

Traditional Mennonite School

by David Peters

The church schools, in keeping with the traditional Mennonite education system, were taught in German, although the spoken language in the homes was *platt deutsch* and concentrated mostly on the 3R's. Oral and silent reading sessions were held, both in the morning and in the afternoon. The older children would read in the Old Testament, a lower group in the New Testament and then a third group use the Catechism, whereas beginners started with the Fibel, a primer.

School opened in the morning with the singing of a hymn, followed by recitation of the Lords Prayer. Then the older groups had a session of independent silent reading. The first lesson of the day was with the Fibel for the beginners. They would work on letter and sounds recognition skills using the Fibel and following that they had a writing activity, which often consisted of copying the letters of the alphabet and various combinations of letters or small words. While beginners were writing the teacher focused on the Catechism group. This group continued to work on their phonics development but with a greater emphasis on word recognition skills. In the catechism, which is set up in the form of questions and answers, they would orally spell

and sound out each word in the question and then read each work in the answer. After the lesson, the group would continue silent reading while the teacher read with the New Testament group and then finally the Old Testament group had their turn. When all the groups had finished their reading exercises it was time for a short washroom break.

Following the break, the older students began work on penmanship. This consisted of copying very slowly and meticulously from the "Vorschrift" which was a model script carefully prepared by the teacher or someone who had very neat handwriting. While the rest of the class worked on penmanship, the teacher again worked with the beginners to help them with letter formations. Each group was taught separately, while the other three had to read their lesson or do other assigned work silently.

The afternoon session started with another hymn, followed by the recitation of a table of weights and measurements and other general information. Then the reading format of the morning session was repeated until the afternoon washroom break. During the last session of the day the older students would recite the multiplication tables and then begin to work independently in their math program. Math was always done individually on a continuous progression basis. As an example, each student after completing the addition course, would move on to the subtraction course with no regard to the progress of anyone else. While the older students were busy with math the teacher worked with number recognition skills with the beginners. Following the recitation of the multiplication tables by the older students, the beginners would recite the numbers from one to one hundred followed by practicing writing the numerals until they were ready to begin with simple addition activities. The teacher did not teach any math lessons to the class as a whole, but rather provided individual help as needed.

Two afternoons per week were devoted to a variation in the routine, in that students would recite the

Catechism. Tuesday afternoons were for the first half of the Catechism and Friday for the last half. The teacher read the question and the students each in turn, would recite the answer from memory. Anyone that needed prompting or help usually found it quite embarrassing because usually the teacher would record every incidence of assistance or prompting. Then at the end of the session the "incident" numbers were announced. In that sense the Catechism recitation served as a weekly test for the students. It was also used as the bases for promotion from one group to the other. All those in the Catechism group and older participated in the catechism recitation. Upon having memorized the first half of the catechism the student was promoted into the New Testament group and when the entire catechism was memorized the student moved up to the Old Testament group.

Following the Catechism recitation the teacher dictated a paragraph or short story which the students wrote on their stone slates. The teacher would later copy it on the chalkboard, usually with many errors, and then the class would identify corrections. With this activity the students learned skills in sentence structure and punctuation, word usage as well as capitalization of all nouns. Most of the students, especially the older ones, looked forward to these dictation exercises as they were perhaps the only activities that allowed active competition.

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The Peace River Isn't Always Peaceful

by Diedrich P. Neufeld

The mighty Peace River played prominently in Northern Alberta life long before the Mennonites entered the scene. The original fort named Fort Vermilion, now a small hamlet, celebrated its bicentennial anniversary in 2001, the oldest surviving community in Alberta. The fort served the fur traders, both native and white for more than a century before any Mennonites arrived. Some of those adventurous people settled in the area and others from

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Editorial

by *Diedrich P. Neufeld*

This is my fifth edition. The job gets to be more complex but also rewarding as the Society grows, as expectations become more focused and as the goals are clarified. I started out with about three articles on hand in September of 2001 and assurance from

the Board that more materials would be forthcoming from the next meeting. Now I am in the enviable, yet distressing, position of having to choose six of the twelve excellent articles recently submitted. Telling family and community history seems to be in vogue.

Centennial Family and Church anniversaries are increasingly prevalent in this new millennium and the spirit of thanksgiving and celebration is being shared throughout the Mennonite community as people tell their stories.

The fall meeting of MHSa is to be held in La Crete, Alberta, the most northerly farming community in the Canadian provinces. This issue contains several stories intended to entice and capture your interest, so that you will want to join us in visiting that community. Take note of the promotion elsewhere in this issue and join us as we ride a bus for the 12+ hour journey into the historically significant Peace River country.

Chairman Jake's Corner

by *Jacob D. Harder*

This is my last report. It is three and a half years ago that I became chair of MHSa. Up until then I had only a cursory knowledge of its work. That changed rapidly. There was a good Board and they clued me in quickly as to their expectations. I sensed that they, along with the membership in the Society, were ready to move the program forward. None of us even dreamed that things would fall into place so rapidly. There were some crucial issues that needed attention.

The Society needed:

1. a permanent safe location for its holdings,
2. to expand its organ of communication with members and churches
3. to organize and catalogue its holdings
4. to encourage churches and individuals to save and use the

Society to store their archival materials

5. to increase its membership and budget.

Each year the momentum increased as we worked to achieve our objectives. Some we achieved while others are of a continuing nature. As we moved along new opportunities arose and with them new challenges.

It has been a busy period and I thank the members of the Society for the support they have given. Materials are being sent in for cataloging and storage; the budget has grown from just over a thousand dollars to ten. We especially appreciate the help and generous cooperation of the MCCA staff and the staff of the Thrift Store. I hope that the relationship is beneficial to both groups and that the complex becomes a center of Mennonite activity in Alberta.

I thank the Board members for their work on the various committees on which they served, the Policies and Procedures Committee, the Program Committee, the Editorial Committee, the Facilities and Equipment Committee, and two special People, Dick Neufeld the editor who has grown the Newsletter to be a very respectable publication, and Judith Rempel who is a dynamo in keeping the office functioning and all of us informed through the Internet.

It has been a productive period with excellent programs twice a year, the publication of several documents and a modest growth in membership

My challenge to you now is to grow the membership and make the archives available to the membership and others through regular office hours, the use of the Internet and the continuation of semi-annual programs.

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distant locales in the USA and Canada, moved there in the early 20th century.

Of note were the Rivard brothers, who may have differed considerably from the first Mennonites. They did, however, have one common trait. They, like the Mennonites, were hiding from Government authorities who tried to

impose on them. The first Mennonites, who began to arrive 17 years after the Rivard brothers did, were fleeing compulsory public education. While the three French-speaking brothers from Quebec were fleeing conscription in 1914.

Ettienne, Conrad and Anistoch Rivard claim that they named the La Crete area in which they settled. They observed that the 'hogsback', which sported a foot-path leading to the top of the river bank behind their house, resembled a rooster's comb, which in French is la crete.

J. A. S. King, the official Government surveyor, surveyed portions of the area now occupied by Mennonites as early as 1914. William and Anne Marie Hallett left Los Angeles for health reasons, bringing their one-year old daughter with them. They eventually arrived and settled on La Crete land in 1917. In 1923 Anne Hallett gave birth to William Alfred, the first recorded white baby to be born in this area. They homesteaded, after several interruptions in their frontier life, in the Buffalo Head district. Then in 1939 that farm was purchased by the Old Colony churches' Bishop William Wiebe.

Louis Tourangeau homesteaded the fertile property currently occupied by the Hamlet of La Crete. Louis, his father Joe and brother Fredrick continued to live there for many years as La Crete grew. His home was about one hundred yards directly south of the teacherage occupied by the author back in 1957-61. These folks were very obliging neighbours and helpful to the early Mennonite arrivals. Native people, of course, had been there for undetermined centuries before the white fur traders, the white settlers and the Catholic and Anglican missionaries arrived. (The natives were 'offered' Reserves by the Government of Canada, and were expected to settle further north and east.)

Other non-Mennonite family names appear in the colourful stories written about this most northerly farming community. Included are the Smiths and Joneses, the Gibbs, Charles, St.

Germaines, Marshals, Chenowiths, McTeers and Sibalds. The list goes on including a Buryk family, Kolstow family, Downings, Robinsons, Lukoskys and, of course, Al Grandgenet the renowned trapper. There were Woods, Zaichkowsky and Grant Savage after whom the Savage Prairie is named. Although most of the families retained their distinct cultural priorities, the love bug as well as financial considerations did generate interaction, seemingly to mutual benefit.

