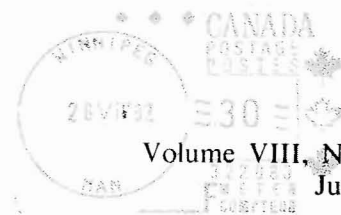


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Mennonite Historian

41



Volume VIII, Number 2
June, 1982



The Mennonite community in Mexico traces its beginnings back to 1922 when a large group emigrated to Mexico from Canada. The 1982 Mennonite Yearbook currently lists eight groups, totalling 25,330 in membership.

The Legacy of K. H. Neufeld

By Wes Berg

Kornelius H. Neufeld, or K. H., as he was known, was born on December 10, 1892, in Nikolajevka, Ukraine, and came to Canada in 1923. After spending some time at the *Rundschau* in Winnipeg learning the printing trade, he brought his wife to Winkler in 1924 where he set up a print shop.

His real interest lay in other areas, particularly music and conducting. Before long he had organized an *Immigrantenchor* (1924), had been asked to conduct the Winkler Bergthaler Church Choir (1928), and the Altona Bergthaler Church Choir (1933), and had assembled a group of Winkler men into the Winkler Male Voice Choir (1935). He was also responsible for starting the Southern Manitoba Music Festival in 1932 and before long was organizing choral festivals and choral workshops in Manitoba and neighbouring provinces.

In 1944 he began his association with the Manitoba Mennonite Youth Organization (MMYO), spending the summer months working with choirs in various regions and organizing concluding choral festivals in each area. This association with the MMYO continued until his death early in 1957.

In addition to his activities as a choral conductor, he also composed and published four cantatas, as well as a number of choral collections entitled "Singet dem Herrn". Recently, some wire recordings made by Neufeld in the last two years of his life were discovered in the possession of Neufeld's daughter, Mrs. Susie Penner of Winkler, Manitoba. These recordings, which include three of his cantatas and the last *Messiah* he was able to conduct (in Winkler 1956), have been transferred to cassettes and placed in the Mennonite Heritage Centre and the MB archives in Winnipeg.

Mrs. Penner also has photographs of her father and his choirs, some as early as 1924, the year he arrived in Winkler. A number of these have been copied and placed in the two archives. These two additions to the Heritage Centre's collection complement the MMYO files which contain many letters written by Neufeld to the MMYO executive over a period of twelve years.

One detail of Neufeld's biography that presents certain problems is the matter of his degrees. His stationery first sported the title of D. Mus. in the summer of 1953. In the summer of 1954 a B. Sc. was added, followed a few days later by a B.A., making for a very impressive letterhead.

At the time there was some confusion as to the source of the degrees. The *Echo* reported that he was to receive "an earned degree of Doctor of Music" from McGill University.² More recently, the article on Neufeld in the new *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* attributes to him an honorary doctorate from the University of Saskatchewan. He never attended McGill, and his career as a composer was far from being distinguished enough to justify the granting of an honorary degree. The doctoral parchment itself seems to have disappeared, so we will have to look elsewhere for the solution to the problem.

The parchments for the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees are still available for examination. They were both issued by an institution in India called St. John's University. It is most likely, therefore, that the doctorate was also a mail order degree, a conclusion confirmed by someone close to Neufeld, who remembers being shown such a parchment issued by the University of Bombay.

Those who knew K. H. Neufeld well would see his impressive letterhead as a logical extension of the flamboyant, theatrical personality of a man who literally had to live by his wit and charm, and these revelations are not intended to discredit him. In any case, his career as a conductor and the affection with which he is remembered by thousands of people speak for themselves. But recently there has been increased interest among students in the musical history of their Mennonite forefathers, and this should clear up at least one source of confusion that might be encountered. (over)

Notes

1. An extensive discussion of Neufeld's career as conductor and composer will appear in a book on Mennonite choirs in Canada by the writer to be published by CMBC Publications.
2. *The Altona Echo*, (4 March 1953), 1.

Wes Berg, of the Department of Music at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, recently completed a doctoral dissertation entitled: "Choral Festivals and Choral workshops among the Mennonites of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 1900-1960, with an account of Early Developments in Russia", University of Washington, 1979, 246 pp.



K. H. Neufeld on his cello. Photo courtesy of Wes Berg.

Donor Acknowledgments

We are much indebted for support in recent months to several dozen persons who have remembered the Centre in their giving. Thank you very much!

April - June, 1982

Walter Froese, Anderson, Indiana
John Friesen, Headingley, Manitoba
Nettie Neufeld, Steinbach, Manitoba
S. A. Derksen, Langham, Saskatchewan
G. Sickert, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Frank Fast, Kleefeld, Manitoba
Henry Siemens, Victoria, B.C.
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O. J. Andres, Aurora, Ontario
Carl H. Epp, Taiwan
Jerald J. Hiebert, Raymond, Alberta

CMBC Student Papers

by Adolf Ens

Each spring the archives of Mennonite Heritage Centre receives a valuable collection of research papers produced by CMBC students as part of their course in Mennonite Studies. Thirty three such research reports were deposited recently by Professors John Friesen and Adolf Ens who jointly teach the course at the college.

