



Newsletter

Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Volume XI, No.1

April 2008

MHSA Road Show

by Dave Toews

“We’re here already!” says John Bergen, “What time is it? You made good time Dave; you are a very safe driver.” I think he means fast, but he doesn’t say so. It is 8:30 a.m., Saturday, October 20 and we’ve arrived at The Care & Share Centre in Linden, Alberta. Henry Janzen, John, and I left the First Mennonite Church parking lot at 6 a.m. and have arrived well ahead of the 9 a.m. start time for the Fall Linden Event of the MHSA. We only had time to solve half the world’s problems and barely got to first base in the Mennonite game.

It is the intention of the MHSA to take these events to as many diverse places (road show) as possible to garner information and support for the society. We were there to listen to the stories of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (CGC) also known as “The Holdeman” and Mennonite Breth-

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Mennonite Weddings as I Recall Them

by Fred Enns

In the 1940s and 1950s, as now, weddings were preceded by a series of social activities at which young people came to know each other and learned how to conduct themselves in the presence of members of the opposite sex. Since this was a time before TV, and when movie attendance was rare, other kinds of activities had to suffice. Especially in rural areas these centered on the church and church community. Weekly choir practice was a favorite. There one learned not only to sing in four-part harmony, but how to behave in the presence of girls (boys) And since cars were rare, after choir practice boys and girls paired off for the walk home. Holding hands was not uncommon or even an arm encircling a waist. And if things really worked out, a goodnight kiss climaxed the evening.

The *Jugendverein* (a gathering where youth performed in recitation and song under the supervision of parents and older friends) was another opportunity for youth to gather. Sunday morning, of course, was dedicated to the worship service and Sunday school, but since no work was permitted on the Sabbath, the afternoons were free for social gatherings. These often took the form of sports events like ball games, or just visits for social interaction.

Naturally, high school provided opportunities for girls to meet boys.

However, some young people dropped out of school before graduation, and because farm work went into a period of inactivity during the winter, churches often organized Bible schools for these otherwise idle young people. Some were local, but others were provincial in their coverage.

The above activities were of

(Continued on page 4)

MHSA AGM & Spring Seminar

Saturday, May 31

Registration & Coffee: 9:00 a.m.

Annual General Meeting: 10:00 a.m.

Lunch: Noon (\$12)

Seminar: 1:15 p.m.

Location: First Mennonite Church,
 3650-91 Street NW, Edmonton, AB
www.edmonton1st.mennonitechurch.ab.ca

There will be an opportunity to renew your membership, buy Mennonite history books and make a donation.

Through the Red Gate:
 Voices From Stalin's Gulag



REMEMBER US

Letters from Stalin's Gulag (1930-37)
 Volume One: The Peggler Family



Spring Seminar: *Letters from Stalin's Russia*

Invited Speaker: Ruth Derksen Siemens

Ruth's superb website reminds us that "Writing letters to the West' during Stalin's Reign of Terror was a crime. Receiving a letter resulted in arrest without trial..."

Yet 463 letters, written from the prisons of the Gulag and from home villages arrived in a tiny town in the Canadian prairies...

To read more about our speaker and her subject, see www.gulagletters.com

Editorial Reflections

by Lorne Buhr



I am curious about how writing by Canadian Mennonites has changed in my life time. Since this editorial comment is coming in a

Mennonite history newsletter, writers abound in our environment. And some of our writers and read-

ers may have wondered about changes as well. My guess is that significant shifts have come about as we Mennonites are getting more acclimatized to our surroundings in the northern half of North America. There have been Mennonite communities in western Canada for more than 100 years. The settlers who came before 1900 have been joined by those who came in several waves after 1900. A theory I have is that the acclimatization has sped up considerably in the second half century of the 100+ years we have been here.

It was in 1962 that Rudy Wiebe published his *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. And it upset a lot of folks at that time. Wiebe had chosen to write a fictionalized account of what might happen in a closed rural Mennonite community. Mennonites not used to fiction being written about them wondered who Wiebe really meant. Fiction was not a significant part of their everyday life. So they were curious, as people are in every culture, about the supposed scandals which lurk. Much of the negative reaction came from people who were unsure about themselves and didn't wish "outsiders" (non-Mennonites) to know about their foibles and even sins. "What would they say?" It seems that our reputation for being upstanding people was on the line and in the minds of many Mennonites it was our good reputation that got us into the country to begin with. Could we be sent packing again?

Shift gears to Winter 2007. Arthur Kroeger had just published his book *Hard Passage*, which chronicles his family's trek from Russia to dryland Alberta in 1926. This book is still garnering favourable reviews and that beyond Mennonite circles. Kroeger got to dig around his

roots later in life. He writes that after their various pilgrimages Mennonites have seemed "awkward" in their new surroundings. That in large part may have to do with them being refugees and immigrants; such "awkwardness" is expected when people on the run come to a new place they hope will be safe. But has an avowed "separation from the world" added an additional dimension to what usually happens?

I know of two men who came from Russia to the United States in the 1800s and to Canada in the early 1900s. One was my grandfather and the second was my first wife's grandfather. Neither felt at home here. My grandfather came from a relatively homogenous Mennonite community in the US to homestead in a near wilderness on the banks of the North Saskatchewan. Both gentlemen had seen a lot of change and much of it not to their liking. The usual family tragedies were part of it too. Poverty didn't help. Possibly they found the US more akin to their Russian experience than striking out on new paths in Canada. If awkwardness was part of their outlook perhaps there were deep underlying reasons.

One of the signs I see in Mennonite writing that we are starting to feel more at home in Canada is that now, rather than earlier, Low German expressions are used freely in the tales that are told. I recall reading the earthy novels of Armin Wiebe. They were well sprinkled with Low German expressions. That strange language of our forefathers was often an embarrassment. And, to those of us familiar with the language, the habit of providing direct oversetting (translation) into English makes the language even funnier. Even

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Rudy Wiebe's heart warming memoir *Of This Earth* uses Low German expressions in the narrative and he translates these into English for the non-Low German speaker. Finally, within the last year Anne Kirkby has published her book *I Am Hutterite*, also a memoir. Generally our impressions are that Hutterite interest in the literary world would be quite limited indeed.

Do our writings today indicate some subtle changes in who we are? When does acclimatization become acculturation? Is that something which leads to challenging and changing our values? Does this mean that we are just another peace group who like to help people? A trusted friend told me "every denomination has it's peace group". That despite our 500 years at it. Let us explore these ideas in upcoming issues. We invite your views. ❖

Chairman's Corner

by Vince Friesen

I am certain that I speak for all of the members of the MHSA when I say that I am pleased and excited at the energy put forward by the people organizing our newsletter. Both Lorne Buhr and Dave Toews have done an amazing job at reviving this publication. It is also wonderful to see that many different people have contributed articles to the newsletters.

On the theme of volunteers, I must address the need for volunteers in our Calgary library and archives. Fewer and fewer people are volunteering here. Important work is being done at the library and ar-



chives but it requires volunteers to do it. At present only a handful of individuals are performing this work. The issue of volunteers will be a topic for us to discuss at our annual meeting on May 31.

