

Editor: Diedrich P. Neufeld
 Editorial Committee: Diedrich Neufeld, Roger Epp, Judith Rempel
 Layout: Judith Rempel
 Distribution: D. P. Neufeld

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To join, send payment to:
 MHS
 2946 - 32 Street NE
 Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7

Send submissions, photos and correspondence to:
 Diedrich Neufeld
 2946 - 32 Street NE
 Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7
 Or to: adneuf@telusplanet.net

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Editorial

by D. P. Neufeld

This edition is another collection of wide ranging materials provided by numerous individuals.

We feature the experience of our Mennonite 'siblings' who fled the threat to their beliefs, from back in Russia in 1874, much earlier than many of our forebears. They responded again in the 1930's, in much the same way they had when they left Russia, when education and isolation were impacted by

Canadian government decisions. Now some of them are retracing their steps, back into Canada.

We included a review of the biography of David Toews written by an admirer.

Two more stories of family migration came to my attention. There must be an endless supply available and more being written every day. Our ancestors' devastating experiences in Russia, prompted a search for the *right* homeland. That search is being continued by many families.

We are encouraged by the emphasis on further research into both documented and oral records. The Mennonite story is increasingly being documented.

MHSA is venturing into new territory, geographically, by taking its fall 2003 meeting to LaCrete, where Mennonites began to settle in the early 1930's. We look forward to one or perhaps even two bus loads of interested people, joining the Board for the 12-hour trip from Calgary. LaCrete Mennonites have published several historical books and continue to gather stories about the experience of homesteading in such a remote agricultural part of the province.

You are invited to participate in the history collection and preservation process by submitting your family stories either to the Newsletter or for retention in the archives. We welcome your submissions and hope to begin receiving more photos.

Chairman Jake's Corner

by J D Harder

It has been a busy summer for some members of MHSA.

I reported in June that our accommodation at the MCCA office was filled to capacity and that we had reached an agreement with MCCA and the Thrift Store to rent part of the mezzanine floor. We now have a secure room that should serve our needs for at least ten years. Thanks to volunteers a wall was built to enclose our space, doors fitted, and paint applied, to make a fine home for our historical materials. This has become a reality; a functional and attractive

setting. Early in July all was ready to make the move from MCCA to the new address. Again volunteers, including a group of young people, came to help and the transfer was soon accomplished.

At our May meeting the MHSA Board had agreed to hire Judith Rempel to work for one month to organize and catalogue the materials accumulated. She flung herself into the task. With many extra hours and help from volunteers she was able to complete the major portion of the work in time for our "launch" and open house on October 5th.

Then she donated the contracted remuneration back to MHSA. What dedication and generosity!

Now that we have a permanent address and our materials are inventoried, we need to make them available so that interested people can use them. To aid in this the archives/library will be open every Saturday from 10:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. staffed with a volunteer attendant.

The MHSA website is already in operation. In the near future we want to use the Internet to provide information to clients. To this end we need some additional equipment. We haven't a phone yet, and the old computer we have hasn't the capacity or the functions needed. Else where in this Newsletter you will find a list of items for which we need sponsors. Our income is erratic as we depend on membership fees and donations.

At our October Board meeting MHSA moved to:

1. Complete a Policies and Procedure Manual for the operation of the archives/library for approval at Annual meeting next April.
2. Hold the spring Annual General Meeting and Workshop on April 26, 2003, in Gem, Alberta complete with a fund raising banquet.
3. Plan a fall *story telling* meeting, hosted in LaCrete.

I end with a sincere thank you to all the people who worked so diligently to bring the MHSA Archives/Library to life.

Mennonites from Mexico (cont'd)
 fact that these Mennonites were

exempt from military training and spoke an enemy's language led to changed policies. From this time on, Mennonite men were required to participate in military training. Fortunately, the church leaders were soon able to negotiate a form of alternative service such as forestry service (**Forstei**) that was acceptable to the Czar.

The Russification Policy caused concern for many of the Mennonites,

able to retain control over most of their affairs, schools, and settlement arrangements on their land reserves and remain separate from the rest of the population. This separation was difficult to maintain during World War I and politicians felt the pressure of other citizens who did not have the privileges enjoyed by the Mennonites. The Mennonites were thus forced to attend Public Schools

Canadian government promised in the 1870's.

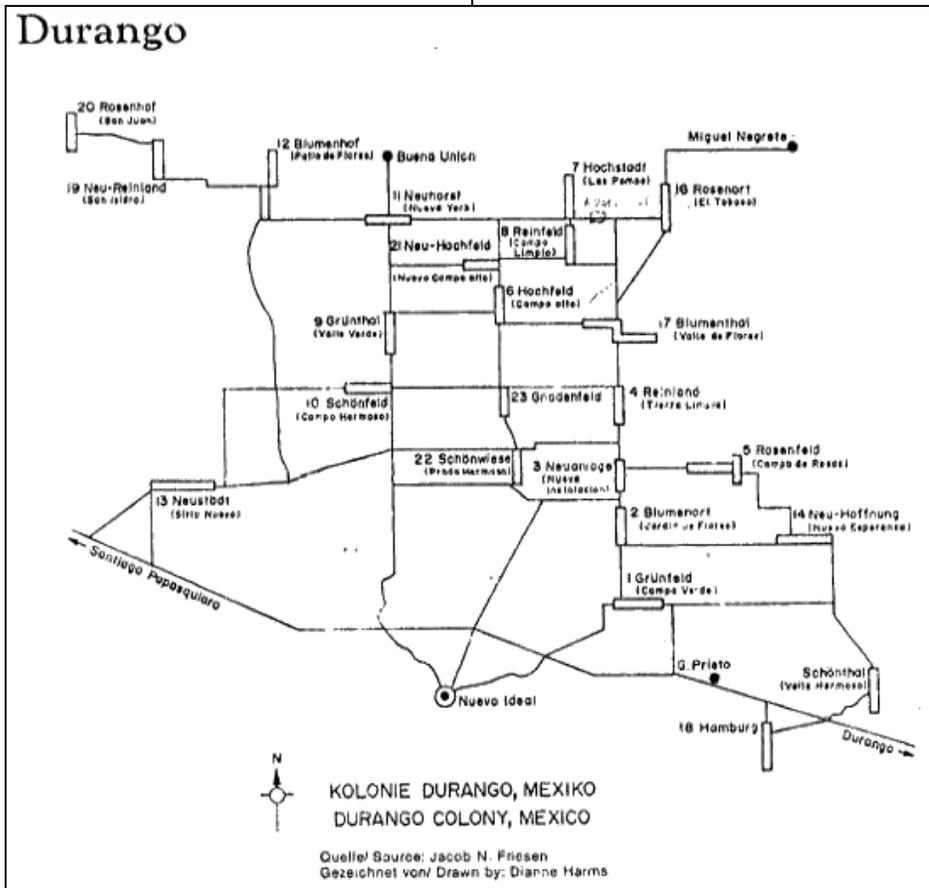
The early years were very difficult in Mexico; the Mennonite people struggled because they were not familiar with the type of crops that could be grown when was the time to seed, etc. The banks proved unstable and many lost most of their saving. Difficulties with the Mexican people who formerly lived on the land that the Mennonites purchased made their situation very unstable. In 1935, the Mexican Government had all the Mennonite Schools closed and it appeared that they were losing the privileges they had been extended. Many people wanted to return to Canada, but did not have the means.

The progressive individuals in the Colonies in Mexico wanted to move ahead. They wanted to put their tractors on rubber tires, drive trucks and hook up to the electricity. Those who dared to change were excommunicated by their churches and remained thus until about 1999. In the colonies near Cuauhtemoc, Chihuahua there are now more progressive churches established, and excommunication is rarely used as a form of discipline. But in Mexican colonies where there is only the one church, it is still being used to bring dissidents into line.

Over the years problems arose because of rapid increase in population, extended periods of drought and a shortage of land. As early as the 1950's, Mennonites from Mexico began returning because they could not make a living in their colony. Or, they would come to Canada and work during the summer and then return to Mexico for the winter. Others looked for more land and started new colonies in other parts of Mexico, Belize and Bolivia.

It is believed that over the last 30 to 40 years possibly as many as 40,000 Mennonites have returned to Canada. We have an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 Mexican Mennonites living in southern Alberta. They have returned to Canada and settled in Alberta in the last 20 to 25 years.