What makes these papers so valuable is the fact that they constitute original research on the topic under consideration. Interviews and questionnaires were frequently used to supplement information available in primary documents.

Three students, Alfred Clarke, Bernie Janzen, and Robert Martin collaborated in preparing a genealogy index based on obituaries in the Red River Valley Echo. The authors and titles of the other papers are listed below, arranged in topical order.

Congregational

Banman, Jennifer: Osler Mennonite Church
Bartel, Ken: The Split of the Waldheim Zoar Mennonite Church 1960-61.
Buhler, Jerry: The Development of the Church of the Way: Granisle, B.C.
Enns, Gordon: Nutana Park Mennonite Church 1966-1981
Feick, Dave: The History of the Faith Mennonite Church
Kathler, Jacquie: A Look at the Arnaud Mennonite Church from 1965-1982
Peters, David: The Portage Mennonite Church, A Congregational History
Regehr, Valerie: Charleswood Mennonite Church - A History
Ruegger, Elisabeth: Die Geschichte der Gründung und Entwicklung der Mennonitengemeinde Liestal
Schellenberg, Larry: Financial History of the Foothills Mennonite Church
Squier, David: A Journal: A Psychological and Sociological Profile of Lakeside Hutterite Colony
Wiens, John R.: The Development of Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, B.C.

Biography/Family History

Born, Paul: Genealogy - Family History
Gerbrandt, Elinor: Jacob Gerbrandt (1888-1980) and His Involvement Among Mennonites in Canada
Koop, Karl: The Emigration Experience of Heinrich Koop From Russia to Canada

Lichti, Chris: The Ethics and Theology of Reverend Clayton F. Derstine
Richert, Dean: Jake Epp, A Mennonite Politician

Mission Themes

Janzen, Bonita: The Anabaptist Vision and The General Conference Understanding of Mission
Janzen, Gord: The Church and Evangelism of the General Conference Mennonite Mission in India: History and Evaluation
Squier, Marilyn: Edwin Brandt's Role in the Founding of the Y.O.U.
Stoesz, Yvonne: Y.O.U. and the Native Christian Church

Schools

Flaming, Dennins: The "Cause-Effect" Approach to the Changes of the U.M.E.I.
Janzen, Linda: A History of the Alberta Mennonite High School, Coaldale, Alberta 1946-1964
Martin, Phyllis: Is There a Need for a Mennonite Bible School in Ontario?

Miscellaneous

Dyck, Veronica: Women in Conference Mennonite Churches: Where They are Involved and How People Feel About Women in Leadership Roles
Falk, Ron: The Proposed Nuclear Refinery (at Warman)
Fast, Jane: No Graven Image - A Study of Art and the Mennonites
Heese, Karen: The Saskatchewan Valley News 1902-1945
Neufeld, Rick: History of Derksen Printers
Retzlaff, Luella: Unions: A Mennonite Perspective (General Conference)
Schulz, Evan: The House of Commons Debates on Conscientious Objection and Alternative Service Programs During World War II
Siemens, Charlotte: Theology of Camping

Needed Badly: Sept. and Dec. 1974 issues of the CMBC Alumni bulletin to complete the archives set. Mail to the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Family Studies

Genealogy Sources

It is now generally known that Mennonite Genealogy Inc. has moved from the Mennonite Heritage Centre to a new location at 790 Wellington Ave. in Winnipeg. People wonder then if the Heritage Centre continues to hold certain genealogical source materials or not. This article notes what remains in the MHC collection.

Passenger Lists — 1870s

Most of the Mennonite families coming to Canada in 1874-1880 appear on these lists. Names of ships and date of arrival in Quebec are given, as well as ages of persons coming over. A similar list for U.S. Mennonites has been published in **Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need** edited by Clarence Hiebert.

The Jacob Shantz list of family heads includes names of most family heads of those 1874-1880 families. The majority of them stopped over among Ontario Mennonites before going to Manitoba and Shantz helped them to settle down.

Information on families coming in the 1920s from Russia is still with MCC (Canada). That office will release information free of charge. Write to MCC Archives, 1483 Pembina Hwy., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Church Registers

A large number of registers from Prussian Mennonite communities going back to about 1750 are available on microfilm. There are also two or three books from Russian Mennonite village communities (Schoenhorst, Fuerstenland, Alexanderwohl, excerpts from Chortitza books, just a few pages), and notably the Bergthal colony villages. Bergthaler Mennonites brought over their books to Canada and here they were continued by Chortitzer, Sommerfelder, and Bergthaler churches of Manitoba. Copies of Chortitzer and Bergthaler churches have come to the archives; also those of Old Colony churches in Manitoba. Besides that the registers of the Rosenorter Mennonite congregations (early years in Saskatchewan) and those of the Rudnerweider (EMMC) Gemeinde are also at the archives.

Published Family Studies and Unpublished Papers

"Family tree" material — unpublished manuscripts, some short, others longer. Some of the latter have been done by students, and the former by genealogists from U.S. and Canada. An index to the total holdings up to ca 1980 is available free upon request.

