

Mennonite Historian

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



One of the largest out-migrations in Canadian history since Confederation in 1867 took place 100 years ago, when some 7,700 Reinländer, Sommerfelder, Chortitzer, and Saskatchewan Bergthaler Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan moved to Mexico and Paraguay, in part because provincial governments did not honour the federal government's promises of religious freedom with respect to education. The picture of this group was taken on September 21, 1922, as they prepared to leave Canada. The man with a tie (4th from the right) has been identified as Alvin Solberg and the man (7th from the left) with his arm around the boy is possibly Samuel Mc Roberts. See story starting on page 2. Photo credit: Mennonite Archives and Library, Bethel College, Kansas, 2022-0101.

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The Effect of the 1920s Exodus on the Canadian Mennonite Scene

by William (Bill) Janzen, Ottawa

How was the general Canadian Mennonite scene affected by the exodus, in the 1920s, of some 7,700 Old Colony, Sommerfelder, and Chortitzer Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan to Mexico and Paraguay? What would be different if they had not moved? What trends or developments in the subsequent history of Canadian Mennonites can be attributed to the absence of these groups?

I will begin with my personal situation, believing that it illustrates certain broader realities. The simple fact that I grew up on a modest farm in the village of Blumenheim, between Hague and Osler in Saskatchewan, is due, in part, to that exodus. My grandfather, Peter P. Janzen (1878–1962), having decided against joining the 1920s move to Mexico, bought several quarters of land from those who did move. He then gave one quarter to each of his children when they got married. This gift of land helped my parents to start a farm of their own and to raise their children, including me, within that community. What would have happened if

that land had not become available to us? Perhaps our family would then have joined one of the small migrations to outlying areas of western Canada that took place in later years, or maybe my father would have taken a factory job in Saskatoon. Certainly, life would have been different.

More significant for the broader Canadian Mennonite scene is that the exodus made land available for a significant portion of the 21,000 *Russlaender* families who came from the Soviet Union in the 1920s. In the Hague-Osler area, where only a third of the Old Colonists moved to Mexico, the number of *Russlaender* families who settled there was below 100. In the Swift Current area, the number may have been slightly higher, since a larger percentage of the Old Colony people there left for Mexico, but the total number in that reserve was somewhat smaller to start with. In Manitoba, where a much larger number of the Mennonites emigrated, the *Russlaender* purchased 15,000 acres in the Winkler area from the Old Colonists who moved to Mexico, and another 43,988 acres in the Steinbach area from the Chortitzer and Sommerfeld people who moved to Paraguay (Anna Ens, *In Search of Unity*, p. 30). Despite these large numbers, it is likely that over half of the newly arriving *Russlaender* settled elsewhere, sometimes in outlying areas where other farmers had given up.

What does it mean for our question that a substantial number of newly arriving *Russlaender* were able to acquire farms that had been built up by those who moved away? First, it gave these *Russlaender* reasonably good places to live, in a somewhat concentrated way, among neighbours with whom they enjoyed a significant linguistic, cultural, and religious affinity, although those relations were challenging at times (Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, vol II, p. 245ff). Second, given that many of the *Russlaender* had a more open and accepting view of the larger society, they often had what I see as a positive influence on the conservative people who stayed back. In my situation, though there were no *Russlaender* in my village, six miles away, in Neuanlage, where my father grew up, there were at least half a dozen *Russlaender* families; another half dozen were on farms nearby. Before long they had their own church services, as

well as monthly *Jugendverein* programs, which Old Colony young people from my father's generation found attractive, in part because musical instruments were allowed there. One generation later, my father was keen to take his own children to those evening services, even as he served in the Old Colony church as a Sunday School teacher and in other ways. We did not have to disown our Old Colony background in order to be welcomed by these *Russlaender*, but their orientation and mindset influenced us in far-reaching ways.

These Neuanlage *Russlaender* may have been unusual; not all were that welcoming towards the Old Colonists, but Peter Zacharias in his 1976 book, *Reinland: An Experience in Community*, recounts a similar approach in the village of Reinland, in Manitoba. There the *Russlaender*, particularly the family of Gerhard G.H. Ens, started a community-based Sunday School and *Jugendverein*. These attracted many of the Old Colonists who had not emigrated. They saw these programs as providing the Christian education that their church-run day schools had provided earlier. Again, the impact was extensive. Another way in which the *Russlaender* influenced the conservative people who stayed back was that a good number of them, as a good number from the more assimilated *Kanadier*, obtained teaching certificates and then taught in the public schools in the more conservative communities. By doing so, they made those schools more acceptable to the conservatives than they would have been with non-Mennonite teachers. One other characteristic of the *Russlaender* was a greater readiness to set up committees, organizations, and institutions for all kinds of purposes. The more conservative Mennonites were less inclined to take such initiatives, but once taken, some from the conservative groups then found their way into those bodies. A beautiful example of this is that in 1963, when Mennonite Central Committee Canada was formed, the Old Colony church of Manitoba was one of the founding members.

The general orientation of the *Russlaender*, their readiness to take leadership roles in Mennonite affairs and their openness to the larger society,

(cont'd on p. 4)

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Genealogy and Family History

The 1920s Mennonite Immigration to Canada: Pre-emigration Genealogical Sources, Part 1b

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

In the March issue, Glenn began exploration of the pre-emigration sources (1923–1930) for the 1920s immigration to Canada. In this issue, he concludes this first part by pointing readers to church records, civil registers, village lists, and newspapers. There are still three more parts to his extended treatment of genealogical resources for the 1920s immigration.

To conclude the discussion of pre-emigration church records that I began in March, I direct readers to the Chortitza Family registers, which I mentioned in Part 1a. They are now viewable online at mennonitegenealogy.com.¹⁸

Civil Registers

Few civil registers of births, marriages, and deaths were kept by the imperial Russian government. Traditionally, the metrical books of the Russian Orthodox church served as civil registers, but only for the majority Orthodox population. At some point in the late 1800s, all churches were required to keep metrical books, and these were used as official records of births, marriages, and deaths. One such register has survived—the birth register for the Gnadenfeld Volost for 1898 to 1920.¹⁹ The Molotschna Mennonite colony was split into the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld Volosts (municipalities) in 1870. The communist government started civil registration in the mid-1920s. These civil registers were kept by the local village soviets (councils). As a result, they are found scattered in various Russian and Ukrainian regional archives.

Several registers for various locations in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies are in the Zaporozhye archives. Some of these were microfilmed by the Mormons and are available through FamilySearch.²⁰

I have worked towards finding these registers and having them translated. Deaths for the Chortitza village soviet for 1925–1932 have been found and translated,²¹ as have those for the Rueckenau soviet (Molotschna colony) for 1926–1929.²² Marriages for the Alexanderwohl soviet (1926–1929) have been translated and will be posted soon. Copies of individual records are available from the author. There should be many hundreds of these communist era civil registers. (In order to effectively search for these, we need the help of someone with a good working knowledge of Russian. Anyone willing to help should contact me.)