The executive is working on having a presenter give a talk on the Mennonite experience in Soviet Russia at our Annual General Meeting. This topic has become more and more interesting since the Iron Curtain has fallen and many records have become available. Tragic, heart-wrenching as well as troublesome stories are coming to light as academic and lay people are examining this frightening era of Mennonite history.

I wish all our members the best as we head into the spring season. Living in Alberta, it's always wonderful to see the days get longer and the temperature rise. Looking at our history, we do also need to give thanks that we live in a wonderful province like Alberta where our faith and freedoms are respected and protected.

Best Wishes and see you May 31st! ❖

Volunteers needed

Did you think we could manage without you? The MHSA is built on volunteerism: books, archival documents, financial donations, and time. Here are some roles that need additional involvement.

Archival Assistant: Learn the processes of receiving boxes of papers through to stowing them in organized, described order in archival-quality containers in our vault.

Board Treasurer: Day-to-day financial matters are being managed by volunteers—we need a board member to provide some oversight and to work on fundraising strategies and activities.

Genealogical Research

Aides: Work on your own family history at the MHSA—you would not believe the resources we have—and help others when they drop in.

Facilities Expert: We need a go-to person when we don't know why the lights don't work, the vault heating/cooling system needs tweaking ... or we'd like help hanging things from our

walls.

Technical Expert: We're managing fairly well with routine uses of computers and software, but really could use someone who has abilities in networking and database development.

Regional Representatives: Northern Alberta and Tofield area are vacant at present. If you live in one of these areas and are willing to look for opportunities to encourage Mennonites in congregations and other gathering places to appreciate and preserve our history—you're our person!

Translators: Needed for German-language articles found in *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* to *Vertreterversammlung* annual reports.

Helpers! There are times when Judii and/or Irene simply need the weekend off due to vacation, health or family needs. Can you help by "taking" an occasional shift?

Send an e-mail to queries@mennonitehistory.org or call 403-250-1121 to let us know how you can help.

(Continued from page 1)

interest mainly to youths in their early to late teens, and generally took the place of present-day dating. If a relationship matured and became serious to the point that a wedding might be anticipated, an engagement was announced in the church. Normally the young pair would have been in their early 20s, and usually only baptized youth were married. The engagement was an event of considerable excitement and joy in the two involved families. The engagement period was usually only long enough so that wedding arrangements could be made. This involved whatever legal matters were required—obtaining the license, blood tests, etc.—and finding space in the church calendar. The whole congregation was normally invited. The engagement period was also a time for the young couple to visit relatives and special friends to receive their blessings.

The service itself usually took place in the early afternoon. In early practice there was no wedding procession. The young couple sat together facing the front of the church. There were usually two ministers, each preaching a sermon (shorter than a morning sermon, hopefully). Sermons were serious, emphasizing the seriousness of marriage. One of the ministers held the legal authority to perform the ceremony. Only later, in the later 1940s or so, did Mennonites adopt the Canadian practice of having best men, bridesmaids, a procession, and so on. Even then modesty in dress was expected, thus no bare shoulders for the bride. The bride always wore white and the groom his best suit (he rarely had more than one.) Photography was limited since most people had only simple box cameras. A professional photo might be taken at a later date in a city studio.

Immediately following the service there was a reception in the church fellowship hall. Everyone was invited. The menu was simple compared to the elaborate banquets we have today. It consisted of buns, cheese cold meats, cakes, coffee, and tea. This was also the time for guests to present gifts, which the young couple opened to display. Needless to say gifts in those days were less elaborate or plentiful than is the case today. The reception required several sittings, and the newlyweds were in the seats of honor for all of them.

The wedding gave the youth of the church an excellent excuse to have a party. In the evening following the reception the floor was cleared to play circle games. In some communities dancing was permitted (actually, some of the circle games were much like square dancing but this was not admitted). As long as young people remained in the same community matters such as this could be controlled. But with movement of youth to cities to work, to enter higher education and the professions, control became difficult, as was the case when intermarriage with non-Mennonites occurred.

Marriages between young people of different communities took place, but because of distances to overcome, these were less common. Songfests, Bible schools and employment away from home, made it possible to meet and make alliances outside one's parental congregation.

Marriages were recorded in the church register and often in family Bibles, as well as in government records. Honeymoons were known but extended

trips by the newlyweds were rare. The first home of the newlyweds was modest, unlike today when young people expect to start where their parents completed their married lives. In short, weddings fitted into the times. They followed the customs of the local church community. They were limited to the available financial resources. And they suited the times. ❖

Report of the Lymburn District for the Meeting of Mennonite Representatives at Didsbury, Alberta, 23 and 24 July 1936

A. P. Regier, District Representative
(translated by Henry A. Regier)



Abraham Peter Regier,
about 90 in mid 1980s
Credit: Leonor Reilly

If I'm correct, then the group that I represent here today is the one farthest away from our Mennonite centre at Coaldale. Our settlement lies almost

entirely in Twp 73 - 13 W6M, right near the British Columbia boundary.

When in 1927 my neighbour Jacob Nickel and I inspected our region and decided to establish homesteads, we were the first in that township. In the township east of us there were then fourteen farmers plus three Indian families on their reserve. The townships south and east were entirely unsettled. The distance to the nearest store was 15 miles and it was 40 miles to the train station

and physician.

Now most of the land has been claimed. The train station is four miles away and some work has already been done on the roads. Since 1930 we have a school district and the children have regularly received instruction in English.

The Mennonite settlement at Lymburn currently includes thirteen families of new immigrants, five families of "Canadians", and one family from the USA. Fourteen families are on their homesteads, two on purchased land, and three on rented land. Altogether we now total 79 souls of newcomers in the District. By age groups we have:

Preschoolers:			
	11 male	12 female	= 23
Public school age:			
	10 male	6 female	= 16
From 16 to 60 years old:			
	18 male	20 female	= 38
Over 60 years old:			
	1 male	1 female	= 2
Total:			
	40 male and	39 female	= 79

One family moved away to Coaldale this spring and two more families have arrived, one from Rio Grande and one from Beaverlodge.

The main occupation is agriculture with grain and livestock. Much sweat is expended to clear the land of bush before it can be cultivated. Usually it has been financially worthwhile, but when grain prices fall as in recent years then one must have a large amount of hope and other strengths not to lose the determination to continue.

In the first years we had good harvests and received good prices for our products. Almost every year we had a snowstorm before the threshing. It isn't so bad if the



grain is already in stooks, but the last three years the snow came while the grain was still standing, and a farmer who had a good crop then also had heavy work to harvest it. Under these conditions one can only use the binder in one direction and the soil is so wet under the prostrate grain that the big traction wheel of the binder doesn't want to turn.

In 1933 and 1935 the crops suffered particularly from frosts in summer nights so that we had to buy seed grain. Otherwise, from newly broken land we often times have threshed 100 bushel of oats per acre. In 1934 one of my fields yielded 130 bushels per acre of seed oats. Wheat is sown less frequently. In this year the prospects are really good again. We generally have sufficient pastures for the livestock, and there is opportunity to make hay. Good water for domestic and farming use is not difficult to get.