Many of the people retained their Canadian citizenship while residing in Mexico. That is what allows them to return to our



fearing that this was the beginning of losing the privileges promised to them by Czarina Catherine. They sent out a land search party to find possible locations where they could move to and have the privileges enjoyed thus far in Russia. The land search party returned with two possibilities: Manitoba in Canada or parts of the United States. Others felt that they had responsibilities in the country. Once alternative service arrangements had been agreed upon, they were willing to stay in Russia.

The Kanadier Mennonites of the 1870's settled in southern Manitoba and prospered. They were

to learn the English language. Families were fined heavily for not sending their children to the Public School both in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and church leaders were in court and some were imprisoned because of their resistance to further integration. This was not the only reason, but possibly the main reason, why history repeated itself and a land search party was sent to check out other possibilities.

The move to Mexico began in 1922 and continued throughout the 1920's when they were promised the same *privilegium* that the

country. Others, who did not register the members of their families, may not return unless they can come as a landed immigrant. The Canadian Government is tightening the borders and is following the letter of the law. To retain Canadian Citizenship, there now are minimum required residency periods. Significant numbers have lost their citizenship because they did not have their marriage legalized in Mexico by a Justice of the Peace. Because many were married in the church only, their children are now not considered legitimate children of Canadian citizens, and therefore may not qualify for Canadian citizenship.

Over the years large numbers of Mennonites have migrated to Belize, Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina. One group has also settled in the Seminole, Texas area of the United States. Their reasons for moving are at times similar to the initial ones, but mostly now for work and land to make a living. Some are still migrating because they want to find a place where they can be separate from the world.

Mennonite Central Committee Canada has assisted Mennonites in the colonies in Mexico at various times. During the drought years in the early 1950's, MCC provided relief assistance as well as some agricultural research support. They assisted in keeping colonies and families connected and reading through *Die Mennonitische Post*. In recent years MCC has placed workers in Mexico to determine how MCC could best help them to remain with their families in Mexico. Further, provincial MCC's are providing assistance to migrants who come to work in Canada and do not have the proper documents and who need assistance finding jobs, living accommodations, etc.

The Kanadier migration from Mexico to the various places throughout North and South America is probably the largest Mennonite migration in history. Anyone interested in the story of their return to Canada can contact MCC Alberta office and request the video "Migration North" which provides background to the life in

the Colonies and their need to move on.

MHSA Opens New Facilities

by Irene Klassen

Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta has made a major move.

From the granary on Henry Goerzen's farm, the archives have been moved to the spacious setting on the mezzanine level of the MCC Thrift Store in Calgary. Many records have already been filed in archival containers and are lined up on shelves. Judith Rempel has done a lot of cataloguing, with some help from volunteers. It is really just the beginning of the process, and there is much room for expansion.

On October 5, the Library and Archives was officially opened. About 50 guests attended the event. Jake Harder, Chair of the MHSA, welcomed the guests.

Henry Goerzen gave a historical sketch of the beginnings. The Alberta Historical Society was at first combined with Saskatchewan's Mennonite Historical Society, but it was decided to become independent in 1986. After a few years of relative inactivity, it was reactivated in 1998 and it has become quite viable.

Henry, who is the Archivist for the Mennonite Conference of Alberta, has collected records, books and other materials over the years, and was recognized for his work, by presenting him and his wife, Erna a certificate of lifetime membership in the Society.

Abe Janzen, Director of MCCA, from which MHSA is renting the space, spoke of the importance of this link with other Mennonite organizations. Preserving the history of the Mennonite people is a form of ministry. Mennonites are relatively few in number, but they have established a good reputation wherever they have gone.

Organizations like MHSA are the pillars for the people.

Before the ribbon was cut to officially open the Archives to all searchers, Irene Klassen spoke a prayer of dedication. Then she cut the ribbon and handed the key to Henry.

Judith Rempel then introduced the various interest centres - Peter Penner was in charge of the Library, Henry Goerzen and Judith the Archives, Dick Neufeld, identifying old photos, and Harold Friesen, Genealogy. Guests were invited to visit the centres of their choice. *Zwieback* and *Pflaumenplatz* were served with coffee.

Already in the collection, are records of Alberta Women in Mission, Alberta Mennonite Youth Organization, Conference of Mennonites in Alberta and others.. We also have on microfilm, the entire collection of Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization settlement records. These are being photocopied and transcribed.

The library contains family and local histories, periodicals, as well as books about Mennonite history from Crimea, Molotschna, Chortitza and others.

MHSA welcomes donations of personal, congregational, or institutional records written by or about Mennonites in Alberta. We are in the process of collecting biographies of Mennonite leaders in Alberta to be published in a book.

Are we there yet? No, but we are definitely on the way.

David Toews was Here:

1870-1947. Helmut Harder.

Reviewed by Henry Epp

MY first impression after starting to read was, this is going to be a good historical book as well as a good read. This impression was strengthened as I proceeded through the pages.

David Toews was Here falls into the "third culture" genre - writing by an expert for the public and for professional scholars. The book is very readable, is helpful in getting to know more about David Toews and has scholarly value.

Lawrence Klippenstein, in the Foreword, writes "The David Toews story has been waiting a long time to be told."

MHSA Library & Archives
2946 - 32 Street NE
10:00-4:30 Saturday
Mennonite Genealogy Group
Meets at MHSA L & A
1:30-4:00
3rd Sat of Month (except Dec)

must have been like. He avoids pedantic posturing and anachronistic moralizing, which are almost a given in current biographies. The author was successful in differentiating between his subject's personal influences and when circumstances were beyond his control. I would argue that, with the exception of the informational value of the book, herein lies its greatest strength. Clearly, then, the book is a scholarly success as well as an aesthetic one.

Thinking of the book as something to read for enjoyment, it has much going for it. David Toews almost lives again. One feels his anguish over world events, over decisions he makes like not being home with his family, his duties as a bishop or elder, unjust criticism by trusted church leaders, the interminable dragging out of immigration travel payments. One feels the loss of his little daughter in a fire, the loss of his wife Margarete, the difficulty of never-ending work and, finally his own terminal illness. Creating such an effect is no small achievement on the part of the biographer.

The author impresses the readers about David Toews' heavy workload during his lifetime; as chair of various high profile boards, including the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. He was significantly involved in establishing and ensuring the survival of Rosthern Junior College against great financial stress. He was a strong leader who had difficulty delegating. Yet Harder is not excessively judgmental. Harder allows that only Toews himself had a sound grasp of whether the work really would and could have been done had he not done it himself. We will never know the answer, and speculation is pointless.

For me, the highlight of the book was the part dealing with Toews' influence over the large Mennonite immigration into Canada from Russia in the 1920s. I could not help but feel emotional about the situation when reading about it, remembering my parents' horror stories of relentless and unjust persecution, added to famine and

rampant diseases. Toews understood the situation better than most Canadians.

The Canadian Parliament supported Mennonite immigration at the time, although not always. Significantly, without the staunch assistance and support of Colonel John Denis, and the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) his employer, most of the immigration might not have occurred. The CPR fronted the travel costs. An irony not lost to Harder is the fact that Denis, the most important non-Mennonite friend the 1920s immigrants had in Canada, was a former military man!

Toews' life, as described in the book, is a graphic example of how Mennonite ministers and bishops were used in the past. They were expected to preach, preside at installations, travel frequently and to do so often under poor travel conditions, yet earn their own livelihood and tend to their families while doing this - all the while listening to self-proclaimed critics who *knew* how to do everything better. Such treatment of leaders seems almost incomprehensible today, so the book is a good reminder of just how difficult church-related work was in the past. It helps establish Toews even more firmly as one of the greatest Mennonite leaders of the 20th century. The author does an exemplary job of driving this point home, again without lapsing into anachronism.

Harder ensures that the family support Toews had in his public life is not ignored in the book. Toews' wife, Margarete, receives the acclaim she deserves for successfully minding the family of eight daughters and one son, often under very difficult financial conditions. Some would argue that Toews was too free with donating personal funds to causes, creating grief for his family, and some would argue that he was not careful enough about keeping track of money. Others criticize him for making too many unilateral decisions. Again, Harder does not gloss over these characteristics. He goes into some detail about resulting enmities, which Toews engendered during his lifetime. Nor does Harder fall into the trap of

condemning either Toews or his critics. He attempts rather, to tell the full story of an influential person who was essentially a human with his own set of foibles, some of which did not sit well with a few of his peers.