Census and village lists

No Russian population census was conducted between 1900 and 1930. The only census taken after 1858 was the national census of 1897. Unfortunately, the copy held in the national archives in St. Petersburg no longer exists. There are a few regional copies available, but none from any Mennonite district. There are too many lists available at mennonitegenealogy.com to mention them all here. An important census is the 1920 Chortitza colony census. Although it contains the names and birthdates for about 6,800 people, it is missing several villages (the villages of Chortitza, Schoeneberg, Nieder Chortitza, Rosengart, Schoenhorst, Osterwick, Kronthal, Rosenthal, Neuenburg, and Neuendorf are available).²³ Unfortunately, a 1926 census of the Molotschna colony includes only a few villages (Fuerstenau, Blumenort, Lindenau, Rosenort, Fabrikerwiese, Schoensee, Klippenfeld, Halbstadt, and Muntau).²⁴

An exciting recent development is the work being done on the 1923 census of the Orenburg Settlement.²⁵ A translation of this Russian language census will appear on the mennonitegenealogy.com website sometime soon. An important colony census is that of the Ignatyavo settlement for 1899. It covers the villages of Nikolayevka, Romanovka, Ignatyevka, Leonidovka, and Ekaterinovka, but does not include Alexeyevka or New York.²⁶

A very important census, which has barely been exploited, is the 1917 Russian Agricultural Census. This is not a population census—it usually contains only the names of the household heads. It does, however, include the ages of all family members as well as economic information on the family. Only three of the many hundreds of “Mennonite” villages have been translated (into German)—that of Klippenfeld, Molotschna colony²⁷ and Ludwische und Dolinowka, in the Barnaul settlement.²⁸ In the latter document, the names of the family members are given! Copies of the 1917 census are scattered over many archival collections and buried in these archival files. Again, someone who is fluent in Russian needs to hunt for these lists and translate them. (Please contact me if you can help.) A recent addition to the collection of pre-1920 lists is the collection for the Barnaul Mennonite settlement in Siberia.²⁹

Newspapers

By far the most important periodical, and an incredible gold mine of information, is the *Mennonitische Rundschau*.³⁰ In recent months, there have been some exciting developments with respect to the *Rundschau*—mainly that the *Rundschau* is now available online on the Internet Archive website.^{31a} This site is searchable; however, it should be noted that searches are not particularly reliable as they involve optical character recognition of the original

(cont'd on p. 11)

Mennonitische Rundschau

Lasset uns fleissig sein, zu halten die Einigkeit im Geist

Ein christliches Familienblatt

Gegründet im Jahre 1877

THE LIBRARY OF THE
MENNONITE BRETHREN BIBLE COLLEGE
1-169 RIVINGTON AVE., WINNIPEG MB. R2L 2E5

1920s Exodus of Mennonites

(cont'd from p. 2)

enabled them, and the more assimilated Mennonites, to shape the broader Canadian Mennonite story. This is reflected in the subtitle of the third volume of the *Mennonites in Canada* history series. Covering the period from 1940 to 1970, its subtitle is “A People Transformed.” Indeed, for many Canadian Mennonites there had been a transformation. They had moved from rural to urban areas, from using German to using English, from having only elementary school education to completing high school (and, in many instances, also university-level training), from working primarily in farming and community related occupations to pursuing various other professions, from having unsalaried and often self-taught ministers to ones with professional training, from being inward looking to having a vocation in the wider world, etc. That subtitle was reasonably accurate for most *Russlaender*, for the more assimilated *Kanadier* in the west, and for many of Swiss background in Ontario, but it did not reflect the ways of the conservative minority very well; they had not been so transformed, but their numbers were small. However, if that exodus had not taken place, then their numbers would have been much, much larger. In that case, it would not have been possible to use that subtitle; the overall story would have been so different.

The question of how differently things might have unfolded if the exodus had not taken place begs for further comment. What if the governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan had not resorted to force to get parents to send their children to English-speaking public schools; what if they had just continued to encourage people to do so voluntarily? In that case the exodus would almost certainly not have taken place, at least not on such a large scale. One consequence, in that scenario, is that the newly arriving *Russlaender* would have had to settle elsewhere, perhaps in smaller, more isolated places, as in fact many did. This would have precluded some of the synergy and creativity that emerged from communities where *Russlaender* lived alongside the *Kanadier*. As for the issue of schooling, I expect that gradually more and more people from the conservative groups

would have accepted public schools, as well as some other practises of the larger society.

But the conservative groups would probably not have faded into the larger society; indeed, they might well have grown substantially, thanks to their larger families. Those living in Latin America, that is, the descendants of those who emigrated from Canada, numbered approximately a quarter million in 2021. That number is close to the total number of Mennonites in Canada according to the Canadian census. If they had stayed in Canada, I expect some would likely have moved to remote areas of Canada, like Peace River country in northern Alberta, or Burns Lake or Fort St. John, B.C., where farming was still possible. Others would have gone into non-farming but still close-to-the-land occupations as, indeed, many Old Order Mennonites and Hutterites have done. And in all likelihood, they would have contributed significantly to the prosperity of their regions, as they are now doing, for example, in the Hague-Osler area of Saskatchewan, the Winkler area of Manitoba, the La Crete area of Alberta, and other places.

In terms of faith, some would have held to a “traditionalist” kind of conservatism. The Old Colony church in Ontario is a fine illustration of this. As in all Old Colony churches, their ministers are unsalaried, their women follow distinctive dress styles, and they have private schools, but, unlike those in Latin America, here they teach in the language of the surrounding society. And their curriculum materials, drawn from conservative Mennonite private schools in Virginia, are quite different from those in the Old Colony village schools in Latin America. The Ontario church also has substantial youth programs and a moving piety. Certainly, evangelicalism would also have attracted many, whether to Mennonite or non-Mennonite denominations, and perhaps even to cities. In addition, quite a portion would not identify with any church. And occasionally, the conservative impulse would have led to a disregard for, or resistance to, the expectations of the larger society, as is currently happening in relation to getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Observers will notice that the speculative scenario I am painting is merely an extension of how the Canadian

Mennonite scene has in fact developed in recent decades. It is different from the scenario that some earlier leaders hoped for. When I started working with Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCCC) in 1975, I sensed that some leaders, especially Frank Epp, hoped for an all-embracing Canadian Mennonite identity, one where every group saw itself as having a place. He sought to articulate that in his history books, and he wanted MCCC to be a home and an agency for all. I found that vision very energizing. I was from an Old Colony family, with first cousins in Mexico. Thanks to those welcoming *Russlaender* in Neuanlage, I had joined a General Conference church. Then I obtained advanced university degrees, and my wife is of *Russlaender* Mennonite Brethren background. In my role in the MCCC, I wanted to hold all those parts together and help build that broad peoplehood and to strengthen its vocation.