Our homes, barns, and granaries are built of logs. Boards and shingles are sawn nearby and some men have earned money in those mills in winter. Some are engaged in hunting and trapping in winter. One man tans leather and Mr. Loewen is the blacksmith of the region. We have a good midwife in the region who has already helped many. Grown-up girls and boys mostly work outside the settlement and help so that the pantries at home don't become too empty. And still most families have occasionally had to accept relief. In the last two winters the Board in Rosthern has richly supplied us with clothes. May God bless the givers.

In the first years we had religious services in private homes. Three years ago we built a small church: a building of spruce logs with an area of 20 by 30 feet and with a roof of rough boards. Since then we have Sunday school as well as worship service. The children have their Sunday School at the nearby home of the Sunday School teacher. On the first Sunday of the month we have an afternoon of the young people's association, at which German is spoken, where young and old participate in recitations, songs, and speeches.

Through the friendly services of Dr. Heinz Lehmann, Berlin, we have received a donation of a nice collection of 48 books from the Volksbund fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland for our German Library of Lymburn. Also some receive journals from patrons in Germany. I hope that this will spur our growing young folks to maintain the German language. We don't yet have a German school but almost all the children learn to read and write the German language at home, though with various degrees of success.

German journals and newspapers are being read: *Bote*, five homes; *Rundschau*, five homes; *Bundesbote*, one home; *Herald* (Newton, Kansas), three homes; *Abendschule*, two homes; and a dozen English journals and newspapers.

In this year the following taxes or dues were received: two requests from the Board, \$20.00; provincial taxes, \$7.50; for Professor B. B. Unruh,

\$3.45. Outstanding debts include: immigration travel debt (*Reiseschuld*) for five families, about \$1,800.00; the second request from the Board, \$25.00; and the provincial charge, \$23.10.

The Mennonite fire insurance organization covers eight settlers who, in total, have insurance for \$4,723.00.

P. Regier, Distriktmann. Bericht vom Lymburner Distrikt für die Mennon. Vertreterversammlung bei Didsbury, Alberta, den 23. und 24. Juli 1936. Der Bote, 13 Jahrgang, Nr. 40, seite 7. (30 Sept. 1936)

Postscript from Henry A. Regier:

The photo accompanying this article was taken in the mid-1980s when Dad was about 90 years old. As he got older he studied the Bible and related literature, perhaps making up for lost time during a very busy life when practical commitments didn't leave much time for contemplative reading.

Abraham Peter Regier was born in Chortitz in 1895. He was the son of a farmer Peter Regier, and great-grandson of the lay preacher/farmer Jacob Regier. Though a preacher, that ancestor seems to have been on reasonably good terms with Johann Cornies, so the farming tradition in the Regier family may have followed the methods of Cornies. His mother's Koop siblings were the Koop factory entrepreneurs. From his youth on, Abraham Peter Regier served in various leadership roles in secular aspects of open communities in which Mennonites thrived. He died in 1995, in his 101st year of life. ❖

(Continued from page 1)

ren Churches (MB) of the Linden area.

Henry Goertzen welcomed the 110 participants, made the opening remarks followed by a short prayer. Colin Neufeldt introduced the speakers during the morning session.

Jake Boese, leading pastor for the three CGC congregations in the Linden area, spoke of the Holdeman faith story and religious values. The CGC was started in 1859 by John Holdeman in Ohio and is considered an offshoot of the Old Mennonite and Amish sects. Later Peter Toews convinced a number of people from the Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba to join. The Holdeman have as one of their cornerstones, the Justification by Faith based on Romans 5. They accept the *Eighteen Articles of Faith* and the *Dordrecht Confession*, which includes living life separate from the world and shunning the excommunicated. They all wear simple clothes, the men short trimmed beards, and the women a small head covering. They do read newspapers, but have no TV or radio; they have their own non-accredited schools and operate a government funded seniors lodge. They practice military non-resistance, but pay all taxes. The government has to answer to God as to how they spend the tax dollars. Farms and property are individually owned; they are excellent farmers and business men. A number have become millionaires and this has caused some friction within the membership.

Rev. Boese told a story of when his grandfather was

plowing the newly broken land, in order to keep the first furrow straight he targeted a large dark object in the distance. Half way across he looked back and realized the furrow was crooked; the object he had chosen was a cow grazing along the edge of the field!

Cornie Wiebe spoke of the history of the Holdeman in Alberta and the Linden area. He emphasized history is important because human nature is unchanging; historical views are still relevant today. In 1902 the Boese and Giesbrecht families came to Alberta from Oregon. In 1903 the Klassen, Loewen, Toews, Regier, Ratzlaff, Isaak, Berg, Redekop, Janz, and Unruh families joined them from Manitoba and Kansas. There are three congregations in the Linden area, fourteen in Alberta, totaling 1,485 members. There are 19,000 members worldwide. The CGC is very involved in missions in Mexico, Belize, Brazil, Haiti, and India, also with MCC and MDS.

During the morning a number of people stood up and thanked the Holdeman for taking their families into their homes when they arrived from Russia in the 1920s with little else but the clothes on their backs. I thanked the Simeon Ratzlaff family for welcoming my mother's family, the



Abram Kroegers to Canada that first cold winter. It always amazes me how much emotion this evokes among the children and grandchildren of those now deceased participating family members.

Nick Wiens and Lloyd Ratzlaff shared the Mennonite Brethren (MB) faith story and history. There is a good deal of cooperation between the MBs and CGCs, especially in regards to Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Disaster Service. There is some intermarriage, but not a lot. A two volume history of the Linden area has been published by Lloyd Ratzlaff and Clarence Esau (deceased).

A tasty lunch of soup and sandwiches was served by the local caterer.

In the afternoon people had the choice of participating in a quilting/discussion group in the hall or taking a local tour. I chose to take the tour; we visited two very successful Holdeman businesses and the C.C. Toews historical farmstead.

Lone Pine Supply is owned and operated by Ron and Dolores Reimer. They supply sawdust, poly seal, and pine seal, organic based absorbents for oilfield and down-hole applications, otherwise known as lost circulation material. For the uninitiated, this means if the oil well drill bit hits an air or water pocket they send this stuff down to plug the gap. We arrived just in time to see a driver strap down his huge semi-trailer load of bagged sawdust destined for Denver.

Hawk Machine Works is owned and operated by Duane Klassen, they machine specialized parts for the oil and gas and automotive industries. Duane mentioned that his most recently ac-

quired milling machine had only cost \$100,000 instead of \$120,000 because of the favorable US dollar exchange rate. Both were very impressive operations.

The Evergreen Historical Farmstead is preserved as a family meeting place and community event centre. Some of the land is used for the Acme and Linden Growing Project for The Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Cornelius C. and Anna Toews emigrated from southern Russia and settled near Linden in 1924. Most of the family members still live in southern Alberta. It was interesting to see the old buildings and farm machinery.

