

SOME PENNER AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND DIARIES

Original Gothic Script diary of the oldest is in the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan Archives. This translation is placed on the MHSS Family digital website by permission of the contributor of the original to MHSS Archive. Obviously the translation was a challenge. To the best knowledge of the contributors other than their own family there is only one person living in the ninth decade that is alive in the text here presented; all other people whose names which are used have died. The texts cover a century of time that was rich in challenge and transition informing how Saskatchewan was settled. Doubtless there are a vast number of similar documents that would be good to present.

My Grandfather had preserved the autobiography of his father (my great grandfather) and then he wrote his own in German script. He copied this into seven large books, one for each of his children. When my parents died I came across this book. My love of reading and my curiosity prompted me to read it. It was hard as I had not read Gothic script for many years. I started relating some incidents and Wilma, my daughter- in- law, said, "Mom why don't you translate it so we can all read it. My husband, John J Gossen and I, Mary Agnes Gossen, nee Penner, together with a German-English dictionary went to work. It may have lost some value and meaning in the translation as can often be the case, but it is as accurate as we could make it.

Mary A Gossen (GRANDMA 5 #133542) died in 1996.

PETER PENNER I

Born near Lachendorf, Lower Saxony about 1759/60

Died in Schönhorst, Southern Ukraine, 1815

Married 1783 no other information except for one son

PETER PENNER II

Born Lachendorf, Germany 1787

died in Schönhorst, Southern Ukraine in 1835

Married in 1825 to

SARA FRIESEN

Born Lower Saxony July 15, 1790

Died in Schönhorst, Southern Ukraine August 7, 1854

ISSUE:

KATHARINA PENNER

ELIZABETH PENNER

SARAH PENNER

ABRAM PENNER

PETER PENNER III – the diary follows

AGANETHA PENNER

A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY PETER PENNER III

I was born Dec 17, 1829 in the colony CHORTITZ, Village Schönhorst, South Ukraine. My father's name is Peter Penner. He is a Deacon in the Chortitz church, a Godly trained man, honored by his family. My father went to be with the Lord in December 1835, when I was a boy of six. Before he died he expressed the wish that his brother, Henry Penner, church teacher, should bring me up, which he did. I went to my uncle as a foster son, in Chortitz in the winter of 1836. I grew fast and was a very active boy. My foster father did all he could to send me to the village school as much as possible. During this time I had three teachers, Peter Sawatsky, Jacob Dyck, and John Wieler. Since I found studying hard I had little knowledge of the course but I had to finish my six years of school. A new school system was started in certain areas in 1842. The government built a "Central School"; the purpose of this was to improve the standard of the village school. Six pupils were chosen from the church to attend this school for six years, with instruction to be given in German and Russian. I was chosen to go. I attended classes regularly, for five years with Henry Heese as teacher and one year with Henry Franz as teacher. I was in school for twelve years, and then graduated with a teacher training certificate.

I was only eighteen years old and since there was no position available I temporarily accepted a job as village secretary for four years which was detrimental to my career as well as it was financially. I worked for Jacob Isaac in Rosental for over a year. In 1848 I suffered most of the year from Tertian Fever (three day fever); then I went to Schönhorst and worked for Diedrich Rempel as village secretary for two years. When I was about twenty the Spirit of God spoke to me saying, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Even though I heard I did not listen to this, but followed the world. The loving spirit of God did not give up on me though and my Mother lovingly warned me too. I spent Sunday with my companions against my conscience and when I said my evening prayers I promised the Lord I would not do this again, but when Sunday came I was tempted again. I sighed, "Oh God, how will this end? You will be angry with me. You will lose patience when I don't keep my promises. Oh miserable wretch that I am, to whom shall I go?"

I had to come before the Lord again and again in shame and in sorrow. It did not enter my mind not to pray to God. I forced myself like this for three years. How difficult and sad it is when a child is so disobedient. Then in 1850 the idea came to me that I should join the church, but when I compared my life with the walk of Christ I was ashamed. All I can say is that it was the stirring of the Holy Spirit that helped me. I often prayed to God during the day as well as morning and evening. On bended knees I pleaded to God that He would prepare me to become a good member of His body and help me to listen and understand the catechism. I withdrew partly from my companions, but did not break away completely. I did not attend dances and sing worldly songs, but this was only so that I would appear without blemish publicly. I asked myself if this type of conversion was enough. I didn't think so, but during my studies I had developed a good understanding of the truth. What I needed was faith in salvation which one can only get through Jesus Christ. Finally I became a church member through Holy Baptism and later took part in Communion service and now came of age or had "grown up". I now began to

observe how the other church members lived so I gradually joined my old companions again.

I felt grown up and more important. On New Years Day of 1851 I moved to the village of Neuendorf to work for the village Magistrate, Jacob Loewen. I was farther away from my companions and I also had another purpose in mind since 1850. Since God had said, "It is not good that a man be alone," I decided to find a life partner. I did not have to search for long, since I had known for a some time which woman I wanted, but I had to be sure and also know if this was whom God wanted for me. I wanted to be sure of this for I did not want a daughter of Canaan but one of our own kind. I often prayed to God about this. Oh, I can't marvel enough that the Lord had so much patience with me and my weaknesses. The Lord gave me the woman I wanted. In May of 1851 Susanna Hildebrandt and I were married by my foster father and church teacher, Heinrich Penner. The following winter we lived with her parents; Isaac Hildebrandt and I made many household and kitchen furnishings. I was rid of my bad companions and now that I was married I had to learn to carry my share of the load as well. Marriage had many problems. In 1852 I got a job as teacher on the Island of Chortitz where I was to instruct in the German language. I knew without a doubt that if I wanted peace of mind I had to live a different life. I knew that I had had good religious parents and I wanted to be like them. Diligently I started to read God's word, the New Testament; John Arndt, and Friedrich Stark, were my daily manuals. One evening my wife and I went to visit our good friends, John Wiebes. Our conversation was not always just for the edification of our spiritual life. The discussion of God's word was not custom and that was regrettable, yet John Wiebe told me a certain Jacob Janzen from Schönwiese, a former church teacher, told his congregation that they should keep on praying and calling on the Lord and according to His word, the Lord would answer these pleas. This encouraged me to put this into practice at the first opportunity, which I did in a rather weak and childish fashion. If God's thoughts had been human He would have scorned me and not answered my prayers, but God knows our hearts and our sincerity and He says He will answer before we call and that has been my experience too. His mercy became great to me and He gave me the spirit of devotion and prayer. Wasn't this a tie between father and son? Isn't this an anticipation of eternal life?