In retrospect that broad vision may not have resonated well with some of the conservative groups; nor did it keep more liberal Mennonites from fading into the larger society. We seem to be left with a great divergence, one that would be even greater if that exodus had not taken place. What to do? While regretting the loss of that all-embracing framework, many positive connections and relationships are still possible. In my long involvement with Mennonites from Mexico in Ontario, I was often surprised at how supportive people from different branches of the larger Mennonite community, and indeed the larger society, were. And now, as many people from many other countries have come to identify with the Canadian Mennonite family, it is embarrassing to even speak of Swiss, the *Russlaender*, and *Kanadier* identities. There are doors to new relationships, of many kinds. May the Spirit of God help us to see them.

Bill Janzen, now retired, served as director of the Ottawa Office of MCCC from 1975 to 2008. His book, Advocating for Peace: Stories from the Ottawa Office of Mennonite Central Committee 1975–2008, published by Pandora Press, can be obtained from the Commonword bookstore at Canadian Mennonite University, <https://www.commonword.ca/>.

Elder Ordinations in the Conference of Mennonites in Canada

by Peter H. Rempel, Winnipeg

In the Prussian-Russian Mennonite communities, the elders (*Ältester*) have been the overseers of the faith and unity of their church (*Gemeinde*), presiding at meetings, coordinating the ministry of the preachers (*Prediger*) and deacons (*Diakone*), conducting baptisms and communions, and ordaining deacons, preachers, and elders—a three-fold ministry structure. These elders served churches composed of several local congregations or a church of one local congregation located at a distance from the concentrated Mennonite communities.

By ordaining elders to succeed them or to serve neighbouring Mennonite churches, the elders asserted the continuity of faith and oversight inherited from their Anabaptist forebears and the bonds of shared beliefs and practices with sister Mennonite churches. This sequence of ordinations by elders served to assert a legitimate sequence and the three-fold ministry composition of ministry analogous to the apostolic succession and ecclesial structure maintained by the Catholic Church, from which the Anabaptists had separated, and which questioned their ecclesial legitimacy.

The sequence of the ordinations of most elders in the Prussian-Russian Mennonite stream began with Jan Matthijsz of Haarlem, who had been baptized by Melchoir Hoffman in 1532, and who later emerged as one of the key leaders of the revolutionary kingdom established in 1535 by Anabaptists in the city of Münster. In 1533, Bartel Boeckbinder, one of twelve apostles dispatched by Matthijsz from Amsterdam, baptized and then ordained Obbe Phillips as elder in Leeuwarden, Friesland. One year later, in Groningen, Obbe ordained his brother Dirk as an elder and, in 1537, he, possibly together with Dirk and several other Anabaptist “brothers,” ordained Menno Simons as elder, also in Groningen. These three elders steered Anabaptists away from violence and toward a pacifistic movement.

Menno Simons visited Prussia several times after 1549 to organize and mediate in congregations of Anabaptist refugees. Dirk Phillips, who may have accompanied him,

became the first elder of the Anabaptist-Mennonite congregation in Danzig in 1561. Leenaert Bouwens, whom Menno and Dirk had ordained as elder in 1561 in Emden, visited Prussia in 1563. One or more of these three ordained new elders in Prussia, thereby initiating a sequence of elders which continued in Prussia for four centuries, transferred to Russia for almost two centuries, and eventually arrived in Canada.

The Reinlaender, Bergthaler, Chortitzer, and Rosenorter churches transplanted to Canada by the Mennonite immigrants who arrived in Canada the late 19th century, and the churches which divided from them, such as the Sommerfelder, could claim that they were in the sequence of elder ordinations originating with the first elders of the Mennonites in Prussia. The sequence of elders in the *Kleine Gemeinde* (now Evangelical Mennonite Church), and the Holdeman Church which emerged as a separate church from it, had begun with the ordination the first *Kleine Gemeinde* elder in 1813 by a minister, in the absence of an elder in the original dissenting group. The Mennonite Brethren Church, which emerged later in Manitoba, was also not in this Prussian-Russian Mennonite sequence of elders, as the first elder of the Mennonite Brethren in the Molotschna colony had been ordained in 1868 by a lay member of the separating group, and the first Mennonite Brethren elder in the Chortitza colony had been ordained by a visiting Baptist minister in 1869. In any case, the EMC and the MBs discontinued the office of elder by the middle of the 20th century (see John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* [1975], pp. 302–312; and Harvey Plett, *Seeking to Be Faithful* [1996], pp. 47–50).

The Bergthaler Church based in Manitoba and the Rosenorter Church in Saskatchewan, which together established the Conference of Mennonites in Canada in 1902, were led by the elders ordained in the Prussian-Mennonite sequence: Johann



Peter G. Sawatsky (1924–2012) with Rita (Penner) Sawatsky (1922–2010) on the occasion of Peter’s ordination at Mayfair Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, 1958. Photo credit: MAID CA MAO XV-19.3-1992-14-1433.

Funk and Peter Regier, respectively. Later, other strands of elder ordinations entered the CMC, and eventually about 162 elders served in CMC churches and congregations until the office of elder was discontinued in the 1970s. Most of the first elders of these several strands served multi-congregational churches, initially in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and later in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia after the arrival of the next wave of immigrants in the 1920s and thereafter. From the 1950s onward, in response to the widening desire of congregations for their leading minister to have the authority to conduct baptisms and communion, most ordinations were of ministers leading a single local congregation. Six strands of elder ordinations rooted in various Mennonite streams in Europe can be identified.

Peter Regier, ordained in 1888 in Prussia, brought the **Rosenorter** strand into the CMC, where it was continued through David Toews, ordained by Regier accompanied by four elders from other churches in 1913. Toews became the preeminent CMC leader of his time and, in 1929, ordained Johannes Regier

(cont’d on p. 8)



A Tribute to Lawrence Klippenstein (1930–2022)

by Alf Redekopp, St. Catharines

I first encountered Lawrence and LaVerna in March 1976 when they transferred their church membership from Altona Mennonite Church to Home Street Mennonite Church (HSMC). Eight months later, I too joined that congregation, and we continued to worship together until I moved in 2013. Those years bring back many good memories of their contributions to the life of the church.

One of the first roles that Lawrence accepted at Home Street was the superintendent of Adult Sunday School. Christian education, spiritual nurture, and development were always important to him, and the records at HSMC would show that his name appeared on the Education Committee at various times. As an ordained minister, he also took his turn at preaching. And when the congregation was between pastors, he was often on the “Pulpit Committee” (or the Pastoral Search Committee, as it was then called), which looked after the Sunday morning needs for the worship services, as well as finding a candidate for the pastoral role. He was also

on the Student Minister Committee in the early 1980s, a committee that encouraged young potential individuals to test their callings. I also remember that he served as the congregational chair for a period in the early 1990s.

From 1987 to 1997, I had the privilege to also be a co-worker in Lawrence’s role as a Mennonite archivist. Our roles were vastly different. He was the seasoned administrator of the archives program for the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC), and I was an archival assistant for a sister denomination, the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, working half-time, learning the principles of archival science. Our paths occasionally crossed at public events sponsored by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. I was always impressed by his interest and vast knowledge of the Manitoba Mennonite story. From 1994 to 1997, I worked more closely with Lawrence, as half-time archivist at CMC. He was now my supervisor, and I reported directly to him. For the most part, I appreciated the independence that he extended to me. He modeled a leadership that I would later try to emulate. He was available and supportive.

