigrants with applications for exit visas. After immigrating to Canada, he had resumed his teaching vocation in Canada, first in Manitoba and then in British Columbia. He was a representative of the Mennonite Brethren Conference on the Board.

Queries sent out by Thiessen in January 1950 clarified the involvement of several potential participants. Schaefer declined further involvement due to the time requirements of his primary roles and suggested that Thiessen himself, being most familiar with the Board's history, should take the leadership in writing its history. In the same month, F.C. Thiessen reported that he had completed his memoirs, admitting they were neither strictly objective nor written in a historical form. A chronicle of his life produced by his daughter, however, does not specifically refer to these memoirs (see *My Father: Franz C. Thiessen* by Kaethe Thiessen). Janz expressed eagerness to do research for writing his account of the conditions and activities in Russia leading

to the emigration but was hampered by his church obligations and failing health.

Obviously, the history project needed a new impetus. On March 6, 1950, Thiessen asked Johann G. Rempel whether he would take over the task of writing the Board's history. Rempel was just completing a history of his church (*Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in Wort und Bild*, 1950) and began the task with some resolve. At the annual meeting of the Board in March 1951, Rempel proposed a three-part treatment of the Board's history: the emigration (*Auswanderung*) out of Russia to be written by Janz, the immigration (*Einwanderung*) into Canada by himself, and the transmigration (*Durchwanderung*) through Germany and England by Benjamin H. Unruh.

B.H. Unruh (1881–1959) had been a member of the "study commission" sent by the Mennonites in the Soviet Union to Europe and North America in 1919 to plead for their aid. He had remained in Germany, where he represented the Board and later the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in their support of Russian Mennonite refugees through the 1920s and 1930s. During the Second World War, he had advised the German government on its relations with Mennonites in occupied Ukraine and thereafter on the care of Mennonite refugees now scattered in western Europe (see *Fuegungen und Fuehrungen: Benjamin Heinrich Unruh, 1881–1959* by Heinrich Unruh, 2009).

There had been strains in Unruh's relationship to the Board over his requests for remuneration in recognition of his efforts on behalf of Mennonite refugees. Already in the 1930s, Unruh had proposed—without success—that the Board could hire him to write a history of the immigration, with a substantial monthly remuneration (as reported by D.P. Enns in his confidential 1946 memo to Thiessen). The Board may also have felt uneasy about the degree to which Unruh had nurtured personal connections to Germany's National Socialist government, even though these were motivated by compassion for Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union. The Board did eventually subsidize and distribute Unruh's voluminous self-published compilation of records of the eastward migrations of the Mennonites (*Die niederlaendisch-niederdeutschen Hintergruende der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im. 16, 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, 1955).

The Board approved $1,000 for the Board history book project as proposed by Rempel, requesting that "the book would be popular and kept easily readable." Later, it was suggested that the biography of David Toews—presumably a revision of Schellenberg's manuscript—could be integrated into the three-part history.

However, there was negligible progress to report to the Board through 1952 and 1953, as Rempel was still pre-occupied with leading his congregation and producing a chronology of the Conference, eventually published as *Fuenfzig Jahre Konferenzbestrebungen, 1902–1952*. Actual progress on the Board history project was slow until Rempel retired from his leadership role as *Ältester* of the Rosenorter Church and moved to Saskatoon in summer 1953. Though impeded by a stroke and with remuneration from the Board, he devoted three days per week to the project, but after only a few months of researching in the Board's office files, Rempel suffered a heart attack and ceased his work. He did produce a manuscript of about 200 pages but could not complete the history.

Concurrent with Rempel's proposal to the Board, Janz reported that he was already procuring copies of relevant documents from the archival collection of Abram A. Friesen (1885–1948), another member of the original study commission sent abroad by the Mennonites in the Soviet Union, and thereafter employed as secretary for the Board through the 1920s. Friesen had had a falling out with his Canadian colleagues, especially with David Toews, and had placed his papers at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas. In any case, Janz proceeded with his research independent of direction or financial support from the Board, though it made regular inquiries about his progress.

In September 1953, just as Rempel was about to begin his research, J.J.Thiessen, still attempting to move the history project forward, approached another potential co-worker, Walter Quiring. Quiring (1893–1983), originally named Jacob, had emigrated from the Soviet Union to Germany in 1921, where he completed a doctorate in 1927 and replaced his Judaic name with "Walter." A vocal promoter of National Socialism among Germans living abroad (*Auslandsdeutsche*) through *Der Bote* and otherwise in the 1930s, he had published two portrayals of German Mennonites settlements in South America in the 1930s after spending two years living there. After serving with the German military during the Second World War, Quiring immigrated to Canada in 1952. Quiring expressed interest in the project and proposed a two-part treatment: (1) Immigration and (2) Settlement and Care. He also opined that a history of the Board "is actually a good portion of the history of Mennonites in Canada" and proposed that the Board consider expanding the project into an overall history of Mennonites in Canada.