We went back to the Care & Share Centre for a quick *faspa* and some thoughtful closing words by our chair Vince Friesen. Then we were homeward bound after an interesting and satisfying day. ❖



Dave Toews' article and Anne Harder's article are about the same event but they are complementary. Thus, both are included. Editor's note.

MHSA Meeting with Holdeman Congregation in Linden, October 20, 2007

by Anne Harder

The purpose of the meeting was to become acquainted with the Holdeman congregation at Linden, to learn about their church doctrine and practice, and how their beliefs translate into their everyday lives. We



were warmly greeted and invited into their church. A full house had gathered to hear their congregational leader Jake Boese speak about the history of their denomination, about their faith, and their lifestyle.

The Holdeman Mennonites were a 19th century "offshoot" movement from the Old Mennonites (MC) and Amish churches. They wished to return to the true Anabaptist form of church life. Their founder John Holdeman, born in Wayne County, Ohio in 1832, was drawn to the revival movement of the day – having had a personal religious experience of new birth and forgiveness of sins. He studied the Bible, the writings of "Menno" and Dirk Philips. He was a prolific writer and a powerful evangelist. In 1859 he established what he called "the true lineage church"- thereafter called The Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (CGC). He stressed a simple, conservative lifestyle, personal salvation, rebirth before baptism, more faithful and

consistent church discipline, avoiding the excommunicated, and the practice of peace and non-resistance.

The movement had a very slow beginning, but with the arrival and inclusion of some immigrant Mennonites from the Ostrog area of Poland (later Russia), who settled in McPherson, Kansas, the numbers grew. Meanwhile, upon invitation John Holdeman evangelized among the Kleine Gemeinde church people in Manitoba, with the result that some also joined his church. At the time of Holdeman's death in 1900, the membership numbered 750.

In Alberta the CGC was founded in 1902, in Linden, with the settlement of two families, the Giesbrechts and Boeses from Dallas, Oregon. They were soon joined by more families from Manitoba and Kansas. Today there are three congregations in close proximity in Linden, Sunnyslope, and Swalwell. Some of the family names are Baerg, Loewen, Janzen, Klassen, Toews, Regehr, Unruh, Ratzlaff, Redekop, and Giesbrecht.

In the early years of the 1900s homesteaders, Mennonites and others replaced ranchers in the area who had raised large herds of cattle, of which many died in the huge snow storm in the winter of 1903. Many ranchers departed, leaving land readily available. Some years later, in the late 1920s and 1930s, during the great depression, the area also experienced devastating drought and dust storms, after which some of the Holdeman Mennonites (and others) moved to the lower mainland in BC, others to the Grand Prairie area, and 15 families settled on 22 sections of land in the Crooked Creek area of the Peace River district. These settlers included those of both Swiss and Dutch ethnic origin. This diversity contributed to their strength and vitality, living as they did in rural, rather isolated locations. They were God centred people who embraced evangelical piety, and remained a separate community from the surrounding society.

The generosity of the Holdeman people was evident when Russian Mennonite immigrants arrived in the Linden, Swalwell area in the 1920s, and were taken into the Holdeman farmers homes, somewhat indefinitely, until living accommodations could be found. Alberta was still a very young province, just becoming settled, there was much land, but few homes. The Holdeman people also took responsibility to assist the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization in their task to help settle the immigrants. Three men served as contact persons. During World War II they contributed financially to Mennonite Central Committee for relief work. In more recent years they have served with Mennonite Disaster Service.

Church Doctrine – Faith, Repentance and Obedience

Man is saved by re-birth for sins forgiven, followed by baptism of the Holy Spirit, and symbolic baptism with water. They retain the strong conservatism of the early Anabaptists. Perhaps one difference is their emphasis on revivalism – much of their membership growth happens as a result of annual revival meetings. There is very little change to contemporary understanding of the Gospels. There is belief in separation of church and state. State is necessary, but not relevant to the Holdemans. They do not participate in military service, do not vote, and do not sit on civic boards. There are no lawsuits. Taxes are paid as required, but they expect the government to use the money for ethical purposes. They believe Jesus will return to earth; that Heaven is a resting place, and Hell is everlasting torment.

Church Organization

Ministers are chosen from their ranks, but must feel called by God. They do not pursue formal theological training; theirs is an oral tradition of mentoring, and teaching each other from generation to generation. The minister preaches an unwritten sermon as the spirit directs him. Ministers and deacons are elected by ballot vote; they must receive 50% of the vote to be elected. Women also vote. The church administration consists of ministers and ordained deacons.

Lifestyle

Simple, modest and distinct from the world. Men wear beards; women wear devotional head coverings. Photography, art, musical instruments, radios, and television are not approved, used, or owned. Professional sport, fashions, entertainment, are contrary to Christian life. Some read newspapers to keep abreast of world events. Members are expected to remain living in the community. They have foot-washing as a symbol of humility and a clean walk with God. They hold prayer meetings and private devotions with their families. A book of "Policies and Principles" sets out the parameters of their lifestyle and conduct. Non-conformists can expect disciplinary action.

Church discipline

Members must adhere to accepted practices and absolute commitment to church beliefs; where this is in question the person must appear before the church leadership for reconciliation. Some have questioned the central doctrine of being the "true church". Removal of membership is taken under consideration for repeated lying, unethical behavior, extra marital relations, marriage break up. Marrying an unbeliever is also problematic.

Losing membership has serious ramifications, in that the person in question is not allowed contact with the membership and can even be denied service in their businesses. Forgiveness and reinstatement is given upon repentance in the presence of the elders and the congregation.

Missions

They engage in an active overseas missions program, beginning in the 1930s. In 1987, 150 persons were involved in overseas

missions, in India, the Philippines, Europe, Mexico, Nicaragua, Belize, and the Dominican Republic. Between 1950 and 1970 the church membership grew from 5,000 to 8,500 and today their membership worldwide is about 19,000.

In Alberta the Holdeman have fourteen churches with a membership of 1,400. In Linden the Holdeman also own and operate a nursing home, on land donated for that purpose by Sam Boese in 1945. The home is staffed by a registered nurse and Holdeman caregivers who feel called to the work. A number have taken high school by correspondence, followed by some nursing instruction in Red Deer or Calgary.

Women who teach in their school must also feel called to the work, and discuss the matter with the church elders; on approval they take a few days of teaching instruction in Red Deer College. Any training over and beyond the school education is monitored by the elders. The Holdeman would like to offer grade 10 in their schools, but are not given credit for it by Alberta Education, since their teachers are not certified.

Women's role in farming and homemaking.

Women care for the family and home, with the aid of modern conveniences. Children are given a Christian upbringing, mothers instructing the children, telling them Bible stories, and having daily devotions and prayer. Women gather in groups for Bible study, to socialize and to make quilts for distribution to Third World countries. They meet with young people to sing for patients in the nursing home or hospital. Most families are very hospitable; visitors are expected without invitation, though invitations are also offered.