From November 1999 until August 2013, I served as the Director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and Gallery. During this period, Lawrence became my treasured archival consultant, especially with regards to projects related to Russian Mennonite Studies, acquiring documents from the former Soviet Union, as one example. If I ever didn’t quite have enough content for the next quarterly newsletter, Lawrence always had something ready to submit, or he would write something. He continued to have his pulse on the Mennonite community in Manitoba quite broadly and willingly shared these bits of news.

There are many things that could be added to this tribute that arise from the 46 years of friendship (1976–2022). His wife and children also were a significant part of my experience. LaVerna was so much a part of his life.

(*cont’d on p. 11*)

Voices from EMMC & EMC



Altona Conference, 1971. For many people connected to EMMC, the last days of June indicated the end of school for most kids and attending “conference.” People would plan their vacation around the location and dates for the annual get-together, usually the last days of June and first days of July. The male-only delegate business meetings took place in the hosting church sanctuary. The men, dressed in suits and ties, began their all-day deliberations over the budget, listening to reports of potential areas of new ministries or challenges that churches were experiencing. Sundays were “mission” days. Morning, afternoon, and evening sessions would feature missionaries telling stories in addition to the full-length sermon from the guest speaker. On Monday, when the general attendees would head home, the boards would continue their individual sets of meetings. Text and photo credit: Lil Goertzen.



The EMC ministry in Mafeking, Manitoba, began in the early 1950s. After ten plus years of growth, it became evident that a permanent meeting place was needed. A local believer who worked in the lumber industry offered to help the church. A permit was secured to cut lumber from the surrounding forest, and volunteers from Blumenort, Manitoba, came to help fell the trees. A lot was purchased, and a building slowly took shape, built primarily by volunteers passing through the area. In May 1964, two attendees were baptized, and the mission was partially organized as a church with four members. In 1970, the decision was made for the church to move to Birch River, Manitoba, a more central location, and they became the Christian Fellowship Centre, a church that continues to meet today. Text and photo credit: Ruth Block.



Lawrence Klippenstein speaking at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, ca. 1983. Photo credit: MAID CA MHC 490-132.0.

June 2022 CMBS Report

by Jon Isaak

Below is an image showing a page from Anna Baerg's 1922 diary written on milk can labels. A hundred years ago, MCC sent relief aid, including food, to Ukraine during the time of the Russian Revolution and civil war. It was the reason MCC was organized: to bring North American relief aid to those suffering in Ukraine.

Anna wrote her diary on the only paper she could find, repurposing the fronts and backs of MCC milk can labels (several hundred) to write her experience of the wartime conflict in Ukraine. CMBS has these labels in its collection. (The one pictured below comes from Vol. 914, see https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/personal_papers/baerg-anna-1897-1972-2/) They were translated into English and published in 1985. (The translation is for sale at Commonword Bookstore, <https://www.commonword.ca/ResourceView/82/1180>.) Her diary is a testament both to the compassion of the faith community and the resourcefulness of individuals like Anna Baerg.

I enjoy my job as keeper of the CMBS archives in Winnipeg, helping people make connections from the past to current events—the past always has something to say today (e.g., Russian aggression toward Ukraine is not new nor are the humanitarian needs that MCC addresses).

While the COVID restrictions again meant that going to the archives for an in-person visit was limited, the number of Anabaptist-Mennonite online resources for historical research is extensive and expanding all the time. I spent the bulk of my time this past year promoting, updating, editing, and contributing to the many Anabaptist-Mennonite online resources available for historical research. I will highlight five.

First, there is the *Mennonite Historian* website, www.mennonite-historian.ca/. The website has a searchable collection of over 40 years of Mennonite research and writing. This is the digital repository of the magazine you are reading right now, which I co-edit with Conrad Stoesz. Then there is the *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* or *GAMEO* website, <https://gameo.org/>, which continues to grow with the addition of the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation as the latest managing partner.

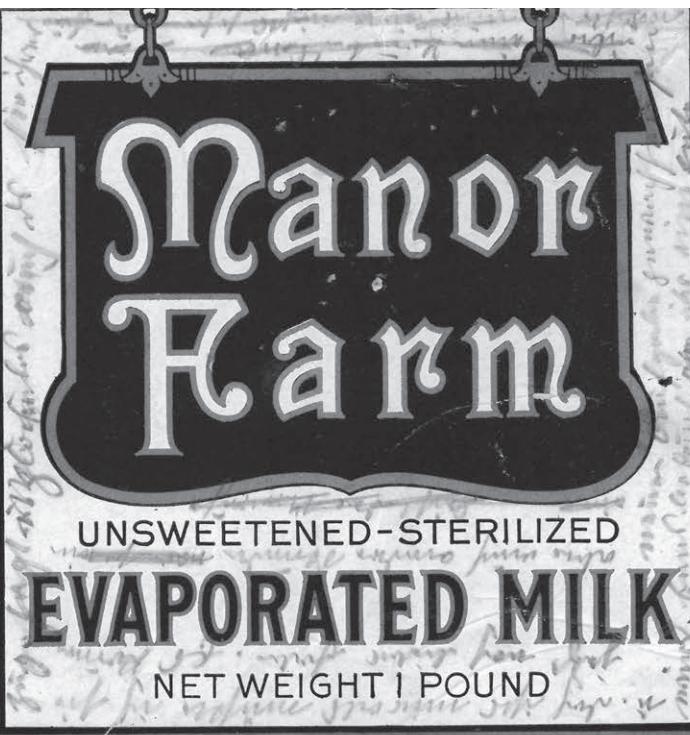
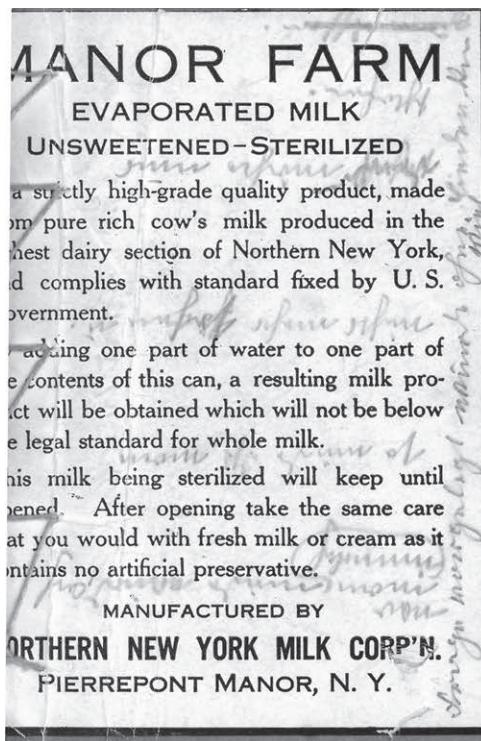
In terms of acquisitions, CMBS received 10 collections of donated records since last year (e.g., 44 banker boxes of provincial church conference material, black and white photographs from the 1950s, bulletins from Linden MB Church, six banker boxes of personal papers of Bible school teacher, David Bergen [1929–2020], two boxes of Abe Dueck's research files, and digital files of provincial conference yearbooks). Processing,



describing, and making accessible via the CMBS website has occupied me when not working on various publication projects. See <https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/>.

