



Preserve
the Past
for the
Future

Newsletter

Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Volume VII, No. 1

May 2004

Roman (Hermann) Peter Niebuhr

History of my life

By Roman & Vladimir Niebuhr

In 2003, Judith Rempel had an opportunity to send an e-mail to Gundolf, Niebuhr, the archivist of the Fernheim Colony Archives in Paraguay. A brief exchange of family history revealed a blood relationship and eventually an introduction to Vladimir (in Russia), also related, who wrote the following story about his family. This is the first story in our Newsletter about the survival of Mennonites who didn't leave Russia.

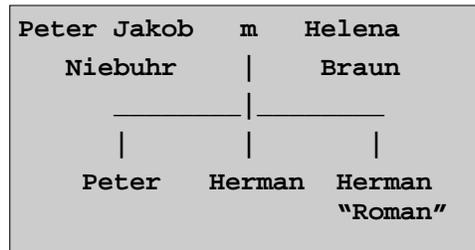
I was born in Chortitza, near to Zaporozhye, the big city in Ukraine, on July, 22, 1935. My father - Niebuhr Peter Jakob, who has been born on December, 23, 1902 and my mother Helena (Abram) Niebuhr (nee Braun), born in 1901; also natives of Chortitza.

I know all data on my pre-war childhood from words of the my father, which he told to me about it already after War.

I was the third son in our family. The grown-up from my

brothers was Peter, as I assume, he was on 10-11 of years more senior than me. My second brother was Hermann, but he has died, as I assume, in 1935, till my birth. Father spoke me, that at first my parents given me named Hermann, but then (I do not know precisely when, but I assume, that it was after returning Red Army to Chortitza in 1943-44) my relatives began to name me Roman because at that time in the Soviet society everything, that anyhow reminded of Germany, caused hostility, irritation, and, at times, hatred. This name "Roman" also is specified in my "The Certificate on a Birth," which was restored after war.

I was born and lived before War in the house of my grandfather, the father of my mother Abram Peter Braun.



chortitza.html). There is an index C45 appropriated to it on this map. (Very big thanks to Willi).

The preceding five paragraphs are printed in the exact sentence structure used by Roman and Vladimir. I left them as is, in order to illustrate how difficult it can be to communicate in a second language when using computer translation software. The rest of the article is lightly edited for ease of reading and improved clarity. I had to consult about the meaning of several literally translated words and phrases. (ed)



In this photo - my mother Helena Braun-Niebuhr and my senior brothers Peter and Herman. I think, that the photo is made in 1933-35.

I managed to recollect and find this house on a schematic map of Chortitza, available on a website "Chortitza" created by Willi Vogt in Germany, (<http://wavogt.bei.t-online.de/Chortitza/>

chortitza.html). There is an index C45 appropriated to it on this map. (Very big thanks to Willi).

The preceding five paragraphs are printed in the exact sentence structure used by Roman and Vladimir. I left them as is, in order to illustrate how difficult it can be to communicate in a second language when using computer translation software. The rest of the article is lightly edited for ease of reading and improved clarity. I had to consult about the meaning of several literally translated words and phrases. (ed)

I do not remember much about my pre-war childhood. I remember well, that my mother played the piano very well, and we had the piano in our house. She had learned to play, taught

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MHSA Fall Workshop

First Mennonite Church,
Calgary

Tenatively: October 2, 2004

Details to follow & on MHSA website

Editorial

By *Diedrich P. Neufeld*

This issue features a story of survival within Russia, from which many thousands fled. We have earlier shared stories of the hardships encountered before leaving, of the difficult trip and difficulties of resettlement. This Niebuhr family is now in relatively comfortable circumstances

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apparently, within the country many Mennonites mourned and scorned.

Also featured is Ted Regehr's reply to my query, What is it like to write the story of a Mennonite conference. His book, "Faith, Life and Witness in the Northwest" is reviewed favorably in this issue. Two other books are reviewed telling family stories which add further detail to the growing collection. Many of the first generation refugees from the Stalin era were reluctant to revisit their experiences but descendants appear to be eager to learn of and inform future generations.

It has been interesting to get to know Valerie who so very recently "came home" to her Mennonite roots. Her experience

appears to be somewhat unique since the drift appears to be in the other direction.

Not unlike Valerie's story, however, is the thought provoking presentation by Dave Pankratz. He too, wants his children to know 'whence they came'. Both of these folk illustrate that there is a distinct difference between Mennonite church affiliation and Mennonite culture. That topic bears further discussion and I would encourage readers to reflect and share their understanding of what it means. This may well be a sensitive subject as the increase in Mennonite church membership falls behind the rate of population growth. History however, records what was rather than what we might think should be. ❖

Dear Editor:

I wish, herewith, to state that I should not have mentioned the name of the Janzen family in my article "Does Anyone Care?" which appeared in the October 2003 issue. In no way did I wish to discredit any member of that family. My only concern was to illustrate from the trying experiences of the Wiens family how anguishing it was for them to try to establish a family connection broken so long ago.

My sincere apologies, Peter Penner

Chairman's Corner

By *Colin P. Neufeldt*

The MHSA has gone through a "growth spurt" this past year. As is common with growth spurts some maturation has taken place: we have experienced the satisfaction of becoming a more widely recognized and respected institution. At the same time, we have also experienced growing pains - we are undertaking new projects with limited funds and resources. So what has happened this past year? Let me list a few highlights:

- **Accreditation:** This past year MHSA received accreditation from the Archives Society of Alberta (ASA). This designation means that we are now recognized provincially as an archive and library. Obtaining this designation was no mean feat, as the MHSA was required to demonstrate on a number of occasions that it met or exceeded the very high standards of ASA. What is so important about obtaining this designation is that the MHSA is now eligible to apply for various provincial and federal grants that are only available to accredited archives.
- **Funding:** MHSA has also received various grants this past year from the Province of Alberta and the Archives Society of Alberta for various projects and building expenses. We now have a better idea of how to apply for and obtain these

grants. While these grants are very important financially to MHSA, we still depend largely upon the generous donations from our members and supporters in order to continue on with our important work of preserving and interpreting the history of the Mennonite community in Alberta.

- **New Facilities:** As many of you already know, the MHSA is moving into new space. We will still be located in the same MCC building where we are presently located, but we are moving into a much larger area. I must say that our Facilities committee and volunteers have been putting in long hours and much overtime to ensure that our new facilities will meet our societies needs for years to come.
- **The Work of Our Volunteers:** Our organization could not exist without its volunteers. Once again I must highlight the Herculean efforts of our volunteers from the Calgary area. Not only have they kept the archives in operation (even during the current construction phase), but they have also continued to hold genealogy group meetings, and have performed much of the construction work for our new space. Their tireless efforts have kept our archives in operation and they are much appreciated. At the recent meetings in Edmonton we honoured founding member and active volunteer, Irene Klassen of Calgary, with a life membership.

The MHSA has matured this past year. As a result it is better able to take on new challenges and meet the mandate of our society: to research, discuss, preserve and write about Alberta Mennonite history. ❖

(Continued from page 1)

by my father. I remember my grand father, Abram Braun, who had a big workbench. I do not remember grandfather himself. One of my brightest memories is of smoking sausages and hams in which my father was engaged. I remember, that in our yard there was the pigsty, I think that the smoke house was situated in our kitchen garden. It consisted of a hole for a

fire, a trench - flue and big racks for hanging the products to be smoked.