The organization and layout make the book not only easy to read, but also to revisit selections that may have struck the reader as especially salient. This is useful in the absence of an index. Typographical errors are rare. The typeface is easy to read, although a bit small.

So, should you rush right out and buy this book for twenty-four dollars? The answer is yes, emphatically.

(CMBC Publications, Winnipeg, Manitoba. 2002. xii, +388 pages. Appendix 1, Appendix 2, Notes, Photographs, Errata Insert. ISBN: 0-920718-74-4. \$24.00.)

Aaron and Elizabeth (Miller) King

by Harry Stauffer

Aaron King was the third child (first son) born to Jacob Y and Catharine (Kung) King, April 23, 1863 at Motville, Michigan.

His parents, who had two older daughters, had moved from Lawrence County Pennsylvania in 1862 to Motville, Michigan. In 1866 the family then moved to Garden City, Missouri where two more children were born. Both died in early childhood.

As a seventeen-year-old, Aaron's responsibility was to provide for his parents, when his father Jacob had to have one gangrenous leg amputated. Then, a year later Jacob died. Now Aaron had to provide for his widowed mother. Some of his skills were learned from his father who was a carpenter making furniture and caskets. (A writing desk built by Jacob is apparently, still in the possession of relatives living in Garden City.)

Aaron took seriously the wishes of the church and parents regarding courtship, a practice quite different from today. The custom was for the groom to ask the Bishop if he might go ask the girl and her parents if she would be willing to marry him. The end result of that process was that

Lizzie Miller accepted the "approved" proposal and a wedding day was set. Bishop J. C. Kenagy solemnized the wedding.

Aaron's mother Catharine had been remarried on January 13, 1886 to Jonathon K. Zook. They shared *married bliss* until July 29, 1913 when Jonathon died. By this time Catherine was blind, living under the care of her family for 2 ½ years until her death December 15, 1915.

Thirty-three years of Aaron and Lizzie's married life was spent raising their family in the Garden City area. In 1909 they spent a year as a family out at the West Coast renting a place near Hubbard, Oregon. They had many different experiences in that year (as told to Harry and other grand children). One especially interesting one was a week spent at the ocean and another was Aaron's hike up to the top of Mount Hood. It took four days with a guide traversing Oregon's muddy roads.

Sorrow was very real to Aaron and Lizzie when they lost three daughters in a weeks time to diphtheria, May, Amelia and Emma, who are all buried in the Sycamore Grove Mennonite Church cemetery, Garden City, Missouri.

Aaron and Elizabeth moved to Tofield, AB in August 1918. It was in Tofield that Nora (who had one older surviving sibling, Joseph and two younger ones, Jake and Christina) married Benjamin Franklin Stauffer. Ben and Nora are parents to Harry Stauffer, the author of this tale.

Harry, who is a dedicated member of the MHSA, remembers his Grandpa as having quite a sense of humour. One of his favourite stories is: "My mother Nora, was a victim of small pox as a child. One night, when her fever broke and Nora began her recovery, Grandma Lizzie was cleaning the dried small pox scabs from Nora's body and burning them in the stove.

The resulting snap, crackle and pop were quite amusing. Just then their phone rang; Grandpa Aaron answered to hear an enquiry from a relative, who was paranoid about contracting the disease, asking about the condition of the small pox

sufferers. Aaron's reply, "They are doing just fine. We just cleaned off the dry scabs, burned them and I will blow some of the soot over to your house." Whereupon he heard a click as the phone went dead. Grandpa got many a chuckle from responses to that story.

Henry J. Eckert

by George Paetkau

Jacob Eckert of Rosemary, told me about his dad, Henry J. Eckert, who along with about 500 other adults, went from Orenburg to Moscow to apply for emigration papers. His application was rejected. In the meantime he heard the rumour that military officials were looking for him. Instead of returning home, he boarded a train heading east intending to travel to the end of the line. He had heard that Mennonite settlements existed there and he expected to escape into their midst. Upon arriving at Blagoveshchensk on the Amur River just north of the China border, he was informed of about a dozen Mennonite villages consisting of more than 500 people.

Henry sent word back to his wife, informing her of his safe arrival and inviting her to join him. She managed, with the help of friends and neighbours, to pack all her goods and belongings into a rail car and eventually she arrived safely in Blagoveshchensk to join Henry. They settled in this area and lived at peace and without threat for about three years.

Eventually the Czar's [White] army, retreating from the advancing Communist [Red] army, also arrived in the vicinity. The Czar's army managed to hold their position for about 3 to 4 weeks, but eventually were over whelmed and fled across the Amur River into China. The "Red" army then stationed border patrols along the Amur River to prevent others from following the escaped "Whites". "My parents and others were questioned and beaten and some men began to disappear," said Jacob.

Gradually the local Mennonites became acquainted with and befriended some of the border guards. (They may well have used money as incentive for protection). One week before Christmas of 1930

when the guards drank excessively, about 500 to 600 adults plus their families crossed the Amur River into China coming to the city of Haerhpín [Harbin]. The Eckerts were one of these families. They settled in and lived here for three and one half years.

Harbin had American, British, Canadian, Japanese as well as some South American country consulates. By making application through these consulates, some of the Mennonite families were able to migrate to Brazil and Paraguay.

The Eckert family remained in their new setting. Jake and his brother Henry, (now living in Brooks, AB) as well as their sisters, attended a Russian school, which had been established in this Chinese area. Henry, their father, decided that since they expected to live in China, the children ought to continue their education. They were too far from the Chinese school, so this was their most convenient option. The Eckert family lived near Harbin for approximately 20 years. Their neighbours were Chinese as well as Japanese, who had migrated into the area, and of course other German (Russian) speaking Mennonites - a miniature Babel with four languages being used and taught.

Following the defeat of the Japanese and the Germans (WWII) American and Japanese people were repatriated, but the Russian people stayed. This created a dilemma for the Mennonites, who had fled the Communist system. Russian officials renewed the purge of German speaking Mennonites even venturing into China and there they took Henry Eckert captive. Despite their promise to keep him for a maximum of three days, the family never saw him again.

Mrs. Eckert and her four children assisted by Henry's brother, Cornelius who lived in Rosemary, AB, successfully arranged to migrate to Canada, arriving in Rosemary in 1951.

The April 1, 1936 edition of *Mennonite Rundschau* contains a letter written by Henry Eckert, translated as follows:

On February 7, I received a letter from the German Embassy in Harbin, with an enclosed list

detailing where each of the named German refugees might be settled. Therefore those families who had interest in farming left the city of Harbin.

The area, where we settled is about 5 kilometers from the town of Nunkiang and equally far from the beautiful Ronje River, which is full of fish. The river is also used to transport lumber, which can be purchased at a considerable price.

The land is rich, black soil and good for farming. The area has abundant wild life including ducks, geese, pheasants, grouse, antelope and others. The market for grain is good. Quality wheat costs up to 1.20, oats and barley .50 - .60 per russ. Horses, oxen and sheep are similarly expensive. (No equivalent values known at this time)

The Government is stable and particularly the Chinese farmer's benefit thereby. The latter are friendly towards us.

The conditions under which we are to acquire the land have still not been clarified, but are to be decided later this month. We have received precise instructions from the consulate as to what we are expected to do upon acquiring a land agreement.

God willing, I expect to seed 20-22 'schan', having acquired both the land and the seed grain. We also have enough wheat to grind for bread to last us until October. We have four horses, one cow, a wagon and a nice ride-on plow that has a great value here.

We are thankful to the Lord Jesus Christ for all we have, praising and thanking Him daily for the privileges we have been granted.

Dick Family Sponsors Siberian Mennonite Research Initiative

by Peter Penner

For some years now Mennonites have benefited enormously from archival resources that were discovered in Ukraine and Russian archives. This material has been a great boon for Mennonite Studies. What is needed now and what we have within our reach is the recovery of documents of primary interest to Mennonites from all

those Siberian sources. How to get it done most efficiently and within reason financially was the big question. What seemed necessary was to find a Russian who knows the archival deposits, has learned to know and work with the Siberian archivists, and who could achieve our ends at a reasonable cost.

What turned into an opportunity to achieve this end, started when I had the occasion to meet Andrej Savin, a young historian in the University City of Akademgorodok (near Novosibirsk). This was during the last part of my two-month stay in the Altai, Western Siberia, in October and November 2000.