Other numbers since last June: \$787 of used Mennonite history books sold—for the list of books for sale, see <https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/used-books/>; 1,763 images linked to the **online photo database**, *Mennonite Archival Information Database* or *MAID* (total now = 11,821), <https://archives.mhsc.ca/>; two Mennonite Brethren books scanned and uploaded to the Internet Archive (total now = 110), <https://archive.org/details/@jonisaak/>, plus I scanned 52 issues of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, https://archive.org/details/pub_diem-mennonitische-rundschau. Now most of the MR is viewable online.

Never before have so many searchable, Anabaptist-Mennonite resources been accessible to researchers anywhere with internet service. The past has always had something to say today—and now so much more of it is available for analysis and meaning making.



DIREC
For coffee, cocoa & diluted.
For drinking, cooking,
dilute with water as
For infants dilute with
from one to seven per
according to age and

MODO D
Para el café, chocolate
Para bebidas, pudiendo
de mesa disuélvase con
Para niños, disuélvalo
azúcar en proporción

MODE I
Pour du café, cacao et
tel que.

Pour boire, usage de
dilayer avec de l'eau
Pour les enfants, déleiller
ébullie et ajouter
sucre ou de lait sucré
l'enfant.

Elder Ordinations

(cont'd from p. 5)

and Gerhard G. Epp as elders for the Rosenorter Church. These two ordained seven elders in Saskatchewan for their church and several neighbouring churches. Toews also ordained seven elders for churches formed by the immigrants of the 1920s, including Jacob Janzen in 1926 who subsequently ordained the next CMC elders in Ontario and the first CMC elder in British Columbia, Johann Bueckert, in 1928 of the Blumenorter Church in Manitoba, and Jacob J. Thiessen in 1938 of First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. Thiessen, who succeeded Toews as the preeminent CMC leader, participated in the ordination of four elders in Saskatchewan, one elder in Ontario, and one in Manitoba. He also ordained MCC worker Peter Dyck in 1947 to authorize him to serve the post-war refugees in Europe and South America and Peter Derksen in 1954 for missionary service in Japan.

The Chortitzer-Bergthalter strand of elders entered the CMC through Johann Funk, ordained by David Stoesz in 1882 in the original Manitoba Chortitzer Church. Stoesz had been ordained in 1878 by elder Gerhard Wiebe to serve the portion of the church living east of the Red River. In 1903, Funk, now elder of the Manitoba-based Bergthalter Church, ordained Jacob Hoeppner in the first ordination of an elder in the CMC era. Hoeppner ordained Franz Sawatzky in 1907 as elder of the Bergthalter congregation in Herbert, Saskatchewan. But the more extensive sequence continued with his ordination of his successor in Manitoba, David Schulz, in 1926. Schulz served as elder of his church for almost four decades and eventually ordained several assistant elders who subsequently ordained several elders in the 1960s for local Bergthalter congregations.

Another group of elders who led their churches in re-settling from the United States to Canada were connected by their ordination to churches in the Molotschna colony. Johann Gerbrandt had been ordained in 1890 in the Johannestal Church in Hillsboro, Kansas, by elder Jacob Buller of the Alexanderwohl Church, which had migrated from Prussia to the Molotschna colony in 1820 and then to the United States in the 1870s. Gerbrandt led a portion of his church to Saskatchewan in 1905 to form the North Star Church. Gerbrandt

participated in the ordination of three elders in Saskatchewan and, as chair of the CMC Inner Missions Committee, he ordained Benjamin Ewert in 1926 as an itinerant elder to serve scattered groups and individuals on the Canadian prairies.

The sequence of ordinations preceding that of Michael Klaassen, elder of the Herold Church in Manitoba, can also be traced back to a **Molotschna** Gemeinde. While serving the Herold Gemeinde in Oklahoma, Klaassen had been ordained in 1901 by Jacob Toews, elder of First Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas. Toews had been ordained in 1886 by Leonhard Suderman, who had been ordained in 1865 as elder of the Mennonite church in Berdyansk. As this congregation was a subsidiary of the Gnadenfeld Church in the Molotschna, Sudermann was probably ordained by its elder, August Lenzmann.

Three elders ordained in churches of the **Molotschna** colony or its daughter colonies came into the CMC as immigrants in the 1920s: Franz F. Enns, ordained in 1903 in the Terek colony, probably by an elder sent by the Molotschna Council of Elders; Jacob B. Wiens, ordained in 1911 in the Ohrloff-Neukirch Church by its elder Abraham Goerz; and Cornelius Harder, ordained in 1912 in the Barnaul colony by Jacob Gerbrandt, elder of the Pordenau Church and the itinerant elder for the Mennonite colonies in Siberia. Enns led the Whitewater Church in Manitoba, Wiens served the Ebenfelder Church in Saskatchewan, Harder the Westheimer Church in Alberta, and all three ordained more elders in their provinces.

Sequences of elder ordinations, beginning within the **Swiss-South German** churches in the Alsace (France), the Palatinate (Germany) or in Volhynia (Poland), also entered the CMC at an early stage. Before moving to serve CMC congregations in Saskatchewan, John C. Peters and Nicolai Bahnmann were both ordained in the United States by Heinrich R. Voth of the Alexanderwohl Church—Peters in 1906 and Bahnmann in 1922. Though Voth, Peters, and Bahnmann were ministers in churches of Russian Mennonites, Voth had been ordained by an elder of a church of Mennonite immigrants from Bavaria and the Palatinate, first formed in Summerfield, Illinois, and then relocated to Halstead, Kansas. Christian E. Krehbiel had been ordained ca. 1865

in Summerfield as elder by Johannes Schmidt, his predecessor. Nikolai F. Toews, elder of the Zoar Church in Langham, had been ordained in 1910 in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, by Heinrich H. Regier. Regier, also a Russian Mennonite, had been ordained in 1890 by Christian Kauffman, a Swiss Mennonite immigrant from Volhynia and elder of a Swiss Mennonite church in South Dakota.

The **Chortitz-Schoenwieser** strand as continued in the CMC began with Johann P. Klassen, who had been ordained by Isaac Dyck in 1907 as elder in the Frisian Kronsweide Church in the Chortitz colony and immigrated to Canada in 1923. Klassen was installed as the first elder of the Schoenwieser Church in Manitoba in 1928. He and Johann H. Enns, whom he ordained as successor in 1939, subsequently ordained elders for the several local Schoenwieser congregations in Manitoba.

Several elders who immigrated to Canada after World War II and served in CMC congregations had been ordained in **Germany** or **Poland**: Abram A. Harder, born in Molotschna colony, was ordained in the Palatinate in 1931 by Christian Neff and ministered in Paraguay before arriving in Canada; Bruno Ensz had been ordained in his home church Ohrlofferfelde, Prussia, in 1935; Leonhard Ewert had been ordained in the Mennonite church in Deutsch Kasun, Poland, in 1940; and Otto Bartel had been ordained in 1948 in Hamburg at a conference of the ministers from the former Mennonite congregations in East and West Prussia, now serving the refugees living in the several zones of post-war Germany.