One day we wanted to visit my parents and brothers and sisters so I walked over the field to get my horse from the valley. I called on my Heavenly Father out of the depth of my heart and I received such a feeling of love and devotion for Him that I almost forgot that I was on earth. Such joy could not last since we are only human and imperfect. If I had kept on this way I would soon have had a very good opinion of myself and who knows what I might have done. The Lord took that holier than thou feeling away and I realized that I must struggle and pray without end. In this way the Lord led me through sunny and cloudy periods and sometimes it seemed my Jesus was asleep, my ship was shipwrecked.

In 1855 the board of our church had a meeting to provide the colony churches with better teachers and the result was that I was to be transferred to the church school at Schönhorst. It appeared the District Representatives did not have the meek and gentle nature of Jesus. Naturally this did not have good results, but the church reluctantly let me go rather than have the ill will of the government who are the servants of our Lord, and the people of Schönhorst unwillingly accepted us. In 1856 my family and I moved to Schönhorst (we

were a family of four) for two years. Here I was elected to the position of chanter (vorsanger) of the church. The Lord spoke strongly to me and said, "Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He is near". I listened to Him in a way and found Him too. He let me feel such joy for Him that I jumped for joy and sang His praises and I could hardly contain myself in the church and at work and sometimes when I looked at the world situation I cried, "Lord I wish I could be with you". I had such great longing for this that I cried for joy and felt that I was with Him in spirit.

One night when I was doing the evening chores during the Christmas season of 1857, I got down on my knees and prayed to God and I saw the Lord as a little child. I was really comforted and my faith was strengthened. The prophet Daniel prayed to God three times a day but we can appear before the Lord every hour. Wouldn't the Angels in Heaven sing for joy? It is God's gift to be able to call on Him, but nevertheless my nature remained human and even though I believed in the Holy Spirit and things looked bright, there were other times when doubts appeared and the vision of my Lord faded. The Bible was quite familiar to me but not as clear as it should have been and this weakened my faith. However I searched for the Lord as best I could and got a better understanding of the truth of God's word which says "He who seeks shall find and to he who knocks it shall be opened". I read and searched every day, sometimes more, sometimes less, for this is the life of the soul. Yet sometimes this does not seem to be enough. Maybe the Lord is just testing us and just wants us to spend more time in prayer.

As I mentioned before we were accepted reluctantly at Schönhorst. A new District Representative came and claimed he had the right to hire a different teacher and I was released from my job. Since I was devoted to this profession I could not stay out of it. My superiors were very helpful. In the spring of 1858 we moved to Neuhorst and took care of a small school of 70 children as compared to 120 in Schönhorst. Naturally my pay was much less and so I only stayed one year. The feeling towards me here was much the same as at Schönhorst.

Early in the year the church at Neuendorf approached me and offered me a much better salary so I did not hesitate long. In the spring of 1859 we moved to Neuendorf where I took care of a larger school than at Schönhorst. So I changed from place to place which was not good for my reputation, instead of being praised I was scorned. It was a comfort that the Lord punishes gossipers and it was a consolation to me that everything was in the Lord's hands. Even though it appeared that I had forgotten the Lord at times, He never forgot me. In His great mercy He always knocked at my door even though I did not listen, but there were times when I did acknowledge Him. The Lord is merciful. I prayed and studied and searched and things became clearer and I grew in wisdom and knowledge; I purchased reference materials. While in Schönhorst I acquired "Lagatzki's Schalskastlein" and in Neuendorf I had bought "Friedrich Stark" and my New Testament which together with my own study books I used every day and this activity I combined with prayer, for I believed that reading God's word without prayer could be harmful. Many people read God's word year after year and do not grow in God's grace. Even though we know God's word from childhood we must ask God for understanding. Then I found a book, a gift from my mother, called, "A Treasure Chest for Believers," which spoke much of righteousness, which we have through Jesus Christ. While reading and especially during one communion Service in 1862 the Lord gave me the saving faith and

the whole plan of redemption was so clear to me and all doubts were gone. It seemed to be written in large gold letters and brightly lit up.

In church it seemed everyone should be so happy that we could know their thoughts. Moreover the Lord appeared to me one evening in my yard at Neuendorf so I had no doubts that it was Jesus speaking, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and sup with him." I felt His goodness and mercy so many times that I can't name them all and I am not worthy of this, but I do know that I am His child. I received this right through Jesus Christ and yet I was not without doubts and fears. When I looked back at my unclean walk, I knew that daily, I had to try to cleanse my life. I thank God that He accepts our prayers through Jesus Christ. The Lord has helped me so much that I take this verse for my Motto, "Happy is the man whose sins are not added unto him." Help me Lord that I will not disgrace you, who has accepted me in my sinfulness. Daily I fail you. Oh Lord! When will this end? Save me O Lord. Amen.

Cares, fears and hopes go hand in hand and death will separate them. Christ is my life and I am not ashamed to die today for Christ. I'd rather die today than tomorrow for Him. I wonder what my heavenly inheritance would be? What a change it would be to leave this troublesome world and enter Eternal Heaven. My dear wife, within three months, became bedridden with a strange but very serious illness, October 7th, 1862. Before her illness she had a hard battle to fight, for Satan tempted her to commit suicide. But the Lord stood by her and helped her to victory, for it is written that Satan who tempted Jesus left Him for a time. Long before her death the Lord had anchored her ship of faith and made her strong and promised her the glories of Heaven so that she had fewer doubts during her illness and finally the Lord took her to His Heavenly Home on January 8th, 1863.