Andrej Savin works out of the history department of this University. He is already familiar to some of us from his numerous articles in *Forschungen in der Geschichte u. Kultur der Russlanddeutschen*, and from his recent book, with Professor Detlef Brandes, *Die Sibirien=Deutschen im Sowjetstaat, 1919-1938*, Duesseldorf: Klartext Verlag, 2001. It was fortunate that James Urry had forwarded some relevant articles by Savin, Belkovec, and others to me before I left for Siberia.

Savin's apparent qualifications, based on experience in those archives, and achievements in publishing, as well as his sympathetic interest in the story of the *Russlanddeutsche*, encouraged a number of western Canadian historians to join with archivists seated in Winnipeg and Fresno to form this "Siberian Mennonite Research Initiative". We met for the first time in conjunction with the *History Conference* staged by the Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, late in 2001.

It was left to Paul Toews, Director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Fresno Pacific University, to find funding for this project and to negotiate with Savin the details of his assignment. We are pleased to announce that the Peter G. Dick family has agreed to fund the first installment of the research - essentially for a period of eighteen months.

Peter Dick, who is doing well at age 96, lives in Vineland, Ontario.

He himself was not born in Siberia, but in 1910 his family joined the large number of Mennonites moving to the Altai, Siberia. Peter has many happy memories of life there, but in 1927, at age 22, he decided to leave for Canada, alone without family, while he still could. Family and relatives who remained behind went through some terrible experiences because of the repressive measures and the purges of the next ten years, 1928-1938.

In July 2002 Savin began to search the archives in Tomsk, Novosibirsk, Barnaul, and Omsk, as well as some in Moscow for materials of primary interest to Mennonites. He will list these, first in Russian, and ready them for their eventual translation into English. Part of his initial assignment is also to make hard copy of the documents considered primary to our interest. The translation and publication of documents will likely constitute a second and separate project for which funding will be necessary.

The informal executive of the "Siberian Mennonite Research Initiative" is made up of Paul Toews, Fresno Pacific University; James Urry, Reader in Anthropology, University of Wellington, NZ; Harry Loewen, Kelowna, former holder of the Chair in Mennonite Studies; and Peter Penner, researching and writing in Calgary, Alberta. Supportive of this executive are the following: most of whom were present in Winnipeg in early December 2001: the archivists: Abe Dueck, CMBS-Winnipeg; Alfred Redekopp, MHC, Winnipeg; Lawrence Klippenstein, retired archivist, Winnipeg. Historians in Winnipeg included: Hans P. Werner and Royden Loewen, University of Winnipeg; John Friesen, Canadian Mennonite University; in Alberta: Colin Neufeldt, Edmonton, and Ted Regehr, Calgary; in BC: David Giesbrecht; and in Ontario: Walter Unger, well known for his annual Mennonite Heritage Tours down the Dnieper.

Yarrow Research Committee News Release

The publication of local histories with new information is always cause for celebration. The

Yarrow Research Committee is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of two volumes under the shared subtitle *Yarrow, British Columbia: Mennonite Promise* that explores a historic Fraser Valley community in a way not done before.

Early in 1928, a fragmented group of war-ravaged European immigrants began arriving in Yarrow, BC to build a new home for themselves and their families. Now, almost seventy-five years later, a number of former Yarrow residents and associates have written two books that explore both the pre-Mennonite history of Yarrow and, after 1928, the fascinating and at times painful story of the founding and development of this immigrant settlement. The initiative for starting this study came from anthropologist Dr. J. A. Loewen, who in 1998-99 invited a number of scholars to join in a project of research and writing. Perhaps like Pacific salmon that spend years living in an open ocean, eventually feel compelled to return to their spawning channels, these former Yarrow residents found such an invitation irresistible.

After several years of work, the Yarrow Research Committee (YRC) can report that a distinguished publisher, Heritage House of Victoria, BC has agreed to publish our study of Yarrow, covering the years 1928-1958. The projected release date is early December 2002. We expect to offer this set of 6" x 9" volumes, titled *Before We Were the Land's* and *Village of Unsettled Yearnings* respectively, in a slipcase. Some 129 pictures and a number of maps will complement the text. This will be the first such study of a Mennonite community ever released by a publishing house in B.C.

While carefully researched and documented, these two volumes are written for the general reader. Volume I provides a historical survey of pre-Mennonite and early Mennonite settlement and in its last two parts, features excerpts from personal memoirs and journals of 30 Mennonite settlers, ten of them women. Volume II offers numerous essays designed to serve collectively as a cultural mural of Yarrow from 1928 to the end of the 1950's.

Persons interested in placing orders should contact either David Giesbrecht at (604) 853-0382 (dg@paralynx.com) or Lora Sawatsky at (604) 795-5197 (rsawatsk@dowco.com)

MHSA Launches Library & Archives

by Judith Rempel

Well, we're done! The MHSA Library & Archives has moved its new quarters on the Mezzanine Level of the MCC Thrift Store in Calgary (2946-32 Street NE). Not only have we moved from the basement of the MCC building, but also we've managed to move the collection that had been housed at the interim location on the farm of Henry Goerzen in Didsbury.

What a wonderful space we have. Our Archival Vault is secured with a fire-retardant wall and steel door² has a floor space of about 370 square feet – plenty of room for our current archival holdings and ones that we'll acquire over the next five years. By July 2, it was ready to be filled. A number of second-hand items have been purchased from the Thrift Store³ and supplemented with gifted items from others. (*Hint*: we still need a clock and a good personal computer (Pentium II or better, including a CD writer).

And in the first two weeks of July it was filled.⁴ Then the task began of putting the materials in order. We still have a backlog of archival records to be inventoried and books to be catalogued, but

² **Credits:** Harold Friesen, Henry Goerzen, Dick Neufeld, Ellen Kinghorn and Erna Goerzen for planning, putting up the studs, putting the drywall in place, mudding & painting & vacuuming.

³ **Credits:** two desks hand-made by Gerhard Bartel, used lamp and coat rack fixed by John Klassen, and a beautiful table donated by Margaret Kent.

⁴ **Credits:** Harold & Sandra Friesen, the College & Career youth of Abbeydale EMC Church, Peter Penner, Henry Goerzen and Dick Neufeld for moving the MANY boxes and shelving units to the new location.

things are in good order and ready for visitors and researchers.

This space is supplemented by space shared with the Thrift Store that we use for desks, processing of records, library shelving and research/reading/meeting space.

Our Library

We now have about 800 books on our shelves.

For **genealogists** we have the paper copies of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization records, a copy of the Bergthal Gemeinde Buch, B.H. Unruh's book published in 1955 in Germany, a copy of Mennonitischen Namen/Mennonite Names (bilingual), 20+ biographies, 20+ published family history books, the Mennonite Historical Atlas, pedigree charts from the Mennonite Genealogy group and more.

For **sentimental folks**, we have copies of Arnold Dyck's Low German works, some fine volumes of Goethe, and 40+ Mennonite College yearbooks (Swift Current Bible Institute, Menno Bible Institute, Rosthern Junior College, Mennonite Educational Institute etc.).

For those **serious about Mennonite history** we have copies of: P.M. Friesen's book on the Mennonite Brotherhood (English); A.H. Unruh's important book (*Die Geschichte der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde*); Walter Quiring's pictorial account of Mennonites in Canada; *Mennonites in Canada* (I & II by Frank H. Epp and III by Ted D. Regehr); the *History of the Mennonite Conference of Alberta* by C. L. Dick, the *Profile 1974* by Delbert Plett, which is about the immigration of Kleine Gemeinde to Canada in 1874, *The Mennonite Encyclopaedia* (Vol. I-IV).

In addition, we have **thousands of periodical issues:** Long runs of *Der Bote*, *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, *The Mennonite*, *The Canadian Mennonite*, *Mennonite Historian*, and *Mennonite Life*, and selected volumes/issues of *Journal of American Historical Society of Germans from Russia*, *Volkswarte*, *Festival Quarterly*, *Mennonite Mirror*, *Mennonite Weekly Review* and *Mennonitische Rundschau*.

The Archives

This has been a real adventure. Starting from ground-zero in terms of knowing how archives are managed, we have drafted a 40 page policy manual to be reviewed and approved by both the Archives Advisory Committee⁵ and Board, visited three Canadian archival institutions in the past six months, consulted with and had a three site visits by the Michael Gourlie (Archives Advisor of the Alberta Society of Archivists - ASA, made substantial progress in the processing of our archives collection⁶ and have been capturing temperature & humidity measures.