The domineering Peace River played a critical role in the life of the Mennonites and all the other residents living east and south of the Peace, including the residents of Fort Vermilion. Isolation was absolute annually, as the river froze each fall and again while the ice melted in spring. All travel across the river was either on the water or over the secure ice. I remember seeing the tailgate of Ike Knelson's 'stock racks' at forty five degree angle above of the ice. The experience of losing trucks and other heavy-duty equipment, as they broke through an inadequate layer of ice, meant a delay in shipping. The alternative was either to stay at home or to reinforce the river crossing, when cold weather permitted, with logs and pumping water to form a reinforced ice bridge.



Guessing when the ice would break, gave excuse for an annual contest as the entrepreneurs waited to ship livestock, restock the grocery shelves and bring in the bags full of mail. Even more exciting was a visit to the river, to watch the turbulent breakup every spring. This 'Peace' river belied its image, as thunder rolled and mountains

of ice obscured the other shore. Fort Vermilion was flooded on more than one occasion as the ice backed up behind massive ice jams downstream. None of the Mennonite farmers were directly affected, (with the exception of one flood at Carcajou) since La Crete area families live at much higher elevations. The "Fort", however, occupied a plain about a dozen feet above normal high water level and was always at risk.

One discomfort shared by all 'comers' was the annual mosquito plague. Stories abound about the size and ferocious persistence of these creatures. One Derjch Neefelt reputedly, while fleeing the giant of all giant mosquitoes, suddenly ducked behind a green sapling. He then calmly tied a granny knot in the emerging stinger. This mosquito had failed its agility test.



The first settlers all used the unpredictable, sand dune infested, water highway from the town of Peace River. They either contracted with one of the two or three riverboats or built their own scows. Their lives and all of their earthly possessions were entrusted to that unfamiliar but exclusive means of transportation until 1952, when the Mackenzie Highway #35 was built. Many of those adventures are well told and preserved in *A Heritage of Homesteads, Hardships and Hope*, edited by Bill Neufeld.

Selected information taken from a *Heritage of Homesteads, Hardships and Hope*. By permission

Three Octogenarian Ladies and Two Retired Gentlemen Reminisce

Compiled by Dave Pankratz, based on interview notes prepared by Teresa Unger

Mennonite settlers were originally attracted to La Crete because of affordable land and because opportunities seemed plentiful. They saw it as a place where they could start over. Some of the first Mennonites came from Saskatchewan where drought and the depression severely limited their potential for growth. Others came from as far away as Mexico with the hope that they would have more control over their children's education in this largely undeveloped area. With the opportunities came hardships and challenges that were daunting, especially in the early years. Through diligence and thrift and by helping one another, the early settlers were able to survive and eventually to thrive.

Isbrand Friesen was one of the many Mennonites wanting to leave Saskatchewan during the drought stricken years of the 1930s. He first visited Mexico but did not like it there. He later traveled to northern Alberta where he saw the fertile land, the wheat crops and the cattle. He thought the Peace Country was a place where he might prosper so he moved his family to Carcajou in 1934. Carcajou is about thirty miles south of La Crete along the Peace River. Mr. Friesen passed away a few years later and his widow and children moved to La Crete in 1939.

Maria Peters and Sarah Friesen were also among the early Mennonite settlers to arrive in northern Alberta. The two sisters, born Fehr, were teenagers when they arrived in Carcajou in 1934. Their parents had operated a dairy in Saskatchewan and were looking for a place where they would be better able to provide for themselves. The family moved to Carcajou in 1936.

Helena (Banman) Klassen came to the area as a young married woman. The family moved from Mexico to Swift Current in the fall of 1936 and then continued on to La Crete in 1937. They originally left Mexico because of concerns about the education system and hoped that here in La Crete they would be able to have their own schools without interference from government or the outside world.

With the opportunities, however, came challenges and even danger. Maria Peters and Sarah Friesen recall their trip from Saskatchewan to northern Alberta. Twenty-one people made the journey in a small Ford truck with a camper on it, while several young men traveled by train with the livestock. The group spent three weeks in Peace River where the men built a scow for the trip up river. When all was ready the families were loaded on the scow with their personal possessions, their machinery and livestock, and enough food to last a year. Just before they left a man, familiar with the Peace River and experienced with scows, offered to pilot them to their new home for five dollars. The leaders of the group turned down the offer and the families set out for the North Peace. They had only traveled about twenty miles when they hit a rock and half of the scow began to sink. The men cut it loose so that the rest of the scow would not be pulled under. No lives were lost, but they arrived in Carcajou with only the clothes on their backs and the tractor that powered the scow. Some of the aboriginal people living near the river found clothing floating in the river. They dried the clothing and returned them to the settlers.

Maria and Sarah also recall some of the hardships and challenges they faced as pioneers in northern Alberta. Food was in short supply when they first arrived in Carcajou and the family went without meat for a long time. Mrs. Peters remembers friends giving them sour smelling frozen wheat that they used to bake bread. The bread had a horrible smell but they ate it without complaining because they knew there was nothing else. They also used the

sour wheat to make cereal for breakfast. In summer they picked wild berries and preserved them in jars. Berry preserves were poured over the cereal to mute the taste of the sour bread.

Laundry was done with a washboard and a tub of water. When they first arrived and only had the clothes they were wearing, one girl would hand her clothes to her sister and would sleep until the outfit was washed and dried. They would then switch places until the other sister's clothes were clean and dry and ready to be worn.

The winters were very cold and Mrs. Peters remembers a family wrapping their baby in a blanket and hanging it above the stove to keep it warm. The Fehrs thought about moving back to Saskatchewan but they were too poor, having lost most of their possessions when the scow sank.

Their situation improved when they moved to the La Crete area but they still faced hardships. Soon after they arrived they planted a garden, but it froze. They did not have money and it was their neighbours who helped them out by giving them food. That fall they only got potatoes, carrots and cabbage from their garden. These vegetables were boiled for every meal and eaten day after day, week in and week out.

Mosquitoes were a constant problem in the summer. They would come in at night and the whole family was wakened while Mr. Fehr lit a bucket of moist grass or hay and walked around the house until the rooms were filled with smoke and the majority of mosquitoes were either dead or had left.

The early settlers were rarely paid in cash for their labours. Mr. Fehr and the boys hauled hay for nearby farmers and received wool as payment. Mrs. Fehr spun the wool and then at night she and the girls knit mittens, scarves, toques and thick wool socks by the light of the open wood stove. Mr. Fehr took the knit goods to the trading post in Keg River, a three-day drive, and from the sale of these goods received enough money to buy socks and fabric for dresses.

Helena (Banman) Klassen also remembers some of the difficulties she and her family encountered when they

moved to La Crete. The family traveled from Mexico to Peace River in a van. They traded the van for a tractor and horses and then took a riverboat from Peace River to Carcajou. Mrs. Klassen's only possessions were a trunk of clothes, a chair, and some kitchenware.

One of their first tasks was to dig a water well, but the water was so bad that it gave the whole family diarrhea. The land they leased had to be cleared so Mr. and Mrs. Klassen felled the trees with an axe and the children dragged the trees to a brush pile. Mr. Klassen and a group of men also built a log house and the women filled the cracks with mud to make it waterproof. When it started to rain the roof leaked and the inside of the new house filled with mud.

The following summer Mr. Klassen found work on a farm in Peace River. He stayed in Peace River until the riverboat's last trip in the fall. During his absence Mrs. Klassen looked after the family farm, which now also included a cow, a pig with piglets, and chickens.

During the first few winters Mr. Klassen was able to earn money driving native people to town once a week. Mrs. Klassen and the girls also earned money by knitting wool slippers and selling them to local aboriginals. This provided them with enough money to feed the family during the winter.

The difficulties encountered by early Mennonite pioneers in Carcajou were not limited to physical hardships. William Friesen, a son of Isbrand Friesen, did not attend school while growing up and did not learn to read or write. He can now, however, read the Bible and the songbook in English. "One of the differences in growing up in La Crete today in comparison to then is the opportunity for education, which is a very big advantage," says Mr. Friesen.

John S. Friesen offers a divergent view. He feels the schools in La Crete have done a lot of harm. "The ideas of the world have crept into the community," he says, "making it much harder for young people to make the right decisions on how to live according to the Scriptures."

Over the years the early settlers, their families and those that followed, not only cleared their own land and built farms, they also developed the community's social and industrial infrastructure. New businesses and services have sprung up and helped diversify the local economy. Today La Crete is a thriving community with a distinctively Mennonite character.

Migrating – The Peters Family Style

Life in the Hague district of Saskatchewan did not meet the expectations of the Peters family. So on April 20, 1937, after weeks of preparation, they boarded a model T Ford one-ton truck and headed out to their dream home in the Peace River country.

Mother with eight children together with uncle and aunt and their children plus all the food and bedding for everyone filled that truck to capacity. Father rode in the railway-car that carried some horses, cattle, machinery and other personal effects. Apparently some of the boys, feeling too confined, snuck into the rail car with their father. They had to hide when stopped in a town, to escaped detection by the CNR police.