Before the war my father, Peter Jakob worked in Zaporozhye in the big steel factory; "Zaporozhsteel". Later in the War, during the rapid advance of the German armies towards

Zaporozhye, he took part in dismantling and the evacuation of factory equipment to the East. Our family was to be evacuated with last *echelons* (apparently a prison ship) but, because of the rapid advance of the German armies, the railway communication with the Central Russia had been interrupted. So our evacuation did not take place.

I remember how parts of the German army entered into Chortitza. I remember that it was accompanied by gun-fire, but no serious destruction of Chortitza took place. I remember that German soldiers entering our village, did not show any special animosities, not only to the population, but also to the captured and wounded Red Army soldiers. I remember how they rendered them medical aid and fed them.

After leaving of German army to parts farther East, Gestapo have come to Chortitza. My father at once was arrested, accused of helping the Bolsheviks to evacuate the factory. He was sent to prison in Dnepropetrovsk (where he was down to returning in city of parts of Red Army in 1943). All this time to the end of summer, 1943 we together with my mother and my older brother Peter, still lived in Chortitza, in my grandfather Abram Brown's house. At this time my aunt, Sara (Jakob) Heese (my father's sister) lived in Chortitza too. In the summer of 1942 my brother Peter drowned in the Dniepr and I witnessed it. He was about 18 years age then, and, as was then fashionable, he jumped into the water from high rocks on the small Bajda island. During one of the jumps he



Photo, taken in 1948, after the marriage of my father on Praskovja Kositskaya, in the center I am, on the right is my father Peter Ja-

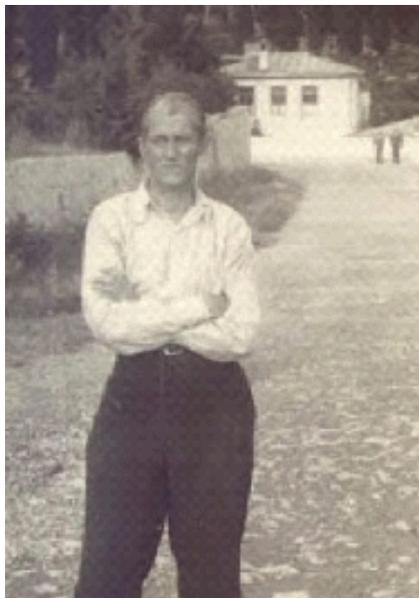
probably hit his head on a stone and did not come up to the surface. Later, when his body was recovered on the shore, he had a big bruise on his temple.

When the Red Army counterattacked, the retreating German armies ordered all German inhabitants to move the West. I remember, that we followed the German army for a while with my aunt Sara, but then the Red army war operations overtook us. We began to return to our native land-Chortitza. After arriving in Chortitza the Soviet authorities accused my mother and my aunt of treason. In October, 1943 they were banished to Siberia, in the town Chernogorsk, Krasnoyarsk region. They sent me to a children's home in the Zaporozhye region.

Based on my father's stories, he was shipped in an *echelon* to a prison in Germany, from Dnepropetrovsk. Enroute the *echelon* was destroyed by bombs from the air. The advancing Red Army rescued the surviving prisoners and my father was then called into the Red Army. However after a while he was demobilized because of the tuberculosis found out in him, which he had contracted in prison.

After demobilization my father began to search for his family. He found out that his wife was banished to Siberia, and his son to a children's home. He started to appeal for Helena's release. In 1946 my father found me and took me from the children's home. That year we received notice from Moscow about the release of my mother from exile and, simultaneously, the message from Chernogorsk about her death. My aunt Sara (Jakob) Heese continued to be in exile in Chernogorsk and at age 50 was she allowed to move to a residence in the settlement of Bagan in the Novosibirsk region. She was prohibited to depart to Central Russia and Ukraine. I received news from her prior to the beginning of her 60th year, but her precise further destiny is not known to me.

In 1948 my father married again one Kositskaya Praskovja Petrovna (1921 - 1980) who was a school teacher. On June, 25, 1949 they had a daughter, my step-sister, Lyudmila who now lives on the native land in Zaporozhye, several kilometers from Chortitza. In the summer of 1972 she was married to Horunzhaja Nikolay Aleksandrovich who also was born in 1949, and uses her surname - Horunzhaja Lyudmila Petrovna. She is an engineer-architect. They now have two adult sons - Jury Nikolaivich who has been born in 1973 and Alexander Nikolaivich, born in 1976. Both received an education and are married. Jury - the engineer-electrician, is engaged in designing and programming of microchips. Alexander - is a highly qualified specialist in welding nonferrous metals. My son Vladimir keeps up correspondence on e-mail with brother Jury and through him with



This is one of his last photos taken before my father's death on March, 6,

all their family.

After the war my father worked in electric power association "Dniepr Power". His health has been strongly undermined by tuberculosis. There was no effective means of treatment of this illness in those days. In July, 1951 he went for treatment to Crimea. Tuberculosis took him, the day after Stalin's death. At the time of his death, I had already left school and was trained in technical college, receiving a certificate of the builder. My sister was then only four years of age.

In 1955 I finished technical college in Zaporozhye, having received the diploma of the builder and having been directed here, to Siberia, as the construction specialist, for the construction of Bratsk hydroelectric power station. At the time, this was the biggest Russian engineering firm. This firm existed from 1954 to 1991 and has constructed during that time, Bratsk and Ust-Ilimsk hydroelectric power stations with a capacity of more than 4,5 million kilowatt. It also built the world's largest, for those times, an aluminum factory in Bratsk and timber industry complexes in Bratsk and Ust-Ilimsk (a cardboard, cellulose, plywood, timber) and many other small industrial enterprises and sources of power throughout Siberia.

Simultaneously on an empty site in the Siberian taiga, for 20-30 years, has been constructed the city of Bratsk which today is home to and provides work for about 280,000 inhabitants. Also the city of Ust-Ilimsk which is 250 km to the north from Bratsk.

In 1956 in Bratsk I married Brjukhanova Zinaida Grigorievna.

She was born on October, 25, 1931 in village Uzhur of Krasnoyarsk region. Her parents were Brjukhanov Grigory Ivanovich (1902-1990) and Brjkhahova Eugeny Avgustinova (1900-1986).

They arrived early in the twentieth century to develop the newly identified fertile lands in Siberia. My wife's father was born of peasant immigrants from the Krush region. Her mother's parents are assumed to be Polish noblemen. My son intends to research this matter in further detail.

My wife studied in the Siberian Tomsk-city in a Polytechnical Institute and received the diploma of the engineer-builder in 1955. She has been 'directed' to Bratsk on 'distribution' too. The 'distribution' system for specialists, who graduated from educational institutions, "on distribution" existed in the USSR as part of a planned economy. Specialists were required to work for three years in their specialty and in the place where they were directed after the completion of study. Then s/he could choose their place of work independently. In most cases workplaces offered to specialists "on distribution" were quite satisfactory. After the end of the obligatory three-year term many specialists continued to work in the area where they had been directed. My wife and I started to help build the Bratsk-city in 1955, continued into the early 90's, when we retired on pension.

Our only son Vladimir was born on June, 9, 1958 in Bratsk. After leaving school he studied in the big Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk in the Polytechnical



In this photo (taken in 2003), is my son Vladimir with his wife Natalia.

financial specialist.

On January, 13, 1986 Vladimir and Natalia's daughter, Maria was born. She has left school in the last year and continued to study in Krasnoyarsk. She is a student of Krasnoyarsk Architectural-Building Academy. Upon completing studies she should become an engineer-architect.