We're doing well enough, that it's conceivable that we'll be recognized as a full member of the ASA very soon. That puts us in better position to receive advice from the ASA and to be eligible for grants (such as those, which would pay for temperature/humidity controls in our vault).

At this time, we have received about 25 accessions (discrete gifts of records) – with the largest coming from the Conference of Mennonites in Alberta (CMA, now Mennonite Church Alberta). In total the materials cover about 30 metres of shelving. Apart from the CMA, we also have *fonds*⁷ from Alberta

⁵ The AAC is comprised of Ted Regehr, Henry Goerzen, and Peter Penner; Judith Rempel has taken the role of archivist.

⁶ The key tasks in processing archival records are: clearing the files of damaging items such as paper clips and post-it notes; ensuring that no items are folded/askew; transferring the records to acid-free folders and boxes; capturing the folder titles (and dates) into a database; and describing the records. Archival description is a significant task in itself – since the several-page document needs to provide the researcher with a substantive appreciation as to whether or not the *fonds* might answer the research questions s/he has and point him/her to the appropriate boxes and folders.

⁷ A *fonds* (pronounced “fo” where the “o” has a nasal sound) is the entire

What we need

From Congregations: Sunday bulletins, annual reports, yearbooks, membership albums, wedding invitations, funeral bulletins, membership registers, pastoral records, financial records, photos, discarded library books, congregational or conference histories, burial records

From Families: family papers - source items that can be used for family histories, biographies, or research into the origins of the Mennonites in Alberta (MC, GC, MB, EMC, etc.). Photos!, published family histories, GEDCOM files

From Individuals: manuscripts of books, translations of early Mennonite works, transcriptions of genealogical data

From Communities: local histories, burial records, land records, tax records

Photos of:

Everyday life
Gathered families
Church buildings
Congregational gatherings
Significant events
Mennonite leaders (in church life, music, education, missions, family life, sport, government, business, etc.)

Equipment: wall clock, telephone line, Internet access, PII or better computer with CD Burner

Stories: Long and short - about times in Russia or Germany or early Alberta, about the journey to North America, about family life, about church life, about school life, etc.

Women in Mission, Alberta Mennonite Youth Organization, David Braun, several congregations (which have discontinued operating) and individuals (Helen Pauls

set of documents created and/or accumulated and used by one person, family or organization in the course of their activities.

Friesen, Margaret Riediger, Henry Goerzen and others).

Descriptions and Finding Aids for those records will be available at the Archives and on our website in November.

Do consider preserving your congregation, family, or personal records by making arrangements for them to be deposited to our Archives.

Plan to drop in and research!

The MHSA Library & Archives will be open every Saturday (10:00-4:30), staffed by rotating volunteers⁸. Bring your research questions, pencils (no pens please), and we'll help you dig into the materials that will advance your research interests. The materials are all non-circulating (you can't take them off premises), but we do have a photocopier at hand if you need copies of some items.

Thank you to all!

Thanks to the many folks who came to the MHSA Library & Archives Launch on October 5. You made us feel that this is something to celebrate and that you'll support us with your donations (records, time & financial) and visit us when you have research interests.

Significant thanks go to our friends in Mennonite Central Committee and in the MCC Thrift Store – they've made the move a delight with their many forms of support.⁹

History of the Chinese Mennonite Church

By Daniel Kong

Let us look back to our church's history. We started our church through the Mennonite Central Committee. They

⁸ **Credit:** Irene Klassen, Dick Neufeld, Peter Penner, Henry Goerzen, and Judith Rempel.

⁹ **Credit:** Abe Janzen, Martha Ras, Sheila & Hank Froese, Joyce Rochel, Marion Koop, Victor Pries & John Wiebe; but also the many volunteers whose faces are growing familiar but which change daily.

began the sponsorship of refugees from Vietnam in 1978. The Conference of Mennonites in Alberta also supported this project.

The CMA employed pastor Ezekiel Wong from Vancouver to come to Calgary for church planting and promoting the evangelical ministry for refugees.

We began our congregational worship in 1981. The Foothills Mennonite Church provided the place of worship, not only for us but also for our twin, the Vietnamese Mennonite church. We started our churches together.

There were just three people in the beginning of our church life. After five years, the church membership had increased to fifty. We purchased the present chapel in 1987. The mortgage funds were borrowed through our Conference from Mennonite Foundation of Canada. From that time our services, our choir, fellowship, Sunday School and children's worship continuously grew.

Pastor Ezekiel Wong concentrated his services in our Church since our brother/sister church, the Vietnamese Mennonite Church, employed their own pastor. We dedicated our church during the opening ceremonies in 1987. At that time, the church membership had increased to eighty-five. Our pastor, Ezekiel Wong attended the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary for further study in 1989 and Pastor Raymond Wong carried on his pastoral ministry.

Raymond Wong resigned in 1990. Our church again employed Ezekiel Wong. During that time, the church membership decreased to thirty people but later it increased to seventy-five. CMA helped us to establish the Faith Mennonite Church in 1990, but it closed in 1997.

We employed pastor Daniel Kong for the Chinese ministry and pastor David Ma for the English ministry in 1998. Thank God! He is guiding us as our Church leader. What we should do is to worship our Lord because our help is coming from the Creator.

Looking back on our brief history we should thank God. He continuously cares and guides us. Also thank CMA and a lot of pastors

for their support to us in pulpit ministry.

Tomorrow is exciting and full of promise for everyone. It is not an exception for our church. We wish to have a lot of challenges. Church needs to have not only a mature leader but also a loyal congregation. We should work together and prepare God's people to participate in various ministries so that the body of Christ could be built up. We have four primary aims:

- form a church of prayer; "It is the way to receive strength and guidance from God".
- To form an evangelical church; to train and to equip the church members to become leaders in evangelism.
- To form a mission-church and participate in missionary work.
 - To form a mature church.

Every year we plan at least one camp retreat and three devotional meetings. To strengthen our deacons and workers, we plan different training courses for them, such as evangelical and caring training.

May God be glorified.

The Mennonite Historian's Bookshelf

This month we have decided to tell you what's missing from our library bookshelves. If you'd like to consider a Christmas gift to the MHS in the form of unused items in your personal library, we're looking for these books and periodicals:

- *Heimatbuch* - most years
- Doell, Leonard, compiler. (1999). *Mennonite Homesteaders on the Hague-Osler Reserve*.
- Dyck, John & William Harms. (1994). *Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch: 1880-1903*.
- Dyck, John & William Harms. (1998). *1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve*.
- Friesen, John. (1994). *Against the Wind: The Story of Four Mennonite Villages*.
- Friesen, Rudy P. (1996). *Into the Past*.

- Giesbrecht, Abram B. (1995). *Der ersten mennonitischen Einwanderer in Paraguay*.
 - Lemieux, Victoria & David Leonard. (1992). *Tracing your Ancestors in Alberta*.
 - Schapansky, Henry. (2001). *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia: Early History and First Settlers in the Context of Mennonite Migrations*.
 - Smith, C. Henry (1957). *Smith's Story of the Mennonites*.
 - Warkentin, John H. (2000). *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba*.
-
- *Zionsbote* - all issues
 - *Mennonitisches Rundschau* - most issues
 - *Der Bote* - issues from before 1990
 - *The Canadian Mennonite* - many issues
 - *Journal of Mennonite Studies* - most issues
 - *The Mennonite* - many issues
 - *Mennonite Life* - many issues
 - *The Mennonite Brethren Conference Yearbooks* (Alberta) - 1993 to 2002.
 - *Mennonite Weekly Review* - most issues
 - *Mennonite Quarterly Review* - most issues

MHSA Members' Ancestry Corner

This Ancestry corner will be dedicated to one or two direct ancestor lines of those MHSA members who have supplied pedigree charts. It follows a format initiated by the *Journal of Mennonite Family History*. Sub-missions may be sent to the Editor.