Very little of the inevitable inconveniences of that trip are recorded except for sleeping under the stars and one episode intended to silence the very young infant for whom there was an insufficient supply of milk. The driver and the father of the infant decided to park the truck beside a farm lane intending to buy some milk from the farmer whose dairy cows were visible from the road. Unfortunately the farmer wasn't home but with a great deal of care they found one cow, which tolerated their intrusion. They came away with a bottle full of warm milk. The farmer, a bachelor, returned home just as they were approaching their vehicle. They asked him for some milk and were denied, saying that all the milk he had was for the calves. The full bottle deep in a pocket escaped the farmer's notice.

Many other interesting and harrowing experiences remain part of the vast unrecorded history experienced by Mennonite families as they search for paradise. They obviously would have had time to record them since their truck had a top speed of 20 mph, but did not do so. The recorded story continues in the town of Peace River, where Mike Raychyba was building a new twin-pontoon riverboat. Between the pontoons was a paddle wheel driven by two old refurbished car motors. How all of the people in those two families and all their worldly possessions found place on that boat, named The Russian Navy, remains part of the untold story, but they set out down stream very early May 16, almost a month after departing Hague.

The next reference, recorded as part of the sentence referring to their departure from Peace River, is to docking at Stoney Point just six miles upstream from Fort Vermilion. They were cheerfully received by Robert Jones and his family. The entire Peters families and all their possessions were unloaded, all perishables housed under cover to protect them from the elements and the animals put out to pasture. They stayed there for three weeks during the search for a new home.

Alberta law required two years residency before filing for homesteads, so the Peters had to look for land available for purchase. Etna Rivard, an old timer, was prepared to sell two quarters of farm land just six miles from the Jones' property. It was purchased for seemingly exorbitant amount of \$1,200 with \$200 down and the balance in 10 years without interest. That was deemed a very high price but the loan terms made it acceptable. Improvements were limited to 55 acres of brome grass and no buildings. Mr. Rivard did own a log building, 14 x 20 on a nearby site and also enough logs for a 24 x 30-foot house. Sam Cardinal and Joe Ducharme were employed to build the house and moved the other building as well as an unfinished log barn purchased from a neighbour named Nick Kolstow.

Before the snow fell in the fall of 1937, the Peters family was housed in their own new home in the Peace River

area now known more generally as the La Crete district.

Tractor Train to Peace River

Early La Crete settlers had very limited opportunity to ship grain, so it was fed to hogs and cattle. The closest market for the latter was in the town of Peace River 300 miles upstream along the Peace river. In the spring of 1950 the Hudson's Bay Company launched a new boat to haul freight between Peace River and the Vermilion chutes 50 miles downstream from Fort Vermilion.

Six Mennonite farmers from as far south and east of the river as Buffalo Head Prairie, had cattle and hogs ready for the market. They took their animals to Fort Vermilion expecting to be first in line for the limited space on this new freighter.

Traffic between BHP and the Fort was overland on unimproved trails, but the venturesome pioneers were undaunted. John Harms hooked his 44 Massey Harris tractor to his best wagon and loaded it with his stock. Jacob Wieler had a Ferguson tractor to pull his load. P. I. Friesen transported his stock with a 70 Cockshutt tractor and a one ton truck. Jacob Peters used a 22 Massey; Jimmy Ward had a 44 Massey. Ben Peters, the author of this story, his dad and brother John drove a 30 Massey Harris. Ben remembers having to take one wagon at a time through some of the mud holes, sometimes using three tractors for one wagon.

This "wagon train" arrived at the 'Fort' well ahead of the new freighter and they waited. Eventually the boat arrived only to inform the eager entrepreneurs that all the space was either already occupied or reserved. The captain refused to take any more animals.

"What do we do now?" Cattle are marketable at most any weight but hogs must be sold when they reach that ideal condition. These six farmers had a dilemma. Their semi annual opportunity to transport their market animals was denied them. The six farmers decided to take matters into

their own hands. They had to build and repair several wagon boxes and then they set out for Peace River. First they crossed the river a few loads at a time by ferry, which was pulled across the Peace on cables. Then they set out on the 250-mile trip via High Level. The weather was fair throughout the trip.

P. I. Friesen managed to negotiate transportation for his animals with a trucker in High Level. The other five all drove the long distance to Peace River and back. Ben does not remember how many days but thinks it must have been five or six at least. They had more drivers than tractors so they rarely stopped. "It was a luxury trip sitting on a wagon box full of hogs, eating out of a grub box but 'this little pig went to market'."

An abridged version of the original story written by Ben Peters.

Chronology of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church in La Crete

By Mrs. Tena Thiessen

Bishop David Wall, Reverend Jacob S. Kroeker and Rev. John C. Schlamp of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Faith moved to La Crete, AB in 1964 from the Swift Current area in Saskatchewan. Bishop Wall had been ordained as minister in 1933. Then in 1935 he was ordained as Bishop at Rosenhof, SK near Swift Current. Rev. Jacob S. Kroeker was also ordained at Rosenhof, while Rev. John C. Schlamp was ordained at Vanderhoof, BC. He with his family moved first to Swift Current and then to La Crete in 1965.

The first Sommerfelder Church services in the La Crete area were held in a building on Rev. Schlamp's farm. Very soon after that they amalgamated with the Bergthaler congregation in Wilson Prairie. The Bergthaler Mennonites had recently built a new Church building in the Wilson Prairie

area, so it seemed reasonable that they worship together.

Differences in understanding of church polity and practices soon became evident. The result was that the Sommerfelder members defected from the Bergthaler congregation. The two factions made an agreement between the Bergthaler adherents and those, whose roots were in the Sommerfelder tradition. The Sommerfelders would take possession of the church building, while the Bergthalers retained the church records, the treasury and the name. The Bergthalers decided to begin worshipping in the hamlet of La Crete.

Now the Sommerfelders had a real church building in the Wilson Prairie area, but some of the Sommerfeld adherents lived in the Blumenort area about 15 miles north. So the building from Rev. Schlamp's farm was moved to the Blumenort area so that services could be held closer to where these families lived. Rev. Jacob S. Kroeker was elected as Bishop in 1968 and ordained as Bishop of the Sommerfeld Church in 1968. He served in this capacity until his heart attack and passing on Oct. 31, 1978.

In 1970 a new Church building was constructed at Wilson Prairie and the old building moved to Blumenort. Rev. Abraham I. Dyck from Vanderhoof, BC joined the Sommerfeld church in 1974. Bishop David Wall passed away in Feb. 1976 and in Feb. 1977 Rev. Claas Peters passed away due to a heart attack. Rev. Henry Froese from Rosenhof, SK, joined the Sommerfeld church in 1975 and passed away in Aug. 1996 also due to heart attack.

In 1978 a Senior Citizens home was built in the town of La Crete and the clergy held church services in the banquet room for the convenience of the seniors.

In Jan. 1980 Henry Kroeker and John H Buhler were elected as ministers and ordained in Aug. In Sept. 1981 Rev. Henry Kroeker was elected and ordained as Bishop of the Sommerfeld Church. In 1982 a new church building was constructed at Blumenort and 1986 a church was built at Tompkins Landing.

Then in 1995 a new church building was built at Wilson Prairie.

Jan. 1988 Peter Wieler and David Enns were elected as ministers and John B Neufeld as deacon. They were ordained in Aug. Deacon John Neufeld and Nick Boelig were elected as ministers and William Fehr as deacon in 1991, and were ordained in 1992. Rev. John C. Schlamp passed away in Feb. 1991 and Deacon Isaac Krahn on Dec. 31, 2000. In 1998 Rev. Henry H. Wiens from Carrot River SK. joined the Sommerfeld church.

The ministry team began church services in the La Crete Care Home in 1992 and in the Senior Citizens Lodge in 2000. The Ministry of the Sommerfeld church is not a salaried position, therefore the bishops, ministers and deacons earn their own livelihood by other means of employment, mostly being engaged in farming. The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church with congregations in Blumenort, Wilson Prairie and Tompkins landing area has a total membership as of Jan. 1, 2003 of 2,450 persons with 1,083 baptized members.

Bergthaler Mennonite Church

Abridged version of a brochure by Bill Harder

A group of about fifty Mennonites, some of whom had Bergthal connections in Saskatchewan, moved to the LaCrete area in the 1940s. Over the next 15 years, additional families came so that the Bergthal contingent increased and became more settled. They decided they needed their own church and in 1957 they built one in the Wilson Prairie District. A year later they were officially incorporated as the Fort Vermilion Bergthaler Mennonite Church. That name was changed in 1990 to La Crete Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

Andrew Knelsen was ordained as minister in Sept. 1958 and Jacob Peters as deacon. They joined Rev. Claas Peters who had already been ordained while still living in Saskatchewan. In

Mar. 1960 Jacob Dyck and Jacob Peters were elected as ministers and Isaac Krahn as deacon. Two years later Rev. Jacob Dyck was elected and ordained as Aeltester and ordained Jan. 21, 1962.