At the Board's annual meeting in February 1954, little progress on its history was reported, but Thiessen raised the question of whether the history of all Mennonites in Canada should be written. Drawing upon Quiring's proposal, he projected a history organized around four waves of immigration: (1) the immigration of the Pennsylvania Mennonites to Ontario, (2) the immigration in the 1870s, (3) the immigration from the United States starting in 1900, and (4) the immigration since 1923. The Board deemed that "the matter is worth considering" (CMBoC file 1389-1535). The project of producing a comprehensive history of Mennonites in Canada was eventually taken up by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada in the 1970s, and partially funded by the Mennonite Central Committee Canada, an agency formed by the merger of the Board and several other Mennonite relief and immigration organizations. The first two volumes were written by the ultimate writer of the Board's history, Frank H. Epp.

Later, it was also suggested that Peter F. Froese (1892–1957), formerly a member of the staff of the Mennonite office in Moscow, be added to the research and writing team. After enduring 11 years of harsh imprisonment in the Soviet Union, Froese had immigrated to Germany soon after its 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union and had settled in Germany. However, due to age and distance, Froese never became involved in the project.

After Rempel was incapacitated by a stroke in fall 1954, the Board again asked Quiring whether he would take up the writing of the Board's history. But by then he had been appointed editor of *Der Bote* and he responded that this new task required all his time and energy. He asserted, however, "that someone from our

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Mennonite Heritage Archives

Award of Excellence and more

by Conrad Stoesz

The Mennonite Heritage Archives was pleased to host the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC) in November as the society marked its 50th anniversary. Historians, archivists, and board members came together to report, plan, and dream. The Society honored three notable historians with the Award of Excellence for their contributions to telling and preservation of Mennonite history and the programs of the national and provincial historical societies. Dr. Adolf Ens and Dr. John Friesen began teaching history at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in 1970 and were active in the local history scene, helped administer the Mennonite Heritage Centre, published numerous books and articles, and energized local interest in historical projects. Dr. Abe Dueck taught history at Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg and was also active in the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. He ended his career as director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies and editor of this magazine.

Looking ahead, the Historical Society founded two centennial committees to help Canadians remember the exodus of some 8,000 Mennonites to Mexico and Paraguay 1922–1926. A second committee will work to shed light on the coming of 20,000 Mennonite immigrants from Russia to Canada 1923–1930.

After the Society meetings, the focus of activities shifted to the University of Winnipeg and the conference in recognition of the Mennonite Historical Society's 50th anniversary entitled "A People of Diversity: Mennonites in Canada Since 1970." Sessions were well attended and began on Thursday evening and ran until Saturday afternoon. Themes such as identity, youth, cultural diversity, education, and agriculture were discussed.

On November 8, the archives hosted a volunteer appreciation event to honor the twelve people who contribute their time and skills to the Mennonite community through the archival program. Scanning, writing, sorting, copying, translating, and describing are some of the activities undertaken. Our volunteers contribute 180 hours of volunteer time a month. The partners in the Mennonite Heritage Archives were on hand to thank the volunteers for their dedication including Cheryl Pauls, President of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Henry Paetkau, Executive Minister of Mennonite Church Canada, and Aileen Friesen, Executive Director of the D.F. Plett Foundation. Dr. Aileen Friesen gave a presentation on the files created by the Russian secret police known as the "People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs" (in Russian, the *Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*) or NKVD. This organization was renamed in 1954 as the KGB (*Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti* or in English "Committee for State Security"). Friesen discussed the project under way to bring copies of these secret police files that relate to the false arrest, trial, exile, and executions of Mennonites living in Ukraine 1920–1940 to the Mennonite Heritage Archives.

MHSC Award of Excellence recipients for 2018 (l to r): Drs. John Friesen, Abe Dueck, and Adolf Ens. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz for both images on this page.

Dr. Aileen Friesen presents on the NKVD.

In September, we received the 1873 letter of invitation from the Canadian government, signed by John Lowe, addressed to the Mennonites of South Russia from the Canadian Conservation Institute after they cleaned and repaired the document. It was on display at CMU's Face 2 Face event that discussed Treaty 1 and this *Privilegium*.

MHA staff continue to build and reinforce bridges with communities, researchers, and professionals including with CMU's history professors. In October, Dr. Karl Koop's Anabaptist studies class was held in the archives where archivist Conrad Stoesz gave students an introduction to archives and archival research. A list of research paper ideas—based on English-language sources at the Mennonite Heritage Archives—was provided to encourage further archival research and exploration.

It is exciting to be part of the myriad kinds of research that MHA supports from film makers, genealogists, students, congregations, and historians from around the globe.

Anna Janzen Neufeld diaries donated

by Jon Isaak

This summer marked a significant accession at CMBS. Hildegard (Peters) Isaak (b. 1933), granddaughter of Anna (Janzen) Neufeld (1868–1945), donated Anna's original diary/journal books to CMBS (Acc. no. 2018-08). See image below showing Anna's diary/journal books.

In addition to the donation of the diaries, transcriber and translator Peter Neudorf (b. 1935) of Vancouver donated digital copies of his German transcriptions and English translations of the family letters and Anna's diary/journal books at the same time.