Several days before her death, my wife gave birth to twin boys. The Lord blessed her richly during this ordeal and we know that she is with the Blessed Lord, deservedly so and is serving God before His throne. I am yearning for this too, but the Lord spoke the same words to me as He spoke to His Mother, "Your hour has not yet come." Our two little sons, Abram and Henry went to Eternity with her. Very soon after my wife's death I realized I needed a housekeeper right away, I still had three little children at home, so I had Mrs. Peter Wiebe stay with me for a while. She was a devout Christian widow who took good care of my household. She was companionship and good company for me but she was not my wife. My greatest wish now was to find a wife! Daily I prayed to God to help me to find the right one, a Christian and from our community, but I also wanted one with whom I could live in peace and love and follow my Lord, but I did not want to be chained with a ball and chain. My dear Heavenly Father soon showed me the right one, a young maiden, daughter of Jacob Braun in Neuendorf whom I married April 14, 1864. I was still a school teacher in colony Neuendorf and I was also chanter in our church.

God's ways are mysterious and unfathomable. Not only had I been a shepherd of lambs for Jesus Christ for 13 years but now the Lord asked me to shepherd His sheep when on October 14, 1865, I was elected church leader (pastor) on a "donnerstag" (Thursday business meeting) by a vote of 51, after the church had prayed for God's will to be expressed. I cannot describe how I felt that now that I had to be a "Light to the World"

and a salt of the earth and admonish the congregation to be followers of Christ as I was. This was quite a responsibility, but I had to do it. It did not enter my mind to flee like Jonah, but I looked at it sensibly. The Lord helps the weak to be strong, I reasoned, and he who needs wisdom must go to God in prayer, was a reminder given to me lovingly by Elder Gerhard Dyck; so, accepted this task in faith. I must admit that for a long time I had been having thoughts along this line, about leading the flock, and about how I would achieve this through prayer and study. I had been attending services in God's House regularly and very often when Saturday came I looked forward to the Lord's Day and I was so happy when I awoke Sunday and knew that I could go to the House of the Lord, that I couldn't describe it. Sometimes I thought it must be like children feel when they awake on Christmas Morning full of anticipation and happiness about the gifts they will receive. We would go to church and listen to the sermon with reverence.

I wasn't always free of thoughts like, if I was standing up there I would explain salvation so clearly to the congregation that they would have to accept the Lord there and then. But who was I to have such ideas that might never happen. Often when I was alone I imagined I was in the pulpit preaching and I'd think, if this was written out it would be a good sermon. I don't know why I felt this way, but the time came when it became my job.

While visiting with my brother Abram Penner, at Henry Wiebe's, who was married to our sister, on September 3rd, 1867, and who lived on land owned by the Grand Duke, we had a discussion about God's word and His Mercy with "Amtsbruder" (colleague) John Wiebe and about how the Lord had revealed Himself, how often and in what manner and how often we had been blessed. The Lord let me see that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He will also be there. If the door is open we shall be filled with Heavenly Glory again and again. During this discussion I saw the door of His Mercy open, 'Oh! glorious door', which is seldom found and soon vanishes. I must say, 'Oh! unfit vessel that I am', not even capable of protecting my own faith. My faith seemed to fade so quickly that the sunny rays seemed foggy, but man thinks and God leads (German idiom).

Everything we have was strengthened so much in my faith that I almost felt I was with Him already. I thought He would soon take me home to Heaven with Him. This was a taste of the future. What can separate us from the love of God? Neither death nor Hell nor Satan can, for those who believe in Him and that He was crucified and died and rose up from the dead for us, will always have Him with them. My life is hidden through Christ in God.

In the summer of 1876, as I was going to take a nap one afternoon I thought, "Is anything surer than my faith in God?" Nothing in this world is as sure as Jesus. I was so filled with the Holy Spirit that I could not remain in bed. I sat up and thought of the love of God and how He had revealed Himself to me and I thought of the verse in the New Testament, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11 verse 1; which made my faith and joy in the Lord stronger. The Lord confirmed my faith more and more and I learned to know Him better. He taught me the length and breadth of His love as well as the height and depth.

I had to learn this step by step, while my consuming illness increased and it became more difficult to breath. Several times I had very bad attacks, but I put my complete trust in His will and He gave me faith so that my suffering seemed lighter and easier to bear. One morning, December 9th, 1882, I had such a bad coughing attack and my breath was so short that I thought the Lord was taking my breath away. And then what? The end of my life? Yes, I felt the Lord had me on the edge of eternity, as though the earth was on one side and Heaven on the other side, and the Lord could have asked me to step into Eternity. I thought, "Will the Lord ask me to come or to stay?" If I had to stay, then my time had not yet come. It is such a joy and blessing to have a Savior and to feel secure in Him. I had wanted to die, but now my suffering was eased. Soon after, one evening as I was sitting in my bed I was very short of breath, but the Lord seemed so near to me. Suddenly I saw a vision of a figure with the head of a sheep. I thought of a picture of my Lord, but it was one of Satan's lies, an apparition which spoke, "How can you be so joyful? You can do that with your own power also. You are imagining that this joy comes from God." "Should a person who is suffering look forward to death?" But I was not afraid during this temptation. I told Satan in the name of Jesus, (shaking my finger at him) that he should hurry away and should not tempt any more people and the lying pig (verkel, { in low German}) started to talk in audible words so that my wife, who was asleep said, "What did you say?" I said, "I'm chasing Satan away. He was here tempting me with lies."

[These are the words my blessed dead father wrote. He lived two more years after this and got weaker and weaker. He had no pleasure in writing any more. He died December 3rd, 1883 and was buried in NIKOLAIPOLE, JESIKOF CHURCH CEMETARY, SOUTH RUSSIA.]

This was recopied by his son Peter A. Penner IV in September, 1918 at Laird, Saskatchewan Canada. This was then translated from German script to English by great granddaughter Mary Agnes (Penner) Gossen in September 1969 at Hepburn, Saskatchewan, Canada, fifty one years after it was recopied by her grandfather.

