

Mennonite Historian



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The photo display of Jean Funk, Winnipeg, Manitoba, remains an important feature for visitors to the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Emphasis of the display is on the people of Mennonite communities in Belize. Visitors may come at any time Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Other times may be arranged.

First Mennonites in Alberta: 1888?

by Alexander Malycky

Elias W. Bricker, a member of the (Old) Mennonite Church from Ontario, is usually credited with being the first Mennonite settler in Alberta (1:83; 2:21; 3:14; 4; 6:306). In 1889, he came with a C.P.R. sponsored "homeseekers' excursion" to Calgary, and from there he went south, into the vicinity of High River, and took out a homestead situated about half a mile north of the future Aldersyde, a locality which he named and where he was the first postmaster (4; 11:47).

However, some statements concerning the settlement of Mennonites in the vicinity of Gleichen, made by and with reference to Emil Griesbach, appear to challenge Bricker's claim of being the first Mennonite settler in Alberta. The first settler of German origin in the area of the future Gleichen, Emil Griesbach (1855-1954), played a prominent role in the life of this locality, as its early overseer and later mayor, businessman and civic leader (5; 7; 9; 10). He also founded the locality Griesbach, which was later renamed Carseland (5; 10:41). Having arrived in Winnipeg from Germany, in December 1883, Griesbach soon joined the C.P.R. construction crews. As a railroad worker, he came

then, in the following spring, to Alberta, and first worked and later settled at Gleichen. In an autobiographical article that appeared in 1908, he asserts: "Im Jahre 1888 brachte ich durch Empfehlung die ersten Mennoniten nach Gleichen..." (7). Yet, Frank H. Epp, relying on the information provided by John H. Warkentin, states that in the Gleichen area "a number of (Mennonite) families arrived from southern Manitoba in 1891 and temporarily made their home" there (6:306). With a three-year discrepancy between those two dates, does Epp refer to the same migration that Griesbach does, or to a subsequent one? The appearance of two Mennonite surnames — Penner and Paethkau — among those who on June 21, 1890 applied for their homesteads in the area (8:56) is of little help in solving this question, for it seems to be too late for Griesbach's dating and is too early for that of Epp. The surnames which are rather Dutch/North German than Swiss/South German would indicate that these settlers came from Manitoba.

Some additional data concerning Griesbach's role in bringing the Mennonites to Alberta is also contained in a 1912 article

on him. From it we learn that already "in 1886-87, . . . , he corresponded with German papers, and the articles published abroad from his pen proved the starting point of the Mennonite migration to Alberta. During the year 1888 he assisted in locating 1,443 homesteads for these people, and incidental to that service he covered the ground on foot practically all the way from Gleichen to Edmonton. During the very dry season of 1888-89 he located most of these settlers at Didsbury" (9). A reference to the above mentioned trip on foot to Edmonton appears also in his autobiographical article: "In Begleitung von Herrn Schantz von Waterloo, Ont., bin ich im Jahre 1887 von Calgary zu Fuss nach Edmonton (200 Meilen) gelaufen..." (7). Mentioning the surname "Schantz" without any given names implies probably that Griesbach had in mind the Schantz, i.e. Jacob Y. Schantz, the founder of Didsbury who, following his exploratory trip of 1892 (12:6), brought in 1894 the first substantial party of Mennonite Brethren in Christ from the area around Waterloo, Ont. to the site of the future Didsbury (6:307; 12:6 8).

Would Shantz's trip of 1894 have been his second trip into this area, following that of 1889? And does Griesbach's mentioning of Schantz imply that he assisted the Mennonite Brethren in Christ from Ontario rather than the Mennonites from Manitoba in locating the homesteads? Epp seems to imply that in 1891 some Manitoba Mennonites moved not only to Gleichen, but also to Didsbury (6:306), but this again would place them there some two or three years later than the year given in the article on Griesbach. Literature on the subject places the appearance of the first (Old) Mennonite Church members in the vicinity of Didsbury, at Carstairs, at either 1893 (6:307) or 1894 (1:83; 2:22; 3:15), and that of a substantial party of the Manitoba Berghaler settlers even later, in 1901 (1:85; 2:33).

In the light of all this, the very early dating of the first Mennonite presence in Alberta, offered by Griesbach himself and in the 1912 article on him, calls for further research with the view of verifying this point, as well as the matter of the seemingly excessive number of homesteads cited for this early date.