Obituaries

Mostly published in periodicals like **Mennonitische Post**, **Der Bote**, **Mennonitische Rundschau**, **Christlicher Familienfreund**, **Steinbach Post**, **Red River Valley Echo**, **The Carillon**, **Saskatchewan Valley News**, etc. The first years of **Der Bote** are indexed (1924-1947); most of the others have to be traced in the papers themselves. There is an index to obituaries in the **Familienfreund** and to many of the years of **Red River Valley Echo**. (to be cont.)

Research Request

I need a complete genealogical record of the male and female descendants of Cornelius Toews, born 1737; his son Cornelius, born 1766, Prussia, died 1831 Russia; his son Cornelius (no dates available); his son Cornelius (my grandfather) who died about 1890 — Hillsboro, Kansas, U.S.A. The Johann B. Toews — born 1865 and who lived to be about 102 was 5th generation of the original Cornelius Toews, born 1737 — and had seven sons: Peter, Jacob, Bernhard, Henry, Abram, Frank and David. I do not know how many daughters. I believe that most of the Toews descendants live in Canada, where Johann B. Toews returned to live after living for some years at Hillsboro, Kansas. All information greatly appreciated. Please write to: **Anne Taeves, Apt. 313, 1200 E. Broadway, Newton, Kansas, 67114 U.S.A.**

Home Street Church Celebration in Fall

The Home Street Mennonite Church of Winnipeg, Manitoba, formerly the Winnipeg Bergthaler Mennonite Church plans to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary on September 18-19, 1982. All former members and friends of the church are invited to help celebrate, and praise God for what He has done.

Arrangements for this event are now under way. Registration will take place on Saturday, September 18, from 12 noon to 2 p.m. at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College campus, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba. Sport activities and a barbecue will be held in the afternoon, followed by an evening program of slides, singing, drama, and other events. On September 19, a Sunday morning worship service led by former ministers will be held at the church, 318 Home Street. The afternoon will include informal reminiscing, presentations, etc. Be sure to bring your thoughtful reflections, and share them with the

Gemeinde. A communion service will be held in the evening.

Meals, and billeting will be available, and there will be a small registration fee. For more information contact Abe Teichroeb, committee chairperson, Box 20, Group 612, SS 6, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2C 2Z3, or the church, 318 Home Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 1X4. (Ph. 204-783-1721). Please indicate ahead of time if you plan to come.

The church began in 1957 with a membership of about forty, and today it has grown to over 250 members. For many years, the church was located at Ross and Sherbrook, but in 1973 the congregation moved to 318 Home St. Ernest Wiebe, Edwin Brandt, Clarence Epp, David Wiebe, and presently, John R. Friesen, are some of the ministers who have served the church. The rural to urban shift, paid ministers, individual membership, the vote for women, electing deacons for terms, not life, were some of the changes which have occurred through the years. Several congregations have sprung out of Home Street church, geographically it has moved three times, and the social base of the church may also have shifted. Do come and help us look into the future, and the past.

Family Reunions

Community and family reunions continue to be an important experience for many people. We note several which are scheduled for the months ahead.

Boese: To be held in Tofield, Alberta on August 1, 1982, then later to go to a camp from August 3-6, 1982. Contact David Boese Jr., Box 181, Tofield, Alberta.

Falk: To be held at Winnipeg Bible College, Otterburne, Manitoba on July 31, 1982. The program begins at 4 p.m. Contact Ben Falk, Box 36, Niverville, R0A 1E0 for details.

Friesens: To be held at the Mennonite College Institute in Gretna, Manitoba on July 17 and 18. Contact Nettie Neufeld, Box 2455, Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0.

Heese: To be held at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba on July 18. Contact Rudy Peters.

Klassen: To be held at the Steinbach Bible College, Steinbach, Manitoba on July 11, 1982.

Kroekers: To be held at Winnipeg Bible College, Otterburne, Manitoba, on July 16-19, 1982. A tour to Mennonite Heritage Centre will follow on July 20. Contact Agnes Kroeker, 612-1335 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Cherry Hedge

By Peter Paetkau

THE CHERRY HEDGE, a drama in three acts written in English and Low German by Elizabeth Peters, got a premiere performance by the Garden Valley Collegiate (GVC) Drama Club on February 18, 19, and 20, 1982. Directed by Judy Wiebe and R. Hamerling, the drama made its debut in the English version, with a Low German presentation planned for the future.

The *Cherry Hedge* opens with an introductory speech in which the speaker poses as "the composite of life past, present and future" in Winkler and lists many of its most prominent and often colorful citizens.

The story is really very simple. The entire plot revolves around a cherry hedge located between two properties owned by cousins. Home to the birds of the air and a never-used love-seat, and responsible for countless headaches of those living next to it, it is a nuisance especially to one who now does not like anything made from choke cherries, and is desperate to remove the hedge.

Nobody else really wants to be rid of it, least of all Uncle John, an elderly bachelor staying at his niece, and most adamant in advocating the removal of the bothersome hedge, nor does Great Aunt Mary, owner of the hedge, who must be consulted before the hedge is removed.