I with my wife and Maria on the day Maria finished school.

I and my wife are now pensioners. We live together with our son and his family. We spend summers in a country small house, which we know as a "dacha".

Often we go to Krasnoyarsk where many of my wife's relatives and my son's wife live. ❖

Call for Readers

Available in the MHSA Bookstore

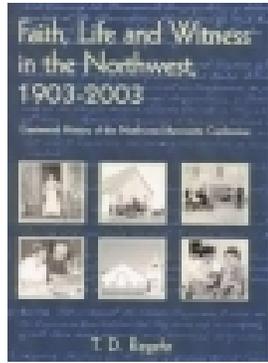
- Mennonites in Canada I, II, & III
- Mennonite Historical Atlas, 2nd ed.
- Molotschna Historical Atlas
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- Shepherds, Servants and Prophets
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A complete list can be found on our website. Copies available for purchase at all MHSA events. Look for our booth at the MCC Sale in Coaldale this summer.

Historical Reflections

By Theodore D. Regehr, History Professor emeritus

Presentation to Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan Workshop, 7 February 2004



Historians face some interesting challenges. I have been asked to reflect on some of these, as they pertain to the writing of the History of the Northwest Mennonite Conference.

Historians can never tell the whole story of anything. The available information and documentation is incomplete, and only what is deemed important in the available documentation gets into the written history. Check the index and that fact becomes painfully obvious. Check, for example, the references to the life and work of Amos Bauman, the first Bishop of what was then the

Alberta Mennonite Conference. The available information about Bishop Bauman is quite limited, and what there is relates mainly to his removal from office after he published two controversial articles. The incident was obviously important in the history of the Alberta conference, but the image of Bishop Bauman which emerges may be too negative. Family members and close friends may have had a different but undocumented view. So a quite negative interpretation is offered in the book. By contrast, the available records provide very positive information about Willis Yoder, an exceptionally dedicated northern mission worker. Little is said about his human imperfections, so he may be portrayed too positively. But what should a historian do? I relied on the information available, and interpreted it with reference to its importance in the history of the conference.

Most sources available to historians have serious limitations.

Minute books and official correspondence provided much information. But Paul Voegtlin, a member of the History Committee and the person who wrote many of those minutes expressed concern that the official minutes did not adequately document what really made the conference work. The personal inter-relationships of various leaders, and the practical ways in which they dealt with difficult problems do not find adequate expression in a formal minute of the official action taken. The fact that members of the History Committee had very extensive conference experience certainly helped, but it is difficult to capture the spirit and ambience of times and places outside of the historian's personal experience.

There are also questions regarding the use of specific sources. It was my privilege, early on, to have a lengthy conversation with Paul Burkholder, another northern missions pioneer. He spoke very openly and candidly about both the joys and some of the disappointments he and Doris

had experienced in their work. I wrote up what he told me, but when reading my material he expressed some uneasiness. The facts were reported accurately, but some of the nuances seemed problematic. Left unchanged, they might create ill feelings or result in misunderstandings and reopen old wounds and damage some restored relationships. We had some very interesting discussions, which resulted in revisions in which the main story was retained but without some of the heat, pain and harshness which had surfaced in the original interview and in early drafts of the manuscript. I should perhaps add here, that it is my practice when conducting interviews to show my notes or the write-up of the interview to the person involved. That provides opportunity to correct factual errors, and also to ensure that what is written reflects what the person interviewed wanted to say.

There are, however, some limits. It has always been my goal, when discussing controversial issues, to ensure that the position of all participants is explained, and that all are given voice insofar as the available evidence makes that possible. That proved particularly difficult in the discussion of the recent conference debates regarding church membership for non-celibate homosexuals and, in consequence, the decision of the Northwest Mennonite Conference to decline membership in Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Alberta. There were some who were reluctant to have all views presented regarding that

There is only limited information regarding some aspects of the history of the Northwest Mennonite Conference, but very extensive documentation related to other issues. That, not surprisingly, often means that there is far more information when and where problems arise than in more tranquil situations.

difficult and painful chapter in the history of the conference. I tried to ensure that the history would include not only official positions taken, but also the views and feelings of those whose position was not the one adopted by the conference.

There is only limited information regarding some aspects of the history of the Northwest Mennonite Conference, but very extensive documentation related to other issues. That, not surprisingly, often means that there is far more information when and where problems arise than in more tranquil situations. Two aspects of Northwest Mennonite Conference history which fit this pattern relate to church planting initiatives and to efforts to assist and support Hispanic Christians. In both cases there were cultural as well as personal difficulties and these are documented in the available archival material in

considerably greater detail than problems in the other congregations. A very candid discussion of the various irritants threatened to reopen old wounds, but ignoring the problems also seemed inappropriate. Finding a balance which was both fair and honest was difficult.

That brings me to a more basic question or problem. A very important motive in writing religious history is the glorification of God by telling the stories of His children. But, unfortunately, churches and conferences are not without spot or wrinkle. They are human institutions, subject to human frailties and imperfections. Some religious writing documents only those things which, in the author's view, glorified God. I have, at various times, encountered critics who suggested that some things, even though they happened and are reported accurately, should not be included in a church or conference history. It is true that some authors find particular pleasure in raking up all kinds of muck. But a balanced history, like the Biblical record of the great but still fallible heroes of the faith, should seek to deal as honestly as possible with what was good, and also what was less than perfect, in the story of God's people. The true glory of the Gospel is not that it makes believers and their institutions perfect, but that it shows the way to forgiveness and reconciliation for sinners.

Writing the history of a Mennonite Conference about which I knew very little was a privilege. In the course of my work I encountered many good people. I am particularly indebted to members of the Commission which invited me to write the history, and then provide strong and unwavering support. They gave me free reign to follow the evidence, but also provided me with much useful information and with many insights which I could not have gained from the documents alone. ❖

The Trip to Gretna

By Val Williams

Not every one appreciates a Mennonite ancestry. Valerie does now, but was totally oblivious of her family connections until April 2003. "My father left home at age 13 following disagreements with his step father. He never returned and never once mentioned the connection to 'a Mennonite religion' of his parental home or to his own family." He apparently went to his grave 10 years ago without resolving his disagreements.



Valerie is an avid internet-user and had an incidental encounter with

the MHSA website. The subsequent invitation to attend a genealogy meeting looked interesting to her. So she came to her first, of many subsequent, meetings. Here she met Frieda Toews and through a quick enquiry, acknowledging Valerie's maiden name as Toews, discovered her first connection to a cousin. Since then she has discovered more cousins than you would normally bother to count. Not so with Valerie however, she can now name first, second, and third cousins by the dozens and does so whenever any one lends her an ear.

She gets so excited every time a new cousin appears in her intensive search for relatives. Not long ago, while waiting at the hairdressers, she engaged another customer in conversation and to her surprise met Stan Toews another cousin.

The following travelogue is a condensed version of her trip into Mennonite country. (ed)

My cousin, Frieda Toews, and I went to Gretna, MB on the August long weekend in 2003!

We had just met at the MHSA archives in April of 2003, thanks to Judith Rempel's invitation. Upon her suggestion I accessed GM4 and found that Judith and I are 3rd cousins on her maternal side—the Hiebert's. Later I discovered another connection on the Toews side. Frieda and I are also 2nd cousins. In July, I had invited her to a picnic to introduce her to some of my 1st cousins and from there the idea of visiting Manitoba was born.