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Heritage Week Celebrations

Winnipeg, Man. — The Mennonite Heritage Centre celebrated Heritage Week (November 17-21) by inviting the constituency to hear several speakers, view new displays, become familiar with the facilities and archival holdings, and to take part in a "campus tea".

On Tuesday Jean Funk, a native Manitoban, addressed an audience of about 25 people about her recent visit to the Mennonites in Belize. Her purpose in visiting Belize Mennonites was to record their history "as it is happening", she said. "A hundred years from now we will be interested in this history". Her recording medium was photography and many of her prints were, and still are, displayed at the centre.

Martin W. Friesen, historian-archivist from the Menno Colony, Paraguay, spoke about his approach to writing the history of the Menno Colony. He is the editor of **Kanadische Mennoniten Bezwingen eine Wildnis***, a book dealing with the emigration of Canadian Mennonites to Paraguay in 1927. Friesen is presently gathering material for a history of later developments in the colony.

During that week **Deutsches Panorama**, a German-language TV program, also telecast the film of the Mennonite Heritage Centre opening held in January, 1979. *Susan Letkeman.*

*The book is available at the Centre for \$8.00 (includes postage).

The Kleinegemeinde/ EMC Story: Materials

Two teachers, Roy Loewen, from Koostatak, Manitoba, and Betty Plett, from Blumenort, are compiling information for a history book on the Blumenort community. Plans are to publish the book in 1981. Anyone holding materials that could contribute to the story are invited to write the Blumenort Historical Society, Box 100, Blumenort, Manitoba. The small town, founded in 1874, is located about six miles north of Steinbach on Highway 12.

Dave Schellenberg, editor for the **EMC Messenger** edited a book on the Steinbach Evangelical Mennonite congregation in 1975. The title is... **to the Glory of God.**

Delbert Plett of Steinbach, Manitoba, has assembled a major collection of genealogical studies on families related to Kleingemeinde (EMC) congregations.

Cornelius L. Toews of Steinbach, and Peter Plett of Landmark, Manitoba, have transcribed in typed form a major collection of manuscript material left by the late Aeltester Peter Toews, earlier a Kleinegemeinde, and then a Holdeman minister in Manitoba and Alberta, respectively.

An index to all Kleine Gemeinde / EMC holdings at the Mennonite Heritage Centre is now complete, and available for \$1.00, postage included. The holdings include complete sets of the **EMC Messenger** and **Christlicher Familienfreund.**

The Evangelical Mennonite Conference formally established an archives in 1975. Holdings are located at the conference office in Steinbach, Manitoba.

Copies of the book **The Sesquicentennial Jubilee. Evangelical Mennonite Conference 1812-1962**, written by Peter J. B. Reimer, of Rosenort, Manitoba, are still available at the author's address.

Books I-III of Rosenort: **A Mennonite Community**, written by Lawrence and LaVerna Klippenstein are still available for \$2.50 each. Write to Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Man. R3P 0M4.

Klippenstein Family Gathering

Weather-wise, August 10th, 1980 began with dark clouds and heavy rain. However, this did not interrupt plans for a family gathering arranged by Henry and Mary Klippenstein of Horndean, Manitoba. The spacious facilities of a former two room school building, now Horndean Community Centre, provided a pleasant weather-proof location. The gathering of approximately 65 descendents of the late Henry and Sara (Wieler) Klippenstein was occasioned by the visit of Eddie and Shirley Klippenstein from Clearbrook, B.C.

Congenial tones of greeting continued during the arrival of family members. Gradually pockets of conversation followed, when for a while, the men folk formed a circle and began talking about current events, farm conditions and general items of interest. Nearby two generations of women enquired about each other's health, swapped cooking discoveries and exchanged points of common interest. A cluster of teenage family members talked and laughed about the things of youth while the young married couples congregated. Some of the little moppets allowed curiosity to lead them from one group to another.

By mid-afternoon the aroma of coffee began to waft through the air. Tables laden with food were set out while chairs were rearranged. All the while up-to-date camera equipment and ordinary pocket cameras captured a variety of impromptu shots. With a more formal approach family groupings were also photographed.