A SHORT AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF PETER A PENNER IV

I was born on the Island Chortitz in South Russia (now Ukraine) on June 4th, 1852, where my father was a school teacher. The first memories of my innocent years are very happy ones. My parents were devout Christians. When I prayed at my Mother's knees, at night, I was very happy. In 1856 my parents moved to the village Schönhorst, where my father taught for two years. Then in 1858 they moved to Neuhorst. During these years I lost my innocence, and I became unhappy, probably the result of disobedience. I was also teased by the school children, so I revenged myself and bit John Wiebe's arm. I remember especially that I became very unhappy and did not have joy any more in praying with my mother. I awoke at night with bad dreams and I worried and feared all evening about the next night, so I did not want to go to bed and I cried and resisted going to bed. Satan had troubled my innocent heart and thus I remember my unhappiness, but it did not stop here.

In 1858 my parents moved to Neuendorf, where again my father was a school teacher. I also had to attend all classes and also grew bigger and was influenced more and more by the older pupils and the sinful ideas grew and if I'd had the freedom to do as I pleased, as

many children had, I, no doubt would have become a "good for nothing". The urge was there to enjoy the pleasures of this world but my dear father who was a child of God did not let me run wild, but disciplined and admonished me and showed me God's way. I could not leave the yard without permission.

On January 8th, 1863 my dear mother died and I got a step-mother and this changed things. I became more disobedient and it sometimes almost turned to wildness, so that even I felt ashamed. My father did not spare the rod. Often before he punished me, I had to kneel down with him and he prayed in a loud voice to God and told the dear Savior that I had been so disobedient and now he must punish me with the strap and he asked the Lord to give me a different heart. This prayer did much more for me than the strapping, and so I grew up. Even though I attended school every day and helped father with the smaller children and took Religious Instruction three times a week, it seemed to have no effect on me. I went from one sin to another.

In 1869 my parents settled in Jesikof, where the "mother colony" had bought land. My father reluctantly gave up his teaching because of poor health. Here I started worrying about my sinful life and I thought, "What will happen if you keep this up?" With my worries about my sinful heart and the hard work that must be done in a new settlement and which I, as a teacher's son, was not accustomed to, I almost despaired. The Devil who had tempted me to sin said, "Now you have sinned so greatly there is no help for you and of others can be in Hell, than so can you. Why don't you kill yourself? Then everything will be over." I was tempted and almost fell into Satan's trap, but God who does not want the death of a sinner, but rather wants them to accept salvation, intervened and so I got more courage and life went on. There was not much talk of conversion in those days, only that one must become a better person. I wanted to do this and often made up my mind to become a better person, but how was this possible with my own power? Thus year after year I sank deeper into sin instead of becoming better.

In the winter of 1871 I came to Anton Loewen, (he was married to my mother's sister) to learn "Stelmacherei" (tinsmithing) for the second year. After New Year 1872 I heard my comrades were joining church in spring, or become of age, or grow up (groat vore), as we said. I wanted to do this too so I started to read God's word, which I had not done up to now. When I went home for seeding time my father and I went to Petersdorf, to the mill, some fifty "Werst" away. Now was the opportunity to tell my plans to my father, who was also the minister here. My father looked at me with big eyes and said, "Peter, you are not saved (or converted), you must be saved first or it is of no value."

I told my father, with tears in my eyes, that I wanted to be saved. Since I promised my father to read my Bible earnestly and pray often he agreed to consider my request. My comrade Gerhard Giesbrecht and I read the Bible together and discussed it often, but it did not enter my mind that I should open my heart to someone and I did not feel the need. In the church we had to recite the catechism which was easy for me because I had attended school till I was 18 and had listened to students memory work every Friday in 4 or 5 classes. Then we went to the church at Neuendorf to be baptized. It became very important to me on the way - my father had often spoken to me of the importance of baptism and did so this day as well. There were about 100 candidates for baptism on our knees waiting and during this time this ceremony became very important to me. I begged

the Lord with tears for a sign that He had accepted me. When the Elder came to me I felt as though something wonderful was happening to me and I detested sin and the former youthful companions no longer interested me. I prayed often and read God's word and felt I lived in companionship with God. I avoided my companions as I had promised to serve my Lord.

Next winter I apprenticed again at a different instructor - Gerhard (George) Sawatsky in Eichenfeld and I lived at his house. This was a Sunday gathering place for many people. At first I had no urge to join them but I was urged by them and tempted so that during the winter I joined them and their activities but I kept away from drinking, which happened occasionally. Spiritually I was on the down-grade which is much easier than moving upward, but I often had times where I was at a stand still spiritually because the Lord drew near to me and asked, "Where are you?" Then I realized that I was doing wrong and I prayed that the Lord should save me. I also had the wish to get married and I had learned to know and love a young woman in our group but she was not yet a church member or "become of age" as the saying went. I prayed much for her that the Lord would make her suitable for the work. The Lord has to listen to many foolish prayers, but He answers some of them.

We waited until fall and on October 26, 1872 we had our wedding, Aganetha Block and I! I prayed often that the Lord should grant us a happy marriage and the message always came back to me, "Tell your bride who and what you are!" Oh no, I thought, and again no and kept it this way until the winter of 1874. We were living at my wife's parents, Jacob Block's home in Eichenfeld and I did the chores and made a wagon shaft and undercarriages (under wagons). The Lord came near to me again and I became alarmed and fearful about myself because I had betrayed my loved one, my wife, for I had not told her everything that was in my heart. I often prayed to God for forgiveness. One evening, as I prayed to God, (I always prayed aloud when I was alone as I'd always heard my father do it this way) my mother-in-law heard me and went to my young wife and said, "Come, lets go to the shed and get Peter, before he loses his sanity -- he's carrying on so."