We left Calgary at 5:00 am Friday and we were in Swift Current at

10:30am. Our first destination was Wymark, where Frieda thought her grandmother, Katherina (Giesbrecht) Toews, was buried. A roadside map showed a Mennonite Village, so we dropped in. John Rempel and a few volunteers were in the village museum. John was making stairs for an old church that was in excellent condition and recently was moved to the village. The pulpit is a replica of the old style that Mennonites used in Russia. After chatting with the volunteers, John escorted us into the traditional house. He searched through a few of their history books looking for Toews, finding one name, but not known to be related to us..

Their old-style house was connected to the barn. Frieda and I introduced ourselves and our mission: finding Frieda's grandma's grave and searching out my unknown Toews family. The volunteers invited us to lunch and we had potluck. We brought in our sandwiches, peaches and lots of talk...family names and history. They mentioned a Klippenstein reunion held the previous week. So I mentioned my recently discovered Klippenstein relatives. They assured me that at 1pm Linda Klippenstein would show up and sure enough she did. She too is related, as is her cousin Dick Klippenstein in Calgary. We exchanged e- email addresses. She would be my 5th cousin.

Then we headed south to Wymark in search of the grave. One volunteer drew a map for Frieda. We drove through Wymark's three streets and six avenues and found ourselves out of town. There were lots of

fields, so we consulted one of the local people who directed us to the cemetery. We found Johan T. Loepky b 29 Sep 1872, no death date; and Anna Loepky May 14, 1877 - Jul 4 1957. Johan is the son of Abraham Loepky and his second wife Anna (nee Toews). This led to the discovery in the 1906 Census of Canada for Altona, Manitoba, five children: Abram, Margaretha, Anna, Peter, and Johann who were not recorded in GRANDMA IV. Frieda took pictures of the gravestones and I frantically wrote down names. It was so much fun! Between the cattle just across the fence and us, we had everything under control.

We didn't find Katherina's grave. So we ventured on just south of Wymark past the seed storage on the left, past an empty house and then we were at the Schantzenberg Cemetery. Time was fleeting so we checked names but didn't find Frieda's grandmother.

I asked Abe if he knew his genealogy and he shook his head "no, I have no relatives". I asked him his father's name; "Abe", he answered. I asked for his grandfather's name, "Abe". Then Kathy asked him what his grandson's name was, "Abe". More laughter!

Off we went to Wawota, SK where Bertha, Frieda's sister and Keith live on a farm, (another 2nd cousin, how exciting). We stayed the night and they treated me to my first Mennonite

supper, consisting of deer sausage and perogies, mushrooms and fresh green beans from their garden. What a taste delight. We had a good visit that evening. Bertha reminded me of my own Aunt Bertha, I guess it is that Toews chin.

The next morning we were Manitoba bound. At Rosetown I met Kathy and Abe E. Kehler, another one of Frieda's sisters and brother-in-law. All of us girls got right into the family information. I asked Abe if he knew his genealogy and he shook his head "no, I have no relatives". I asked him his father's name; "Abe", he answered. I asked for his grandfather's name, "Abe". Then Kathy asked him what his grandson's name was, "Abe". More laughter! We had just lost an hour of our precious time and were nearing the time we promised to meet Frieda's father.

Frieda's dad, Jacob R. Toews, is my first cousin once removed. He lives on the family farm where she grew up and went to school. She shared her extensive knowledge of the area. Jacob is 94 years young and a sweetheart. I just gave him a big hug and a kiss on the cheek and he didn't know what to do; I think he was surprised.

I showed him a mystery picture, one from my father's collection and asked Jacob R, "who could this be. Do you know him"? He replied in his very quiet voice and we asked him to repeat it. "That is my Uncle Jacob, the son of Jacob D. Toews." Uncle Jacob was distinct since he was missing the lower half of his arm. Uncle Jacob had lost it when he demonstrated to his boys how to change a belt. His left arm got caught in the machinery. Jacob R. started shaking his head and said, "the boys already knew how to do that".

We had *faspa*, another new experience and got acquainted for the next few hours. So I gave Jacob R. another big hug and a kiss on the cheek

on our way out. "If you don't like the hugs and kisses you will have to tell me." Frieda just about died laughing since no one in Grandpa's whole life had done that before, not even his daughters.

We were laughing every time we looked at each other. Some of the Jacob Toews had nick-names as the only way they could keep them straight. Sharp Toews and Scotch tape Toews, whose eyelids, unfortunately, were so long that he used to scotch tape them up so he could see. I originally thought they were trying to fool me, but apparently that was not the case.

Back on the road to check out more places. We stopped in at Blumenhof, toured the town and the graveyard before leaving for Gretna and on to another of Frieda's sisters Helen and John C. Braun. We stayed two nights. The next day Gerhard "George" Toews' (Jacob R's brother) family was getting together for family reunion. Helen had been invited!

Helen in turn invited us so we went to the reunion. There I met the men, Peter, Bill, Abe, John, Ben and Ed and women, Annie, Mary, Marj and Justina. I just kept asking how I was related and they were all 2nd cousins. I was overwhelmed. WOW. The youngest was about my age. I didn't get to meet most of the children and grandchildren but enough to overwhelm me.

Another *faspa* with Jacob R., this time he pulled out a picture of his brother's family when they were younger. He had 11 of the 15 children's birth dates and names for me. What a gift! Helen was with us at the time and asked why some of his children had one name and some had two. His answer was "should that matter to you now."

That night we found Jacob J. Toews (1875) grave. I was beginning to know rural sections by now and that I was becoming "territorial". We also met Jack Toews, another 2nd cousin who lived just down the street. His father is Peter (b 1905) son of Johan Toews (b 1877) son of Jacob D. Jacob J. remembered my Uncle Ed. They had nick-named him "Killer" Toews in honour of his time in army uniform. I was exhausted and overwhelmed. I had thought I would meet Frieda's sisters and Father. What a bonus; my whole world seemed to expand in front of me.

I found out that two Jacob Toews' men married two Hiebert girls and two Toews brothers married two Penner sisters. The generation before, two Toews and one Loepky, all cousins, married 3 Giesbrecht girls. I guess you could say, it's all in the family.

Tuesday, on our way home we tried again at Wymark and found the

Katharina (Giesbrecht) Toews' grave with help from a local lady who asked us if we had been at the Fehr reunion. I said "no but I do have the Fehr name in my family tree".

Frieda and I talked the whole way to Manitoba and back again, my voice began to give way by now. It was a great way to get to know each other. So many years had passed us by but I felt before meeting anyone, that somehow I was going home. When I met my cousins it was as if I had known them all my life, we just hadn't seen each other for a while.

Thanks to Frieda's invitation and the willingness of her family to accept me in their homes and to their hearts, I was able to relive their stories and to share a glimpse of our common history. I came to understand that each and every one of us has so much in common, the colour of our eyes or our mannerisms; we are all relatives. The Mennonite culture has brought many of the Toews families through difficult times but faith, culture and kindness have brought them through everything. It makes me proud to be able to share what I have so very recently experienced. ❖

Why I do Genealogy and Family History

By Dave Pankratz, Genealogy Group Leader

This article is based on a presentation made to the Mennonite Genealogy Group in February of this year. The Genealogy Group meets the third Saturday of each month in the MHSA library and archive in Calgary.

Interest in genealogy and family history is as old as recorded time. The Old Testament traces the lineage of Adam and Eve, pyramids record the history of the pharaohs, while steles and crumbling walls tell tales of other ancient rulers. The reasons for the interest in genealogy and family history were many and varied. The Bible used genealogy, in part, to show the fulfillment of prophecy; some of the pyramids and steles told tales of

greatness; others of heroism or wisdom.