The subsequent secretive and separate actions of the cousins and Uncle John, the real accomplice in the story, to invite the great-aunt to their home sets in motion a train of irreversible events they regret later.

Uncle John, mooning about his lost love, great-aunt Mary, whom he was "too block-headed" to ask for a hand in marriage fifty years ago, contrives to take advantage of the situation his niece has created in her uproar over the hedge.

After two false "Great Aunts" appear on the scene the audience senses that a final showdown is imminent. The agitated conversation in broken English by the two rather simple-minded false aunts is executed with great skill and realism. When finally the real Great Aunt Mary arrives, a total contrast to the two, the scene turns riotous and the audience roars with laughter.

Elizabeth Peters has once more proven that she is an exceptional story-teller. All through the drama suspense is gradually built up. The plot is well conceived, maintaining the interest of the audience at all times.

Even in the final scenes, as the action diminishes, anticipation of what may yet occur does not quiet subside until the curtain is drawn. The final scene is especially well done by this group of amateurs, and is almost moving in the way that now the hedge really does not matter any more.

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Other Low German Events

*"Jereeshte Tweeback", a new Low German singing group provided excellent and much appreciated entertainment at the fund-raising banquet of the Mennonite Village Museum Society on May 25. Rev. Peter J. B. Reimer of Rosenort, Manitoba was the honored guest of that occasion.

*During this past winter in Steinbach, Wilmer Penner taught the intricacies of the Low German Language to a class of twenty students in Steinbach, Manitoba. Three quarters of the students came from non-Mennonite homes. Classes in the language have also been taught recently in Winnipeg and Winkler, by Dr. Jack Thiessen and Elizabeth Peters respectively.

*A group of 15 more academics and other individuals in Winnipeg, interested in Low German orthography met on Saturday, April 24, to plan the outlines of a standard orthography which will be useful for writing the language.

*Dr. Lennert Nyman of Sweden recently completed a doctoral dissertation on the Low German dialect as used by Paulsheim in the Ukraine. The work is entitled "Studien zur Niederdeutschen Mundart des Dorfes Paulsheim in der Ukraine", Kopenhagen, 1980. Cf. *Mennoblatt*, December 16, 1981. pp. 3-4 for a lengthy review of the work.

*In April the Low German Drama group of Landmark presented the plays *De Bildung* by J. H. Janzen and *Welkom Ope Forstei* by Arnold Dyck. The group will also sponsor the Mennonite pavilion in the Folklorama series at Winnipeg this August.

Used Book Sale

At the Mennonite Heritage Centre donors sometimes provide duplicate titles of Mennonitica which are sold, and thus help to fund the operation of the Centre.

Below are a number of titles now available at the prices listed. They will be mailed out or sold on the spot on a "first come - first served" basis. In many instances there is only one copy available.

Write in for the full list of items available, including also new titles (no charge). The cost of postage and handling is extra for books mailed to buyers.

\$6.00 Books

Das Reiche Gottes — Heinrich Dirks
(1892-South Russia) (photoduplicate)
Mennonites in WWII or Nonresistance Under Test — J. S. Hartzler.

\$5.00 Books

Erfahrungen der Mennoniten in Kanada waehrend des Zweiten Weltkriegs D. P. Reimer, ed.
Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in Saskatchewan — J. G. Rempel
Who's Who Among the Mennonites in America — A. Warkentin
In den Steppen Sibiriens — G. Fast
I Would Like to Dodge the Draft
Dodgers — F. H. Epp

\$3.00 Books

Die Bergthaler Mennoniten — Klaas Peters
Meine Reise nach Siberien und zurueck — M. B. Fast (1919)
Abriss der Geschichte der Mennoniten — C. H. Wedel
Kirchengeschichte fuer Schulen und Familien — C. H. Wedel
H. H. Ewert — Lehrer Erzieher und Prediger der Mennoniten — P. J. Schaefer (paperback)
The Fate of the Prussian Mennonites — W. Schreiber
J. H. Janzen: *Durch Wind und Wellen* (Gedichte - 1928)
Gedanken und Erfahrungen und Traeume
Denn Meine Augen haben den Heiland gesehen (1925)

Periodicals

Canadian Mennonite \$5.00 per volume (year), plus mailing. Available: 1960-1971, all issues.
Light for the Day Cost of mailing and handling only (monthly). Available: 1950-1971, most issues in both German and English.
Der Bote \$5.00 per year plus cost of mailing and handling. Available: 1950-1981, most issues.
Mennonite Life \$1.00 per issue, plus mailing and handling (Quarterly). Available: 1946-1981, most issues.

Mennonites in Mexico

Sixtieth anniversary

In August at least three Mennonite congregations of Mexico will celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the coming of Mennonites to Mexico. All groups are associated with the General Conference Mennonite Church. It is not clear whether other Mennonite congregations which had earlier intimated plans to be involved, will be joining these celebrations, or plan their own.