My loved one and her mother came out to where I was, hand in hand and when they opened the door I jumped up from my knees and my darling said, "Peter, come in." I agreed and she took my hand and we followed her mother, who went ahead with a lantern. While we were still in the barn, I grasped my wife's hand and asked her to wait. Her mother disappeared with the light. I held my wife in my arms and cried on her shoulder. She asked me what was the matter and I told her that I was a very bad person. She tried to comfort me and said it couldn't be that bad. I told her that I had betrayed her and had not told her everything and cried again. She begged me to tell her my trouble and I asked if she would forgive all if I told her and she agreed and so I told her everything that was in my heart. She forgave me and so I said, "God has forgiven me too, so let us pray together and thank God that I am rid of my burden that only god and I knew." We knelt together for the first time for prayer and thanked God that I had been able to confide in my wife and I prayed loud enough that she could hear it all. I was happy and at peace now and this had never happened to me before. So our life went on! We had no companionship with believers.

It was practically unheard of here to read and discuss God's word - that was for preachers,

but not for young people. As time went on I was rid of my burden but after a while, I lost my happy peaceful feelings, even though I went to church regularly every Sunday. Beginning of the month of June, 1874, we started our own home. We lived in the summer kitchen at Jacob Andres, in modest circumstances like all young couples. On July 27, the Lord gave us a son whom we named Peter. In 1875 we bought a "Pachtswirtschaft" (leased a farm) for 450 Ruble. The first year we had a crop failure. We each had 40 Desentin (1 desentin = 2.75 acres) and the rent was 1 Ruble, 50 Kopecs per desentin. I could not pay my rent from the crops I hired out as a school teacher at 30 Ruble for 4 months, so I earned half my rent. That was a hard beginning. Since there lived mostly young people in this village, life went on quite merrily. It didn't take long and I went along too. I wanted to have prestige in the village, but the dear Lord did not give up. He knocked and very loudly too, as that year He took our 10 month son through death on June 4th, and this drove me to prayer again.

The human heart is contrary and faint-hearted and I soon forgot and went back to my former life. Yet I went to church regularly and was "Chanter" (vorsanger) in the church by appointment and was a pillar of the church so I felt secure and life went on. In 1878 there was a revival in Nickolaifeld where my parents lived and this inspired me again and I had to change my ways again. I was saved and if there were converted people in my home village, I belonged to them too. So now I started morning and evening devotions in my house and prayed out loud at the table with my wife. We found three more couples in the village who were interested and we had Bible studies together with prayer which was very new at that time. I requested that we pray out loud. I felt very happy. One evening after Bible study at Claas Friesens I discovered that I had a lot of ego and self righteousness, especially after Mrs. Frank Heinrichs pointed this out to me, and realized that I could not rely on myself, alone. So one day I went to see my Aunt - Mrs. Anton Loewen in Jesikof (formerly Franzfeld). I had spent two winters here apprenticing in tinsmithing and felt it was my second home.

Uncle Anton Loewen was a minister and we soon talked about the revival and also how we rededicated ourselves in Gerhardstal. My uncle said this was very good but that he had heard that I was praying out loud. I told him this was true and asked if he thought that this was wrong. He told me if I did it when I was alone it was good, but if there were others present, it was showing spiritual pride and worse yet, I had asked others to do this as well. He admonished me not to do this again. This spiritual pride was very dangerous, he told me, and could lead me astray! He caused me to think about it, but I held to my way because I definitely felt it was the right way. I also found out that my first communion, when I "became of age" by joining the church, was not right. God makes no covenant with anyone who has a bad conscience and who does not cleanse his heart. I was convinced that if I wanted to follow god's word, I must also be baptized, but how or when I was to conquer this hurdle was not clear. The same day I also visited my parents.

My father had also heard that we in Gerhardstal were praying out loud, for, we believed that if poor sinners cry to God and then praise Him and speak in tongues, not only the whole world talks about it, but the angels are happy too. My father was happy as well, but he was also worried whether praying aloud in public could lead to "Spiritual Pride", because this practice was almost unheard of at this time and in this place. Then my father said, "Peter, you wouldn't leave our church and be baptized somewhere else, would you?"

He said he had been a believer for so long and felt the need to share his concern that spiritual pride was a dangerous thing and as I stated before, I was feeling uneasy about it myself, so I thought there must be some truth in it. I promised my father that I would not do it any more. The next time we met for Bible study in our village I couldn't pray out loud. When my friends asked why, I told them the preachers thought it was spiritual pride and had warned me of the dangers and so I stopped, but that we could have our discussions and everyone could pray silently.

Even in our house, I prayed together with my wife, but silently and on finishing my prayer, I said "Amen", and asked her to say Amen too. She replied that she didn't know why she should say Amen when she didn't even know what I had prayed for in the first place. Now I thought what a fool I'd been and what folly it is when we listen to people instead of God. We had some brethren visit us (those who had left the church) and we also visited them and liked them, and through this our faith grew even less, though the Spirit urged me, I resisted and my spiritual life went down hill again. I was convinced that I could not go on this way and that I must follow Jesus Christ alone and I should join the Mennonite Brethren Church and this was only possible through baptism by immersion in the water. I had felt happy when I was baptized by sprinkling and then the words came to me "They came and confessed their sins and were baptized" Matthew 3 v6 and Mark 1 v5. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in a sinful heart but I resisted until I felt I had lost all the faith I'd ever had. I would have to live a different life or I would be lost eternally. This all started when I had listened to people more than God and this had gone on for about six years. I had neglected prayer because I knew if I did not want to give my life wholly to God, there was no use in praying! I also knew that I should fellowship with Christians for no man can serve two masters.

Again I cried to God in fear and anguish. Then the Lord became stern with me. We had some young stock, but we lost our only cow and then just before harvest three horses died in one week. Then I felt the Lord was speaking to me and punishing me because I was not following Him. Because of all this and other reasons as well, I was deeply in debt. I convinced myself that if I stayed in this village with these people I could not find salvation. So I decided to sell my lease and move my family back to my home village of Nickolaifeld. There were several other Brethren there and it would be easier to rededicate myself. We also started morning and evening devotions again and had fellowship with believers again. This was in the spring of 1884. It seemed that all of my resolutions were of no avail and I still remained the old sinner I always had been. We lived in an adjoining building at Peter Schroeder's and as a hired hand I had to work with a Russian fellow during seeding time as I had only two horses. After this was finished we wanted to start our own home again.