In 1965 the congregation faced the fact that serious differences of opinion about theological interpretations and church practices were irreconcilable. Aeltester Dyck, together with 64 persons including children, left the church (building), retaining the name, the church records and the treasury. The majority of the participants kept the church building and began worshipping as Sommerfelder. Considerable animosity continued for a few years so about one half of them abandoned the small Bergthaler group and joined the Sommerfelder.

Throughout the turmoil cohesiveness developed within the small group so that by 1967, after worshipping on Bishop Dyck's farm, they built a church in La Crete. They were optimistic and enthusiastic erecting a building 28 x 62 feet with a full basement. It was ready for dedication on Dec. 27, 1967.

The tensions resulting from the church split continued affecting many families, including the children in school. Some unfortunate decisions were made but in the long run relationships have been restored.

Peter B. Harder and John Neuforf were elected as ministers in Nov. 1970. Three months later bishop Jacob Dyck passed away, leaving them unordained. Rev. John Friesen from Lowe Farm, Man. was brought in to ordain the newly elected ministers. Nov. 1974 John Neudorf was elected as Bishop and Peter Knelsen as deacon. Both were ordained in May 1975.

The church grew as the Lord blessed them, so that by 1976 they added a building 42 x 46 to the existing church in La Crete. Leadership also grew to accommodate the growth in their membership and programming. Feb. 19, 1983 Peter Knelsen and Abe Bueckert were elected as ministers, while Randy Peters and Frank Wieler were elected as deacons.

Continued growth in membership and attendance was such that in 1983 they began to plan for a second church on the east side of the Peace. The Tompkins region was deemed appropriate since numerous families were moving out into this newly opened farming area. In 1984 the Tompkins church was built about twenty miles south and west of La Crete along the road to the Tompkins Landing. Rev. Peter Harder was the pastor from the outset until 1990.

Then in Nov. 1985 Frank Wieler was elected as minister and John Siemens as deacon to replace Frank in the mother church. Bill Janzen was elected as minister and Abe Friesen and Johnny Knelsen elected as deacons. Continued growth resulted in adding another 5,000 sq. ft. to the La Crete church building.

There were also people working as far away as High Level. So the La Crete Bergthalers began to reach out to others. Bi-weekly meetings were held in High Level in homes and in public school beginning in 1967. Despite a perceived slow growth, a trailer was purchased in 1977 and services held weekly. On April 12, 1979 Rev. and Mrs. Abe Bueckert were commissioned as missionaries to High Level and Paddle Prairie. They held weekly meetings in both centres including Bible studies, vacation Bible School and regular weekly Sunday school.

By June 1982 they built a church in High Level with a lot of help from La Crete. This new facility was dedicated in Oct. 1983. Rev. Abe Bueckert was now the home minister and Perry Friesen and Peter Wiebe were elected as minister and deacon respectively to assist him.

That church in High Level soon proved to be too small so they have built a new one 50 x 90 feet just outside of High Level. Their membership is again growing and many children and visitors attend regularly.

History of LaCrete Christian Fellowship

By Peter Janzen

The church was formally begun in the fall of 1973 when Elmer and Lena

Hamm came from Wymark, SK under the EMC Board of Missions, to provide services in the English language. Prior to this, there was a small group of teachers and a handful of local Christians meeting for Bible study. In the mid-60's a number of these teachers were from General Conference backgrounds. This led to an invitation to the General Conference to explore the feasibility of beginning a church here. The delegation, however, determined that such a move would negatively impact the small new Berghaler congregation, since this Bible study group was also being a support to that fledgling congregation.

In the late 60's, however, a few teaching couples from EMC background in Manitoba came up, and the English service question was reconsidered. Hence the EMC became involved.

The first meetings were held in the town hall. After a few months the group began using the school, so that a Sunday School program could be included. The group represented a healthy mix of EMC, GC, MB, BMC, as well as some Non-Mennonite background people. Understandably when formal organization and affiliation were to be determined, they were not all of the same mind. In time, with Elmer Hamm's patient leadership, and dialogue with EMC representatives, EMC affiliation began to make sense.

In 1976 a building project was begun. Services were held in the basement for the first year. The project was completed in 1978. Menno Hamm, brother to Elmer, served as deacon. In 1983 he was elected as lay minister, and two other couples were elected to the deaconship. This same year Elmer Hamms retired and moved back to Swift Current, SK.

The next year Charles and Lorraine Koop were hired as pastor couple.

They were young and became a good fit in a young community. Many young couples came into the church, so by 1986 the church was too small. The building was expanded to its present size with seating for approximately 375. Electing 4 more couples as deacons enlarged the Ministerial. In 1987 Menno Hamms moved back to Steinbach, MB. Dave and Sharon Siemens were hired as Associate Pastor couple, with a focus on youth work. In 1989 Charles Koops moved to Calgary to pastor the Abbeydale EMC church, and a replacement was found in Milton and Gladys Fast from Landmark, MB. In 1992 Dave and Sharon returned to Manitoba and Dean and Kaylene Buhler were hired to continue the youth work. In 1993 the Ministerial was enlarged by electing two more deacon couples. Milton Fast retired in 1995 and returned to Manitoba. Peter Janzen was elected as lay minister, and together with the Youth Pastor and one of

the deacons, the work continued through the next year. In 1996 Glen and Betty Koop were hired to the Senior Pastor position having left a long teaching career at Steinbach Bible College. In 1997 Dean and Kaylene returned to Calgary so the Youth Pastor position again needed attention. Richard Krahn, a recent graduate of SBC, doing a Minister-in-Training period, filled the position. David and Sharon Schellenberg, also from our congregation, were hired and very ably led the youth program for one year. In 1998 Brain and Trisha Reimer were hired. They stayed with us for two years. In 2000 Gordon Foster was elected as lay minister. Also Peter Fehr, a homegrown youth, was elected as youth pastor and has now led the program for 3 years. As of this year, 2003, the church is again looking for a Senior and a Youth Pastor. At the same time a sister church building project is underway approximately 30 kilometers to the south, in the rural area of Buffalo Head Prairie.

While the church has experienced frequent changes in senior leadership,

it has also benefited from these leaders' varied strengths and gifts. The ministerial presently includes 8 deacon couples plus ministers and pastors. Seven missionary couples out of our congregation are serving in various fields under EMC, MCC, and Associate missions.

The EMC congregation has grown to a membership of 340. Since the La Crete community is thriving with young people, the congregation also experiences the energy that youth bring, as well as some of the transience of their lives.

There have been 'growing pains' along the way, but God's faithfulness is to be praised.

Where from – Where to? God's Leading in MCCA/MMI (*Unterstützung bei Brand, Sturm und Allerlei Not*)

By Diedrich Neufeld

MCCA asked that its constituency "dig deep" by entertaining and challenging about 200 faithful supporters on Friday April 25, 2003. The Corpus Christi Male Chorus entertained us in two segments of the program. Two grey-haired men explained how MCCA/MMI got to where it is now. Two much younger men outlined where MCCA/MMI would like to be a year from now. About one half million dollars separate the dream from reality. The late Dick Reimer began his report in* *A Celebration of Service*, about the development of MCC in Alberta by quoting the proverb, "Mighty oaks from small acorns grow". That is already evident in where MCCA/MMI is now but the dream can become reality only by adding further acorns.

Mennonites in Alberta have a reputation of responding to "material" needs, ever since they began to arrive here at the end of the 19th century. Farmers readily responded to a call for fighting prairie fires, chasing the ranchers' free ranging cattle out of settlers' grain fields, or housing and sometimes employing the newly arrived

settlers until they could find land and erect temporary shelters. Responding to the large influx of immigrants from Russia in the early 20's resulted in the establishment of *Immigranten* funds by individual churches. There were also local health aid plans and burial funds. Farmers, in the absence of refrigeration, formed Beef Rings whereby they took turns delivering the fresh meat from a butchered animal, distributing it to the other five or six participating families.

Although Mennonite individuals and churches have always been keen and deliberate about assisting distressed individuals and families, the General Conference and the Mennonite Brethren churches in Alberta founded a joint approach referred to as the *Vertraeter Versammlung der Mennonitischen Siedler in Alberta (VV)* (Delegate Gathering of the Mennonite Settlers in Alberta) in 1946. Four different funds were centralized, to deal with urgent problems. *Hilfswerk, Immigranten Kasse, Beerdigungs Kasse, and Unterstuetzung bei Brand und Sturmschaden*, (Relief, Immigrant Aid, Burial Fund and Support for Fire and Storm Damage) were undertaken by this inter-Mennonite committee, thereby spreading the financial risk of responding to disasters and urgent needs. Each church had its own representatives assigned to identify cases and mediate between the central body (VV) and the local needs.