Speakers such as Peter Rempel of Mexico and Gerhard Lohrenz of Winnipeg, Manitoba will be speaking on themes related to the original emigration, and the meaning of the Mennonite experience in the country. On Saturday, August 28, young people will present a drama, and the Sunday worship service will offer thanks to God for His care and leading in the past sixty years.

Several thousand Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan first moved to the country in 1922-1927. They were able to get important privileges such as military exemption and the right to educate their children by the presidential decree of Alvaro Obregon. The largest Mennonite settlement developed in the province of Chihuahua. The majority of the people belonged to the Old Colony (also known as Reinlaender) group, but others came from the Sommerfelder and Kleine Gemeinde communities of Canada. A number of families have left Mexico for Bolivia and Belize, as well as Canada, in more recent years.

Most of the Mennonites engaged in agriculture at first but more recently there has been some development of industry and business as well. Although a distinct minority in the country, Mennonites have made a significant impact particularly in economic development of their regions of settlement.



One of the trains of Mennonite immigrants which reached Mexico in the 1920s.

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Three congregations have developed under the direction of workers sent out by the General Conference Mennonite Church in the last few decades. The total membership of the communities is between three and four hundred. Persons active in leadership include Peter Rempel and Cornelius R. Reimer along with Canadians such as the Frank Sawatzkys and Daniel Peters, Helen Ens, and the Henry Ens' from southern Manitoba, and others from the U.S.A.

Mexican Mennonite Documents Copied

By Dennis Stoesz

Over the past number of years, several collections of early Manitoba Mennonite village and church records have been borrowed from the Mennonite community in Mexico, microfilmed or photocopied, and returned to places of origin. Many records were naturally taken to Mexico in the 1920s when several thousand Mennonites moved there. Today there has been a keen interest in this pre-emigration period of history, 1874-1920s, by Mennonite people who still live in Manitoba and by those Mennonites who trace their religious and ethnic roots to this community.

The records of the village of Reinland, Manitoba, 1876 to about 1930, were the first set of materials brought into the archives. In 1976, while working on a history on Reinland, Peter D. Zacharias, then from Grunthal, Manitoba, managed to locate these records with a Franz Froese from Cuauhtemoc, Mexico.

In 1977, Peter Goertzen, then of Edmonton, Alberta, was working on a Goertzen family history. In doing so he located and photocopied an Old Colony church register, which was kept in trust by that church in Mexico. This register dated from the time that the Old Colony Church (then Reinlaender Church) established itself in Manitoba between 1875 to 1922. The material has received much use over the years by genealogists and persons who trace their lineage to this church.

In 1880, a set of documents from the village of Gnadenthal, Manitoba, were borrowed by Leonard Sawatzky, Winnipeg, Manitoba. These records date from about 1875 to 1930. They became an important source for writing a history of Gnadenthal which is to be published this year.

A fourth collection of material recently brought into the archives by Jake Peters, Winnipeg, Manitoba included the papers of the Sommerfelder Bishop Abraham Doerksen, 1893-1929. Peters borrowed them from the bishop's grandson, Jacob Doerksen, also now a bishop, of Blumenthal village, Santa Clara Colony, Mexico.

All of these records have been invaluable for understanding the early Mennonite experience in Manitoba and also Mexico. We are grateful for the help of people who secured these documents on a loan basis, and for individuals in Mexico who made these materials available. It is hoped that this interchange of documents and dialogue between Mexico and Canadian Mennonites can continue.

Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940

A People's Struggle for Survival

By Frank H. Epp

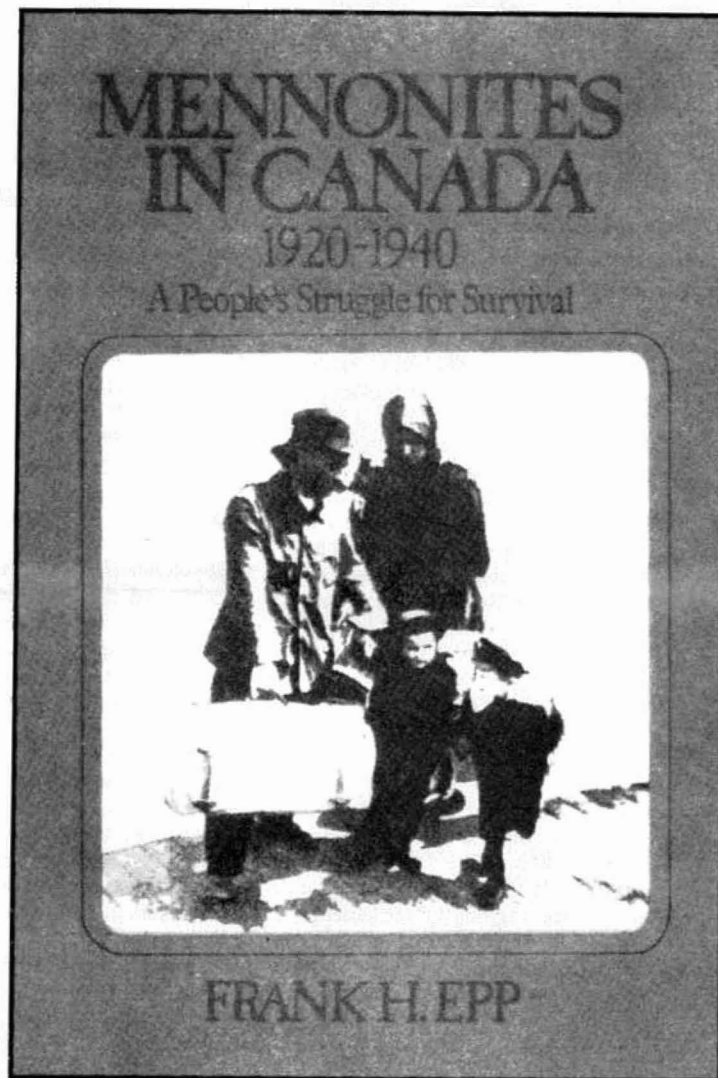
The second volume, *Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940*, follows the exacting standards of the first in its detailed research and readable style. Subtitled *A People's Struggle for Survival*, it covers the period framed by the two world wars.