I had bought a house from Abram D Welk and moved it on to the plot of land which the village parish had allotted to me. I had very little feed so I asked the council if I could pasture my horses with the village herd overnight and I received permission so I took my horses there one Saturday evening to the herdsman. Sunday morning I went to the horse corral to see how my horses were doing. The horses were brought in every morning for inspection and in case someone wanted to use them. My horses were missing and so I had to start searching. I went to my mother (my father had died 6 months earlier) and borrowed a horse and rode all day looking for my horses, but found nothing. I even rode

to our former home in the hope they would be there, but no luck. I had to get back home for the night and on the way I felt a deep depression come over me. The Lord's Spirit had been admonishing me all day and finally I got off my horse and cried to the Lord for forgiveness. I also asked Him to help me find my horses and promised to serve Him again and do everything He would teach me.

Soon after this I passed through a Russian village (Sarayen); I met some of the villagers and asked them if they'd seen a pair of horses. One said he'd seen two horses during the night and that they had gone south. I rode south to the village of Reinfeld where I found my horses in the village herd. How happy I was when I found them and now I remembered my promise to the Lord! Now I saw what lay ahead of me - the scorn - the scoffing if I followed the Lord. It seemed I could not make a decision, but what if I let the voice of the Lord go unheard? The Spirit told me that the Lord calls several times and if the call goes unanswered, the heart is hardened and the soul is eternally lost. This was to be a real battle, with Satan on the other side. Finally I received the victory and opted to be on the Lord's side.

Earlier I had lost all assurance of faith and forgiveness of sins, but I confided in a brother from the church and we read I Peter 1 -9 and I found it possible to believe in salvation and forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ again. It was much harder than before as Satan had developed a stronger hold on me, but finally I achieved full victory over sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. We had fellowship with believers and attended services from then on. In October 1884 we applied for baptism in the Mennonite Brethren Church. My wife had also received salvation during this time. Since I had not been steady in my spiritual life and was not well established in my faith, the church decided that we should wait a while before being baptized. That was quite a shock for me and I went into the garden under the trees in deep discouragement and thought everything over. I didn't know which way to turn and I felt the rod of punishment over me and then it clearly came to me; God's word says in Jeremiah 2 v 19 - "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee and thy backsliding shall reprove thee -". Well, if this was so, I would take this as a consolation because I had doubly deserved this admonition.

Satan also had his say and told me, " Well, if the Brethren think this way, you might as well stop going to church." Go backwards? No thank you that would be of no use at all. Then my dear wife said we should go to Eichenfeld to her parents, but I refused, since we had stopped there in the morning and told them our plan and my father-in-law had said we needed a good strapping! What, and now go there. Oh no and again no! I told her that we should go to the baptism at the Dnieper River. We went and only one lady was baptized. On the way home we had a long discussion. That evening there was a service in Franzfeld which was only one werst away. To stay home and not grow spiritually would mean backsliding. I went to church somewhat unwillingly. It was dark and I stepped off the road and knelt and prayed to God for courage and strength to have faith.

I went to the service which was held in a private home. When I entered it seemed as though no one saw me. I was angered but inwardly cried. I went out behind a straw pile and knelt and prayed again. When I went in again and sat down near the door, a dear Brother, John Loewen, from our village came and sat with me and showed interest. He told me that he was glad that I had come to the service. This gave me more faith and

courage and I was happier. I saw the hand of God in this and my faith grew stronger, I went to church regularly and was happy that winter and even though I had temptations, the Lord's mercy helped me. On April 28, 1885 we applied for baptism again and this time we were accepted and with several others were baptized in the Dnieper River, at Jesikof, a Russian village in South Russia (now Ukraine -1996). Now we were also accepted as members in the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Since that time my faith grew stronger and I had the assurance that my sins had been washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ. In spite of temptations I could always go to my Lord for forgiveness of my sins. I had many blessed times with my Savior and also fellowship with believers at the Sunday services. I was also appointed as choir director, and was blessed in this work. We often prayed for my singers after choir practice and asked that more might be saved. As far as I know now, they are all saved - praise God!

("Saved" in the Mennonite Brethren faith in the 19th and 20th century, means a personal acceptance and public profession of the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, came to earth and died to atone for the sins of all who believe in Him – editorial note.)

We were quite poor and deep in debt. My job in the slack season was to haul loads for other people and in the winter I started to do some tinsmithing and thus tried to make a living. I also farmed (I leased 25 desenten, 7 miles away and paid 7 ruble per desenten for rent.) and the Lord blessed my farming and other work and my credit became real good. I'd had no credit when I'd first come here. The first winter when I'd wanted to charge 20 pounds of Rye flour from the mill owner, Isaac Friesen, he had refused me. Another time I'd had no luck when minister Henry Rempel had refused to charge 5 Ruble worth of lumber -- hard times! The Lord was kind and after 4 or 5 years things were changed so that I could borrow 100 ruble for a short time from the wealthier ones. One motto says, "Credit is better than gold!"

We lived for nine years in Nickolaifeld and enjoyed fellowship with believers in the church services. Then the land I had leased was sold and if I had wanted to lease it again I would have had to pay 10 ruble per desentin and the land was very weedy at that. I had been sent to Ekaterinaslav (Dnieperpetrovsk 1917) several times by brother William Dyck to work out passports for those who wanted to move to America. During 1890 - 91 many families went to America, and I was tempted to go too. In 1891 my sister Helen, Mrs. Aaron Guenter, went to America and I became more interested and I started planning, but kept it to myself.