A common reason for the interest in genealogy today is the hope that it will reveal a connection to nobility, fame, or fortune, the idea being that somehow the exploits or accomplishments of our forefathers also apply to us.

My own interest in



genealogy and family history grew out of an interest in Mennonite values, or more precisely an interest in trying to help my grown daughters understand the origin of some of their most basic values. A value is an enduring belief that it is better to be or behave one way than another. Values guide us in our day to day activities, help us resolve conflicts and aid us in decision making.

The way we see the world and the values we hold are determined in large measure by when and where we live and by our experiences. I grew up in a Mennonite home in Mennonite communities and in the process learned and accepted many basic Mennonite values. Consciously, or sub-consciously, I passed on some of these values to my children.

My children did not have a Mennonite upbringing and they did not know very much about Mennonites when they were growing up, even though through me it is part of who they are. Consequently they did not always understand why they sometimes behaved and thought differently than the people around them. I thought if I gave my daughters a glimpse of Mennonite life, a flavour of how Mennonites see the world, they would learn to understand themselves a little better. Therefore at Christmas or whenever one of my daughters had a birthday I would send them copies of Mennonite short stories, translations of letters written by family members, and transcriptions of tapes and letters written by Mennonites for Mennonites. I was, however, mainly looking for short stories written by Mennonites that dealt with or reflected Mennonite values. I wanted the stories to be short because I usually only worked on this on Sundays and fictional because I thought that was what the girls would enjoy.

I did this for a number of years, sending them stories about the Mennonite view on pacifism, men/women relationships, sharing, and numerous other topics. I sent them a copy of a report written by one of the eight people I traveled to Russia with in 1998. It described life in the German-speaking villages we visited in Siberia. I translated my father's recollections of his life in Russia and my uncle's recollections of the 80 years he lived there, and I sent them excerpts from other unpublished Mennonite family histories.

I ran into a number of problems while preparing this material. First,

My interest in genealogy and family history grew out of an interest in Mennonite values, or more precisely an interest in trying to help my grown daughters understand the origin of some of their most basic values.

I feel good about my Mennonite identity and I want my children to know about their Mennonite heritage.

much of the material was written in German. Translating German to English is hard enough but it is even more difficult to explain the meaning of words for which there is no English equivalent.

Take the word *Geschwister* which means "all ones brothers and sisters." The closest word I know in English is "sibling," but sibling doesn't really convey the full meaning of the word *Geschwister*. *Geschwister* is warm and loving, it relates to family; "sibling" is clinical and cold by comparison. An analogy would be the difference in feeling between the phrase "mom and dad" and the phrase "sire and dame."

A further example is the word *Bluemchen* which means "little flowers," but "little flowers" does not evoke the same image or feelings as *Bluemchen*. I have spent considerable time over the last few years trying to translate a poem written by one of my mother's brothers. He wrote the poem shortly before he was killed by a falling tree while in a Soviet concentration camp. In the poem he says he does not expect to leave the camp alive and that his family will never see where he is buried or place *Bluemchen* on his grave. In this context "small flowers" does not do justice to the mood of the poem.

The second problem I encountered was even more difficult - I ran out of short stories. Some of the good stories I found did not deal with Mennonite values and others were written in Low German. Translating stories from Low German would have been too

onerous and taken far too long. Therefore I relied more and more on family histories originally written in German and translated by family members. The difficulty with these histories was that they had often been translated too literally, either because the translator did not have a good command of English or because the translator wanted to retain the writer's "voice." This made them less enjoyable to read.

From time to time I talked to my daughters about the stories I sent them and they invariably said they really enjoyed them – and I'm sure they did. But on one occasion one of my daughters said "You know what I enjoy most are the stories about our family" and she went on to say, "Sammy (my grandson who was about seven at the time) is asking 'where do I come from?'" She said stories about our family would help her answer Sammy's questions about his ancestry. This made me think I should be sending them something other than values-related stories. Instead I should go back as far as I could on both sides of my family – the Epps and Pankratzs, find out what I could about who they were as people, and put this information into context with when and where they lived.

I've been doing research for about a year now and don't know when I'll be ready to start writing, there is so much data and so much to learn. The University of Calgary has lots of good information, its library web page lists over 300 titles under the heading "Mennonites." But I have learned more from leads provided by Judith Rempel, our MHSA library and our Genealogy Group than I have from the university library. For example, at a Genealogy Group meeting last year

Tim Janzen shared his list of genealogical resources with us. The list consisted of more than thirteen pages packed with valuable information.

It occurred to me while writing my presentation that what Mennonites do, and sometimes do very well, is write family histories. I am beginning to wonder if family histories might be to Mennonites what fiction is to other cultures. Could writing family histories be the traditional way of telling stories and even of producing literature?

Involvement in the arts, including literature, has historically been discouraged by Mennonites. Peter Klassen, in an essay on Mennonites and culture wrote: "... there was a fairly strong conviction [among early Mennonite settlers] that *Kunst* (the fine arts) was largely under the control of the devil, and that serious interest in the arts was a sign of worldliness."¹ Family histories did not appear to fall into this category, even if judged solely by the sheer number to be found in Mennonite homes and on the

bookshelves of Mennonite libraries and archives. While many of the older family histories are not particularly well written there are some that have the beauty of style or thought that could be turned into literature. What they appear to need most is a talented editor and a gifted translator.

The family history I write will not be literature, that kind of writing is well beyond my ability. But I feel good about my Mennonite identity and I want my children to know about their Mennonite heritage. Interestingly enough, in the process of tracing my roots and writing my family history I will also be able to tell my daughters about the origin of their values because they will be reflected in the life stories of their ancestors. ❖

1. Klassen, Peter. 1974. "Mennonites and Culture: The *Saengerfest*," pp. 33-39 in "Harvest: Anthology of Mennonite Writing in Canada" edited by William De Fehr et al. Winnipeg, MB: Centennial Committee of the Mennonite Historical Society of Manitoba.

E-mail Facilitates Traditiona Exchanges Holidays in Russia

By Valdimir Niebuhr [Reproduced verbatim]

Dear Cousins!

Here in Russia, it is a very beautiful holiday. We celebrate it in 8 March. It's name "The Holiday of Spring or Women's Day". In this Day all courageous Mens congratulate theirs womans (wives, mothers, sisters, girlfriends, colleagues and other womans who are near with they) with Spring's coming, and all Mens tell theirs Woman about love to them I think, tht it's very right tradition, because I think that Women is the most beautiful creation of God (or of Nature, if it's pleasely for somebody). We, courageous Mens, must to love, to care and to protect our lovely and kind womens. And then they will to love us.

It's a good Russian tradition, and I think that you will live it. (Oh! We celebrate "The day of St. Valentine" - February 14 too! We like holidays here in Russia).

With love to you ... Vladimir

Raising Silkworms in Russia

Submitted by Judith Rempel, based on an interview with Tina (Rempel) Mannell of Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

Grandma had all the furniture removed from one room, and put up racks for silkworms. She had saved some cocoons from the previous year. At just the right time she put them on a sheet of paper on the kitchen window ledge facing south. Grandma knew exactly when to hatch the eggs. I used to go every day to watch them hatch.

At the back of her garden was a row of mulberry trees. We would pick the tiny first leaves to feed the silkworms. The worms grew pretty fast and then would spin themselves into cocoons.