This was a critical period when the Mennonites' survival in Canada was under a variety of external threats. It was also an age in which Mennonite history was marked by fragmentation even in their own communities. During this twenty-year timespan the battle for separate schooling led to a significant emigration of Canadian Mennonites to Latin America, while another struggle was waged with our immigration authorities to allow the entry of Russian Mennonites into Canada. The book also covers the impact of the Depression on the Mennonites and their efforts to preserve their cultural and racial identity. The book ends with the response of the Mennonites to the outbreak of the Second World War.

The book focuses on the Mennonite minority but it is far more than a Mennonite history. It contributes greatly to Canadian minorities' history and provides a new perspective on the role of provincial and federal governments and on federal-provincial relations generally. Through the Mennonites' involvement in global events, the book also throws light on the international world in the inter-war period.

The book is written for a general audience and in popular style. However, its bibliographic documentation, numerous tables, maps, and illustrations increase the book's attractiveness for both the general reader and the scholar of Canadian history, religious studies, ethnic minorities studies, and, of course, Mennonite history.

Selected photographs from various Mennonite sources enhance beautifully the lucid prose of Dr. Epp. This eminently readable book is an outstanding account of a unique people during a turbulent time in their history.



Available July, 1982

\$25.95

Volume I is still available also - \$16.95 hardcover

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Milestones of First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon

By Esther Patkau

Part II

In the 1940s better weather, more rains, better crops and a more hopeful future financial prospect also brought an influx of more young people to the educational institutions of the city. More families moved in to find work.

The Mayfair district was blossoming. Henry W. Friesen came in from Rosthern to help with organizing Sunday School classes; Rev. J. J. Thiessen visited many homes; Erna Dyck held meetings for children and contacted the homes. Worship services were begun in the homes, but they were overcrowded. On December 11, 1949, a church building donated by the Bethesda congregation of Langham and moved to 1405 Avenue G. North, was dedicated as the first Mission. Now they too had a church "home".

World War II came to a close in 1945, bringing new waves of refugees from Europe. They were received by their relatives and soon assimilated into the work force. Yet the movement had its impact on the growth of the church.

The 1950s brought a new surge of vitality. In 1950, Peter Sawatzky, just graduated from CMBC, began work as a minister in the Mayfair congregation, was later ordained, and on February 3, 1952, the Mayfair Mennonite Church was organized.

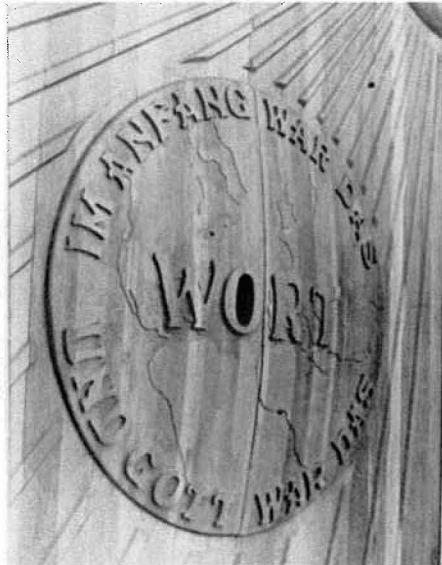
In 1952 Peter Reimer was ordained as the first deacon of First Mennonite Church. The same year the Junior Ladies Aid (later the name was changed to the Naomi Mission Society) organized. Also, the men started a Young Men's Service Organization with the purpose of serving. They began a Boys' Club, took on ushering services and participated in a visitation program combined with sales of chocolates and nuts to finance their projects. They began a newsletter in January, 1953, a monthly issue of activity and program announcements, plus articles of encouragement in the faith. This was a means of communication for sixteen years. For more than thirteen of these years, Elmer Neufeld was the production man, with many others serving in various aspects of its publication.

The work at Pleasant Hill Mission also had prospered with many from First Mennonite sharing in the task of teaching and visiting in that district. On January 8, 1953, the Pleasant Hill Mission chapel on 22nd Street West, was dedicated and a new chapter began for that congregation.