Often several elders from different strands participated in the ordination of a new elder, thereby connecting the new elder to the overall sequence through two or more strands. Occasionally, elders from churches outside of the conference participated in ordinations of CMC elders. Most notably, five elders from three strands participated in the ordination of David Toews in 1913: Johann Gerbrandt (**Molotschna-Alexanderwohl**), John C. Peters and Nicolai Toews (**Swiss-South German**), and Peter Regier and Jacob Dick (**Rosenorter**). Every elder ordained by Toews and by those Toews ordained was thereby connected at least to these three strands. Thus, each of these three strands extends to at least 60 CMC elders, whereas

the Chortitzer-Berghaler, Chortitzer-Kronsweide, and Molotschna strands extend only to about 25 elders each.

By the 1960s, the multi-congregational churches were disbanding; most of their long-serving elders had retired or died, and most local congregations wanted their leading minister to have the formal authorization to conduct baptisms and communion services. Resolutions passed at the annual CMC sessions in the 1960s permitted local congregations to confer the functions of the elder on their leading minister, resulting in a flurry of second ordinations or simple redesignations of such ministers as elders. However, once virtually all leading ministers were accorded the status and functions of an elder, ordinations to eldership and the title of elder became superfluous and both ceased in the early 1970s.

About 160 elders served in CMC congregations. A compilation of data about them, including the year and place of ordination and the name of the ordaining elder(s) is available at <https://www.mharchives.ca/features/mennonite-historian/#elder-ordinations>, as well as charts for each of the strands and several charts summarizing the data about their birth years and place, migrations, and ordinations. Information for about 30 elders, especially those ordained after 1965, is incomplete and would be welcomed. Please review the compilation and submit missing data to Peter Rempel at <phrempel@gmail.com>.

Elders formed the core of CMC leadership at the conference and congregational levels for seven decades, and their ordinations represented continuity with the sequence originating with the first Anabaptist leaders in Friesland and Prussia and with several strands of Mennonite churches. Though the sequence of elders in the CMC terminated after 440 years, it continues in several sister Mennonite churches such as the Berghaler, Chortitzer (now Christian Mennonite), Old Colony, Sommerfelder, and Reinlaender Mennonite churches in Canada and other countries in South, Central and North America.

Peter Rempel served in various administrative roles in Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite World Conference, and Mennonite Heritage Archives. He is now retired in Winnipeg and researching several topics in Mennonite history.

Esther Goossen (1920–1997): A Real Zest for Life

by Ralph Friesen, Victoria

In the March 2021 issue, the statement was made that Helena Martens was the first Mennonite women to receive a PhD. It should have read the first PhD in music. There are other early Mennonite women PhDs, including American Alta Schrock who received a PhD in biology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1944 and Katherine Esau who received a PhD in 1932 from Berkeley. Ralph Friesen's article about his relative, Esther Goossen, is based on family correspondence—the first Mennonite woman from Steinbach to earn a PhD.

“To rival Einstein is her open ambition. She believes to have accomplished this by continually heading the class.” This was the character sketch for Esther Goossen in 1937, when she was in the 11th Grade at Steinbach Collegiate Institute. It proved to be prophetic.

John and Elisabeth began married life as *Kleine Gemeinde* members, but at some point joined the Bruderthaler (later Evangelical Mennonite Brethren). In this less restrictive church environment, J.D. Goossen felt free to encourage his children’s intellectual ambitions. All five of them—Abe, Mary, Esther, Ernest, and Harvey—achieved post-secondary certificates or degrees.

Esther, the middle child, was the only one to get her PhD, the first woman from Steinbach to do so.

From the beginning, she was bright and curious about the world and people around her, and willing to assert herself. At the age of nine, she wrote Santa Claus, “I wish to see you before Christmas,” signing herself as “your true loving friend, Esther E. Goossen.”

She graduated from the Steinbach Collegiate in 1938 and then attended Bethel College in Newton, Kansas, for a year, perhaps thinking to please her parents, for



The John and Elisabeth Goossen family in 1935. From left: Ernest, Mary, John D. Goossen, Abe, Elisabeth Friesen Goossen, Esther, and Harvey. Elisabeth was a sister to my grandfather, the machinist, K.R. Friesen. Ernie, of course, was a well-known lawyer and a law partner to Delbert Plett in the early days. Photo credit: Ralph Friesen.

Esther was born on July 19, 1920, the third child and second daughter of John D. and Elisabeth Friesen Goossen. Both John and Elisabeth were children of conservative pioneer Kleine Gemeinde families (John’s parents were Holdeman), but they occupied positions of civic leadership. John made his living with land conveyancing and served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Hanover Municipality from 1917 to 1946, except for a two-year interruption in the early '20s. Elisabeth, before marriage, had assisted her father Abram S. Friesen with his land conveyancing work.

whom a daughter in Bible school would have been a point of pride. But the next year, she became a student at the University of Manitoba, living in residence in Winnipeg. Although she majored in the sciences, she had a flair for the written word, scoring an A+ on a second-year English paper: “Milton in Paradise Lost.” She was the only Mennonite student in a graduating class of 55 when she got her Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics in 1942.

Some of Esther’s classmates wrote “personality ratings” for her. She was

praised for her tidy hair, industry, energy, and loyalty to her friends, but criticized for a too-loud laugh and jerky speech: "She talks too fast especially when excited or flustered and runs her words together." At the age of 20, Esther burned brightly; she loved the social life at the university but also worked hard, determined to make her mark. She may have lacked dignity, as one classmate said, but she had "a real zest for life."

In 1941, Esther interrupted her studies for a year to earn the funds for her final year at university. She taught at a remote one-room school in Ashern, Manitoba, where she wrote her parents with a jovial description of rural life: "We 'pioneers of Canada's last frontier' over here learn all the latest music hits from Wilf Carter and his cowboys over the gramophones at home—in case you're behind times with the latest stuff, the most recent 'hit' here is *Red River Valley*. You know the mosquitoes, fleas, mud, lakes, sloughs, trails, woodsmen, and cowboy songs are really having an effect on me—no kidding—I'll be a cowgirl for sure before the end of the month."

In Ashern, Esther found the religious beliefs she had been taught at home challenged by her neighbours, a couple from Holland. She openly shared her thoughts on the subject with her parents, even though religion was a sensitive subject. She was anxious, however, that they not embarrass her with any missionary efforts: "They make fun of (and Mrs. Ebbers in fact hates) the Mennonite religion, so I've been pretty quiet about my religion here, in order to keep the peace, since Mrs. Ebbers is surely a hot-headed, ill-tempered woman who would be the *very* last person I'd even think of displeasing. So, if you should come and get me, *please* (for my sake as a teacher) try to remain 'mum' about my religion. I'm *not* afraid, however, to stand up and fight (argue) for what I believe to be true and what I've been taught to be right and the Truth."