It was Aunt Mary's job to wind up the silk thread. The big copper kettle standing on the wood-stove, was partly filled with water and heated, not to boiling. Aunt Mary dropped the cocoons into the hot water, waited a while, and then with a wooden spoon tried to catch a thread from each cocoon. Then she would wind the thread onto a spool.

MHSA News

MHSA Build out Continues

MHSA continues to function, albeit with some inconvenience, largely due to the determined efforts of the MCCA contractor and MHSA Archives Facility Committee. The archives are now housed in a small space adjacent to the construction of the new office tower and the second floor addition to the existing MCCA Thrift Store.

Despite all the efforts to keep

a relatively "dust free" condition, that small room is taking on a new colour. The plastic sheeting should minimize the impact on the archival records. The books will require individual attention before placing in the new space and shelves.

At the time of this writing, the drywall is installed, mudding finished and painting well underway. All of these tasks have been done by volunteers under the capable direction of volunteer Project Manager, Dave Hildebrand.

In addition to the volunteer work, MHSA has the challenge of fundraising about \$25,000 to offset the cost of securing the archival records, including climate control.

The finished product will very nicely house MHSA within a 1,500 sq. ft. space. This is divided up into:

- A reception, research, library, and office room
- A records processing room, which includes storage and sorting space, a holding area for records donated to the MHSA and semi-active records of the MCA, before release to the vault and
- The temperature and humidity controlled vault for permanent storage of fully documented historical records.

Build-Out Volunteers:

Dick Hildebrand	Henry Goerzen
John R Dyck	Colin Neufeldt
Herman Neufeld	Gerhard Bartel
Dave Pankratz	Dick Neufeld
Harold Friesen	Ben Geddert
Abe Hildebrand	Dick Klippenstein

Alberta Society of Archives Grants Institutional Status to MHSA

In very late 2003, we were granted full institutional status in

the Archives Society of Alberta (ASA). This means that we have passed the rudimentary demands of being a professional archives, are eligible to receive professional advice from members and staff of that organization, and are eligible to apply for small archival project grants (no operational or capital grants are available).

Already in 2004, two grants have been obtained. One provides for the equivalent of labour costs to process 40 archival *fonds* descriptions. The second will pay for a "conservation assessment" of our new archives. This will guide future physical developments and will further enable us to understand and implement best archival practices—including applying for additional grants.

MHSA fonds Go Online

The MHSA now has it's first (11) *fonds*-level descriptions online in the regional Archives Alberta Network (ANA). Individual *fonds* descriptions are linked to finding aids that itemize the series/files holdings. Many more *fonds*-level descriptions and finding aids will be going online as soon as volunteer time permits.

The *fonds* descriptions automatically are captured from the ANA into the Canadian Northwest Archival Network (CNAN) and Canadian Archival Information Network (CAIN) as well.

These are big steps for the MHSA, which just launched the archives in October 2002.

The MHSA is an independent non-profit society and charitable organization

that operates an archives and library through it's website, and being open to the public on Saturdays (10-4) and Fridays (by appointment—send email to: queries@mennonites.ca). All "staff" are volunteers. Our mandate is to collect the works of/by/for/about Mennonites and their ancestors - regardless of congregational or conference background.

Note: A *fonds* (a French word) is the complete works produced by an individual, organization or business during it's lifetime. In any archives, the portion of that work that is preserved is also known as a *fonds*.

Discover the Source

Search Alberta's Archives
www.archivesalberta.org



The Archives Network of Alberta is an online database of over 8,000 descriptions of records held in archives throughout Alberta.

2004 MHSB Budget

Approved

Revenues:	\$49,220
Memberships	2,400
Bookstore	5,500
Donations	30,000
Meetings	0
Grants	7,000
Research Services	300
Sale of Capital Assets	4,000
Miscellaneous	20
Expenses:	\$56,890
Archives:	
Supplies	1,500
Training	400

Equipment	9,400
Projects	8,370
Bookstore	4,000
Construction	20,285
Meetings:	
Honoraria	100
Hosting	300
Travel	800
Memberships	575
Projects	6,000
Newsletter	600

Office & Library:

Books	300
Equipment	300
Supplies	1,000
Rent	2,400
Utilities	500
Miscellaneous	20

Funds on hand, 31 Dec 2003:

\$11,432.83

Anticipated loss for 2004:

\$7,670.00

Funds on hand, 31 Dec 2004:

\$3,762.83

1906 Census

The transcription of the 1906 Census of Canada is really a project of the Alberta Family Histories Society where it is coordinated by Judith Rempel. However, she is also the MHSB Library & Archives Coordinator. The complementary roles make it easy for her to identify the portions of the transcribed census that are more pertinent to Mennonites and those files have been placed online and are accessible from a link on our website: www.rootsweb.com/~abmhsa/census/canada/1906.html

About 80% of those are complete. MHSB member, Val Williams, has assisted in this project by transcribing thousands of lines of data. Thanks, Val!

MHSB Website Grows

Our homepage (www.mennonites.ca/mhsa) receives about 300 visits every month. This is not a huge number, but the use of Google in recent years means that the majority of visitors go to interior portions of the website rather than through the "front door".

We have over 16,000 pages on our website, although about 15,000 of those pertain specifically to the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization indexing project.

Fortunately, this doesn't result in any costs to the MHSB. Judith Rempel sponsors the main pages found at www.mennonites.ca/mhsa/. Those found at www.rootsweb.com/~abmhsa are hosted for free by Rootsweb, an American non-profit genealogical webhost. The latter address is where our bulky project files are housed.

Freundschaft Issues Received

In October, 2003, Alexander Malycky came by the MHSB with an interesting box of newspapers. The newspapers are called *Freundschaft*, are in the standard newspaper size and material. But, they are published by the Kasachstan government – in German as a Monday-Friday daily paper for the many persons who speak German in that state.

Henry Goerzen has organized the papers in the MHSB archives—they span 1972-73. They are filled with interesting articles and photos. On a fairly regular basis, Mennonites are identified in the newspaper articles.

We'd be interested in making

this resource more useful to our research visitors by developing an index of the articles that pertain to Mennonites.

Is there a volunteer among our members to do this? The index could be prepared on paper. Other volunteers can then take the index and put it into a computer file. Depending on the scope of persons and subjects identified, the index may be a valuable item to place on our website.

To help with this, contact Judith Rempel via queries@mennonites.ca

MHSA Archives Receives Northwest Mennonite Conference Records

By Dave Pankratz

On a Saturday morning in late August 2003, Ted Regehr and his wife Sylvie carried dozens of heavy boxes up the long stairs that lead to the archives and library of the MHSA. The boxes contained over one thousand files of minutes, articles, notes and letters related to the Northwest Mennonite Conference. These are some of the files that form the basis of Professor Emeritus, Ted Regehr's new book, *Faith, Life and Witness in the Northwest, 1903-2003: Centennial History of the Northwest Mennonite Conference*.

I will say at the outset that I am a fan of his work and have been ever since I read his *Mennonites in Canada, 1939 – 1970: A People Transformed*. I like the clarity of his writing, his voluminous research and his perceptiveness. He brings all of these qualities to bear in his latest book, which identifies and examines the dominant issues, events and initiatives that affected

and shaped the Northwest Mennonite Conference.

The Conference has its roots with three small rural congregations in Alberta that formed the Conference in 1903. The founding congregations had been organized with guidance from and in ways familiar to Mennonite church leaders in Ontario and Pennsylvania. Over the years, new congregations were formed and joined the conference. There are eighteen congregations in the conference today, including one each in Alaska, Montana and Saskatchewan.