In 1954 First Mennonite Church leased property at Pike Lake for summer activities and began holding summer camps there. Later the Saskatchewan Youth Organization became responsible for the annual camps for children and youth held there.

Fourth Avenue church building was too small. People were being turned away for

lack of space, even standing room was scarce. Plans were formalized, a building fund begun and in 1953 the property on the corner of 5th Avenue and Queen Street purchased. The fund for construction needed time to accumulate a bit, but with the dire need for space, construction of a new building went ahead. July 15, 1956, the congregation gathered for the sod-turning and dedication of the site ceremony on Queen Street. In August construction began. The Mayfair congregation too was anxious for more space and had purchased the First Mennonite building on 4th Avenue, waiting for it to be vacated. Not waiting for completion, First Mennonite congregation moved into an unfinished building on March 24, 1957, and their former building was moved on April 8 to Avenue D to become the home of Mayfair Mennonite Church. May 26, 1957, the new First Mennonite church house was dedicated. (to be cont.)



Design on the door of the Mennonite Heritage Centre carved by Peter W. Enns of Winkler, Manitoba. A large area in the basement level has been converted to a library stack area this summer.

Northwest Conference Marks 75 Years

Tofield, Alta. — Delegates to the Northwest Mennonite Conference (MC) annual sessions July 1-4 have celebrated the 75th anniversary of the church body.

The conference has 923 members in 17 churches. The majority of the congregations are in Alberta, with one each in Saskatchewan, Alaska and Montana.

The church body was organized in 1907 as the Alberta-Saskatchewan Mennonite Conference. It was founded by Mennonite colonists who moved into the area after the opening of free homesteads by the Canadian government.

(cont. from page 8)

In 1942 a suggestion for the Manitoba Vereine to create a scholarship for the M.C.I. in memory of Mrs. Margarete (David) Toews was made by Rev. J. J. Thiessen to Mrs. Maria Siemens (Winkler), who founded the Manitoba Women's Conference. A similar request, for a Margaret Toews Scholarship for R.J.C., began the Saskatchewan Conference in 1943. The Alberta women's group began organizing with encouragement from Mrs. Krehbiel at the Canadian Conference in Coaldale in 1947. The Ontario Women's Conference was formed in the same year, due mainly to the many efforts, experiences and contacts of Mrs. Helene Toews (Niagara-on-the-Lake).

Across the country women were led to service in local institutions held sales and suppers to raise money for church projects as well as support of specially adopted missionaries, had their own paper *Unser Missionsblatt*,* and enjoyed retreats and the guidance of gifted leaders. When Mrs. Krehbiel resigned in 1957, the organization was strong.

In the 1960s, the Canadian Women's Missionary Conference was strengthened in its work by closer relationship with the General Conference W.M.A. and the Council of Boards of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. In 1975, the name was changed to Canadian Women in Mission to express more personal involvement. As the silver anniversary approached, new opportunities were being examined as women found themselves free to use their gifts in urban settings, and to develop personal contacts with sisters overseas.

Looking back on the struggle and growth, one appreciates the quiet testimony in reports such as this from one of the Southwest Ontario Vereine. "Perhaps some of our ladies did not play an important role in our community, did not take part in the conference, nor present any speeches, nor serve on an important committee. But who can measure the strength of these ladies' prayers, or the support and encouragement which they gave?"

*A nearly complete set (April, 1946 - July 1963) of this periodical is available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

Needed badly:

The November, 1959 issue of *Der Leitstern* (EMMC paper) and the July 1947 issue of *Unser Missionsblatt* published in Altona, to complete sets at the archives.

Book Reviews

Jacob G. Guenther, **Men of Steele: The Lifestyle of a Unique Sect**. Saskatoon: By the author, 1981, Hdc., \$17.50. Irene and Peter Petkau, **Blumenfeld: Where Land and People Meet**. Blumenfeld near Winkler, Manitoba, 1981, Hdc., \$20.00. *Reviewed by Jake Peters, Winnipeg, Manitoba.**

"Local and family studies have become boom industries on the prairies in recent days..." (Friesen and Potyondi). This holds true for Mennonite society particularly as it does for the prairies generally.

Jacob G. Guenther's book, **Men of Steele** has in it brief historical sketches of, Mennonite immigration to Canada, settlement in the Hague-Osler Reserve, the Steele School district, and various events like World Wars I and II, and the Great Depression. In addition it includes brief family histories of many people from the area.

The book will be of great interest to people who have lived in the Hague-Osler area of Saskatchewan. It presents various memorabilia from their "lived history", which will serve to bring back positive memories. Some examples are: lists of songs sung in school classes, reproductions of poems and Christmas verses, and of course many photographs. Unfortunately many of the old photographs are of poor quality and hence of diminished interest. A second point is that the narrative and photographs present the reader with a series of glimpses of the community. The book does not weave all of its component parts together very well into one cohesive story. This will have the effect of reducing its usefulness for the reader from outside the community.