Peter spent about nine years on the transcription/translation project, starting in 2009. Peter's wife Helga (Peters) Neudorf (1937–2017), another of Anna's granddaughters, edited and proofread Peter's translations until Helga's passing. Grandson Helmut Peters (b. 1935) also helped with translation verification. Hedy (Peters) Pletz (b. 1942) is also a granddaughter. The original family letters remain in the possession of the family.

The donated collection at CMBS includes 30 cm of textual materials: 6 diary/journal books, 1 notebook, 1 friendship autograph book, and 744 pages of transcriptions/translations (i.e., English translations of some 70 letters written by Kornelius A. Neufeld (1869–1917) dated from 1890 to 1917, as well as English translations of Anna's diary/journal books dated 1916 and 1919 to 1925). (See the online description at http://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/personal_papers/neufeld-anna-janzen-1868-1945/.)

Through letters and journal entries, the collection documents well the life of a Mennonite factory family as they experience loss due to the Russian Revolution and First World War, emigration from Ukraine, eventual liquidation of their assets, and the challenges of starting life over in a new country.

Anna Janzen was the daughter of industrialist Jacob Wilhelm Janzen (1845–1917) and Helena Unrau (1847–1917). Anna was born in Andreasfeld, Chortitza, on June 23, 1868. She married Kornelius Neufeld on June 26, 1891, in Serjejewka, Fuerstenland. They had eight children, two of whom died in infancy.

Kornelius Neufeld was the son of Abram A. Neufeld (1820–1876) and Helena Unrau (1834–1898). Kornelius was born on May 26, 1869, at the Neustaedter Estate, located between Einlage and Ekaterinoslav, where his father Abram worked as a miller. His father died in 1876 of diabetes in Steinfeld Schlactin, a new farming settlement to which they had moved. Their 135-acre farm was sold for 50 rubles and the family sent back to where they had come from. Some years later, in 1889, Kornelius's older brother Herman took him to Serjejewka, Fuerstenland, where Kornelius started to work in the Janzen-Klassen farm implement foundry. In 1891, he married the Janzens' daughter Anna and was eventually promoted to management of the factory. After the Janzen-Klassen partnership broke up, Kornelius and his father-in-law formed a new foundry and machine shop.

About his translations, Peter writes, "I began the translation project with about 70 letters, the first one written by Kornelius in 1890 to his brother Herman in Nikolayevka. Starting in 1916, his wife, Anna Janzen, kept a diary, writing almost daily. She produced eight journal books in total; two were destroyed. For the first diary (321 pages) and the letters, I transcribed the text from Gothic script to English script and then translated the transcription into English. Eventually, I translated directly from Gothic to English. I started the project in 2009 and sent the first letter translations for the family—Helga's siblings—to read on December 28, 2009, and the last one on August 11, 2018.

Anna's diary/journal books. Photo credit: CMBS, Winnipeg.

"Having been a technician with IBM for over 30 years, the word ***can't*** was rarely in my vocabulary. On occasion, I would spend up to three days on a particularly difficult word, that is, a couple of hours a day, and then I typically came up with an English translation. Some Ukrainian words I could not transpose and I left them as Ukrainian. I want to give credit to my wife, who, as long as she was able, proofread and corrected my grammar. I thank Helmut Peters, her brother, for taking over after her passing.

"Anna's diary accounts give evidence of enjoying incredible wealth and then of experiencing the total loss of everything following the Russian Revolution. There is the narration of her husband's appendicitis operations and ultimate death in 1917 (see p. 11). The family, minus father, managed to flee to Germany on November 23, 1918, from their large home on the factory compound, travelling by train with the retreating German soldiers following the end of the First World War. Then there is her daughter's death—also of appendicitis—after needing to be left in Halifax as they immigrated to Canada in January 1922 following a three-year stay in Germany. Also moving is the humbling experience of having to live by gifts from kind-hearted Germans when the family's money ran out and Germany faced massive inflation.

"Anna was clearly a person that always needed people around her. Her diary describes many visits with friends, and yet there are regular expressions of loneliness. Still, the message that comes through almost daily in the entries is her conviction that God cares and will provide."

For an example of one of Peter's translations, see p. 11 in this issue of the *Mennonite Historian*.

Genesis of *Mennonite Exodus*

(cont'd from p. 5)

generation, someone who has experienced it himself, should write this history."

Thiessen next turned to Heinrich Goerz (1890–1972), a retired teacher and minister living in Clearbrook, British Columbia. Many readers had been impressed by Goerz's objective, though non-academic, history of the Molotschna settlement, where he described the controversies over disparities between wealthy and landless residents and the separations over religious beliefs and church practices (*Die Molotschnaer Ansiedlung: Entstehung, Entwickling und Niedergang*, Echo Verlag, 1950/1951). But Goerz had strong reservations about his qualifications for the task. He replied to Thiessen that he was not trained as an historian, had health issues, limited financial resources, and lived far from the repositories of the Board's records. After conducting some correspondence and research over a one-year span, he withdrew from the assignment when he experienced a major breakdown in his health.