The fire insurance portion of this fund became somewhat delicate in that the Government required licensing of Insurance Companies and imposed fines on Companies and directors for operating without license. So after much deliberation Mennonite Mutual Relief Insurance Company was incorporated in 1960 by special Act of Legislature. Accountability remained with the *Vertraeter Versammlung*. When MCCA was incorporated in 1965, it replaced the VV and, in addition to the Relief and Service agenda, included responsibility for the MMRIC operations. The MCCA board soon found their role cumbersome, so in 1980 a Special Committee was formed to govern MMRIC. In 1988 MMRIC

elected its own Board of Directors and held its own Annual meetings albeit in conjunction with the MCCA annual meetings.

With the incorporation of MCCA in 1965 Material Aid, Self Help sales, Thrift Store were added to the quilting and soap making which kept many ladies busy during the winter months. Many other programs were added in the next twenty five years, so that the *Celebration of Service* book listed more than twenty distinct programs.

Volunteers administered most of the programs from private homes until 1973 when office space was rented in Calgary. In 1981 a new vision arose slowly as venturesome Albertans planned for and spent almost \$302,000 and much volunteer sweat to construct a new MCCA office at 76 Skyline Cr. NE. It was dedicated on October 16, 1982. Programs continued to come out of the woodwork or (more likely) out of God's leading among the dedicated and energetic Alberta Mennonites.

In the subsequent thirty years the phenomenal growth resulted in spawning independently administered programs like Newcomer Centres, Thrift stores, Ten Thousand Village stores, and more recently, Employment Development in addition to the many programs operated directly by MCCA. A total of 127 persons are on the payrolls as well as about another half dozen who receive incidental remuneration for part time services. Uncounted additional volunteers make the annual auction sales the success that they are. The Thrift stores thrive thanks to the staff and volunteers. The Calgary store has 4 staff and 286 volunteers; the Lethbridge store has 2 staff and 200 volunteers. A new store is being opened in Edmonton where the committee is busy recruiting volunteers.

MMI has four full time staff, as well as occasional part-time staff and an additional 115 volunteers. The MCCA and MMI volunteer response is very significant considering the relatively small Mennonite population in Alberta.

So now in 2003, more than a hundred years after Alberta Mennonites started

working together to help each other and their neighbours, MCCA/MMI supporters want to spend about 1.5 Million dollars to add a 16,000 sq. ft., three-storey building to the newly acquired 12,000 sq. ft. Thrift Store in Calgary. This vision will again challenge and test the extent of the constituencies' commitment. God expects His people to love and help each other. He has blessed our visionaries in the past and there is no reason to think that today's leaders will not be supported.

You are invited to participate according to your level of interest, by joining the extensive volunteer contingent and/or digging into your bank account to help in achieving the remaining \$440,000 shortfall on the fund raising target. Contact Keith Hunsberger, MCC Alberta office, 76 Skyline Crescent NE, Calgary, AB T2E 3K7

Inspired by Jake Retzlaff's report to the "fund raiser" event.

**A Celebration of Service 1965-1991 MCCA*

The Lethbridge Mennonite Church Anniversary 1978 – 2003

Summarized by Diedrich P. Neufeld

The Lethbridge Mennonite Church is twenty-five years old. "It was conceived in the minds and hearts of a group of people in the Coaldale Mennonite church with help from a Church Planting committee and the Alberta Missions committee". The story, from which this article is extracted, is told in a paper prepared by Irvin Martens and Ernie Sawatzky. A 'birth and growth' analogy is used extensively, explaining how the congregation started with twenty-three adults and now has a membership of 85. Over that 25-year period 146 persons have been or are now members.

The birth was difficult having to survive a 54/57 NO vote by the mother congregation in Coaldale. A year later that decision was reversed and the concept growth resumed. Mennonites apparently don't all sing from the same hymnbook, since the first pastor lasted only thirteen months. His departure did not resolve all the issues as "tensions, misunderstandings and differing expectations" continued. Added to that were "self-doubt, blaming, remorse and anger" over the previous years' proceedings. "Is it worth the time, money and effort to carry on?" Most of the founding members stayed, having decided "they could not abandon a new-born baby just because it was sick." Their decision was obviously right since three pastors, Ernie Sawatzky 1980-93, Fred Unruh 1993-98 and Ruth Preston Schilk 1998-now, have served the growing, involved congregation.

Growth was not only numerical. As early as 1980 this congregation wrote the Alberta Government protesting abortion, considered sponsoring Boat people and updated their directory. They were also confronted by the Canadian General Conference's Provisional Statement on Homosexuality. "To the best of our understanding, God's Holy Spirit leads us to reject homosexuality as an option for Christians. However, we believe God's grace is for all". That statement forced the issue into the open for constructive debate and reflection but also haunted the Conference of Mennonites in Alberta and the Lethbridge Church for the next twenty years."

The "healthy feeling of stability" at the annual meeting in 1981 resulted in programs being initiated for children, youth, family nights and outreach to unchurched persons of "Mennonite and Hutterite background" over the next year. They also became involved with Project Ploughshares and participated in a march protesting Cruise Missile testing. A visit by wheel-chair dependent Henry Enns, challenged the church to become more aware of the need for handicapped accessibility. The homeless and transients, who stopped

frequently at their door, prompted them to participate with other inner-city churches in opening a Soup Kitchen service.

About this same time the church became too small, (always a good type of problem for churches) but not necessarily so easy to remedy. So fund raising and planning were moved up on their agenda. Later in the same year a number of families with a lot of children moved away and a few other families left for other churches. "Those losses have caused us to question our church program and our commitment to God and the church and possibly even the viability of our small church". Why would they need a new church if this one weren't full?

The **LIFE** program, an unusually large number of candidates for baptism, the return of mission workers from Egypt, and participation of University students and workers from the La Crete area all converged to raise enthusiasm and optimism. This small urban congregation continued to expand its services beyond their walls by supporting Habitat for Humanity by building for poor families and they began to support annual Summer Interns starting in 1995. Their dream of a new larger building was revived and in January of 1998 their new church was dedicated. In May 1998 their current pastor arrived to begin her walk with this very active congregation.

"In 1978 a church was born. Childhood was marked by energy and optimism. Adolescence had its ups and downs. Now as a young adult it is more settled and responsible. Was it all worth it? To be an adult means to be a healthy individual contributing to the welfare of the whole community, in this case a member of and builder of the Kingdom of God. In the last 25 years, 146 persons have been or are members. Of those 38 made a new commitment to follow Christ and were baptized and children were dedicated. There have also been visitors and those who made this their church for a while without becoming members. For many the church has been a place to put down spiritual roots and drew the needed

nourishment. It has been a place to raise one's children in a loving larger family. It is a community where each person has been challenged to live the Christian life more faithfully in the company of and with the help of others. The church has been the home base for service in the community through the **Soup Kitchen**, **MCC** with its sales, **MCC Thrift Store**, **Ten Thousand Villages** and **Mennonite Disaster Service**, through **Habitat For Humanity**, through **Service Adventure** helping **HIV Connection**, **L'Arche**, **Rehoboth**, **Streets Alive**, through deacon's relief fund and through the **Prayer Chain**. Reviewing the last 25 years makes one realize that it is God by his spirit and power and not our own ingenuity and organization that has made us His people in this time and place.

Quotations from Ernie & Sawatzky and Irvin Martens' story of the history of the Lethbridge Mennonite Church history (MHS Acc. 2003.004).

MHSA Annual General Meeting

Gem Mennonite Brethern Church April 26 2003

By Irene Klassen

It was snowing and blowing a bit so we thought we'd allow ourselves extra time to go to Gem. Weather reports were not good but here in Alberta, weather predictions are often unreliable. The farther we went, the worse it got. We phoned George Paetkau in Gem and were told weather was OK, so we continued. Surely it would improve after Strathmore. But in Strathmore it was even worse - the Power was out and we couldn't see any sign of life. Surely this storm will end at the Standard corner - but no. By then it was impossible to turn back. We checked in with George again. - still OK. Finally as we approached Bassano the weather cleared and we continued on. When we eventually arrived at the Church in Gem, we were greeted with a bit of amazement. Our two-hour trip had taken

three hours and forty minutes of the worst driving conditions we had ever encountered. Other Calgarians had phoned and cancelled. However the contingent from Edmonton had arrived in time.

Now the question was whether to have the meeting. The Chairman, Jake Harder, the Treasurer, George Paetkau, the Secretary, Irene Klassen, (me) and Dave Wiebe-Neufeldt of the Executive as well as several area representatives were there, plus a handful of members. Rescheduling seemed impossible so we made the decision to carry on.