When the food and dishes had been put

away a time of singing, led by the John Doell's, brought the afternoon to a close. Several of the selections were dedicated to Welton Reage who has been handicapped since a serious illness several years ago.

On our return journey home the sun was shining. This symbolized so beautifully the warmth and delight of an afternoon's togetherness. *Ruth Schroeder*

Mennonite Genealogy Seminar

The first Mennonite Genealogy seminar in Manitoba took place in 1977 at Altona, sponsored by Mennonite Genealogy, Inc. A second similar meeting was held on November 29, 1980 at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg. Nearly fifty persons attended.

The first presentation by Dr. John Friesen stressed the importance of "fleshing out" the family story, so that it would not only be the "tree", but include experiences and stories as well. This set the stage for a University of Manitoba student, Glenn Penner, to share his discoveries of Russian and Prussian sources for family studies. His tabulation of all Prussian Mennonite villages has been an important contribution to Prussian Mennonite family research.

The entire holdings of Mennonite Genealogy, Inc. have been housed at the Mennonite Heritage Centre for the past two

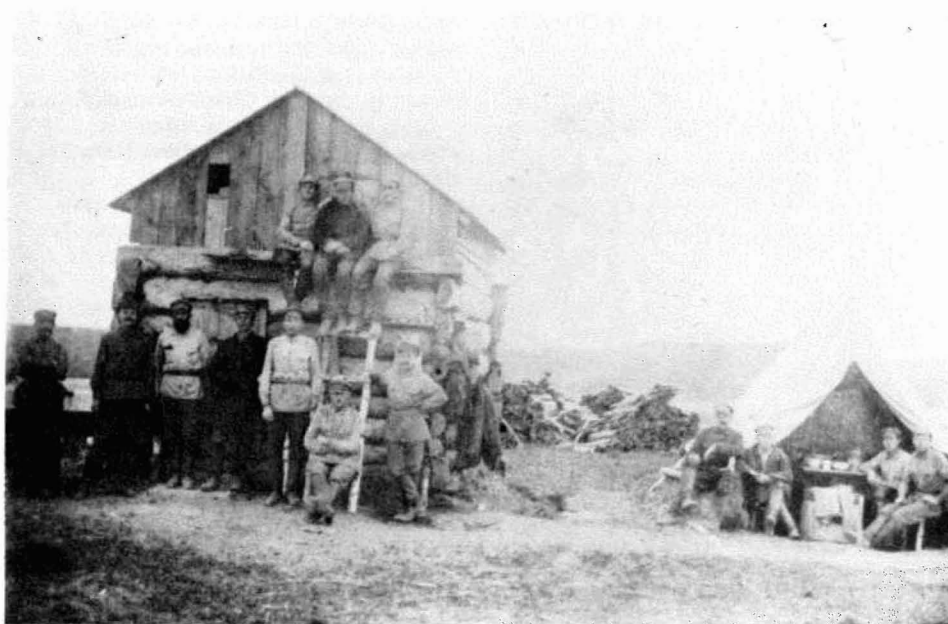
years, and the special services of this facility were outlined by Margaret Kroeker. The ongoing task of simplifying genealogical research through the card index, and providing an exchange list for all family names which are being researched, is a time-consuming task. More workers are needed. Hanna Rempel guided the group in a short general tour of the Centre.

A unique method of relating one's family history, one which all ages find attractive, is the audio-visual-assembling photographs, documents, etc., allowing them to tell the story in their own unique way. This was ably demonstrated by Ted Martens of Altona. With the background of life in Russia, and migration to Canada, Ted could illustrate the wide range of happy and sad events which are a part of family life wherever you go.

Closely related to genealogical compilations is the writing of memoirs. Lawrence Klippenstein, historian-archivist at the Centre, provided a list of very practical suggestions on how to approach the writing of memoirs. In particular, Katie Funk Wiebe's book, **Good Times With Old Times**, was recommended as a resource for writing memoirs.

To make future seminars more meaningful efforts will be made to relate in particular to the various levels of research, and possibly also deal with certain areas, church denominations, etc. Suggestions are welcomed. *Margaret Kroeker*

*In 1930 this group served as COs in the Ob River region of the Soviet Union. Stalin's constitution of 1939 ended all legal provisions for alternative service in the Soviet Union. Exemption grants for CO status in the Soviet Union had ceased a few years earlier. Cf. **Waffen der Wehrlosen**, p. 49-53, reviewed on p. 6).*



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Canadian Mennonite Archives

Archival concerns have been a visible agenda item for the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada from its very inception. With the emergence by now of at least five major, and several smaller collection centres, Canadian Mennonite archival needs will require continued attention in the coming years.