The events that shaped the conference and affected the activities of members, sometimes in response to these events, form the main themes of the book. The emphasis in the early years was on organizing congregations and building the conference.

The First World War forced conference members to delineate the boundaries between their responsibilities as Mennonites and as Canadian citizens. The Depression Years led to the formation of the Winter Bible Schools. By WWII some young men, having travelled and being exposed to the non-Mennonites, challenged and weakened those boundaries. During the Second World War conscientious objectors traveled and came into contact with outsiders, which resulted in weaker boundaries separating them from the outside world. After the war, missionary workers went north, largely among Aboriginal Peoples, to proclaim the Gospel. Their experiences affected some of the long-standing social, cultural and religious practices in home congregations. Moving from rural to urban settings and the cross-

cultural exposure also required adapting to change. Each section of the book concludes with insightful observations or assessments of the events or issues covered in the chapter.

The book ends with a chapter on the key issues which the Conference faces today - the future status of the Conference and its relationship with national Mennonite conferences and institutions.

The book also brings to life many of the men and women who led and served the various congregations that make up the Conference. Regehr goes to considerable length to explain the situations and circumstances the leaders had to face but he doesn't shy away from pointing out weaknesses and shortcomings. Including these frailties makes the people more believable and the history more plausible.

While mainly written for members of the Northwest Mennonite Conference, the book will also be of interest to a broader readership, especially other Mennonite conferences. It would therefore have been helpful if the introduction had said more about the Mennonite tradition in which this conference is rooted.

I originally picked up the book because I enjoy Regehr's writing, but I came away with much more than a pleasant reading experience. I learned about a Mennonite Conference I had not heard of before and about the sincere and dedicated Christians, who through hard work and example, sought to sustain and grow the Northwest Mennonite Conference. I highly recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in Mennonites

and the Mennonite story.

Other Mennonite News

Abe Dueck Appointed Director of the Historical Commission

The Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission has appointed Dr. Abe Dueck of Winnipeg as its next Executive Secretary. Dueck comes to this position following 12 years of service as the Director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg and over 20 years as professor and Academic Dean of the former Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg.

The Historical Commission is responsible for fostering historical understanding and appreciation within the Mennonite Brethren Church in the United States and Canada. It coordinates preservation of historical documents, publishes books and audio-visuals, and sponsors conferences and symposia related to Mennonite Brethren History.

Previous directors have been Dr. J.B. Toews and until recently Dr. Paul Toews.

Dueck notes that he comes to this position with "a sincere desire to make our history as a church relevant as it seeks to fulfill its mission in the world today." Dueck began his new responsibilities in March, 2004

New Portal Reveals Graduate Research on Mennonites

In January 2004, the Theses Canada Portal—a website—was established by Library and Archives Canada. It was launched

so that researchers around the world could take advantage of the knowledge being uncovered by graduate students in our universities.

A search on "Mennonite" and several related terms revealed over 125 "hits".

In some cases, a link is available online to the full text of the thesis! What a remarkable resource.

A sample of thesis titles are:

- Bauman, Dale R., 1951-. (1992). *Church growth in a Mennonite tradition: A case study in integration*. Fuller Theological Seminary.
- Bechtel, Muriel. (1997). *Showing our colours: encouraging self-differentiation in an urban Mennonite congregation*. Emmanuel College of Victoria University.
- Brunt, J. Howard (John Howard), 1950-. (1990). *Coronary heart disease among the Dariusleut Hutterites of Alberta*. University of Calgary.
- Chipman, Josephine, 1934-. (1988). *The Mennonite Selbstschutz in the Ukraine, 1918-1919*. University of Manitoba.

To view the full "hit" list, with links to some of the full-text pdf files, see: www.mennonites.ca/thesis.html

BOOK REVIEWS

- Gerd Froese. *The Gate and other Pictures painted in the Gulag* (Winnipeg: privately published, 2000), pb. 52 pp, 25.00 CND.
- Ida Bender. *The Dark Abyss of Exile: A Story of Survival*, trans. by Laura Anderson and

William Wiest, with Carl Anderson. (Fargo, ND: Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, 2000), pb., 197 pp, 35.00 US (hdc. 55.00 CND). Postage and shipping extra.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

An earlier version was published in Mennonite Historian, September 2003

The experiences of those who suffered and died in the Gulag has been told and published many times and in many places. Each person's experience, and millions had it, was different however, so the total account is still far from complete. These two portraits bring that account somewhat closer to the full picture—LK

The Gate has to do with the exiled life in Siberia of the author's father, Abram Froese. Its focal point is in one sense a set of paintings, some 80 in all, done in watercolour by Abram during his time of imprisonment and sent to his family in Chortitza while correspondence was still permitted (through 1937).

The text is woven around the paintings in a brief review of general early Soviet history but particularly of the experience of the family in the early years of the Soviet regime and then Abram's years in prison until he died in 1942.

All the biographical and autobiographical notes gain special poignancy, connected as they are to various smaller and larger paintings. They are often directly designed for the occasion of a birthday, the recall of special moments in the family, the beauty of nature, but also in a few instances, somewhat veiled references to the artist's own situation in Siberia (e.g., p. 49). The Siberian landscape as a whole is touchingly highlighted by the

author in his commentary on the paintings and his father's life and work as a whole.

The pictures are all the more moving as one sees in them the loving, deeply moving attempts of a father, who is in deep distress, to be of some comfort to his family which is going through very difficult times. He attempts to sustain a parental and husband's relationship in this inescapable and ultimately totally depriving situation. The originals remain in the author's possession.

The last letter the family received from Abram mentioned another ten-year sentence. It also said that he was being transferred to physical labour on a railroad. Of special interest is the irony that he was exiled in the city of Svobodny

(meaning 'freedom') on the Transsiberian Railway, and not too distant from the western villages of the Mennonite settlement which had opened up in the Amur region in the late 1920s. It is not clear that Abram ever learned about these villages during his stay in Svobodny.

As it happened Abram spent a good deal of his time working along side another Mennonite artist, exiled to the same locality. This man, Jacob Sudermann, also from Chortitza served a period of exile very similar to that of Abram. The Sudermann paintings were recently exhibited at the Mennonite Heritage Centre and are now at Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach. They form another very important corpus of the Russian

Mennonite artistic endeavour, which as a whole is still awaiting fuller discovery and discussion.

In *The Dark Abyss*, Ida Hollmann, a young woman in a Volga German family living at Engels in the former Soviet Union, is introduced as a student in foreign languages in Leningrad, when World War II broke out. Shortly thereafter it was decreed that the entire German population of the area would be forcibly evacuated to other regions. They would henceforth be treated as spies and saboteurs, and it seemed, destined for ultimate destruction.

This moving story of getting ready to leave home forever, with all the accompanying difficulties and distress, is told in simple, dramatic detail "as it really was".

Call for subscribers

Journal of Mennonite Studies

Since 1983, the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* has published articles about the history of Mennonites in Canada and in Russia, and also works on the U.S., Europe and global Mennonites. The *Journal* is published each spring by the University of Winnipeg Chair in Mennonite Studies and its associates. Each year's issue features about 12 research papers and 25 book reviews.

The 2004 *Journal of Mennonite Studies* features papers from the "The Return of the Kanadier" conference held at the University of Winnipeg in October 2002.

We invite you to consider the following two options:

Option # 1: Subscribe to the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*; the cost per year is \$20.00 and includes all taxes, postage and handling charges.