Meanwhile, Janz mused about the hazards of writing a history of the Board. In a letter to Thiessen dated March 23, 1957, he argued against Goerz covering events in the Soviet Union, even in the introduction to the work of the Board in Canada, as this would duplicate his own writing. Rather Goerz should focus on the efforts of Canadian Mennonites in support of the immigration, such as asking the government to revoke the "evil" 1918 Order-in-Council that prohibited the immigration of Mennonites and Doukhobors. Revealing his political bias, Janz suggested that the causes prompting the Conservative government to issue this order should possibly also be mentioned.

As one intimately acquainted with the actors and actions, Janz also pointed to a "hot potato": namely, how to handle historically and truthfully "the impossibility of a fruitful, harmonious collaboration between A. Friesen and D. Toews." "What should one do?" he asked, "Obfuscate? Flatter? Keep silence? Tell the truth?" (*Heucheln? Schmeicheln? Totschweigen? Wahrsein?*). The implication was that none of these options seemed satisfactory.

Janz urged extensive treatment of the settlement (*Kolonization*) of the immigrants. But such treatment would require reports from all of the Board's field workers who had related directly to the refugees dispersing across Canada; but the Board's archives held very few of these reports. Eliciting such reports from the still-living field workers would be a major challenge, something only Thiessen, with his wide influence, could do. Without an account of the settlement phase, "the Board's history would come up as quite meager."

Janz highlighted a number of controversial issues in the history of the Board: A.A. Friesen's opposition to various settlement proposals, the strong personalities on the Russian Mennonite study commission, and the critical treatment of David Toews by his peers in the USA. He posed the general question of whether the history would acknowledge that "large, good works must also [inevitably] have so much opposition and also some errors? How then to write honest history!?!"

Despairing at the repeated failures in securing a writer, the Board again mandated its chairman to select and recruit someone. Thiessen approached Gerhard Lohrenz (1899–1986), then a professor of church history at the newly-established Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg and previously a high school teacher and principal in Manitoba. As a 25-year-old, Lohrenz had been an unusually young participant in the final conference of Russian Mennonite leaders held in 1925 in Moscow and was one of the very few from that assembly who had been able to immigrate to Canada. Here, he had authored a monograph history of Sagradowka, his former home in Ukraine (*Sagradowka: Die Geschichte einer Ansiedlung im Sueden Russlands*, Echo Verlag, 1947). Lohrenz eagerly acceded to Thiessen; however, when his home congregation, the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, composed largely of post-Second World War refugees, called him to be its leading minister later that year, he reluctantly withdrew his involvement from the book project. Later, Lohrenz produced several popular accounts of episodes from Russian Mennonite history and pioneered tours for Mennonites to the Soviet Union as it gradually became more open.

In February 1959, J.J. Thiessen also sent an inquiry to Arnold Dyck (1889–1970), well-known in Mennonite circles as the editor of the *Steinbach Post*, and prior to that of several short-lived Mennonite cultural periodicals (*Mennonitische Volkswarte*, 1935–1938, and *Wartejahrbuch*, 1943–1944); he also authored several plays (*Well'koam up De Forstei*), short stories in Low German, and a novel (*Verloren auf der Steppe*) about Mennonite life in Russia and Canada. Dyck had also been instrumental in the formation of the Echo Verlag, an initiative of former Chortitza Central School students that published a series of monographs on various Mennonite settlements, personalities, and episodes in Russia. In his appeal to Dyck, Thiessen conceded that there was a difference between describing life in the barracks of the alternative forestry service in Russia and writing the history of a Mennonite organization in Canada; but, he asserted, surely Dyck would be capable for the task. Dyck disagreed and declined the request.

On February 24, 1959, an encounter finally led to the successful conclusion of the 12-year search for a competent author for the Board's history. Frank H. Epp (1929–1986), then editor of the *Canadian Mennonite* and based in Altona, Manitoba, visited the Board's office in Saskatoon. J.J. Thiessen met with him and mentioned that several "brothers" had worked on a history but were unable to complete it, and that others had withdrawn from the effort after initially consenting. Then Thiessen asked Epp whether he would have interest in the project. Epp promised to ponder, pray, and confer about the matter and to send his reply before Easter.

Thirty years old at the time, married to Helen Dick (b. 1930), and a young father, Epp was considerably younger than all the previous candidates and Board members; however, he had already emerged as an influential leader among Canadian Mennonites coming from Russia. Born in Canada, the son of 1920s immigrants Heinrich H. and Anna (Enns) Epp (Heinrich was the much-loved elder of the Greendale Mennonite congregation in British Columbia), Epp had graduated from the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. After editing the bilingual youth page in *Der Bote* for several years, Epp, together with several visionaries, launched the *Canadian Mennonite* to serve his people with news and commentary in English. Through pertinent reporting and pointed editorials, Epp had become a voice to be reckoned with, especially within his denomination, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

In a letter dated March 14, 1959, Epp declared his interest in the project, noting

that the Board is a "work of faith and a miracle before our eyes and that the history should be written for ourselves and our descendants." Epp articulated the purpose of the project as follows: "Thorough research work should be done in the records of the Board. Out of its findings a truthful, historically accurate, and gripping history should be written that should include the work of the Board in connection with the emigration of the Mennonites after the great revolution in Russia until the present day.... Core themes should be the miraculous leadings of God in the history of a community, the faithful courage of various of its called men, and the gratitude and responsibility that manifested itself in the lives of those who have experienced the grace and leading of God."