Jake Doerksen welcomed us to the Mennonite Brethren Church with a few comments and a prayer. Jake Harder called the meeting to order. After reviewing the minutes of the 2002 General meeting, we realized that much has been done in the past year. A Library & Archives has been established in Calgary where materials are being stored and catalogued, where visitors can come and research their roots. Harder commended the invaluable expertise of Judith Rempel in all this work. Regrettably neither Judith, the archivist, nor Ted Regehr was present to report. The 'Policies and Procedures' manual as prepared by Judith was circulated.

The Newsletters have grown to 16 pages of historical articles, as well as more recent news. Dick Neufeld would have been able to report further, had he been there.

A policy of rotation of three-year terms, according to motion at last year's meeting has been carried through and was approved. New executive was elected: - Chairman – Colin Neufeldt (2004), Vice. Chair – David Wiebe-Neufeldt (2005) and Treasurer – Ralph Dahl (2006) The Secretary's term, will begin in 2004. A \$20.00 membership is to be established in 2004.

A few more of the local folks arrived for the story telling in the afternoon. Linda Lauber told the story of the (Old) Mennonite Church beginnings in Duchess, using Power Point projector to show pictures. Henry Retzlaff and Jake Wiens shared their memories of Rosemary and Countess. George

Paetkau and Irene Klassen shared stories of Gem and New Gem. Jake Doerksen, who has been pastor of the Gem MB church for many years, as his father was before him, gave us his account of the history.

The stories of the cooperation, and community efforts among the various Church affiliations were quite remarkable. The Mennonite Church, the Mennonite Brethren and the General Conference worked well together. Among the influential leaders were Clarence Raymer, Daniel Janzen, Peter Doerksen, Abram Paetkau, as well as others. George told an interesting story. One afternoon Henry Tiessen had taken a group of young men and boys in his truck to pick rocks and these were used for the foundation of the church at Gem.

Due to the inclement weather everyone was anxious to go home, so the evening program took place before the banquet. Harvey Burkholder and his friend "Howdy" brought a few laughs. Special speakers were Jessie and Larry Kehler. Jessie (Neufeld) Kehler grew up in this area and she told of the various people and events that had influenced her life. Larry then shared some of the highlights of his visit to Iraq with a team of Peacemakers.

During the banquet, a male quartet from Rosemary entertained us with some songs. The winners of the Silent Auction were announced and it was time to start our homeward journey.

in the Chortiza Colony of Southern Russia in 1911.

In the mid 1990's, Mennonite tourists from Canada were attracted to Heritage Cruises and tours of the world-famous Dnieper River, making stopovers in Zaporozhye, the first and oldest Mennonite settlement in Russia, dating back as far as the 1780's. Participants returned home burdened by the poverty, poor health and lack of any services for the frail elderly. Their stories filtered to the Board of the Bethania Mennonite Personal Care Home, who in 12997, in partnership with our founders the Mennonite Benevolent Society, dispatched a delegation of three on a fact-finding mission. Upon their return, they confirmed the existence of pervasive and dire need and that MBS could reasonably play a role to mitigate the hardships for at least some of the people residing in the areas.

Partnering with the Zaporozhye Mennonite Church, a very basic home care service was established in the spring of 2001. The church serves as a referral point to identify the most vulnerable elderly within the context of surrounding areas. They also serve as advisors to ensure services are provided within the context of socio/cultural appropriateness and as a distribution centre to disseminate supplies and services. The current program consists of basic home care support to individuals and their families, training for family care providers, and a modest equipment pool with basic orthotic supports to enhance independence in activities of daily living. Anne Goertzen, a Bethania employee, directs services. Her work is augmented by the efforts of two locally trained Ukrainians who constitute the "staff" for the program. It is encouraging to see the emergence of a spirit of volunteerism, which in this transitional society, remains as a newly emerging concept.

This project has been adopted by the Mennonite Benevolent Society (MBS Manitoba). A working group of volunteers in Canada together with a local charity established in Ukraine is working to create and deliver a comprehensive program to build a

Call for Support

Mennonite Benevolent Society Ukraine Project

A Seniors Care Project in Zaporozhye, Ukraine

Many Canadian Mennonites can trace their roots to what is now called Zaporozhye in the Ukraine. The Bethania Personal Care Home in Winnipeg has a cultural and historical tie to that area in that our predecessor known as the Bethania Mental Hospital was founded close to the Dnieper River

healthier, safer, more independent, and less vulnerable population in Ukraine in a way that complements the initiatives of other charities already active in Ukraine. The vision for this comprehensive program includes a facility from where ongoing care can be provided for those whose needs cannot be managed within the present environment. Such a facility will be fully accessible for persons with disabilities. In heeding the call to responsible stewardship, the program will be delivered using foods and services that conserve the environment and resources at every opportunity.

We are grateful to the City of Zaporozhye for their donation of 10-storey building shell, which when retrofitted, will be suitable to house this program for years to come. It will serve as a visible "Beacon of Hope" for the at-risk elderly who are the prime focus for the initial phase of this program. It will also double up as the church home for the Mennonite congregation in Zaporozhye. The MBS vision for Ukraine lights the way for many of us to return to our roots with extended hands, reaching into the hearts of the people of Zaporozhye. This dream can only become a reality when we assemble as a community of (Mennonite and other Ukrainian descent) to join in the effort. While it is clear that there are many risks inherent in undertaking such a project, we are inspired by the words of Paul Toews, Russian Mennonite historian:

"There are opportunities that come to a people because of their history. It would be a great irony if the greatest Mennonite contribution (in Ukraine) were yet to come."

MHSA Members' Ancestry Corner

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

1. **Jacob David Harder** b. 3 Jun 1927, Riga, Latvia, m 20 Aug 1949, Hella Dahl b. 6 Oct 1926 Didsbury, AB

Parents

2. David Harder* b 6 Dec 1891, Friedensfeld, Sagradovka, South Russia, m. 31 Jan 1912, Suvorovka Colony, Caucasus, South Russia, Helena Toews, b 19 Aug 1891, Memrick Colony, d 7 Oct 1959, Calgary AB. David d 13 Dec. 1926, Riga Latvia.
3. Helen Toews b 19 Aug 1891, Memrik Colony, d 7 Oct 1959, Calgary, AB

Grandparents

4. Cornelius D. Harder b 1 Dec 1866, Blumentstein, Molotschna, m 22 Feb 1890, in Sagradovka, SR, Katharina Janzen, b 26 Jul 1870, Sagradovka Colony, d 12 Jan 1927, Rosthern Saskatchewan. Cornelius d. 3 Oct 1946, Rosemary, AB
5. Katharina Janzen b 26 Jul 1870 Sagradovka Colony, d 12 Jan 1927, Rosthern SK
6. Abram Toews b ABT 1845, Michaelsburg, Fuerstenland, S Russia, m ABT 1866, Nikolaifeld, Sagradovka m Katharina Dick, b 22 Jul 1846. Abram d Molotschna Colony
7. Katharina Dick b 22 Jul 1846, Molotschna Colony.

Great Grand Parents

8. David Harder b 10 Dec 1836, Blumenstein, Molotschna, m (1) 11 Nov 1857, Helena DeFehr, b 15 May 1830, Blumenort, Molotschna, d 27 Mar 1878, Sagradovka Colony m (2) 30 May 1878, Margaretha Warkentin, b 18 Dec 1844. David died 28 Sept 1911, Neu Schoensee, Sagradovka
9. Helena DeFehr b 15 May 1830, Blumenort, Molotschna, d 27 Mar 1878 Sagradovka Colony
10. Jacob Janzen b 12 Jan 1843, Wernersdorf, Molotschna, m (1) 16 Feb 1867, Helena Klippenstein, b

15 Dec 1845, d 5 Jan 1892, Friedensfeld, Molotschna, m (2) 1892, Anna Allert, b 31 Aug 1845, Friedensruh, Molotschna, d 1922, Friedensfeld, Sagradovka. Jacob d 24 May 1915, Friedensfeld, Sagradovka, SR.