In fact, the December 6 meeting of Canadian Mennonite Historical Society was preceded by a luncheon meeting of five individuals involved in the above mentioned activity. Meeting the day before were Ken Reddig of the Centre of MB Studies in Winnipeg, Dave Schellenberg of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Ted Regehr, representing Rosthern Junior College archives, Sam Steiner from Conrad Grebel College, and Lawrence Klippenstein of the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

In Saskatchewan, it was reported, the provincial archives has agreed to microfilm the entire run of *Der Bote* (1924-1980) as soon as possible. Copies will be for sale. The Centre for MB Studies, Winnipeg, began a *Mennonitische Rundschau* indexing project last summer, while Conrad Grebel archives had continued microfilming and interviewing projects in conjunction with the Multicultural Society of Ontario. A major new acquisition at Conrad Grebel College archives is the personal papers collection of the late Rev. Newton Gingerich. A new archives centre is now located at the office of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference in Steinbach, Manitoba. In Manitoba too, a project for microfilming congregational records began at the Mennonite Heritage Centre last summer.

The archivists at this meeting decided to provide more publicity for their respective programs. The production of an audio-visual, perhaps a filmstrip, would be proposed to the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada executive later on. Suggestions for better inter-archival communication included the sharing of Union List of Manuscript entries, and the circulation of a "round robin" newsletter. Another workshop for Canadian Mennonite archives came under consideration as well.

A report of this meeting was shared with the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada executive members the next day. To get in touch with other centres, a directory of all Mennonite archives, North American and abroad, is being circulated to institutions included in the listing.

News and Notes

*A new Mennonite periodical *SHUN*, with a satire forte in format, has completed its first year of publication. If interested, write to Robert Hoffman, 1009 North Buffalo, Portland, Oregon, 97217.

*On November 8 Lawrence Klippenstein gave an audio-visual presentation on the life and work of Jacob Y. Shantz at the annual meeting of the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society held at Conrad Grebel College. Sam Steiner is chairman of the Society.

*Jonathan Ens, a Grade XII student at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg, Manitoba, won second prize in the 1979-1980 Mennonite history contest sponsored by the Heritage Commission of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

*The British Columbia Mennonite Historical Society held its annual meeting on November 29. George I. Peters of Sardis was elected chairman, to succeed George Groening, pastor of the Eden Mennonite Church at Chilliwack. The Society is supporting the publication of a book on the work of Conference of Mennonites in Canada leaders, who have passed on in recent decades.

*Frank H. Epp's *Stories With Meaning*, a paperback manual on writing congregational history is available for \$2.00 at the author's office, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, or from the following: MB Archives, 77 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3P 0M4.

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada: Minutes

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada held its annual meeting on Saturday, December 6, at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. Nine members of the recently-formed Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society had appeared as special guests of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada board, and several observers also joined the group.

Reports from the provinces reflected ongoing activities in all societies. British Columbia, represented by George Groening reported a membership of 150, plans to begin a Mennonite museum, and the upcoming publication of a book by George I. Peters, entitled, "Ministers in the Conference of Mennonites in Canada". The Society also sponsored a seminar in October with such themes as "Writing Memoirs" and "Beginning A Family Tree" treated by guest speaker, Lawrence Klippenstein.

The Alberta-Saskatchewan Mennonite Historical Society will be initiating an oral history project, making possible the interviewing of about thirty senior persons, and the deposit of these materials in the Rosthern Junior College archives. The future of Rosthern Cultural Museum is under active consideration, and the gathering of archival materials, located in an earlier survey, is now being undertaken in the Saskatchewan Valley.

Ted Friesen, reporting for the Manitoba Society, announced its recent reorganization with a thirteen member board, and plans for the publication of an English translation of Gerhard Wiebe's *Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika*. The membership is now just over 100.

Lorna Bergey has become the new executive member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada for the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society. Projects of the Society include:

1) encouragement and sponsorship of individual research projects by Conrad Grebel College students.