In fall, during threshing, we were all on the threshing floor (it was all done with threshing stones) when I said to my wife, "Listen! What would you say if I told you I've been thinking of going to America? We can't get more land here and our children are getting older. What opportunity have we got here? She then told me that she had been thinking of it too. I asked her why she hadn't told me and she said she hadn't been quite sure. I told her that if she felt the same way the Lord must be leading us and we should go in and pray to God together and ask His blessing. After we had prayed we went back to work.

We discussed it with our children; the oldest were 14 and 15 years old. They were happy with this idea and seemed willing to go to America. There were many problems and of

course we were saddened by our farewells from our brethren in the church where we had received so many blessings. Saying good-bye to our brothers and sisters and also my wife's old father wasn't easy as he was 64 years old, and we knew we would never see him again on this earth, but we kept on with our plans.

We left Ekaterinaslav on April 27, 1892. We were a family of 10. After we had sold everything, we had 900 ruble in cash. Our trip had to be paid out of this. The Lord gave grace and we remained healthy and had very little sea sickness. We came to our new goal - Gretna, Manitoba, Canada, on June 2nd, 1892. We were in good health and stayed at my Aunt's, Mrs. William Rempel. We had 200 ruble (which was \$100) left; very little to start a new home in a new country. I rented a house one mile out of town and took my family there- bought a cow - flour for bread and some kitchen utensils and the most necessary furniture etc. We hired out the two oldest children for a small monthly wage. I did carpenter work for \$1.35 per day.

My aim was to earn money now. I went to work and came to very rough people and the biggest jesters I have ever seen. I was dragged along and things got out of hand, especially at meal times. The Lord, who knows and sees all, can't let things go on like that for He says in Isaiah 49 v16, " Behold I have graven thee in the palms of my hands-" so the Lord intervened and directed me, for He says in Isaiah 55vs 8-9, " For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." After I had worked 14 days I was called home as my wife was very sick with "nervous fever" (extreme anxiety or panic attack, agoraphobia?) and had to stay in bed for 14 weeks and I also became ill and was in bed for 4 weeks with terrible headaches, but took care of my wife as well. My ailment was 'nervous fever' as well and finally I couldn't look after my wife any longer. Nobody could visit us, or help us because Gretna, Manitoba was quarantined because of an outbreak of small pox.

Our friends all lived in Gretna and finally someone had an opportunity to bring our daughter home to take care of us. She had been working at my cousin John Wall in Gnadental. How dreary and alone we felt in such circumstances. We were used to living near a church where we listened to God's word and could fellowship with friends every day. Now we were alone among strangers and only knew George and John Wielers, and they were three miles away. I prayed often that if it was God's will, He would change our lot. Finally, the brethren George Wiebe and Peter Wedel came to visit us; they were later missionaries in Africa. Our loneliness subsided. Oh! Those were blessed hours, for they were the first of our denomination to visit us since we were in America and we can't forget the lovely songs they sang for us. Such visits are recorded in Heaven! When the quarantine was lifted in Gretna, several of our best friends came and visited us. We appreciated especially the visits of Br. William Rempel and Reverend Nickolai Toews, who also prayed with us - what precious times for us - sick and in a strange land, and then to hear intercession for us. My Uncle Isaac Hildebrand from Waldheim, Manitoba, 34 miles away, came and hired our Jacob, 15 years old, for \$25.00 per month, and he also had a good plan for us. He wanted to rent 80 acres of land to us for 1\6 crop share and to do road work for the municipality in lieu of taxes. He also had a good house and a large barn for rent for \$1.00 per month, which was a good offer for us newcomers.

When my wife got better and could get out of bed, I was shocked to notice that her mind had suffered, but thank God, she recovered again. As soon as she could stand the trip we moved to Waldheim, Manitoba. Now there was fall plowing to be done, but we had no horses or plow. My dear uncle then bought me 2 oxen and I borrowed a plow in Morden. In spring I bought two horses and was able to seed 80 acres. The Good Lord blessed our acres and in fall we harvested 900 bushels of wheat. In the year 1895 we already had 1500 bushels of wheat and we ventured out and bought a 160 acre farm for \$2100 from Gerhard Heppner. Now we really had to take hold and we seeded 120 acres of wheat, 21 acres of oats and some barley, with high hopes, but here also the Lord's thoughts were different than ours.

The grain looked very promising and was nearly ready for harvesting when on August 2, 1896 we had a terrible hail storm in our area. We were completely hailed out, so I didn't harvest a single bushel. I had never experienced anything like this and when I saw the damage next morning I went to the garden alone and cried, I cried to God for understanding, and then thought of Psalm 119 v 91, "According to your ordinances they (all things happen, and Heaven and earth) still stand firm; all things serve you." Well, if these occurrences were according to the word of the Lord, then I had to be quiet and accept what had happened. We went to work immediately with three one-share plows and plowed as much down as we could and when harvest time came my children and I went to work with a threshing crew and we earned over \$300 and so we made it through another year. However the Lord does not forsake His own and in 1897 and 1898 we had good years and thus we got along in our daily life, but the Lord also blessed us spiritually.

Our four oldest children got saved. On June 29, 1894, Agnes and Jacob were baptized and accepted into the Mennonite Brethren Church and September 4, 1898 Anna and Peter were baptized on their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and also accepted in the same church. We were glad and thankful that the Lord had answered our prayers and now our prayer was that He keep them faithful.

Since our sons were getting older and also wanted land of their own, they now urged us to move to Saskatchewan and take up homesteads. Our son Jacob had been there in the fall of 1897, and he liked it so I went to look it over in the fall of 1898. We decided that if I liked it, I would sign up for some land then and there. There was lots of land open here, and good land too. I found good land and ordered four quarter sections of land, one for myself, one for our son-in-law C. C. Enns, the third for our son Jacob and the fourth for our son Peter. We moved to Saskatchewan in February of 1899. We had two rail car loads of cattle, machinery and household goods. We moved in with our friend Gerhard Heppner, for about three months, until we had a house built on our homestead.