11. Helena Klippenstein b 15 Dec 1845, d 5 Jan 1892, Friedensfeld, Sagradovka
14. Peter Dick b 11 Nov 1823, Molotschna Colony, m 1845 in SR, Katherine Berg, b 2 Feb 1818, Prussia, d 31 Jan 1847. Peter died 28 Jan 1887, Marion S. Dakota.
15. Katherine Berg b 2 Feb 1818, Prussia, d 31 Jan 1847

2nd Great Grand Parents

16. Johann Harder b ABT 1779, Danzig E Prussia, m (1) Justina Fast, m (2) Widow Kasdorf.
17. Widow Kasdorf
18. Cornelius Cornelius DeFehr b 22 Dec 1785, Heubuden, Prussia, m (1) Agatha ____ b abt 1774, m (2) Maria ____, b abt 1789.
19. Maria ____, b abt 1789
20. Kornelius Janzen b 20 Jul 1819, Wernersdorf, Molotschna, m 1841, Katherine Boldt, b 21 Sep 1820, d 18 Sep 1903. Kornelius died 20 May 1896, Alexanderfeld, Sagradovka.
21. Katherine Boldt b 21 Sep 1820, d 18 Sep 1903
22. Johann Klippenstein b ABT 1810. m 17 Nov 1831, Katharina Enns, b ABT 1812, d 4 Jan 1872. Johann died 14 Dec 1847
23. Katharina Enns b Abt 1812, d 4 Jan 1872

3rd Great Grand Parents

36. Cornelius De Veer b abt 1749, m abt 1770 Anna Regier, d bef 1823. Cornelius d 16 Jun 1823, Heubuden, Prussia
37. Anna Regier d bef 1823
40. Jacob Peter Janzen b abt 1782, m Sara ____, b abt 1775
41. Sara ____, b abt 1775, m (1) Abraham Regier, m (2) Jacob Peter Janzen, b abt 1782

1. **Hella Dahl** b. 6 Oct 1926
Didsbury, AB, m 20 Aug 1949,
Jacob D. Harder, b 3 Jun 1927,
Riga Latvia

Parents

2. Gerhard Dahl b 12 Jan 1898,
Kronsweide, m 10 Oct 1921,
Katharina Peters, b 9 Mar 1901,
Kronsweide, d 29 Apr 1984,
Calgary AB. Gerhard d 17 Mar
1969, Didsbury, AB.
3. Katharina Peters b 9 Mar 1901,
Kronsweide, d 29 Apr 1984,
Calgary, AB.

Grand Parents

4. Jacob Dahl b 21 Nov 1858,
Kronsweide, m 1 Feb 1881,
Susanna Penner, b 20 Nov 1860
Kronsweide, d 16 Jul 1920,
Nicolaiopol. Jacob died 27 Oct
1927, Nicolaiopol.
5. Susanna Penner b 20 Nov 1860
Kronsweide, d 16 Jul 1920,
Nicolaiopol.
6. Heinrich Peters b 6 Jul 1857,
Neider Chortitza, m 26 Dec 1879,
Elizabeth Warkentin, b 7 Feb 1860,
Neider Chortitza, d 20 Nov 1936
Didsbury, AB. Heinrich died 28
Jan 1930, Didsbury, AB
7. Elizabeth Warkentin b 7 Feb 1860,
Neider Chortitza, d 20 Nov 1936,
Didsbury, AB

Great Grandparents

8. Jacob Dahl b 10 Nov 1834,
Kronsweide, m Helena Epp, b 11
Aug 1836, Kronsweide, d 16 Jul
1920. Jacob died 12 Sep 1878.
9. Helena Epp b 11 Aug 1836,
Kronsweide, d 16 Jul 1920.
12. Heinrich Peters b 1 Aug 1832, m
Katharina Epp, b 15 Jun 1835, d 14
Apr 1907. Heinrich d. 12 Apr
1997.
13. Katharina Epp b 15 Jun 1835, d 14
Apr 1907

Great Great Grand Parents

16. Jacob Dahl b Feb 1796, m 1 Oct
1819 Katharina Peters, b 22 Feb.
1802
17. Katharina Peters b 22 Feb 1802

24. Heinrich Peters b 2 Jul 1799, m
Anna Friesen, b 14 Aug 1804, d 9
Jan 1933. Heinrich died 14 May
1866.
25. Anna Friesen b 14 Aug 1804, d 9
Jan 1833

Numbering in ancestry charts like this is very particular, with father's and mother's numbers always based on the child's.

Father's number = Child x 2

Mother's number = (Child X 2) + 1

* See following story for more about David Harder

More about David Harder

By Jacob D. Harder

My Father, David, died in Riga, Latvia on Dec 13, 1926. The family was in transit from Siberia to Canada. The trip was interrupted for Mother had to remain in Latvia for about seven months while her husband's fatal illness ran its course and daughter Lena was treated for trachoma. It wasn't until the end of June 1927 and I had been born when Mother with her five children ranging in age from one month to 14 years was able to continue her journey to Canada.

The following pages are taken from the diary of Jacob Harder written on June 7, 1996, while on a visit to Riga.

This was the day, the day I had come for. Today I would search for some answers to my past. I had prepared a list of phone numbers of various government departments that might have information related to my questions. We had hired a guide and interpreter for today and I was ready for Ilma Lomanovska, our Latvian guide.

I explained my problem to her and after some phone calls, she said, "We'll start with vital statistics archives."

The office was in the old part of the city, an area that was crowded with old buildings; we found the door with a little brass nameplate designating the building we were looking for, "Vital Statistics-Archives". The buildings are huge, have very austere fronts and unobtrusive entrances so one has to

know exactly where to look. Ilma explained our mission and was handed a form for me to complete. It was an application for requesting, in writing, what information I wanted and why. The form was in Latvian so Ilma interpreted each question and I wrote the answer in English. When completed Ilma handed the form in and waited for our turn - only a few minutes. We entered and met a woman who was the keeper of the archives, Ilma stated our request and the lady reached for the 1926 book on the death statistics for that year and turned to the date I gave her.

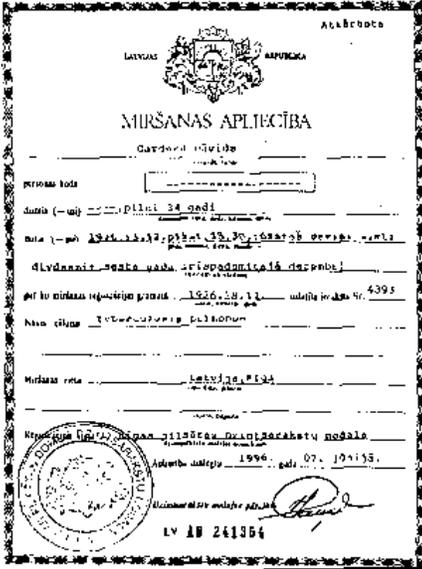
My request was for verification of my father's date of death, what caused his death and in which hospital he had died. She searched the Dec. 7 date and several weeks before and after, no record! She said, "It isn't here." What next?

I thought a minute and then asked, "Would you have a record of my birth? I was born in Riga June 3, 1927."

"Yes, there should be a record," she said, and pulled a volume from the births section for 1927. She flipped a few pages and turned to a whole page on me. There was the date, the hour, the hospital, the street where my mother lived, and my order in the family tree. I asked whether I could get a birth certificate. The answer was 'yes' but I would have to complete another application form requesting it. This I was most eager to do. While we "were completing the application the archives lady called Ilma in and told her she had found some information on my father. This was good news! I had my request for a birth certificate ready. The archives lady told us that she had double-checked the statistics of my father and had recalled that the German H and the Russian G sounded the same. A verbal registration of my father's death could be the likely cause of the mistake in recording. The name may have been written with a G instead of the H in Harder. Sure enough when she checked this she found my father had been registered as David Garners but all the stats matched my father's. She now had all the information in hand.

She said, "Your father was registered as David Garders, your mother was

Helena Toews. Your father died in Hospital #1 on Dec 13, 1926 at 23:30 of tuberculosis." This was news to me because my Grandfather's register showed my Father's death as being Dec. 7. I then requested a death certificate and went through the application procedure again.



But there was other information too. The records showed that Mother had lived in the Immigrant's House on Dzirnavu Street. She had later been moved to Liepajas Street, which was on the other side of the river. Both houses were some distance from the hospitals and also the docks where Cornie worked. We drove along both streets where Mother lived, they are each about a kilometer long but we found no one who could identify the building at one time known as the Immigrant's House.

Hospital #1 is an architecturally beautiful building and is still in use. Hospital #3 where I was born was demolished and rebuilt on the same site in the 1950s.

After having spent five hours with us Ilma took us back to the hotel. I asked her what I owed her. She seemed to be at a loss as to what to charge. She had never done anything like this before. Finally she said two Lat an hour. This was the equivalent of four dollars U.S. I handed her 20 Lat or \$40 U.S. She thanked us profusely. She made our day.

Tonight we celebrated by having a fine dinner in this ritzy hotel.