2) oral history projects with Conrad Grebel College library getting copies.

3) maintenance of Brubacher House on the Conrad Grebel College campus.

4) sponsorship of Ron Sawatzky in his work with Old Colony Mennonite interviews (southern Ontario).

5) preserving Old Mennonite meeting houses.

The Society is also preparing a recently-completed film on Mennonites in Ontario for distribution to the public.

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada members learned from its Reading Committee that Vol. II of *Mennonites in Canada* is moving toward completion. It is projected that the volume may be slightly larger than Volume I, and will cover the period up to 1950. Herb Giesbrecht joined the Committee for the balance of its work term. On another publishing project, the annual December issue of *Mennonite Life*, the Society decided to terminate this arrangement and to make more regular use of *Mennonite Historian* as its vehicle of communication. Mennonite Historical Society of Canada will reserve a page each quarter for the coming year. Further it was noted that Gerry Peters has begun the translation and editing of the Anna Baerg diary, a project which is expected to reach completion in 1981.*

Budget discussions revealed growing needs for funds, and led to acceptance of \$24,000 as a target for 1981. The executive of 1980 will continue for another year, with Herb Giesbrecht joining as fifth member, and Pauline Bauman to act as treasurer in the absence of Sam Steiner who plans to be away for a year.

*A report from the archives committee is dealt with elsewhere on this page.

The material on this page was provided by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

A Mennonite Village Wedding in Manitoba

by Ruth Bock

Conclusion

Weddings were always held on Sunday afternoon. The bride, dressed in white with a long veil and sprigs of myrrh in her head dress, walked up the aisle, together with the groom. In lieu of the traditional Wedding March, considered to be too worldly, a hymn or other sacred music was played. If there were any attendants they were usually limited to one bestman and one bride's maid. This couple, walking together, would precede the bridal pair down the aisle.

The ceremony could get quite lengthy. Often it lasted an hour and a half since two speakers were asked to serve at the ceremony. In addition to congregational hymns the village choir would provide special music. The marriage vows were then recited by the minister to which the couple responded by answering "yes".

After the ceremony the couple went outdoors and posed for everyone with a "Brownie" camera on the steps of the church. The newly married couple would then move to the church basement where tables had been set by the village ladies in preparation for the wedding meal. The menu was standard but the food was delicious. *Zwieback*, sugar cubes, *Pannasch Vorscht* (Penner's Sausage) and/or bologna were served with steaming coffee brewed in two cast iron cauldrons situated outside the church. Later, in more prosperous years, sweets and salads were added to the wedding menu. Even the traditional *Zwieback* was replaced by buns from the Winkler bakery.

The meal was, of course, the highlight of the day — especially for the children. The men were seated at the tables first and as they finished eating and vacated their places, clean plates were set and next hungry guests took the empty places. Children were permitted to eat only after the adults were through.

The kitchen was staffed by the village women. Choir members served the tables and everybody helped with cleaning up dishes, chairs and tables. Most of these services were unsolicited by the parents of the bride. It was merely a matter of seeing where you were needed and then pitching in. In fact it was considered a privilege to help at a wedding.

In the evening the entire wedding assembly came together once more for a program in the church. At this program little nieces lisped memorized poems, cousins sang trios and quartets, and minister uncles gave last minute admonitions and advice. Anyone who had not, as yet, had a part in the program could join the seemingly endless procession of marathon speakers and well wishers in the *Freiwilliges* (voluntary) section.

For many young people it was the time

after the program that provided the climax to the wedding celebrations. The young and not so young would gather at the home of the bride for a social evening. Of particular enjoyment was the playing of folk games at this occasion. The highlight of the evening was playing *Kranz und Schleier* (Wreath and Veil). This particular game began with the bridal couple being seated on separate chairs, which were then raised into the air, and not lowered, until they had kissed. The single girls would then form a circle around the bride who had been blindfolded. The bride would be turned by a cousin or relative until she had no idea as to which direction she was facing. She would then walk towards some "lucky" girl in the circle and present to her the veil.

The same procedure was followed by the single young men in the group except that the groom would present his lapel flower to a lucky lad. Then these two "lucky" young people would be raised on chairs and not lowered until they had kissed. It sometimes took quite some time for the suitably shy and reluctant girl to permit the young man to kiss her. With much support from those beneath holding up the chairs, the gallant swain would succeed in kissing the girl.