Epp projected a book of about 200 pages—if it should be a short history—or 500 pages—if a lengthy history. The style should emulate *In Search of Utopia* (1955), a sociological study of Mennonites in Manitoba by E.K. Francis, *The Story of the Mennonites* (1941), a widely-used survey by C. Henry Smith, and *In the Name of Christ* (1952) by John D. Unruh, an account of the expanding Mennonite Central Committee. Then Epp proposed that "in order to serve the generation of today and the purposes of the future, this work should be written in the English language."

Furthermore, Epp avowed that "the entire work would be under the supervision of the Board to which I should be accountable." But in keeping with his practical and visionary approach, Epp presented the Board with several well-considered terms for the project to be started, continued, and completed as soon as possible, though "even with so much haste, quality should be the priority." He outlined a work schedule of one day per week plus summer, Christmas, and Easter vacations whereby the research and a manuscript would be completed by summer 1960, readings by various critics by early 1961, and publication in fall 1961. The Board should remunerate him for the research and writing with a salary of $400 per month, equivalent to that of a teacher, and also pay for secretarial support at $0.75 to $1.00 per hour. He measured his work time as 5 ½ eight-hour days per week and 4 ⅓ weeks per month. As he planned to study in the coming winter, these earnings would replace other part-time work.

Epp concluded his letter with another summary of his understanding of the project: "This entire work should, through the passing on of the historical leadings of God, foster the work of the Lord among us. For this purpose, it should be built up according to the best rules for academic research and interesting writing. The name of the Lord should be praised and His salvation as shown to the fathers should be proclaimed to the children and grandchildren." In a postscript Epp reported that he had begun to study the Russian language.

The Board discussed Epp's proposal at length in its annual meeting on April 1, 1959, and decided unanimously to entrust the work to Epp in accordance with his terms. Thiessen immediately conveyed the Board's decision to Epp in a letter on April 3: "We ask you to proceed prayerfully to the fulfillment of the assignment. May the Lord grant you wisdom and grace to begin and end the work." Thiessen added that there had been a divided view about the language in which the work should be published, but because Janz was authoring his account in German, then "quite justifiably this [book] will come into the hands of our brotherhood in the English language." However, the Board did want to translate the English manuscript into German.

That September the Epp family re-located to Minneapolis, where Epp began his doctoral study program in history at the University of Minnesota. His doctoral dissertation focused on the views about Nazi Germany expressed in reports and letters in *Der Bote* in the 1930s. However, from the outset, the history of the Board consumed much of Epp's time and that of his wife, Helen, who typed most of the research notes and the manuscript in several stages of its preparation and who provided constant encouragement.

The Board, with input from Epp, assembled a committee of readers from a younger generation and with significant academic and church service credentials: Cornelius Krahn, Cornelius Dyck, and John A. Toews. Krahn (1902–1990) had emigrated from Soviet Russia in 1926 and studied history in western Europe before moving to the USA. At Bethel College (North Newton, Kansas), he directed the Mennonite Library and Archives and taught from 1944 until 1974. Dyck (1921–2014) was himself closely linked to the story being written, having emigrated from Soviet Russia and settled in Canada in his childhood; he served in MCC's relief, refugee, and re-settlement efforts in Europe and South America after the war. Dyck attained a doctorate in history and had just started to serve on the faculty of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Elkhart, Indiana). He would author the next standard survey of Mennonite history, *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (1967). Toews (1912–1979) was also an immigrant of the 1920s, and now served as a teacher and leader based at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. He had written a monograph, *Alternative Service During World War II* (1959), and had just embarked on doctoral studies in history in Minneapolis, where he boarded with the Epp family. Krahn and Dyck were active in the General Conference Mennonite Church and resided in the USA, whereas Toews was active in the Mennonite Brethren Church and had settled in Canada.

By the end of the year, Epp reported that much of the research had been completed and he submitted a comprehensive outline of the prospective book's content and form. He submitted several possible titles. "Rescue" was the key word in most of them, but based on his own criteria he expressed dissatisfaction with all his suggestions—the title should be historical, dramatic, and psychological. Cornelius J. Dyck assured him, "Don't worry about the title. It will come by the time the child is ready for baptism."