Farm work, for some women includes running the tractor, operating the milk machines, "manning the computer", paying the bills, and generally being a partner with her husband in the farming operation. A few have technical computer training; most are self taught or learn

computer skills from teenage children. Some women are employed in the nursing home and in their businesses.

Men prepare the soil, but women do the gardening out of necessity and also as a creative outlet. It is very important to the Holdeman people to have beautiful and orderly yards. The women grow large vegetable gardens but also flowers in beds and borders. They do not enter community competitions, but their carefully tended flower gardens would certainly qualify. Flower bouquets are placed in church for festive occasions and cut flowers also beautify some private homes. Vegetables and fruit are canned or frozen for year around use and root vegetables are kept in cold storage. Baked breads and sweets are kept to a minimum. Their diet is reflected in normal weight; one does not see many overweight people. Kids love junk food, but grow up on healthy home cooked meals.

Youth

Students are required to have a grade eight education; a few continue into high school, taking correspondence courses. Young people attend Sunday school classes and become familiar with the Bible and with their faith. Most young people begin their farming experience with their parents. Some find employment with the Holdeman businesses. A number of young men have a journeyman's qualifications for technical training in welding, carpentry, etc. They employ their skills in the local community, since it is understood that they remain with "their" people. They engage in recreation, such as softball and hockey, but do not enter competitions.

Courtship

Young people do not date; they gather at church functions or at cross congregational visitations, and at weddings. When a young man in love with a girl, wishes to marry, he requests permission from the girl's parents, who then speak with the minister and deacons and on approval, allow the young man to meet with his intended. It may be several weeks before he receives an answer, particularly if the couple does not know each other very well. No doubt some find ways to discreetly circumvent these restrictions, on the other hand some girls have also been totally surprised with an unsuspecting suitor. Engagements are short, a few weeks to a few months. The marriage is normally a love relationship. The wedding is not a big production; the

In 1987, 150 persons were involved in overseas missions, in India, the Philippines, Europe, Mexico, Nicaragua, Belize and the Dominican Republic. Between 1950 and 1970 the church membership grew from 5,000 to 8,500 and today their membership worldwide is about 19,000.

ceremony is part of a worship service. The marriage and family is built on a patriarchal structure.

Farming and Business Industries.

In the communities where the Holdeman reside they are seen as honest, trustworthy, hard working farm people, employing sound agricultural practices. Though most farm, some have developed industrial sized businesses. A tour of the impressive Linden Industrial site gave us insight into the magnitude of these enterprises. For the purpose of this limited article most businesses will just be named. It began with a local trucking business, an extension of the Reimer farm operation. The local trucking business grew into one with long distance runs in semi-trailers and return trip loads of materials needed in industries across Canada.

Lone Pine Supply Ltd, a wood-chip business, was developed from sawdust and chips available in large quantities from nearby sawmills. This product is used with drilling mud in the oil fields. Lorrin Baerg, a local Holdeman with a welding and fabricating shop, designed and built the machinery for the wood-chip industry. In another mill, plastic lumber wrap is finely shredded, bagged and compressed. This business employs 17 to 23 people. Hawk Machine Works Ltd., a machining and fabricating industry owned by Duane Klassen (with two years machining apprenticeship) makes high tech equipment which is competitive with industrial developments elsewhere.

Another industry cleans and bags oats for the market in Japan. There is also an oak furniture making shop; and in the farming area large poultry and animal operations.

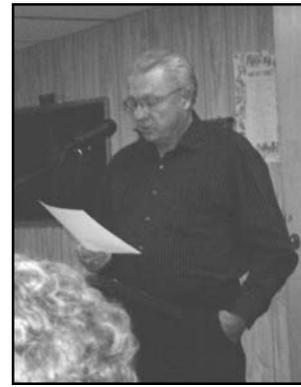
These huge and diverse industries indicate very creative and progressive development in the area of commerce. These multi-million dollar businesses are the work of people with a grade eight education, and some technical and trades training. They regard these industries as a service to mankind; but even at arms length they connect with the outer world. Perhaps this fills a void in an otherwise restricted educational system and conformist lifestyle.

Private Schools

The Holdeman people want their children to be schooled in a Christian environment, in which they will be given a sacred rather than a secular view of life. They feel that the values and permissiveness in present day society is reflected in the public schools. They fear that by attending public schools, their children could be lost to their faith, and perhaps even their lifestyle. At an earlier time they pondered whether they should move to Mexico, however the solution they determined was to have their own private schools, with teachers chosen from the community and who do not have formal university teacher training.

(John Bergen, retired Professor of Educational Administration at the University of Alberta, wrote an account of the school issue, trial and judgment. A shortened version, used by permission, appears at the end of my article.)

A congregation of Mennonite Brethren (MB) Mennonites have lived in the Linden area since their emigration from Russia in the 1920s. They live in peace and with respect for the Holdeman. They have jointly operated a cheese factory and an ambulance service. Together they own a cemetery, and some funeral services are held jointly. They do not have pulpit exchanges, however a three volume history of the Alberta Holdeman and MB,



has been written and placed in the MHSA library in Calgary. In the early years many MB youth attended the inter-

denominational Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills; after graduating, some joined their overseas missions, a number did not return to the MB church.

In the past, rural churches were the religious and social centres of the communities; here was found common understanding, support and security. A common language also drew people together, and in the case of Mennonites, in an era now gone, they have a long history of living separated from the general society. The urbanization seen in recent decades, with its advances in science and medicine, has drastically reduced the dependency within ethnic groupings. The interdependence of religion and culture is rapidly fading, churches are what they were intended to be, institutions of religious faith. However the Holdeman feel that for their faith to be true and worthy it must encompass their entire way of life, and can only be accomplished in a separated community.

The following text is taken, by permission, from an article by Dr. John Bergen.

The Holdeman Kneehill Christian school opened in September 1977 with approximately 120 children in attendance. These children had been withdrawn by their parents from the public school of the Three Hills School Division, in

which the private school was located. The Division board which anticipated a loss of \$120,000 in provincial grants due to decreased enrollment, requested its superintendent to institute the prosecution of more than 40 parents, in accordance with the provisions of the School Act.

At this point the Provincial Attorney General intervened and ordered a test case by selecting one of the parents, Elmer Wiebe, whose thirteen year old son Dallen, of compulsory school age, had been withdrawn from the public school and had enrolled in grade nine in the Kneehill Christian School.

The events caught the attention of the Alberta Human Rights and Immigration Committee of the Alberta Cultural and Heritage Council, which sent two of its members in November, 1977 to investigate the case. Subsequently, attorney William Pidruchney, a member of the committee, applied for the privilege of acting as *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) on behalf of Elmer Wiebe; as retaining legal counsel would have been in contradiction to the convictions held by the Holdeman. The case was heard before Provincial Judge H.G. Oliver at Three Hills, Alberta, on January 18-19, and the judgment was rendered on Feb 6, 1978.

The Trial

Three issues were brought before the court.

- Attendance provisions of the school act.
- Privileges granted to Mennonites in the Canadian Constitution
- Freedom of religion inherent in the Canadian and Alberta Bills of Rights.