Option #2: Subscribe to the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* plus receive a set of back issues for the last seven years (as long as supplies last) for \$120

To subscribe send your postal address to Royden Loewen at r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca or to Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 2E9

2004 Issue Articles:

- An Ontario Old Colonist woman's world
- Evangelicalism's appeal
- Economic crisis in Mexico
- Newcomer health culture in Alberta
- "Community" in the *Mennonitische Post*
- Citizenship and MCC Ottawa
- Belize Mennonites in Nova Scotia
- Bolivia-based migration culture
- MCC in Mexico
- Women migrants in Paraguay
- Manitoba's Old Colony church
- Kanadier entrepreneurs

Back Issue Themes

- 1997: Mid-Century Canadian Mennonites Transformed
 1998: Mennonites and the Soviet Inferno
 1999: EnGendering Mennonite History
 2000: 1874 Revisited
 2001: Mennonite-Aboriginal Relations
 2002: Mennonites in the City
 2003: Mennonites and the Challenge of Multiculturalism

Call for Attendees

State of the Art of North American Mennonite History Grounding the North American Volume of the Global Mennonite History Series

A weekend conference, October 1 and 2, 2004 University of Winnipeg, Eckhart Gramatte Hall

Presented by the Chair in Mennonite Studies and the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada

Friday, October 1, 2004

- 9:00 am Theology: Anabaptism and Evangelicalism
 10:45 am Mennonites in Fiction and the Media
 1:30 pm Race, Missions and Cross-Cultural Encounters
 3:30 pm Identities: Gender, Ethnicity and Nationalism
 7:00 pm Keynote: North America and a Global Mennonite History (John Lapp)
 Mennonites in Africa (Barbara Nkala)

Saturday, October 2, 2004

- 9:00 am Money Matters: Capitalism and Charity
 11:00 am Church Life: Schism, Worship and Children
 1:30 pm Manitoba Leaders Talk History
 3:00 pm Peace, Justice and the Environment

Admission: Free

Lodging Recommendation: Holiday Inn, 360 Colony St., Ph, 204-786-7011

In 2005: Meeting the Indochinese Refugee: A 25 Year Retrospective

The Chair in Mennonite Studies and the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada presents:

A weekend conference, September 30 and October 1, 2005, University of Winnipeg, Eckhart Gramatte Hall

A history conference examining the relationship of Canadian Mennonite hosts and the Vietnam War Refugees, with papers also on African and Latin American Refugees in Canada and Indochina Refugees in U.S. Mennonite communities. Watch this and other Mennonite publications for details.

The long years of exile were imminent. By September of 1941 they were in Siberia where the more difficult survival journey began in earnest.

To fully feel and comprehend the situation is impossible, for those who have not followed the same path, but this account vividly portrays and introduces the reader to the drama. For the family in this account, the tragedy of mass deportation deepened greatly when the Father was removed from the family and the mother with children needed to survive by themselves.

A fishing town on the Yenessei River became home for a

number of years. Finding enough food to eat, and a roof over their heads, was a daily terrible struggle. Pressures from the local governing authorities, and even from hostile neighbours, at times became almost unbearable. This family never considered giving in as an option.

After seven or eight years things improved somewhat. Limited German cultural activities were permitted in the nearby city of Iskup. Father would write letters, as he could, to encourage the family. Ida's time in the Trudarmiia [forced labour], ended in July 1948. She had married Rudolph Bender a year earlier and soon the family was on the way to

Krasnoyarsk. Release from perpetual supervision created by the the strict supervision regime known as the Kommandatura, came in 1956.

The final sections of the book describe the untiring efforts made by people like Ida's father and others, including entire delegations to Moscow, to secure an end to the many oppressive regulations directed at the Germans that continued long after 1956. After moving to Kamyshin it was possible to join a German cultural club, and then began the struggle to obtain documents to emigrate. Wiedergeburt [meaning Rebirth] was organized in 1989 to help Germans improve their lot in the

Parting Shots: Photos for Identification

All but the picture immediately to the left of this text were received by the Northeast Calgary MCC Thrift Store bundled in a donation of goods. To date we have no idea who these people are—none of MCC's volunteers or staff could identify them. Can you? If so, please be in touch with the MHSA through e-mail (queries@mennonites.ca).



Can anyone tell us more about this photo supplied by Lil Bartel, Calgary.



Back row Henry Lottman, John Wisla, Jacob Kerbrant
Henry Kerbrant
Front Row
Elizabeth Kerbrant, Mary Kerbrant, Margret Wisla, Helen
Lottman, Blanche Kerbrant, Bronya Kerbrant



*Call for Contributions***Just a Friendly Reminder**

Ted Regehr quotes Stephen Leacock, "I did not realize that the old grave that stood among the brambles at the foot of our farm was history." Then Ted goes on to say, "But that old grave only becomes interesting and revealing history if one know more that just the inscription on the gravestone." MHSA is trying to record and preserve that history.

MHSA needs your support. Our 'donation' budget is huge compared to previous years. That is premised on the growth of our total operations, on the cost of finishing the space rented from MCCA and on an assumption that members and friends have interest in preserving and reading the stories and records of our Alberta Mennonite history.

PLEASE BE GENEROUS

We would appreciate having ALL members make their annual membership payments.

The cost of publishing the Newsletter is only one small part of our total operations.

We would appreciate donations, whether large or small.

In addition, you can show that you appreciate what your Society is doing by:

Volunteering your time on Saturdays to help supervise the office.

Volunteer your skills by chairing the fund-raising committee.

Promote our cause by recruiting new members.

Familiarize yourself with the archives of which we are so proud.

Join the growing "crowd" currently doing family research in our newly built facility.

Take the time to show your generosity by filling out and submitting the form on the back of this page.

Soviet Union, and also to find ways to emigrate. Ida's father, Dominic, was a writer and devoted his life to the constant promotion of a better lot for his people to his very end. He died in 1990.

A year later, Ida and her husband Rudolph arrived in Hamburg, Germany, to begin a new life and to undertake in due course, the recording of this survival testimonial.

The story speaks for itself, but it must be read to be felt and to appreciate the powerful document that it is. Much appreciation will continue to go to Ida for recording it all in such detail, to the translators for making an English language publication available, and to the "Germans from Russia Heritage Collection" for making it available to the public. This book with photos and maps of the tortuous journey of the Hollmann and Bender families, including other good features, is a definitive rendition of surviving. ❖

Humour corner

When a Mennonite couple divorces
Are they still cousins?

*Call for Participants***Mennonite Families with Dystonia South for Research Project**

Do you or anyone in your family have dystonia? People with dystonia have muscle movements they cannot control. These movements force parts of the body into abnormal movements or postures. Dystonia can affect any part of the body including the arms and legs, trunk, neck, eyelids, face, or vocal cords. (Some names that doctors give to these different kinds of dystonia are blepharospasm, torticollis, Meige syndrome, spasmodic dysphonia).

Please help us learn more about the causes of different types of dystonia. We are searching for branches of 2 large Mennonite families with this condition.

Please call, write, or e-mail us anytime! Thanks in advance for your help!

Deborah Raymond, MS, Department of Neurology
Beth Israel Medical Center
10 Union Square East, Suite 5H
New York, NY 10003
E-mail: draymond@bethisraelny.org

Membership Application & Donation Form

- Memberships are due fall each year.
- Newsletters are issued in spring and fall.

Mail membership form and cheque to:

MHSA

2946—32 Street NE

Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$20 \$50 \$100 \$500 Other _____

Tax receipts will be automatically sent for donations of \$20.00 or more.

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