Epp worked on the manuscript for the following year, but in October 1960 he informed the Board that publication would have to be postponed to July 1962. Then, in a May 1961 letter to the appointed readers, Epp raised the question about the treatment of "the problematic and controversial material in the early years of the CMBoC." Here he echoed the issues named previously by B.B. Janz: namely, the relationship between David Toews and other leading personalities, a libel trial between two immigrants that had aroused wide-spread controversy, and the diverting impact of an American-based initiative to settle the immigrants in Mexico. Anticipating vetoes from influential voices, Epp stated, "Once we start removing everything that certain people wouldn't like, we would have nothing left of our history, at least not an honest history." Thiessen affirmed Epp's commitment to

Helen and Frank Epp in Paris, July 1967. Photo credit: Marlene Epp, Conrad Grebel University College.

honesty. Meanwhile, the official readers critiqued the "heavily Germanic style" of the writing.

Even before publication, the portion of the history written by Epp that elicited the most controversy was the chapter recounting the influence of National Socialism on and among the immigrants of the 1920s. Many members of the Board, now renamed as the Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council (CMRIC), considered this subject to be beyond the scope of the book. The official readers advised restraint in the detail, extent, and interpretation of this aspect of the history. In the discourse within the Council and with the readers, this topic was labeled "Chapter 21" after its place in the manuscript.

Also weighing in—much more critically and publicly, complicating the deliberations within the Council—was Walter Quiring, who obtained an advance copy of the manuscript. He probably felt personally exposed for his previous pro-Nazi expressions, especially as his writings in *Der Bote* in the 1930s had formed much of the material Epp had critically analyzed for pro-Nazi sentiments. Now as editor of *Der Bote*, Quiring published a review of the manuscript before its publication arguing strongly against Epp's account of this episode.

In the face of these objections, Epp insisted on its inclusion for the sake of a "truthful" history. J.J. Thiessen mediated between the apprehensive council members and the "uncompromising" author. The debate came to a head in a meeting of the CMRIC in May 1962 in Winnipeg. Also invited were Gerhard Lohrenz and J.A. Toews as authoritative historians. Thiessen and C.A. DeFehr (1881–1979), a prominent Mennonite Brethren businessman and layman based in Winnipeg who had been involved in MCC's famine relief in Russia and post-war re-settlement of refugees in Paraguay, represented those who called for omitting this chapter. Epp called upon the Council to hold to its original commitment to produce a "truthful history" and pointed out that ultimately the author would be considered responsible for the facts, form, and interpretation presented in the published history.

The Council decided that the chapter would be included, but revised, to emphasize that the Nazi sympathizers were a small, albeit vocal, minority and that Mennonite leadership, including the Board, had rejected such views. Furthermore, references to specific persons and places related to pro-Nazi expressions should be removed. Thiessen placed this decision within the broader expectation of the Board and the Council that succeeded it: namely, that the book should pertain to "the erection of a memorial." Referring to the controversial chapter, Thiessen reported to the CMRIC in October 1961 that "much electricity had been built up in the atmosphere" and expressed the hope that "the thunder will soon exhaust itself once the people have read the book."

In his final report as author to the CMRIC, Epp expressed the sentiment of his wife and himself: "More than once in the course of our work we felt that God was speaking to us as He spoke to Moses... 'Put off the shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'"

After a 15-year genesis since the idea of publishing a history of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization was launched, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Re-settlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution* was published in October 1962. Epp's book engendered much debate and acclaim.

Johann G. Rempel's proposal for a three-part treatment of the history of the Board—emigration, transmigration, and immigration—by a trio of authors was eventually realized with Board's funding, although not in as integrated a manner as he had envisioned. B.H. Unruh authored a slim monograph on the transmigration phase, which was published posthumously together with several documents assembled by his daughter, Liesel Quiring-Unruh, as *Fuegung und Fuehrung im Mennonitischen Welthilfswerk, 1920–1923* in 1966. B.B. Janz's research and writing on the emigration phase formed the basis for the book *Lost Fatherland: The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921–1927* by John B. Toews, published in 1967.

Between the emergence in 1947 of the idea of publishing the Board's history and its publication as *Mennonite Exodus* in 1962, there were several futile efforts to recruit writers, incomplete or unsatisfactory manuscripts, ambitious plans and exaggerated notions of scope, another major wave of immigrants to receive and re-settle, a renaming of the organization, intense debates about content and style, and the preparations for its merger into a new inter-Mennonite service agency, Mennonite Central Committee (Canada). The "genesis" of *Mennonite Exodus* involved an extended interplay of personalities and organizations, exhibited conflict and collaboration, and required persistence and vision.

As a chapter in Mennonite historiography, the "genesis" of *Mennonite Exodus* manifested a transition from lay to professional historians, from recollections written by actors in the events to critical histories written by students of them from a later generation. On one hand, the generation of actors initially pursued to author the history was familiar with the languages and settings in which the events transpired—Russia, Germany and Canada—though most fluent in German and equally familiar with the Russian and Canadian settings. On the other hand, when it came time to write the history of their experiences and efforts in the exodus,

they were fully burdened with broader leadership roles or fading in energy and health. The generation of Frank H. Epp had not participated personally in the emigration from the Soviet Union but had been shaped by the Canadian destination. They had very limited knowledge of Russia and virtually no access to Soviet Russia but had advanced academic training as historians.