Section 134 of the school act stipulates that "a pupil is excused

from attendance at school if a Superintendent of Schools certifies in writing that a pupil is under efficient instruction at home or elsewhere, or is attending a private school approved under the Department of Education Act."

The prosecution argued that Dallen Wiebe had not been attending a private school under the Act; that the Superintendent had complied with the School Act in placing charges, and that the failure to obtain authorization to operate a private school did not entitle the Holdeman to break the law, and furthermore that the court had no power to create a private school.

The defense argued that several attempts had been made by the Holdeman community to gain the minister's approval to establish their private schools, but that each attempt had been thwarted by bureaucrats in the minister's department; whereas the Department of Education Act assigns to the minister alone the authority to approve or refuse to approve a school.

The Department of Education had not responded to the invitation of the Kneehill Christian school committee to inspect its building. The Superintendent of Schools of the local school division had not responded to several invitations to assess the school program and instruction.

W. Pidruchney raised these points to show that the Holdeman had taken every necessary step to meet official requirements.

Consequently on February 6, 1978 the Provincial Court Judge H.G. Oliver, declared Elmer Wiebe of Linden, Alberta, not guilty of breaking the law for withdrawing his son from the public school and enrolling him in the unauthorized CGC private school.

A landmark decision was handed down in an Alberta Provincial Court on February 6, 1978 granting the Holdeman church (CGC) the right to educate their children in their own private school, in communities where no approval to do so has been granted by provincial and local school authorities. The judgment was based on the "Freedom of Religion" clause contained in the Alberta Bill of Rights.

This is the first case in a Canadian court in which the Bill of Rights constituted the basis for a judgment in a controversy relating to education.

On March 7, 1978, Minister of Education, Julian Koziak, announced to the legislature that the Government of Alberta had decided not to appeal the decision to a higher court, and that the private school regulations would be revised to provide for a category of schools (category 4) not requiring the employment of certified teachers (Dr. J. Bergen, "A decision that shook education in Alberta").

Such schools would receive no Government funding. Such schools would be required to follow a course of studies approved by the minister, but would not be required to employ certified teachers. However, Holdeman members are required to pay all taxes in support of public schools, which their children are entitled to attend.

The above ruling is still in effect at this writing. ❖

Planning a Siberia Mennonite History Conference for 2010

by Peter Penner, Royden Loewen and Paul Toews

Sometime in 2006 Professor Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies, Winnipeg, suggested we should plan, if possible, a sequel to the Chor-

titza and Molotschna history conferences of 1999 and 2004. With this clearly in mind, a new committee was formed to meet in December 2006 at the University of Winnipeg. Gathered to discuss such a possibility were Royden Loewen, host; Professor Hans Werner from the University; Ken Reddig, Director of the Centre of MB Studies, Winnipeg; Professor Paul Toews from Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, CA; his wife Olga Shmakina, the well-known guide in Russia to many Mennonite heritage tours; Aileen Friesen, Ph.D. candidate in Russian history, University of Alberta; Peter Letkemann, well known Winnipeg businessman, historian, and musicologist; and yours truly from Calgary, Alberta.

In part this followed from the earlier Siberia-Initiative of 2001 which led to the employment of Novosibirsk scholar Andrej Savin to search out documents about Mennonites in the Russian archives of Omsk, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Barnaul, and also Moscow. This venture, organized by Paul Toews, Fresno, was supported by funds from the children of the late Peter Dick, Vineland, Ontario. The result was the publication in 2006 of Savin's nearly 500 page book listing about 1,000 such documents (the English translation is: *Ethno Confessions in a Soviet State: Mennonites in Siberia, 1920-1980, Annotated Archival Listing of Archival Documents and Materials, Select Documents*). This work is now in the process of being translated.

How the young Savin first came to notice, was through his multiform publications in German translation in conjunction with Detlef Brandes in Dusseldorf, Germany. What especially alerted us to his astonishing abilities in Russian

and German was his joint publication in 2001 with Brandes of the volume entitled *Die Sibiriendeutschen im Sowjetstaat, 1919-1938*. Their combined work indicated the fact that Savin and other Russian historians had already, within ten years of the fall of communism, fathomed much of the Mennonite story in Siberia in the midst of the Germans in Russia story.

That I was personally able to meet briefly with Savin in Akademgorodok (the site of the Novosibirsk Institute of History) during the last days of November 2000, and to be able to converse freely with him in German, was simply a stroke of good fortune.

Sufficient progress was made for this committee to meet a second time on January 18, 2008, at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg. Added to the committee was Winnipeg architect Rudy Friesen, known widely for his valued book *Building on the Past*. Many things could be finalized at this meeting because of Paul and Olga's visit in August 2007 to Novosibirsk to talk to Andrej Savin about such a conference and see his proposed site. They met with Savin and Professor Shishkin of the Russian Academy of Sciences and explored the very attractive conference site offered by the University built south of Novosibirsk in 1957 and named Akademgorodok.



Toews). In view of other significant events on the world Mennonite calendar, we are projecting May/June 2010 as the date for this history conference. The call for papers, to be made early in 2009 to Russian, Ukrainian, European, and North American scholars, will focus on "Siberian Mennonites and other Religious Minorities in the Soviet Experience."

Fully committed to cooperation with this North American Planning Committee are Andre Savin and the already well-known Archivist and Historian Peter Vibe, Omsk, also Johannes Dyck and Victor Fast representing the *Aussiedler* community in Germany. We still have to work out ways of communicating meaningfully with them so as to co-opt them more fully in decision making during the two years remaining until 2010. In any case, each branch is important in drawing in meaningful and pertinent scholarship as well as financial and moral support.

The Planning Committee is meeting again in May of this year. Meanwhile a fundraising letter will be sent over the signature of the President of the University of Winnipeg. What was made crystal clear from the beginning of our discussion with Savin was the circumstance that most of the funds to bring scholars from European locations will have to come from North America. ❖

What is clear now is that the two co-sponsoring institutions for this history conference will be the University of Winnipeg with President Lloyd Axworthy, former External Affairs Minister of Canada, and the Russian Academy of Sciences of which Professor Shishkin was the interim representative (as shown on the left with Andrej Savin and Paul

Gerhard Ens Receives Award of Excellence



Gerhard Ens spent most of his life in public service within the Canadian and Manitoba Men-

nonite communities. Ens was honored in late January at the annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC). He received the Award of Excellence for his life-long advancement of Mennonite History as a minister, teacher, editor, historical society/museum promoter, and German and Low German broadcaster.

Ens began his career as a teacher in the village of Gnadenfeld, Manitoba where he taught 60 children in 8 grades in a one-room school. During the Second World War as a committed conscientious-objector he opted for alternative service. He worked as an orderly in a mental hospital. He returned to teaching at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, in Gretna, Manitoba, where he served for 31 years. For ten of those years he served as principal.

Ens was a founding member of the Manitoba MHSC in 1958 and sat on the board of the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum from 1958-2004. In 1972 he was asked to produce a Low German radio broadcast to promote the centennial of Manitoba Mennonite settlement in Manitoba. Very quickly this 15-minute program was lengthened to 30 minutes. Ens continued broadcasting for 34 years. He was never paid for his broadcasts. In total he aired over 1,400 programs on three radio sta-

tions.