All these activities brought much enjoyment to the onlookers, as well as the participants. The older generation, seated in chairs around the fringe of the activity, looked upon the merry making with interest and not a little nostalgia — remembering days in the not too distant past when they were in the midst of the activities.

The younger ones, not yet old enough to participate in the fun, sat in segregated corners — the gangling, awkward Prince Charmings on one side of the room and pretty young girls on the other side. They observed all that was happening, giggling and dreaming of the time when it would be their turn to join in the games. Ah yes, there is a time for everything — including a time to be married.

(cont. from p. 6)

of these 19th and 20th century women whose lives consisted in caring for large families during very difficult times, but whose care and compassion included also many around them.

These stories of Mennonite women, extending across two continents and several generations, call all readers to greater commitment to God. Families of all ages should read these stories together. Every church library should have a copy. The lives of these women carry a message which women and men of today very much need to hear.

* * *

A Cemetery Map Project

The newly organized Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society has formed a special committee to locate and map Mennonite cemetery sites in the province. Many of these memorial sites have already disappeared, and others through neglect and for other reasons, are going to vanish in the next few years.

If you wish to help retain the memory of such a location and the persons buried there, please contact the Artifacts and Historical Sites Committee, c/o Herman Rempel, Box 901, Morden, Manitoba, R0G 1J0. When writing please mention, if possible, the name of the cemetery, location (township, range, section or town/village), when last used, church affiliation, and a separate list of persons buried there. Further contacts can then be made about detailed information which may be required.

Books Needed

If anyone has for sale a copy of Franz Bartsch's *Unser Auszug nach Mittel Asien*, or any other German book about that trek (Claas Epp's to Central Asia), please write to:

Ernst Quiring
6285 St. Catharines St.
Vancouver, B.C.
V5W 3G7

The Mennonite Heritage Centre archives needs a copy of the German edition of P. M. Friesen's *Die altevangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland, 1789-1910* (1911), and back copies of *Mennoblatt* (South American Mennonites) before 1960.

If you can help, please notify the Centre at 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3P 0M4.

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The article on a Mennonite village wedding is reprinted, with permission, from the newsletter of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada, January, 1980, pp. 2-4.

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Book Reviews

Hans Rempel, ed. and comp., **Waffen Der Wehrlosen: Ersatzdienst der Mennoniten in der UdSSR**. Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., 1980. 175 pp., 22 illustrations, map. \$9.00. By Gerhard Lohrenz, Winnipeg, Man.

When toward the end of the 19th century the Mennonites moved into Russia it had been agreed with the Czar government that their sons would not have to serve in the army. But by 1870 the Czar government saw itself unable to keep this promise any longer and a compromise was worked out between the government and the Mennonites. Their sons would render service like all other Russian citizens but not in the active army. Rather, in peace time they would serve in forestry units and in time of war in Red Cross units, hospitals or labour battalions. This contract the Czar government honoured to its very last days. Not even during the very trying First World War was there an attempt on the national level to force young Mennonite men into the regular army.

Then came the revolution and all old contracts lost their validity. At first, the Soviets insisted that all citizens, including the Mennonites, serve in the army as demanded by the state. The great majority of our young men refused to do so but they declared themselves willing to render a substitute service. Mennonite organizations such as the KfK (Committee for Church Affairs), took up the battle. Practically in all settlements the congregations did what could be done to assist their young men.

In the past our brotherhood had taken our privileged position for granted and non-resistance was not too often discussed publicly. It seemed that the question was solved once and for all. Mennonites did not serve in the army and when endangered at home or in the villages police were called in to handle the matter. But now, all of a sudden, the seemingly secure edifice had crumbled. Our people faced the question: "What is our real conviction? Must a Christian stand idly by when his women folks are violated and his dear ones murdered?" This problem has caused our people real anguish. The Soviet government on its part applied great and relentless force to make the individuals and the congregations amenable to its will. But our brotherhood has never at any time formally relinquished its traditional position.

Between 1918 and 1935 a substitute service for non-resisting Christians was legally allowed. However, it was often difficult for an individual to receive permission to enter such service. Constitutional changes after 1935 removed exemption privileges. Many hundreds of young men, Mennonites and others, who insisted on such recognition

have been shot or sent into death camps. Some have been able to obtain non-combatative service positions in the regular army.