A variety of men came calling on the pretty, vivacious 5' 4" teacher. Their visits amused and entertained her, but she was not really interested; she had plans for her life.

After graduation, she got a job with Defence Industries, Ltd. in Nitro, Quebec, as a chemist analyzing gunpowder and conducting ballistic tests of small arms ammunition. She led a hectic social life in Nitro, where she played tennis, swam, went to dances, and attracted several young

men in the armed forces. Her father wrote back, praising her as "the best letter writer I know," because she described events so vividly, "just as if you were talking to us." He also warned her, however, to "stay within bounds" while having fun.

Esther resigned from Defence Industries in March 1944 and next found work in Belleville, Ontario, as an assistant chemist at Graham's Dried Foods. From there she went to Canadian Breweries, Ltd. in Toronto to do chemical analysis of beer, wort, and barley. Here, as everywhere she went, she quickly formed friendships. She sent her parents a postcard, enthusing over a five-day canoeing and camping trip she had taken, "communing with the wilds of nature" and having "fun and excitement galore."

After a stint with the Canadian Red Cross, Esther moved to the United States, spending two years as a research assistant at Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska, and then moving in 1949 to post-graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Barely scraping by financially and following a rigorous study schedule, she nevertheless took the time to do some exploring: "Yes, I've seen quite a bit of California & have done a lot of things & been to a lot of places—all by bumming rides, sleeping on the ground & cooking meals over a smokey campfire instead of over a stove!!!"

Although she had very little time for anything other than studying, which included having to learn French, Esther still had to fight off the attentions of males who were unfortunately never quite satisfactory: "A couple of young punks have been giving me somewhat of a chase lately—O me, O my, children or sugar-daddies all love me: They're either too young or too old; they're either too grey or too grassy green!!" Tenaciously, she pursued her education goals: "Believe me, many is the time I've wished that I were either a moron or a genius (and I don't even have a preference!)—in either case I wouldn't have to beat my brains out so hard & I'd still be happy."

She had to miss a semester at university when her father died in March 1951; she went home for the funeral. Many years later, she wrote her siblings: "I had a helluva time getting back into the groove to finish the requirements for my PhD. At the time of Dad's death, I told mother that I'd have to stop my graduate education

at a Master's level, and she told me that Dad would not have wanted that, but that he would have liked me to reach for the top degree. She seemed to be the *only* one in our family who cared & she gave me encouragement 'in Dad's name' to go on. I was so pleased that someone cared, even tho' Mother said she did it for Dad's sake."

At last, in 1954, she was awarded a PhD in biochemistry. The title of her thesis: "The Influence of the Level of Dietary Fat on the Oxidation of Injected Acetate-2-C (to the power of 14) on the Synthesis of Liver Fatty Acids and Cholesterol in the Intact Rat."

That same year, she married a professional man named James C. Brice. She also did post-doctoral work in the Department of Pharmacology, Washington School of Medicine, St. Louis. The marriage did not work out; Esther and Brice were divorced in May 1957. Apparently, she kept this information from her family, for in November of 1960, when she was about to remarry, her sister Mary wrote: "You never told us you were divorced from Jim—when did this occur?"

Her mother must have written expressing disapproval of the divorce, prompting a fierce reply from Esther: "I do *not* believe in divorces as such. . . . But God couldn't possibly have approved of a marriage which left me a 'nothing' of no benefit to God, society, human creativity, etc. My very soul & being was at stake."

In spite of her marriage troubles, Esther had become a United States Citizen in 1955, confirming that she had no intention of returning home. She worked briefly as a biochemist for the U.S. Army Medical Nutrition Laboratory at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver, Colorado, and then returned to California work at the Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory in San Francisco. Around this time, she met Toribio Joseph (Cas) Castanera, and they were married on November 24, 1960, at Berkeley, by a Unitarian minister. Esther was 41.

For the next 10 years, she worked as a research chemist at Berkeley and with the Department of Public Health. Joseph Castanera died of leukemia on January 31, 1971. They had no children. After retirement, Esther indulged her love for travel, attending the Olympics in Calgary in 1988. Her sight and health gradually failed, and by the time of her death, September 27, 1997, she was in a nursing home, legally blind.

Pre-emigration Genealogical Sources

(cont'd from p. 3)

Gothic script text and conversion into Latin text. The *Rundschau* contains many letters and reports from Russia during the period just before and during the emigration of the 1920s. More will be written on the *Rundschau* in later parts of this series. A searchable index for the *Rundschau* is also available and may be more helpful for some searches.^{31b}

Other periodicals from the 1900–1930 time period include the *Friedensstimme*^{32a} ^{32b} and the *Zionsbote*.³³

Glenn's overview of genealogical resources for the 1920s immigration to Canada continues in the September edition of MH.

Endnotes

18. https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza_Family_Registers.pdf
19. https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Gnadenfeld_Volost_Birth_Records_1898-1920.pdf
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30. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonitische_Rundschau,_Die_\(Periodical\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonitische_Rundschau,_Die_(Periodical))
- 31a. https://archive.org/details/pub_die-mennonitische-rundschau
- 31b. <https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/publications/mennonitische-rundschau-die/>
- 32a. <https://mharchives.ca/holdings/serials/>
- 32b. <https://chortitza.org/Pis/Frieden.pdf>
33. <https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/publications/zionsbote-2/>

Tribute to Lawrence Klippensetin

(cont'd from p. 6)

For example, when they came back from Moscow, and we learned of their “adopted” Somali refugee sons, LaVerna was very much at the forefront of communicating their needs to the congregation. I have many good memories of playing trumpet together with Norman and Nathan for Easter or Christmas worship services at HSMC, and of the contributions of Noreen singing in small ensembles, or of

Jerry accompanying singing at the piano. The Klippensetin family was a gift to the community.

After I moved away from Winnipeg in 2013, Lawrence continued to be one who regularly communicated via e-mail. Sometimes it was about items he had deposited in the archives, sometimes it was about his ongoing historical research, sometimes it was to answer my questions. He remained a friend and an inspiring pilgrim on life’s journey. Born on July 16, 1930, Lawrence passed away on March 18, 2022. He will be missed.

Alf Redekopp worked at the Mennonite Heritage Archives from 1994 to 2013. He retired to St. Catharines, Ontario, and continues to volunteer as a contributor/editor with several Mennonite research websites (GAMEO, GRanDMA, and MAID).



The official unveiling of the cairn commemorating the Shantz Immigration Sheds took place on May 12, 2022. The cairn is located at the corner of Road 39N and 19E, two miles south of Niverville, Manitoba, five miles directly east of the landing site of the Mennonite settlers in 1874. The four sheds were erected to serve as temporary housing before the immigrants could settle on the lands and villages set aside for them in the East Reserve. The construction of these sheds was contracted by Jacob Shantz. According to Ernest Braun, a member of the EastMenn Historical Committee that sponsored the cairn, there are two aspects worth highlighting with respect to these immigration sheds: 1) the story of Mennonite emigration and arrival at this location where the settlers were temporarily housed; and 2) the larger story of what the arrival/creation of the first block settlement meant to the First Nations and Métis already living in this area—a traumatic liminal transformation of social and traditional culture from nomadic-hunter/gatherer to sedentary agrarian in a matter of a few years. In the case of the southern Anishinaabeg, it was the change from a hunting ground of thousands of square miles to 8.5 square miles of the Roseau River Reserve. The Shantz Immigration Sheds are a symbol of a pivotal moment in the history of both the Mennonites and the Indigenous peoples, a symbol that has two almost opposite meanings—positive for Mennonites and traumatic for Indigenous peoples. Photo credit: Ernest Braun.