1. Judith (Judii) Dianne Rempel m. Eduardo (Kip) Deang Pabustan, Jr..
2. Bernhard (Ben) Johan Rempel b. 13-Feb-1926, Novo Omsk, Siberia, USSR, occupation Miner/Businessman, m., Irene Edith Luetta Peters, Bernhard died 11-Jul-1987, Atlin, British Columbia.
3. Irene Edith Luetta Peters.
4. Johan Wilhelm Rempel b. 20-Oct-1875, Hochfeld (Yazekovo),

- Russia, occupation Factory Operator/Farmer, m. (1) 19-Feb-1902, in Franzfeld, Yazykovo, South Russia, Katharina P Epp, b. 19-Oct-1881, Franzfeld, Yazykovo, South Russia, d. 5-Jul-1923, Presume Novo Omsk, Siberia, m. (2) 10-Aug-1924, Anna Petrovna Ketler, b. 16-Oct-1884, Neuhoehfeld (Chortiza), Russia, occupation Housewife, d. 21-Sep-1966, Clearbrook, British Columbia. Johan died 16-Apr-1953, Clearbrook, British Columbia.
5. Anna Petrovna Ketler b. 16-Oct-1884, Neuhoehfeld (Chortiza), Russia, occupation Housewife, d. 21-Sep-1966, Clearbrook, British Columbia.
 6. Herman H. Peters b. 25-Nov-1896, Reinland, Manitoba, occupation Grain Elevator Agent, m. 26-Dec-1915, Susanna (Susie) Stobbe, b. 7-Jun-1896, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, occupation Housewife, d. 9-Jul-1968, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Herman died 25-Dec-1968, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
 7. Susanna (Susie) Stobbe b. 7-Jun-1896, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, occupation Housewife, d. 9-Jul-1968, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
 8. Wilhelm Wilhelm Rempel b. 26-Aug-1832, Osterwick, Chortitza, South Russia, m. (1) Aganetha Thiessen, b. 11-Aug-1838, Osterwick, Chortitza, South Russia, d. 21-Oct-1868, ? on the day her son Abraham was born., m. (2) aft Oct 1869, Maria Dueck, b. 2-Mar-1840, Chortitza, Chortitza, South Russia, occupation Housewife, d. 13-Aug-1886, Hochfeld (Yazekovo), Russia. Wilhelm died 29-Aug-1905, Hochfeld (Yazekovo), Russia.
 9. Maria Dueck b. 2-Mar-1840, Chortitza, Chortitza, South Russia, occupation Housewife, d. 13-Aug-1886, Hochfeld (Yazekovo), Russia.
 10. Peter Jakob Ketler b. 8-Apr-1837, Kronsweide, Chortitza, South Russia, occupation Windmill Operator, m. Nov 1868, Agatha Isaak, b. 27-May-1847, Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia, d. 20-Apr-1931. Peter died 17 Dec 1885, Hochfeld (Yazekovo), Russia.
 11. Agatha Isaak b. 27-May-1847, Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia, d. 20-Apr-1931.
 12. Herman (Harm) J Peters b. 7 Sep 1862, Kronsthal, Chortitza, South Russia, occupation Farmer, m. 20 Nov 1884, Helena H Friesen, b. 14-May-1867, Prob. Mariupol, Ekata., Russia, d. 3-Jun-1912, Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Herman died 2-Jul-1914, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
 13. Helena H Friesen b. 14-May-1867, Prob. Mariupol, Ekata., Russia, d. 3-Jun-1912, Rosthern, Saskatchewan.
 14. Heinrich (Henry) Stobbe b. 3-Jan-1868, Grunau near Mariupol, Russia, occupation Blacksmith, m. 13-Oct-1891, in Josefstal, South Russia, Maria (Mary) Fischer, b. 12 Oct 1872, Neuendorf, Chortitza, South Russia, d. 27-Aug-1915, Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Heinrich died 17-Sep-1917, Rosthern, Saskatchewan.
 15. Maria (Mary) Fischer b. 12 Oct 1872, Neuendorf, Chortitza, South Russia, d. 27-Aug-1915, Rosthern, Saskatchewan.
 16. Wilhelm Peter Rempel b. 18-Feb-1808, Russia, m. (1) abt 1831, Maria B Penner, b. 10-Dec-1812, Ukraine, Russia, d. 29-Aug-1853, Ukraine, Russia, m. (2) Margareta Penner, d. Russia. Wilhelm died 29-Jun-1866, Ukraine, Russia.
 17. Maria B Penner b. 10-Dec-1812, Ukraine, Russia, d. 29-Aug-1853, Ukraine, Russia.
 20. Jacob (Jakob) A Ketler (Kesler) b. ?? ___ 1813, m.
 21. _____
 22. Abraham Isaak m. Anna Dyck, d. ? at 60 years of age.
 23. Anna Dyck d. ? at 60 years of age.
 24. Johann (John) Peters b. 28-Dec-1839, Kronsthal, Chortitza, South Russia, occupation farmer, m. 28 Sep 1859, Agatha Neufeld, b. 2-Aug-1840, Kronsthal, Chortitza, South Russia, d. 25-Nov-1916, Prob. Reinland, MB. Johann died 13-May-1909, Altona, Manitoba.
 25. Agatha Neufeld b. 2-Aug-1840, Kronsthal, Chortitza, South Russia, m. (1) 28 Sep 1859, Johann (John) Peters, b. 28-Dec-1839, Kronsthal, Chortitza, South Russia, occupation farmer, d. 13-May-1909, Altona, Manitoba, m. (2) 30 Dec 1909, Isaac Wiens, b. 30 Aug 1836, d. 8 Oct 1922. Agatha died 25-Nov-1916, Prob. Reinland, MB.
 26. Heinrich Friesen b. 18-Jan-1843, Prob. Mariupol, Ekata., Russia, occupation labourer, m. 11 Sep 1864, Katharina Bueckert, b. 17-May-1844, Prob. Mariupol, Ekata., Russia, d. 30 Oct 1938, Reinland, Manitoba. Heinrich died 6 May 1920, Reinland, Manitoba.
 27. Katharina Bueckert b. 17-May-1844, Prob. Mariupol, Ekata., Russia, d. 30 Oct 1938, Reinland, Manitoba.
 28. Peter Stobbe b. bef 1848, occupation Fisherman & Shoemaker, m. Elizabeth (Elisabeth) Mohriz.
 29. Elizabeth (Elisabeth) Mohriz
 30. Carl (Karl) Fischer b. 14 Jun 1850, Neuendorf, Chortitza, South Russia, occupation Blacksmith & farmer, m. 04-Jan-1870, in Josephstal Ev Lutheran, Lotschinof, Rus., Adelgunde Werner, b. 27-Dec-1850, Schoenhorst, Chortitza, South Russia, d. 11-May-1933, Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Carl died 19-Feb-1932, Rosthern, Saskatchewan.
 31. Adelgunde Werner b. 27-Dec-1850, Schoenhorst, Chortitza, South Russia, d. 11-May-1933, Rosthern, Saskatchewan.
 32. Peter Peter Rempel b. 29-Dec-1759, Tiegenghagen/Petershagen, Prussia, m. (1) Widow Loewen, d. bef 1795, m. (2) Cornelia (Kornelia, Neli, Nelka) ?, b. ?? ___ 1772, m. (3) Margareta Teichroewen, b. 10-Aug-1773, Krebsfeld, Prussia, d. Russia. Peter died 24-Apr-1820, Russia.
 33. Margareta Teichroewen b. 10-Aug-1773, Krebsfeld, Prussia, d. Russia.