Once in the labour unit a young man was exploited to the utmost. He was defenceless in the face of the arbitrary power of his immediate superiors who in most cases were out to break the men under their command. Overwork, starvation, and various brutalities were the order of the day. Many of the young men died as a result of such treatment and others suffered health damage for life.

Hans Rempel at one time resident in the Soviet Union, has collected the recollections of about thirty persons who rendered this service, and survived. The book is well-written and printed on good paper which makes for an easy reading. The numerous illustrations help to tell the story effectively.

The question of non-resistance and of our position in time of war, today is of vital importance. All those seeking an answer to this question should peruse Rempel's book. I recommend **Waffen der Wehrlosen** to the reader.

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Joanne Flint. **The Mennonite Canadians**. Toronto, Ontario: Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd., 1980. Pb., \$5.50. Reviewed by Ryan Toews, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Mennonite Canadians is part of a series which examines the various groups which form the Canadian cultural mosaic. Writing for the younger reader, Joanne Flint presents a concise look at the culture, both past and present, of Canadian Mennonites.

Happily, the author has covered two hundred years of Mennonite history in a manner that is as entertaining as it is informative. She utilizes the device of telling her story through the eyes of two Mennonite children. By following the lives of Jacob Martin and his family, who came to Ontario in 1805, and of Greta Janzen's family, settling in Manitoba seventy years later, the reader is enabled to form a personal link with the past. Furthermore, the use of well captioned illustrations and maps lend graphic emphasis to this relationship.

The book, however, does not simply stop here. Interspersed throughout the text are several short one or two page sections which, ranging in diversity from such subjects as Mennonite cooking, a recipe for **Pluma Moos** is included, to the work of the Mennonite Central Committee, provide the reader with an elaboration on something mentioned in the narrative. Additionally, questions for discussion are scattered throughout should the book be used in schools as a textbook.

Whether **The Mennonite Canadians** is used in a school for teaching purposes or by the young reader interested in discovering his or her past; and with the current interest in ethnicity it would seem to be inevitable, Joanne Flint's book is a welcome primer.

Katie Funk Wiebe, ed., **Women Among the Brethren**, Hillsboro, Kansas: The Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1979. 197 pp., \$7.95 (U.S.). Reviewed by LaVerna Klippenstein, Winnipeg, Man.

Among the most significant historical materials written about and by Mennonite women in recent years, comes this compilation of fifteen stories of Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren women.

The biographies span a century, telling the stories of women involved in the struggles of emerging churches in Russia, women caught in the cross-fire of both World Wars, struggling for survival apart from husbands and fathers, women pioneering on the North American frontier, breaking trail also for other women in the areas of education, midwifery, and mission work, demonstrating with patience, dedication and courage, their deep faith in God and faithfulness to Him in the midst of extreme hardship and pain.

The book was written in order to preserve a "great heritage of courage, vision, sacrifice and faith". This the writers have done with a skill of straightforward simplicity which makes the book useful for people of all ages. The writers avoided fictionalizing their stories and have largely limited themselves to the use of what research material was available. This factor influenced the selection of subjects for the biographies.

These fifteen stories represent a great deal of work researching archives, personal files, libraries and conducting oral interviews. Some of the eleven writers are new. The editor has succeeded in smoothing out any unevenness of style so that there is uniformity and continuity throughout the book. Introductory paragraphs prefacing the stories, help bridge time and location gaps and bring readers on board with each story quickly.

Katharina Claassen was alone with her family of young children during times of birth, illness and death, for many months while her husband Johannes negotiated with government authorities to help establish the Mennonite Brethren Church in south Russia.

Sara Eitzen delivered more than 1800 babies besides caring for her children, step-children and foster children.

Anna Thiessen became a housemother, guardian and confidante to hundreds of young women who moved to the city in search of work.

Their stories and a dozen others make for reading that inspires one to deep gratitude to God for His leading in their lives, and a great appreciation for the opportunities and comforts we enjoy because of God's grace and people like them.

Some may find the accounts of births, deaths, sicknesses, hard work and weary treks somewhat repetitious, and feel perhaps that the stories blend into each other and obscure some of their individuality. This may well be an authentic portrayal of the history

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