With their predecessors, they shared a profound commitment to their Mennonite people and ascribed these experiences to God's leading. The current generation of historians writing today is even more distant in time from the exodus but has a combination of fluency in languages, diverse backgrounds, dispersed locations, access to records, academic training, and funding to produce a deeper and broader understanding of this formative episode and others in the history of the Russian Mennonites.

A 1916 account of illness and surgery

Eds. This letter from Kornelius Neufeld to Herman and Katharina Neufeld (dated December 17, 1916) was translated by Peter Neudorf, Vancouver, and is part of a recent CMBS acquisition. Kornelius, an industrialist, and Herman, a minister, were brothers. See story on p. 7. The English translation of the letter was first published in Roots and Branches *(September 2017) and appears here with permission.*

Dear Herman and Katharina Neufeld: I wish you God's blessings. After my long silence, to you my loved ones, I shall try and write a little. We are almost healthy again, except that the wound resulting from the operation is not quite healed, and then our Tine has been sick for some days. I shall try, as much as I remember, to describe my illness.

On September 19, I drove to Kherson for business reasons. As often was the case, Herman and Lena also came along. Herman carried on to Yekaterinoslav. Lena and I left for home on the 22nd. I felt so heavy emotionally and at night on the riverboat my right side was painful. It became increasingly uncomfortable to the point of being unbearable. Lena tried to help by rubbing my side but to no avail. We came home around noon; it got worse. The pain spread throughout my whole body, a pain that is indescribable, as though my intestines would tear. We sent for the army medic from Klein Lepeticha. He gave me an enema, but it was as though paralysis had set in—the water did not return and a fever set in to the extent that the bed was shaking. I thought I was nearing my end. Oats were warmed and laid on my body with containers of hot water; the fever receded but the pain carried on with small breaks.

The next day, the illness increased to an unbearable state. Again, we sent for the army medic who then returned. Immediately, we also sent for the doctor at Kamenka. The field medic attempted to remove the water from yesterday. He was successful and this resulted in some relief.

Since then I have taken different laxatives, as well as Franz Joseph bitter water [a salted drink used for constipation] that normally works in two hours. But after seven hours, it still had no effect. The next day was Sunday and at noon the doctor from Kamenka arrived. First, I was bathed in a good warm bath (which I had previously done) and that was very pleasant. Then it was an enema, such a large amount of water with soap—it seemed as though I was being completely filled, but then there was relief. Again, I was given laxatives immediately, which took effect in four hours.

It was believed that improvement would result. But illness set in, resulting in a high temperature, bowel movements as normal, and increased pain in the right side. In a week's time, it appeared that the hour of departure had arrived. I felt the movement of the blood slowing and weakness to the point that speech was almost impossible. With the injections of camphor, the heart was strengthened, and it had the victory.

With all this happening, I was again sent to the doctor at Kamenka, but nothing helped. Then three weeks at home with an unbearable pain. O how I wished that I could die. It was a terrible pain. I felt my nerves getting weak. I thought I would have a nervous breakdown. Nobody was allowed to speak to me. The sight of me was unbearable. I could not pray. It seemed that everything was gone. Then my dear wife prudently started to mention going to Kherson. I started to listen. It created the thought that it might relieve my pain. I resolved to go. So, we left on October 20: Johann Koslowsky, Gerhard Enns, the medic Malitzky, our Tine, and my dear wife. As we left, it came to me—so, this is the last: you will not see Sergeyevka again. The departure from my dear children was silent, no words. The tension was too great.

So, off we went in two wagons to the riverboat, but it was very difficult. We came to Kherson. Prior to our departure, we had asked and sent Brother John Martens to arrange a hospital for us. This he had done with Dr. Bonch-Sosmalowsky. When we arrived, and I had been examined, the doctor declared that, since he was in such high demand (he was a Military doctor), he could not accept me; but in his opinion, an operation was definitely required. He thus sent us to the Red Cross to Dr. Schaad. Our military medic went there and made the necessary arrangements for my admittance. Dr. Schaad is the brother to calendar-maker Schaad in Prischib. Men of his equal are rare.

I was assigned a private room where my dear wife could be with me day and night. Dr. Schaad examined me on the same day but did not want to operate immediately, rather ordered Potassium applications four times a day for half an hour. This resulted in a reduction of the swelling on my right

Anna and Kornelius Neufeld were married on June 16, 1891. This photo is dated about 1910. Photo credit. CMBS, Winnipeg.

side. On the second day, a group of three doctors examined my heart, lungs, and my right side. They put the surgery on hold for three days, although every day I was reexamined. On the fifth day, four doctors decided that I would be operated on the next day, but without chloroform—this was a concern. Then Dr. Bonch-Sosmalowsky returned and spoke in good German: "With the operation the children will keep their father, but with chloroform they would lose him; the heart is too weak and the lungs too stressed." Thus, I arrived at what I wanted. I had found the uncertainty unbearable. I said to Schaad that it would have been better for me to stay home and die.

It turned into a very hard night—I was so afraid. It seemed like I could not find the Lord Jesus until it suddenly came to me: "I am with you all the days." Oh, then he was so near and I could discuss everything with him; these were serious hours but blessed hours. I became happy, all fear disappeared. I was able to sleep a little, but then it was morning, then noon, the appointed hour!