34. Berend Penner b. ?? ___ 1798, m. Maria ?, b. ?? ___ 1783.
35. Maria ? b. ?? ___ 1783.
40. Abraham (Abram) Ketler(Kesler) b. ?? ___ 1763, m. (1) Helena Schuetz, b. ?? ___ 1788, Plauschwarren, East Prussia, m. (2) Maria ?, b. ?? ___ 1743, d. 27 Aug 1799.
41. Helena Schuetz b. ?? ___ 1788, Plauschwarren, East Prussia.
48. Jacob (Jakob) Peters b. bef 1814, m. (1) Katharina Janzen, d. bef 1879, m. (2) Judith ?, b. abt 1810. Jacob died bef 1879.
49. Katharina Janzen d. bef 1879.
52. Jacob I Friesen b. ?? ___ 1794, m. Margaretha Epp, b. 28 Feb 1802. Jacob died 29 Jun 1867.
53. Margaretha Epp b. 28 Feb 1802.
54. Jacob Bueckert b. 25 Dec 1811, Russia, m. (1) 13 Nov 1834, Helena Doerksen, b. 21 Jun 1816, Russia, d. 27 Dec 1878, m. (2) 20 Jul 1880, Justina Loewen, b. 15 Nov 1822. Jacob died 14 Nov 1884.
55. Helena Doerksen b. 21 Jun 1816, Russia, d. 27 Dec 1878.
60. Johann Fischer b. ?? ___ 1803, Riedselz, Weissenburg, Prussia, occupation servant, m. (1) 15 Apr 1841, in Russia, Anita Beilan, m. (2) Amanda Beillan, m. (3) Louise ?, b. abt 18-May-1815, d. 17-Dec-1875, Friedensfeld, South Russia. Johann died ?? ___ 1866.
61. Anita Beilan
62. Peter Werner b. abt 1825, Prussia, occupation Labourer, m. Adelgunde Gabriel, b. 1827, Prussia, d. 13-Jul-1887, Schoenhorst, Chortitza, South Russia. Peter died bef 1870.
63. Adelgunde Gabriel b. 1827, Prussia, m. (1) Peter Werner, b. abt 1825, Prussia, occupation Labourer, d. bef 1870, m. (2) Klaus Hydack. Adelgunde died 13-Jul-1887, Schoenhorst, Chortitza, South Russia.
64. Peter Rempel b. 6-Jul-1735, Prussia, m. abt 1758, in Prussia, Cristina von Dycken, b. 30-May-1731, Prussia, d. 12-Jan-1786, Petershagen, Prussia. Peter died 12-Jan-1788.
65. Cristina von Dycken b. 30-May-1731, Prussia, d. 12-Jan-1786, Petershagen, Prussia.
66. Johann (Teichgroef) Teichkrew b. ?? ___ 1745, Prussia, m. (1) abt 1771, Margaretha ?, b. abt 1745, d. bef 1780, Prussia, m. (2) Katharina ?, b. ?? ___ 1762, Prussia. Johann died bef 1802, Schoenhorst, Chortitza, South Russia.
67. Margaretha ? b. abt 1745, d. bef 1780, Prussia.
80. David Ketler(Kaedtler) m.
81. _____
82. David D Schuetz b. abt 1760, m. 26 Nov 1782, in Plauschwarren, East Prussia, _____, b. ?? ___ 1756, d. bef 1795.
83. _____ b. ?? ___ 1756, d. bef 1795.
104. Isbrand (Isebrand) I Friesen b. ?? ___ 1767, m. Katharina ?, b. ?? ___ 1766.
105. Katharina ? b. ?? ___ 1766.
108. Herman Bueckert m. Maria Elias.
109. Maria Elias
110. Franz Derksen b. ?? ___ 1792, m. Helena Klassen, b. 15 Aug 1796, d. ?? Feb 1878. Franz died ?? ___ 1877.
111. Helena Klassen b. 15 Aug 1796, d. ?? Feb 1878.
124. Heinrich Werner m. Elizabeth (Elisabeth) ?. Heinrich died aft 1807.
125. Elizabeth (Elisabeth) ?
164. David Schuetz b. bef 1740, occupation teacher, m. (1) _____, m. (2) 18 Nov 1781, in Plauschwarren, East Prussia, Helena ?, b. ?? ___ 1762. David died bef 1795.
165. _____
208. Isbrand (Isebrand) Friesen b. ?? ___ 1740, m. (1) _____, m. (2) Agatha Dueck, b. ?? ___ 1745.
209. Agatha Dueck b. ?? ___ 1745, m. (1) 19 Apr 1772, Wilhelm Bolle, b. 3 Feb 1746, d. 31 May 1789, m. (2) Isbrand (Isebrand) Friesen, b. ?? ___ 1740.
220. Jacob Derksen b. 21 Dec 1767, m. Susanna Klassen, b. ?? ___ 1770. Jacob died 2 Feb 1806, Neuendorf, Chortitza, South Russia.
221. Susanna Klassen b. ?? ___ 1770, m. (1) Jacob Derksen, b. 21 Dec 1767, d. 2 Feb 1806, Neuendorf, Chortitza, South Russia, m. (2) Johan Abram Neudorf, b. ?? ___ 1783, Petershagen, Prussia, d. 15 Apr 1860, Osterwick, Chortitza, South Russia.
222. Jacob Klassen m. _____
223. _____
248. ? Werner m. ? ?, b. 1747, d. 13-Jul-1807, Schoenhorst, Chortitza, South Russia.
249. ? ? b. 1747, d. 13-Jul-1807, Schoenhorst, Chortitza, South Russia.
440. David Derksen b. ?? ___ 1733, Tiegengagen, Prussia, m. Maria ?, b. ?? ___ 1736. David died bef 1802.
441. Maria ? b. ?? ___ 1736.

Alberta Profile:

William Gerhard Martens

by Irene Klassen

Wilhelm Martens was born in August 1892, in Landskrone, Russia the youngest of seven children – 4 boys and 3 girls. He received his elementary schooling in Landskrone and his high school in Gnadenfeld. Then he took two years of teacher training in Melitopol and taught school for 3 years. He was drafted for military service and served in Kursk for 2½ years as a *Sanitaeter*, before he became *Kanzelei Schreiber* (Secretary). After military service he took over a school in Blumenhof, Caucasus, 1,000 miles from Landskrone. At that distance it took two years for him to become aware of his parents' deaths.

In Blumenhof he met and became intimately acquainted with Sarah, the daughter of *Prediger* Heinrich Dirks. They were married April 14, 1919, on a Sunday morning. That afternoon a *Bruderschaft* was called and he was unanimously elected as preacher. He started his preaching career in August 1919. In those famine-plagued years, in addition to teaching, he often shared his own meager bread with his students.

In September 1924, Wilhelm and Sarah Martens with two children left Russia. With the help of the Canadian Pacific Railway, they boarded the ship Minnedosa, eventually landing in Halifax, Nova Scotia. There they received a Bible, bologna and bread - and then traveled by train to Tofield, Alberta where the J. Brennemans met them and then hosted them that first



Baptism of John Neufeld, ?, Tina Wiebe, ? Schmidt & Liese Schmidt in Chinook with Aeltesters Jac. Wiens and Wm. Martens, ca. 1929

winter.

In March 1925 they moved to Namaka, where 24 other families were renting a 13,000-acre farm¹⁰. That fall, after harvest, he took his wife and children to Gretna, Manitoba, where he studied English language and took high school courses to prepare for a *Canadian Teaching Certificate*. In April 1926, it was back to Namaka.

Forty-two Mennonite immigrant families had settled in this central eastern area in Alberta, north of Oyen. In 1927 Martens was asked to come to Chinook to serve these families and organize them into congregation(s)¹¹.

The families were scattered over a large area, from Chinook in the south, Naco in the north, and New Brigden in the east - close to the Saskatchewan border. He served those families who gathered

at Chinook, as well as other families at Sedalia, New Brigden and Naco.¹² To make ends meet he farmed a ½ section of rented land.

Most worship services were held in homes, but some times the local school was used. For large gatherings, the town hall was rented. In Chinook the United Church was used for several years.

He traveled many miles in the widespread Chinook/Sedalia area, and preached many sermons.

He always had something to say to the children¹³. He ate in many homes and at one particular time was heard to say, "Oh good, chicken! One gets a bit tired of potato salad every day."

On February 28-March 1, 1929, Aeltester C.D. Harder invited eight preachers

and one deacon to the Neufeld residence near the Bergthal Mennonite church (where he resided tentatively) to convene an *Allgemeine Prediger Konferenz*. These preachers, one of whom was Wm. Martens, represented scattered groups of Mennonite families. The purpose was to plan for nurture and spiritual guidance for the widely scattered immigrant families in Alberta.

These ministers who had come together from all directions (*allen Winden*, referring to their origins in Russia) were inspired (in the words of Martens) "in response to Elder Harder's encouragement to organize congregations wherever we had settled, we returned with new determination to our families and congregations. Wherever our new immigrants had settled in groups and were meeting for spiritual

enrichment, new local congregations were organized."

The formal Alberta Conference of Mennonites came into existence in fall of 1929 with Harder elected as the first chairman. However the first official minutes (available at this date) were of the meeting held on July 20 and 21, 1936 in Rosemary. Martens was the presiding chairman. He served in that capacity from 1931 to 1938 followed by another three years as secretary.



David & Katherine Epp with children, Gerhard and Irene, and Rev. Wm. Martens at Baptism, June 25, 1944

Upon Martens return to Chinook, following the *Allgemeine Konferenz*, he was chosen as leading minister by the Chinook church. Eight other candidates from this community were chosen as ministerial candidates. Five of these accepted the nominations: Heinrich Dueck, David Boese, Abram Epp, Peter Regehr, and Jacob Neufeld. The Chinook congregation also elected two deacons: Tobias Schmidt, Gerhard Baergen. Elected to Church Council (*Kirchenrat*) were Peter Martens and Gerhard Bergen. The churches now appeared to be equipped with faithful and courageous leaders.