New in the MHSA Library & Archives

MHSA Library

- *Once Upon a Lifetime* by Patricia Williams. (CS16 WIL)
- *Our Family Boschman* (CS38 BOS)
- *Long Journey Home* by Mary Braun (CS38 BRA)
- *From Russia to Minnesota* by Henry J. Brown (Braun) (BX8143 BRA)
- *These are My People* by Harold S. Bender. (BR1 BEN)
- *Mia* by Mary M. Enns (BX8143 ENN)
- *Der Bote Indexes* Vol 1-4
- *Jubilaumschrift* by Peter Wiens & Peter Klassen (BX 8119 WIE)
- *Dorf Friesensruh* by Ben Hoepfner (BX8118 MAN HOE)
- *Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve* (F1070 HAG HAG)
- *Mennonite Homesteaders ...* by Leonard Doell (F1070 HAG DOE)
- *Diary of David Harder, 1914-1918* by Jacob D. Harder (BX8143 HAR HAR)
- *C.N. Hiebert was my Father* by Esther Horch (BX 8143 HIE HOR)
- *Der Kerzenbischof* by Ernst Behrends (BX8143 BEH)
- *Mennonite Images* by Harry Loewen (BX8121 LOE)
- *Weichselhogen* by Erich Ratzlaff (BX8119 POL RAT)
- *Ein Vaterland Verloren* by John B. Toews (BX8121 TOE)
- *None but Saints* by James Urry (BX8119 RUS URR)
- *Immer Weiter Nach Osten* by Abram J. Loewen (BX8119 LOE)
- *Neuendorf in Bild und Wort* by Franz Thiessen (BX8119 NEU THI)
- *Aspects of Christian Integrity* by Alan P.F. Sell (BV4647 SEL)

- *A.H. Unruh* by H.P. Toews (BX8143 UNR TOE)
- Rosthern Junior College Yearbooks (1950s-1970s) (BX8103 RJC)
- MB Bible Institute Yearbooks (1940s-1960s) (BX8103 MBBI)
- Mennonite Collegiate Institute Yearbooks (1950s & 1960s) (BX8103 MCI)
- Bethel Bible Institute Yearbooks (1950s-1970s) (BX8103 BBI)

MHSA Archives

Mennonite Central Committee (Alberta) fonds. -- 1973-1997. -- 9 cm of textual material
Annual reports, correspondence and minutes regarding general MCC activities, plus specific documents regarding Peace & Social Concerns, Material Aid, and Self Help activities. Accession 2002.005

Alberta Mennonite Youth Organization fonds. -- 1974-1984. -- 23 cm of textual material
Records related to preparation and execution of Songfest, workshops, sports events, and newsletters, as well as constitution, minutes and correspondence. Accession 2002.006

Molotschna Colony Archives fonds. -- 1835. -- 1 microfilm reel, 16 mm
1835 Census of Molotschna Settlement, South Russia
Accession 2002.021

Bethel Mennonite Church (Winnipeg, Manitoba) fonds. -- 1950s. -- 2 cm of textual records
Biographical sketches of missionaries in various geographic settings. All were commissioned through the General Conference Commission on Overseas Missions, which was responsible for efforts on behalf of Canadian and American members at that time. Accession 2003.002

Springridge Mennonite Church (Pincher Creek) fonds. -- 1931-1992. -- 15 cm of textual records
Minutes and bulletins.

Accession 2002.012

C. Blake Friesen fonds. -- 1974-2002; (predominant 1999-2001). -- 24 cm of textual records

Correspondence and minutes related to Friesen's interest in Calgary Mennonite societies as well as reports, manuals, and correspondence related to his service with the Mennonite Foundation. Accession 2003.003

Henry D. Goerzen fonds. -- 1985-2001. -- 9 cm of textual records. -- photographs

Correspondence, minutes and research notes used to write the history of the Mennonite Central Committee (Alberta), and a history book on Namaka.

Accession 2002.23

Paul H. Heidebrecht collection. --

1943. -- .5 cm of textual records Newsletters and listing from Conscientious Objector Camps of World War II in Canada.

Accession 2003.005

Herman Thiessen fonds. -- 29

microfilm reels, 35 mm

Genealogical correspondence and various materials Thiessen collected while compiling his family history books. Includes card files with a *SuchIndex* which apparently includes all Mennonites he found who were born before 1820 or were baptized before 1840. Correspondence added by Herman Schirmacher.

Accession 2003.01

1906 Census of Canada – available and online

After a lengthy lobbying effort and court action against Statistics Canada initiated by a lawyer from the Alberta Family Histories Society, Statistics Canada released the records of the 1906 Census of Canada (conducted in today's Alberta, Saskatchewan & Manitoba) to the National Archives of Canada in

early February 2003. Statistics Canada's position was that the information was to be kept confidentially sealed forever

The AFHS successfully argued that no such privacy promise was made at that time. Not only did the data become available in the National Archives in Ottawa, but in microfilm copies across the country, and online in about 22,000 web images.

Within hours family historians were celebrating across the country by looking at handwritten record images that were almost 100 years old – including ones for many Mennonites who settled in the Prairies.

MHSA's Judith Rempel also manages the AFHS website and developed an online transcription project design that was online within 24 hours of the National Archives announcement. Now, just over 3 months later, almost 15% of the census has already been transcribed – information about 127,000 Canadians who lived in the Prairies at that time – many who were Mennonite.

To locate information about your family in 1906, go to: www.afhs.ab.ca/data/census/1906 and select the correct Census District and then Census Subdistrict to locate the image and transcribed records.

Information for Didsbury, Gretna, Winkler, Altona, Swift Current, Hague/Osler have already been transcribed. If your family information has not yet been transcribed, join in the volunteer effort. Transcription templates, geographic aids, and a search engine are found at the above website.

Join the MHSA online discussion group

To **subscribe**, send a message to CAN-MHSA-L-request@rootsweb.com with NOTHING in the subject line, and with

NOTHING in the body of the note except ONE WORD: **subscribe**

After that, messages sent to the list <CAN-MHSA-L@rootsweb.com> will be resent to all members of the list.

To **unsubscribe**, send a message to CAN-MHSA-L-request@rootsweb.com with NOTHING in the subject line, and with NOTHING in the body of the note except ONE WORD: **unsubscribe**

JOIN US IN LA CRETE

MHSA Annual Fall Convention

to be held in La Crete, Alberta
on September 27, 2003.

In Pioneer Village

Agenda:

Pioneering stories
Church and School Development
Isolation and Life in the North
"From Rags to Riches"

Where we were – Where we are
How We Got There

Meet our fellow Mennonites in the far north

Travel by bus

\$110

Return Trip

Hosted in family homes or motel

Reserve now. See Insert

MHSA Books for Sale

- *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

Neukirch Mennonite Church (Chinook) fonds

The congregational *fonds* at the MHSA include only a few, but important items from the time span of 1928-1945. Among the documents are these interesting minutes from the founding of the congregation, translated here by Helen (Pauls Friesen). The *fonds* also includes other minutes, a financial accounts book, correspondence, a church membership register and family group sheets (Accession 2002.013)

Protokoll No I CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING Naco, Alberta - March 14, 1928

Church Council Meeting of the members of the Mennonite General Conference of Chinook, Cereal, Naco, Sedalia and New Brigden, Alberta

There were thirty three (33) members present.

1. Opening by Reverend W.G. Martens, Chinook, with Nehemiah 4; 13 and prayer
2. Election of Chairman and Secretary - H. Janzen and G. Harder

Order of the Day

3. Organization (in whole or partly)
Complete organization locally under the supervision of Elder Jacob B. Wiens of Herschel, Saskatchewan.

- a. Name of the congregation, new church name.
Church Congregation of Alberta.*
- b. Election of a leading minister for DNKMKG
Candidates: W.G. Martens, H. Janzen, C Penner, D.B. Wiens
As leading minister of the DNKMKG, the Rev. W.G. Martens of Chinook, Alberta.
- c. Church book recorder, church secretary, bookkeeper
Candidates: J. Fast, G. Harder, D.B. Wiens
Elected was J. Fast as bookkeeper of the NKMKG Alta with 17 votes
- d. Selection of a minister.
Candidates: (votes)
G. Harder (24) Peter Regehr. (14)
Johann Schmidt (11) G. G. Bergen (8)
David Regehr (8) H. Dick (4)
Peter Kroeker (4) David Boese (4)

The selection of the minister will take place on March 19, 1928 at the home of Brother Heidebrecht

- e. Selection of deacons
Candidates (votes):
Sedalia - Gerhard Johann Bergen (5)
Naco - Peter Martens (3)
Chinook: G.H. Bergen (6)
Tobias Schmidt (3)
- f. Election of a Song leader The song leaders of Russia shall continue with their work, namely, namely G. Schmidt and H. Voth
- g. Church Council
The Church Council consists of the 4 deacons and 2 members of the candidates

- h. Cemetery, Graveyard Affairs
The matter has been handed over to Brother W.G. Martens; he will take the necessary steps.

Items from the Floor

How does the congregation feel about the work of Brother Gerh.. Huebert as a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church (MBG)?

We will cordially invite him to continue with his work.

Naco, Alberta , March 14, 1928
Chairman: H. Janzen
Secretary C.J. Harder

* The name was *Neukirch*, named after the home community in Molotschna of one of the members