In 1977 he moved to Winnipeg and began editing *Der Bote*, a Canadian based, German language paper. Having been ordained in 1957, he was asked to become a lay minister at the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church. He preached and taught the German Bible Study there for 30 years.

Upon acceptance of the award Ens said this award was special for him. Commenting on his Low German broadcasting Ens said: "Mennonites of the Low German persuasion have no homeland in Europe they call their home. Low German has become a home where people can move in and out of and express themselves".

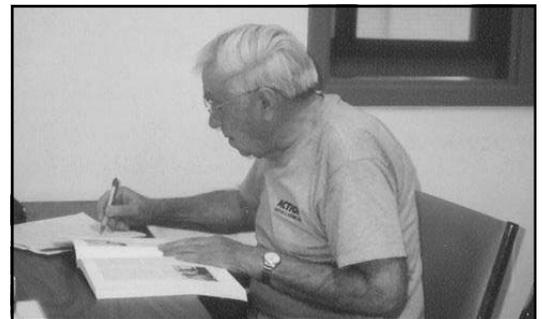
The MHSC and its committees held four days of meetings at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg where representatives informed each other of their projects and continued their joint work with the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (www.gameo.org). The aim of this ambitious venture is to provide reliable information on Anabaptist-related (Amish, Mennonite, Hutterite, Brethren in Christ) topics, including history, theology, biography, institutions, and local congregations. Secular topics from an Anabaptist perspective and full-text source documents are also included. Since its inception in 1996 it has gained the support of organizations like Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite World Conference. ❖

One Body—Many Parts / Ein Leib—Viele Glieder

by Irene Klassen

Jake Balzer is a regular visitor at the library and archives of the MHSA. He reads in English, German, and Plautdietsch, and easily translates from one to another. His latest project was the translation of the book, *Ein Leib, Viele Glieder* by Gerhard Retzlaff.

Retzlaff was commissioned by the *Gemeindekomitee* of the Mennonites in Paraguay to write about and for the Mennonite churches in Paraguay, including the Spanish and Aboriginal ones. Retzlaff goes into a brief account of the beginning of the Church from Old Testament stories of the patriarchs, the kings and the prophets, and into the New Testament story of Christ, and the birth of the Christian Church. He goes on to describe the spread of Christianity throughout Europe, the origins of the Anabaptist movement, and the immigration of Mennonites into North and South America. This includes the various branches of Mennonites. His book is meant to inform, strengthen and motivate Mennonites, and promote a general understanding between the widely diverse churches in Paraguay. It is an attempt to portray honestly and truthfully, the development of the various factions within the churches. The book includes photos and maps. The title based on the Apostle Paul's writing to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12:12-17.



The author, Gerhard Retzlaff was born in the Chaco in 1941, and re-

ceived his primary education in the Neuland Colony. He studied theology in Bible schools in Filadelfia, Chaco, Curitiba, and Buenos Aires. After working as a teacher and missionary in Paraguay, he went on to study history at the California State University in the USA. He was a church and a conference leader, and was an instructor at the Instituto Biblico Asuncion for 22 years, and at the Centro Evangelico Mennonita de Teologia for 18. At present he is the director of the Mennonite Historical Society in Paraguay. He was obviously the person to write this book.

Jake Balzer, the translator, was born in 1918 in Neu Samara Russia. When Jake was six, his family, consisting of his parents and his eight siblings, immigrated to Canada, settling in Colonsay, Saskatchewan, in a small community of Mennonites. There he went to a one-room public school, and later he was able to attend one year at Rosthern Junior College. His education was interrupted by the war. He spent several years as a conscientious objector on Vancouver Island, planting trees and fighting forest fires.

At the end of the war he went back to the farm in Saskatchewan, but soon moved on to Winnipeg where he finished his high school and was employed as a typesetter at the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, a periodical published by the Mennonite Brethren church. In 1964, he went to a Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia PA. where he studied among other courses, Greek and Hebrew. Always eager for new adventures, he went overseas and traveled throughout Europe in 1966, ending in Israel. There he studied modern Hebrew.

His next stop was Tunis, Tunisia where he got a job in the Public Relations office, translating technical German material into English for Americans. He also became fluent in French. In 1972, he moved on to Brussels, capital of the Common Market, again in the translation office. There he spent many enjoyable hours in the library with the books and dictionaries in all the various languages. He even studied Russian; he admits he knows the Russian alphabet but doesn't read Russian too well. It was in Belgium that he bought a typewriter which has all the little symbols for foreign languages (this typewriter is still his prized possession, although he has difficulty finding ribbons for it now).

In 1979 Balzer returned to Canada, worked for a few years as a security guard, and retired in 1983. He moved into a new seniors condominium where he still lives. Since then he has taken up golfing. He enjoys reading and translating as a hobby. He never married, saying "How else could I have moved about so freely?" In 2006 he flew back to his birthplace, Neu Samara, to visit his cousins.

In March of 2007, he joined a group going to Paraguay, where he met Gerhard Retzlaff and learned of the book *Ein Leib, Viele Glieder*. The need for a translation was sparked immediately and after some discussion and correspondence, it has become reality. Over a period of several months, Balzer has translated the book into English, under the title, *One Body—Many Parts: The Mennonite Churches in Paraguay*.

The MHSA became involved in that Judith Rempel read, advised, did the typing of the translated manuscript, and helped with

the technical tasks of connecting Balzer's work with that of Gerhard Retzlaff in Paraguay (Balzer is just a bit baffled by electronic mailings and the ability to send literally everything across the miles by the click of the right button). The English translation will be printed in Paraguay and will be ready in good time for the Mennonite World Conference, which will take place in Asuncion, Paraguay in July 2009. ❖

What Should I Keep and How Should I Organize it?

by Judith Rempel

That's the dilemma that we all face many times each year. Perhaps you just put your head down and close the drawer or closet door. But, if it's on the heels of the death of a family member, the intent to downsize your home, or simply do some spring cleaning a plan of action must be made and carried out.

In a recent *Calgary Herald*, a tempting solution presents itself. Shred-it and the Alberta Motor Association placed a block advertisement that announces "attend a FREE document shredding Event" and "March is Fraud Prevention Month". The detailed text reads:



“identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in Canada. Protect yourself by properly destroying your personal documents”. On the Shred-it website (www.shredit.com), they outline a multi-step approach, but which includes no advice on what must be kept (legally), or should be kept for historical reasons. In other words the appraisal step (and corresponding retention step) is completely omitted.

When I saw this ad, my heart started to thump and Hitchcock-movie music started to play in my mind. My great fear is that individuals are showing up at these “shredding events” and throwing out personal correspondence, diaries, love letters, family photos, etc. I don’t care if they throw out stale tax returns and bills, but I suspect/worry that individuals are throwing away records that provide historical knowledge as well.

So – this is my little opportunity to give you an idea what you as an individual should keep and how you should keep it from a Mennonite historical point of view.