Johann Neufeld and two orderlies came with a stretcher and I was placed on it and carried into the operating room and laid on the operating table and prepared. My right side was soaped and shaved with a razor and then thoroughly washed with iodine and alcohol. Then Schaad (he operated) injected where the cut was to be; I only felt the first needle prick. The skin was cut. Then more injections, deeper cuts, and more injections. A stinking gas came out—more injections and more cuts to the intestines. It was all painless until the doctor searched for the appendix (unfortunately, buried to sight) with his hand, then I felt a severe pain. My illness was diagnosed as an infected appendix, which was swollen with puss, thus causing my incredible pain. Yes, if nature had not been helpful and the colon had not engulfed the appendix and thus isolated the pus, it would have ruptured. The puss would have spread throughout the abdominal area and death would have come quickly.

The operation lasted about two hours with three doctors and one nurse. The first bandage was on for two days, but what a stench when it was removed (like a bowel movement). It was all cleaned and with the inspection of the wound, two pockets of puss of considerable depth and width had formed. Two rubber tubes were inserted through which the puss could escape. After this, I was bandaged daily. The puss had various appearances. For eight days I had to lie on my back (which had been the case prior). When I was helped to sit up, I couldn't. I had similar difficulty walking. It seemed as though it was all forgotten. But after a few days, it came back, and I could walk.

I am fed up with the typewriter [the remainder of the letter is handwritten in Gothic script]. I had been in misery because I could not eat. As soon as I ate, belching and vomiting resulted. I ate very little. In Kherson, two days prior to the operation, I made no effort to eat any thing. After the operation, I could not drink water. My thirst was great; it was eased with eating apples. We stayed in Kherson for about three weeks and the wound was bandaged daily. When it had healed to the point that the rubber tube could only be inserted about half the length of a finger, it was the doctor's opinion that there was no more danger. We decided to return home.

A basket of bandaging material was provided for our return journey. After we arrived at the riverboat and had travelled for a while, I did not feel well. I should add that Schaad sent along two orderlies for our assistance: namely, John Neufeld and Abraham Janzen from Georgstal. During the night on the riverboat, I had a high temperature and a headache. We arrived at Gross Lepeticha, and from there we travelled home by horse drawn wagon.

Upon arrival at home, I felt bad. My temperature was 37.7 (much too high) and on another day it climbed to 40.2. I was very ill. I thought I would not survive. The medic inspected my wound. It had really swollen as a result of the travelling. It had developed a pocket of puss as deep as it was in the beginning—a mass of stinking puss came out of the wound, which gave us serious concerns.

My condition improved as ice was applied to the wound. My temperature returned to normal. So, we carry on. My dear Anna is the medic. She bandages and cleans the wound, which now on December 30 has a depth of about five inches. It appears to be healing externally, which is not desirable. It seems that this is how I will spend this winter. I am up but weak, especially my legs. So, if we keep living and if it is God's will, then we shall get together in our lifetime. Then we can talk to each other about everything.

My wound since yesterday has improved; it is now only three and three-quarter inches deep. It seems to be pulling together internally; hopefully, I will be better soon.

Our Tine for all intents and purposes was well. For Christmas, Jacob Wedel came over and so it was decided that the wedding would be on January 15. But at Christmas, Tine caught a cold and developed influenza and pleurisy. If this will not change very soon, the wedding will have to be delayed. Father is ailing considerably; if his health does not improve, it is unlikely for he will see springtime. Mother is so helpless; she cannot dress or undress herself anymore. Bodily, she is better than Father.

Mrs. Johann Janzen and Jacob Janzen are now involved in a new health remedy: namely, the Jewish healer who cures in his own way. It seems to help. Jacob Janzen's right arm was totally paralyzed, but now he can move it. Lena can move her legs. May God help. It had been said that the Kneipp Cure [Sebastian Kneipp] was not a cure for humans but for horses (perhaps it works with both?).

Well, it is time for me to close. This letter has come to an end on January 2, 1917. I wish you a happy new year and may the Lord of Grace give you and us much wisdom so that we may become what God wills. Heartfelt greetings to the John Neufelds, the Letkemans, and your children, from your siblings, Kornelius and Anna Neufeld.

Abraham Enns came over on December 30 from Siberia, apparently looking for work. He says the beginnings of the settlement are extremely difficult.

If no special notice arrives, the wedding will proceed on January 15.

Kornelius Neufeld

Eds. Kornelius went for a second surgery six months later, this time in Odesa. He and Anna went by riverboat to Kherson and then took the steamer to Odesa. They were hopeful this operation would be successful. While the operation went well, Sepsis (bacterial infection) set in and, after much suffering, Kornelius died on June 25, 1917. "On that day, my happy childhood came to an end. I was not quite 12 years old," writes Liese (Neufeld) Peters (1905–1984) in the account of her father's life, which is also in the CMBS collection of Anna's personal papers (vol. 1401).