This is not to say however that the book is lacking in value. For the academic it will have a great deal of interest as a primary source. It presents a whole range of school documents as well as several other documents of interest to the local historian. The photographs as well lend themselves to the study of change in the community.

The book fails to effectively explain changes in the community to people outside the community. In spite of this the book gives interesting detailed portraits of many aspects of the community at different points in time. The author is obviously close to the past he writes about, and he does succeed in portraying something the people of the area can reflect upon with satisfaction.

The history of Blumenfeld is in many respects a very polished work. It is a well laid out, attractive book. It presents a wide range of maps, tables and high quality photographs. These already make the book worth having, what's more, the writers have done a fine job of reconstructing the Blumenfeld community from its inception to date.

The book, however, is seriously flawed in several respects. There are a distressing number of typographical errors, often resulting in incorrect dates, or in several instances, in people being given incorrect first names or initials.

At points it also appears that the writers are some distance removed from the village ideologically. This results in rather unfortunate value judgments being passed upon the community. The most serious cases of this occur on pages 57-59. In its assessment of Blumenfeld as a religious community, this section is hardly reflective of the way in which a community "insider" would understand it. The writers say, "The Old Colony Church in Blumenfeld (the largest church group in the village) has taken pride in holding to the traditional ways... The consequence of this more conservative character of Blumenfeld is demonstrated, not in a deep religious experience... but in a firmer resistance to education which exposes their children to the world outside the village community. Resistance to higher education is based on the religious notion that innocence is better than the pride of those who know too much."

The village is further portrayed as driving out creative individuals. It is very doubtful in this instance that Blumenfeld villagers and the writers of the book have a shared definition of creativity. It might also be worth knowing how Blumenfelders, in the survey, communicated the "fact" that creative individuals were forced out of the community, or for that matter how many believed this to be the case. A much better explanation *might* be found in terms of economic opportunity or lack thereof.

Another point of criticism relates to the use of Low German expressions; many are quite different from the way in which they are ordinarily used and others seem quite stilted. Secondly, the tables and graphs in the book while generally acceptable, sometimes need more careful work. The graphs on educational expectations (p. 115), for example, appear to account for 110% of both the male and female populations. Graphs, generally, would be more useful if the base numbers on which calculations were based had been provided. On the other hand a simple technique like the "pie" graph (p. 58) of Blumenfeld's religious composition is quite good.

The above notwithstanding, the book has a great deal to command it and most of it is well done. Also a large part of the credit should go to the villagers themselves. As Lawrence Klippenstein says in the foreword, "The community of Blumenfeld has done something important. It has shared a significant experience of life together, and thus opened itself to other groups as well." For this we should be grateful.

***Both books may be ordered from the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba.**

Katie Hooge, ed. **The History of the Canadian Women in Mission 1952-1977** Winnipeg, 1977, pb., 37 p.; Adina Janzen, and Winnie Dueck, eds. **History of B.C. Mennonite Women in Mission 1939-1976**, 1976, pb., 100 p.; Helen Redekopp, ed. **History of Alberta Mennonite Women in Mission 1947-1977**, 1977, pb., 128 p.; Saskatchewan Women in Mission; 1977, pb., 92 p.; Justina Baerg, ed. **History of Manitoba Mennonite Women in Mission 1942-1977**, Winnipeg, 1977, pb., 96 p.; **The Story of Women in Mission (Southwest Ontario)**, 1977, pb., 50 p.; Mary and John Harder, eds. **Ontario Women in Mission**, 1977, pb., 34 p. *Reviewed by Debbie Schmidt, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

Among the holdings of the CMBC Mennonite Historical Library is a publication series from the Canadian Women in Mission and its provincial conferences. The history of the national organization was told at its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1977 by two former presidents and a former secretary in a well-written presentation. In 1976-1977, the regional conference also put out histories of their organizations. Each includes reports from the individual groups, a history of the organization, and information on collective projects and retreats. They reflect both the variety and similarity across the country. The B.C. and Alberta publications have parallel German and English, Saskatchewan's is completely English, and the Manitoba and Ontario publications have the reports in the language choice of the group. The styles vary from B.C.'s brief individual histories supplementing the major provincial history, to Southwest Ontario's similar detailed and relaxed reminiscing, to Manitoba's statements on the current situation.

An integral part of many churches, the gatherings for **Vereine** were an opportunity for the women to have spiritual input, service, and the companionship so rare in their busy days. In 1917, the sewing circles of the U.S. were organized under the General Conference Women's Missionary Association. There was interest in helping Canada organize and in 1930 Mrs. Sophia Krehbiel of Drake began her long and active career as "Canadian advisor". It was not easy to get the individual groups interested in returning the annual questionnaires or participating in joint projects. In 1929, B.C. became the first province to form their own conference with Meta Bahnman as first president. She continued to provide strong leadership for nearly twenty years.

Usually the only opportunity for the women to meet was alongside the regular conference. Thus it was that the first national meeting was at the Canadian conference in Laird in 1941. Appeals for unity continued to go out to those societies not yet affiliated.

(cont. on page 7)