The question of what

Records that officially state the date and place of life events of life (births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths). These will be officially-produced government records, pages in a Bible, annotated family histories, database records, letters and printed e-mails, annotations on the back of photographs, etc.

Records that tell one or many persons’ views of those life events or secondary events.

A secondary event could be immigrating to a new country, establishing a church, mission initiative, family business, or weathering an era (like an economic downturn or period of oppression). These re-



ords could be found in personal, organizational or business correspondence, diaries, autobiographical manuscripts, published reports to a conference or handwritten notes for a presentation to a church group.

Records that capture the contributions that an individual has made to his or her community. Think of your life as a resume – what are the key “jobs” that you’ve had in your family, in your community, and in the Mennonite community. You should have some record of what that activity was, how long you were involved, and records of projects you accomplished in that context (several examples might be: chairing the church ladies’ group, participating in the Mennonite Central Committee sale or going on a Mennonite Disaster Service mission).

Records that you have collected (or been given) that give insight to the ongoing activities of an organization. These might be issues of a Mennonite newspaper or magazine, bulletins from a congregation, annual reports of a conference, or minutes of a committee. Of particular value too are the records that provide insight into the formation (constitution, bylaws), organization (organizational chart), or dissolution of an organization.

Records can take the **form** of notes, pages in a book, electronic files, posters, published accounts, audio or video tape, DVD, etc. In other words, a record (noun) is

anything that has recorded (verb) information.

Records can be originals, copies, or published. Of greatest importance is to preserve the originals (from risk of destruction by temperature, humidity levels and accidents like fire), but copies or published versions are also worth keeping safely.

The Question of Organization

Simply keeping the records is a great first step. Then, you might want to consider organizing them according to what your role was with regard to them. For example if you’ve sat on four committees over the years, the records you’ve kept for each committee should be separately stored and they could be sequenced in alphabetical or chronological order.

Go back to the metaphor of a resume and your various jobs over time. Those jobs likely can be broken down into categories like: personal, familial, community, business, congregational, conference-related, etc. Use those as major groupings for your records. Then, store the records in file folders/cabinets or boxes according to those categories. It can be very helpful to label each container according to what you’ve put in it, and what years it covers.

The Question of Preservation

Now – where are you keeping those records? In a place where the temperature or humidity fluctuates dramatically, in a cardboard box that is leaching acid into your documents, photos on a wall where the sun hits directly, where it is easy for sticky or greasy fingers to access, or where it is vulnerable to accidents (flooding, fire)?

We at the MHSA know that it is human nature to want to keep precious documents near at hand

and handle them. But, we'd like to encourage you to restrict direct contact from the kinds of destroying elements mentioned in the previous paragraph. Two things can be done: Find a place in your home that you really feel is limiting those risks and only use copies for sharing and handling.

In fact, we urge all readers to

Postcards from the Past

Collections of photographs, drawings or postcards can reveal the preferences or tastes of Mennonites in a particular period or place. Following are a few examples from our Virtual Exhibit at: www.mennonitehistory.org/projects/postcards/



“Kroeker Family” (1915) SK,
Credit: Julie McNeice Collection (2008.013)



“A Happy Easter” (1922), KS
Credit: Leann Heinrichs Strobel
Collection (2008.044)



“Happy New Year” (1910), Russia
Credit: Judith Rempel Collection (2008.003)

go through their records and see what is deserving of preservation. We can assist with that preservation by preparing copies for individuals and families, and professionally storing the originals in our vault – free of all the risks listed above. Archival safe (acid-free, lignin free

and buffered) boxes and file folders are available for purchase at cost.

Additional information

MHSA Policy & Procedures Manual:
www.mennonitehistory.org/archives/policy_procedure_manual_3apr2003.pdf

Photo credits:

Rod Driediger ❖

How Albertan are you?

Can you trace your family back to the first families of Alberta? The 1891 Census of Canada in southern Alberta showed that 1% of all residents said they were Mennonite. Below is an index of the persons captured in that census sub-district who were recorded as Mennonite. If you can trace yourself back to them, please tell us about them—we can feature your ancestry on the MHSA website and in a future newsletter.

Name	Age	Birth Place	Name	Age	Birth Place
BRAND, Gearheart	3	MB	REMPEL, Gertrude	7	MB
BRAND, Jackson	25	Russia	REMPEL, Isaac	26	Russia
BRAND, Susana	23	Russia	REMPEL, Jacob	15	Russia
FRIESEN, A.W.	33	Russia	REMPEL, John	20	Russia
FRIESEN, Abram	7	Russia	REMPEL, Kornelius	11	MB
FRIESEN, Aganatha	6	Russia	REMPEL, Lena	46	Russia
FRIESEN, Aron	33	Russia	REMPEL, Lena	9	MB
FRIESEN, Cornelius	4	Russia	REMPEL, Peter	18	Russia
FRIESEN, Henry	2	Russia	SAVATZKI, Abraham	29	Russia
FRIESEN, Katherin	1	Russia	SAVATZKI, Anna	59	Russia
FRIESEN, Mary	31	Russia	SAVATZKI, Helena	25	Russia
FRIESEN, Mary	8	MB	SAVATZKI, Helena	3	MB
FRIESEN, Nezanitha	25	Russia	SAVATZKI, John	71	Russia
FRIESEN, William	3	MB	SAVATZKI, Peter	2	MB
JOHNSTON, Abraham	14	Russia	SAVATZKI, John	5	MB
JOHNSTON, Agatha	4	MB	WALL, Abraham	15	MB
JOHNSTON, Agatha	52	Russia	WALL, Abraham	15	MB
JOHNSTON, D.	52	Russia	WALL, Agaloi	50	Russia
JOHNSTON, David B.	28	Russia	WALL, Agaloi	7	MB
JOHNSTON, Evia	26	Russia	WALL, Agata	50	Prussia
JOHNSTON, Hlena	2	MB	WALL, Agata Jr.	7	MB
JOHNSTON, Jacob	22	Russia	WALL, Cornelios	8	MB
JOHNSTON, Katherina		Russia	WALL, Cornelius	8	MB
KLASSEN, Isaac	29	Russia	WALL, Fred	12	MB
MARTENS, Henry	33	Russia	WALL, Fred	12	MB
PETTKIEW, Anganether	56	Russia	WALL, Henry	37	Russia
PETTKIEW, Anganether	22	Russia	WALL, Henry	20	Russia
PETTKIEW, Anna	20	Russia	WALL, Henry	37	Prussia
PETTKIEW, Gerhard	57	Russia	WALL, Henry Jr.	20	Prussia
PETTKIEW, Katheria	18	Russia	WALL, Katarina	17	Russia
PETTKIEW, Mary	23	Russia	WALL, Katrinia	17	Prussia
REMPEL, Cornelius	11	MB	WEANS, Anna	24	Russia
REMPEL, Dietrick	5	MB	WEANS, John	29	Russia
REMPEL, George	48	Russia	WEANS, John	2	MB
REMPEL, George	24	Russia			