The Goldie & McCulloch Vault in Altona, Manitoba

by Conrad Stoesz

In 1891, the Rural Municipality of Douglas dissolved, giving way to the Rural Municipality of Rhineland, encompassing the eastern section of the Mennonite West Reserve, that portion of land west of the Red River reserved in 1876 by the Canadian government for Mennonite settlers from Russia.

Depending on who the secretary was, the Rhineland municipal office moved between Altona and Gretna. When Gretna became an incorporated village in 1896, the RM office moved permanently to Altona and was initially located in Henry Loepky’s store.

In November 1898, the community was shocked when the RM safe was breached and \$1,105 was stolen. After further investigation, it was revealed that the clerk, Guenther Limprecht, had misappropriated \$4,112.69. Limprecht shot and killed himself before he could be arrested.

Confidence in the RM, its personnel, and its facilities was put in question. To help build confidence and trust in the RM, sometime between 1898 and 1923, a new safe was installed. It was built by the Goldie & McCulloch Company of Ontario. The heavy door was emblazoned with a flourishing, hand-painted, gold lettering, proudly displaying the names of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland and the Goldie & McCulloch Company. The heavy door provided controlled access to a room that was 14 feet long, 7 feet wide, and 7 ½ feet high. For decades, ratepayers entered the office to pay their taxes and saw the staunch vault door; it communicated confidence and security.

The Goldie & McCulloch Company

began operation in 1844 as the Dumfries Foundry, located in the Dumfries township, in the county of Dumfries, near Cambridge, Ontario. It became the Goldie & McCulloch Company in 1859 when two employees, John Goldie and Hugh McCulloch, bought the company. It specialized in manufacturing a host of machinery and fire-proof safes, bankers' safes, and vault doors.

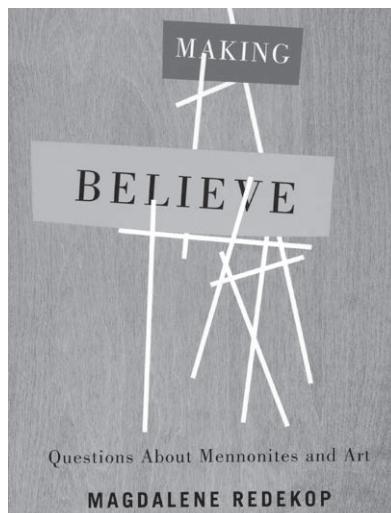
Today, the vault's locking mechanism has been disabled, but the Goldie & McCulloch vault continues to provide a useful service in Altona—now it functions as a storage room for the Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church.



Old Altona Vault. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

The book, *Ensium*, compiled by Cornelius and Carol Ens (2021), begins with a lengthy discussion of the name Ens and its origins. Then the focus turns to the memoirs of Henry Ens (1904–1988), born in Nikolaipol, Ukraine, and Maria Friesen (1904–1987). Henry Ens recounts coming to Eichenfeld the morning after the “massacre” in 1919, his marriage to Maria Friesen in 1927, the threat of being drafted into the Red Army, but being allowed to do alternative service, WWII and leaving Ukraine for Germany, and eventually

immigrating to Canada in 1948. There are photos, names, and charts of descendants. This 344-page book can be obtained from Cornelius Ens, by calling 204-242-2320.



Magdalene Redekop, *Making Believe: Questions about Mennonites and Art* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2020), 380 pp.

Reviewed by Sue Sorensen, Winnipeg

*M*aking Believe is an intriguing amalgam: a memoir and a social history advancing a firm set of opinions about what it has meant to be Mennonite in this nation. Additionally, this is an academic study of Mennonite aesthetics. Magdalene Redekop is well placed to write a thorough investigation of Canadian art as it relates with Mennonite identity. She's a literary scholar who, although not a specialist in Mennonite writing, is very familiar with it. She left religion behind years ago, yet her conservative Mennonite upbringing and family connections are frequently cited. She is helpfully both in the Mennonite world and not of it.

She discusses the dangers of stereotypes and encourages open questioning—as one can see from the subtitle. Redekop's style can be playful; throughout this stimulating book she aims to be provocative, not dogmatic. Still, this book, brimming with references, is academic—her quotations summon a dense cloud of witnesses. A very careful thinker, Redekop considers her topics (satire, tricksters, nostalgia, realism) from many angles.

Redekop's analysis of individual books, art, and music is insightful. However, some general points of departure gave me pause. She takes as given the flourishing of art made by Mennonites in the 1980s as a “remarkable” phenomenon (xiv). The initiating event of this rebellious art-making was the 1957 Brunk revival in southern Manitoba; at the centre of Redekop's argument is the trauma that revival

created for a generation of Anabaptists. An “intentional Mennonite” like myself—although not a term I use—can't quarrel with Redekop's historical assumptions, although the distinctiveness of this happening feels somewhat overstated. But I can offer this: terms important to this study need better explanation: “iconoclasm” and “time warp” are recurring principles and I don't always follow her usage. Mennonite “plain style” may seem obvious but it's worth unpacking. And while the author warns about nostalgia, this project itself is not without nostalgia.

She writes convincingly that “the best art by Mennonites does not come from inside the safety of an ethnic or religious community” (153). She asks if one *should* seek out Mennonite qualities within artists. But she carries on nevertheless, with mixed results. Her probing of Paul Hiebert's satirical *Sarah Binks* is helpful in uncovering some misguided critical responses, but I can't see that Hiebert's comedy fits well in this study of Mennonite culture.

Magdalene Redekop wants to encourage new avenues of research. She relishes the contradiction “at the core of this book: while engaging with art by Mennonites, I will argue that there is no such thing as Mennonite art” (xiv–xv). Yet the feeling imprinted by the book is its insistence on the unique personality of Mennonite art. The most serious reservation I have is her argument that shunning is “the foundational Mennonite gesture” (40, 311). From an author who does stalwart work on stereotypes, this is troubling. And among Redekop's many questions, surprisingly few are religious. Yes, cultural Mennonites are common, but the present-day relevance of churches isn't considered.

Redekop's personal consideration of artworks can be refreshing and spontaneous. She offers fine readings of Miriam Toews, Glenn Gould's *Quiet in the Land*, Wanda Koop, and Victor Davies's *Mennonite Piano Concerto*. This is a serious and important book, with some sharp observations.

Sue Sorensen is Associate Professor of English at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, where she also is the general editor of the university's publisher, CMU Press. She is the author of The Collar: Reading Christian Ministry in Fiction, Television, and Film.