While in Chinook, in 1931 he was ordained as *Aeltester* by *Aeltester* David Toews. In November of that year, Heinrich Janzen became his assistant.

It was a sad loss to the scattered congregations, when in April 1934 the Martens family moved to Coaldale, where Martens also served the church. The Martens lived in Coaldale until March 1938, when they moved again, this time back to Vauxhall where he served the Vauxhall/Grantham Mennonite

¹⁰ The farm was owned by George Lane, who had encountered financial difficulties resulting in a takeover by the Dominion Bank.

¹¹ According to the records the first meeting was held on March 14, 1928.

¹² The church register for this combined congregation is available in the MHSa archives.

¹³ One lesson I personally remember was about honouring our parents and never to speak of them in a derogatory way.

Church, later known as the Vauxhall Mennonite Church¹⁴.

During all these years, Martens was still considered the *Aeltester* at Chinook/Sedalia, so he continued to travel there for baptisms and special occasions. In 1943 he performed the last marriage in that church, Peter Derksen and Margarete Dueck, and in 1944 performed the last baptism: Gerhard Epp, now of Didsbury and Irene Epp (Klassen) of Calgary.¹⁵

Then in February 1946 he was called to serve the church in Sardin, B.C., which he served until 1950. Here he also served part-time in the Chilliwack church.

His next move was back to the Vauxhall Church in 1951.

Following the sudden death of Sarah, his wife in 1954, he returned to Rosemary, staying with his daughters, Elsie Janzen and/or Agnes Janzen. From 1955–1956 he preached in the churches at Rosemary, Gem and Vauxhall on a part-time basis.

He married the widow Helen Reimer of Calgary in 1956 and served for about a year in the First Mennonite Church in Calgary, as lay minister.¹⁶ From Calgary, they moved to Chilliwack, BC; but not for long. His wife became ill and passed away in 1959.

In 1963, he married Mrs. Katherine Kasdorf of Winnipeg and moved there, serving as Associate Pastor in First Mennonite Church for several years. While in Winnipeg he was asked by a Mr. Redekopp to go to Chihuahua, Mexico to teach a few classes in German. So, from May 1965 to May 1966, at the age of 73, he and his wife made the move. It was quite a challenge no doubt, but both of them enjoyed the experience.

Then it was back to Winnipeg from 1966-1969. Another move in 1969 took him to Niverville, Manitoba, where he served the

church until 1974. Then he retired and moved back to Winnipeg.

The unexpected death of his first wife in 1953, had been a big setback for him, but he carried on, adapting to new situations and relationships. He was always willing to serve and was never lost for words. He enjoyed serving the Lord. He enjoyed life and meeting people, whether in church, on the street, bus, train, wherever. He could strike up a conversation very quickly with almost anyone. His family enjoyed him very much and missed him a great deal after his passing on January 11, 1976.

Fonds in MHSA Archives

By Judith Rempel

The MHSA has 12 organizational or congregational fonds in its collection that are processed and accessible for researchers' use. Another 13 fonds are being processed and include records donated by other organizations (e.g., Alberta Mennonite Youth Organization), Congregations (e.g., Taber Mennonite Church) and individuals (e.g., Helen (Pauls) Friesen, Margaret Riediger, David Braun, etc.) and will be available very soon.

Organizations

- Alberta Women in Mission fonds. -- 1971-1997 -- 60 cm textual records. -- 401 photographs
- includes constitutions, minutes, annual activity reports and correspondence
- Coaldale Cheese Factory fonds. -- 1966-1973. -- 2 cm textual records
- bound minute book
- Conference of Mennonites in Alberta fonds. -- 1928-2000. -- 3.6 m textual records
- includes constitutions, correspondence and minutes pertaining to the Executive and General Council, Missions and Service, Education, Home for the Aged, Camp Valaqua, Finance, Ministers and Deacons and other activities

- Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization fonds. -- 1923-1966. -- 36 microfilm reels, 35 mm
- two-sided records of immigrants from 1923-30 to Canada, including full names and birthdates/locations of family members, dates of the points in the journey from Russia to Canada, and details about settlement location and kin in North America

Congregations

- Bergthal Mennonite Church fonds. -- 1927-2001). -- 60 cm textual records
- includes constitutions, minutes, annual reports, bulletins, activities of committees, and newsletters
- Blumenthaler Mennonite Church fonds. -- 1931-1992. -- 8 cm textual records
- includes minutes and bulletins
- Coaldale Mennonite Church fonds. -- 1968-1989. -- 10 cm textual material
- includes constitution, annual reports and bulletins
- Mennonite Church of Lacombe fonds. -- 1968-1989. -- 3 cm textual records
- includes constitution, annual reports, and bulletins
- Namaka Mennonite Church fonds. -- 1937-1971. -- 5 cm textual records
- includes minutes and church register of events
- Neukirchener Mennonite Church fonds. -- 1928-1945. - - 1 cm textual records
- West Zion Mennonite Church fonds. -- 2001. -- 4 cm. textual records
- includes history of church and essays presented at centennial
- Westheimer Mennonite Church fonds. -- 1936-1990. - - 4 cm textual records
- includes minutes, church register of events, and history of church

¹⁴ Anne Harder has written the history of the Vauxhall Mennonite Church and it has been published by the MHSA.

¹⁵ The author of this article – (ed)

¹⁶ I remember his searching through the phone book for Mennonite names and trying to locate and encourage 'lost' ones.

The Church in Chortitza

It was the Mother church of quite a few of the surrounding villages, including Einlage, Burwalde and Rosengart. It served many parishioners. It was built after 1830 and was called The New Church. The structure was of clay brick and it had no ornamentation inside or outside. It was two stories with a main sanctuary and a large balcony on three sides.

Helen Friesen donated these two pictures of the Chortitza Mennonite Church. Her attached note reads as follows.

Rev. John Kroeker of First Mennonite in Calgary told me that the last service in this "our" church was held on Christmas eve, 1936. The church was then closed and converted to a

Kinotheatre.

That last service included singing "*Dies ist die Freundlichkeit*", sung to the melody "*O dasz ich tausend Zungen haette*".

Helen recalls sitting in the school adjacent to the church with windows open, eavesdropping on the service. When the teacher came into the classroom, she was upset and closed the windows.



Forthcoming Mennonite Publications

Dec 2002

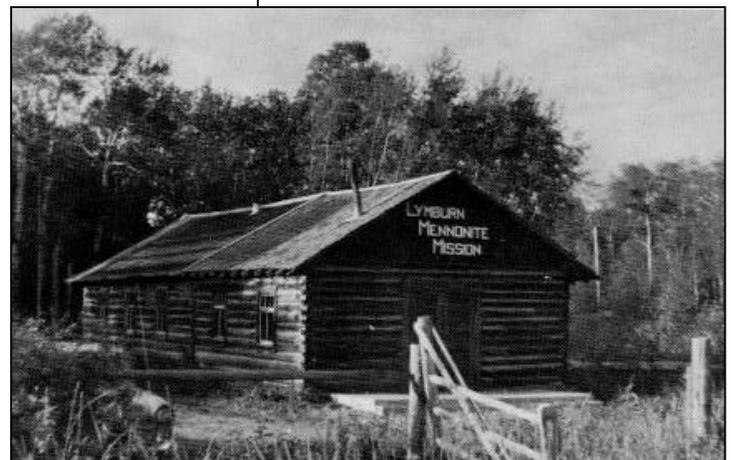
- GRANDMA V CD, to contain about 800,000 linked family records in Brothers Keeper and GEDCOM database formats.
- Chortitza Family Registers Compact Disk – PDF files of scanned Chortitza Colony, Russia church records (especially Chortitza and Rosenthal villages) for 1870s-1930s.
- Sommerfelder Gemeinde Buch, Vol I & II (West Lynn, Manitoba) being produced by the West Lynn Historical Society

MHSA Publications

- *Alternative Service for Peace in Canada during World War II, 1941-46* (A.J. Klassen) - \$25
- *Namaka* (Henry Goerzen) - \$8
- *Knowing and Interpreting our Past: Alberta's Mennonite History* (Judith Rempel, ed.) - \$12
- *Vauxhall Mennonite Church History* (Anne Harder) - \$8

Lymburn Mennonite Church

This church served numerous families who moved into the Peace River when they first came to Canada from Russia. J. D. Nickel served as pastor and later moved to Rosemary.



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