We rented some land from old Henry Epp and seeded as much as we could, so that we would have enough to feed our family. Again the Lord's thoughts differed from ours, the grain grew well, but we had so much cold weather and rain that it could not ripen. We got enough feed for the cattle, but not for bread. So we had to get our son-in-law, C. C. Enns, to bring us flour from Manitoba. They moved to Saskatchewan a year later than we did.

All beginnings are hard, and during our first winter in Saskatchewan, (which at that time was still the Northwest Territories) on March 7, 1900, our daughter Mary died of "galloping consumption 'tuberculosis'". She had reached the age of 11 years, 8 months, and 26 days. This was a reminder from the Father to the son. I've always believed that any circumstances were the Lord's leading and reminding me not to stray too far from Him. In our life material things were always somewhat difficult. Over a period of a few years, seven horses died, the crops were small and wheat was cheap. We had our bread, so we could not complain too much, but we always had to cope with debts. The good Lord knew how to keep me humble. He knew what was good for me, and what gentled me, but I've often felt that if I called on His name He would hear me.

I now want to mention a special answer to one of my prayers! In the fall of 1902, the Lord allowed our youngest daughter, Susie, who was 10 years old, to fall sick with diphtheria and it seemed that her death was near. I called on the Lord, when I was alone in the granary. I had little faith and when I went back to her bed and couldn't find a glimmer of hope, I went back again to the granary, and called on the name of the Lord, asking Him to make her well and this time He heard me. I went back comforted and full of joyous faith in my heart that she would live. She started improving immediately and she recovered. When I was at a loss in my daily problems, I always called on my Savior and He helped me. I'd say to Him, "Let be what will, but don't let me, as your child, be disgraced before the world." The Lord was merciful and answered my prayer.

Our son Isaac was our 'standby' in our farm work, but the time came when he had to start working for himself. Isaac and Abram had taken up homesteads, six miles North of Langham (the land descriptions were - 4 miles West of Mennon, I. I. Penner - SW 14 - 40 - W3rd. Abe Penner NW 14 - 40 - W3rd, R.M. of Laird, # 404, Saskatchewan.). We had a small auction sale on February 15, 1906 and we sold three horses and some livestock and some other articles. Now we farmed together with Isaac as he had horses and I still had four horses. I was only farming one quarter section (160 acres) and had fifty acres in summer fallow. The Lord blessed our acres and we got 1945 bushels.

Isaac got married and moved away and Abram had no urge to farm if he couldn't work together with Isaac, He wanted to go to the town of Rosthern and work there in the winter and in summer he had to live on his farm to get his homestead papers. So I was forced to give up farming because I did not want to work with strange help. Since I could not do it alone, we decided to have another auction sale. I sold all my machinery and cattle. I kept two horses and two calves and machinery for making hay. I rented the cultivated land for one quarter crop share to our neighbor, T.D. Schmidt. I kept the buildings and pasture for us and we were looking forward with pleasure to remain on the farm with our youngest daughter, Susie. (Peter Penner IV owned the quarter section adjacent to the creek. (twp43, W3rd, R.M. of Laird; the house he built, including the chimney he built are still standing in 1996.) God would lead us on and I had given myself completely into God's hands, because He leads well, but we were not without problems, because my spirit was restless, although I was happy in the fellowship with my Lord. Our children, the C.C. Enns's sold their farm too, Jacob Penner had moved back to Manitoba and Peter Penner V had moved back earlier, so now all our children had left the Springfield school district.

The railway was being built North of Dalmeny and our children, the Enns's had moved on to property near the railway. We decided to sell our farm and move to Laird, Saskatchewan. After harvest in 1908, at the age of 56, I built a new house on a plot of land in Laird. I had bought 2 and 1/4 acres from Jacob Siemens, of Manitoba, who owned 1/2 section of land. First I built a barn and then the house, which cost \$950. My plan was to erect a post office in Laird, but did not get this, because Cornelius Regier from Tiefengund moved his post office to Laird. I said, "What ever the Lord does is good."

In the summer of 1909 I started to work in the butcher shop for my son-in-law, C.C. Enns. The business was a bit slow in the beginning, partly because I was inexperienced. I only accepted a salary of \$25 per month, but later as the business grew I got \$35 per month. I nearly always had a helper and the last two years I didn't do any of the butchering. It was hard enough for me to be in the store all day. I worked until New Years Day of 1913 and then I had to stop because of rheumatism in my right leg and after all its hard to stand there all day at the age of 60 years.

I have written quite a bit about our earthly circumstances. I often had blessed times in the butcher shop at the meat cutting block. The Lord blesses the business men at their jobs too, for when you call, He answers. In the fall of 1911 I was busy and somewhat overloaded with work. I had become very depressed and faint, so I said to myself, "How can you stand it? How is your account with God?" I asked myself again and again and I was filled with doubt and sadness.

When people came to the butcher shop they asked, "Penner, what is wrong with you? Are you sick?" I answered, "No," and tried to be cheerful, but it was not possible as long as my heart was not at peace. One day, while I had gone home for lunch, this question bothered me again. After I had eaten, I lay down for a nap in the attic, but no sleep came to my eyes, only tears, for my heart were heavy and again I asked myself, "How is your account with God?" While I was lying there, crying, I saw, in my minds eye, an open book containing a large record written down from top to bottom with nothing in it but debt, and more debt and I cried to God, "Have mercy on me!" On the other page there was a long red line drawn through all my debt. Where the total amount of my debt was recorded, there was written in large red letters, as if with a finger, the following, 'I have paid everything ', signed, Jesus. I was so relieved that I dried my tears, got up feeling very happy, and went back to work. Now the peace had returned to my heart.

Then came the conviction that I should be a witness for Christ before my fellow man. I tried to do this when I had opportunities and gave my testimony in church too, about what Christ had done for me and the peace I now felt in my heart! Of course, Satan was there right away and said to me, "You want to confess that? That is nothing but fanaticism." Thus I suffered for a whole day, till one morning at devotions the word of God came to me, and I was able to tell my wife and daughter, Susie all about this, word for word, with tears in my eyes, and finally all thoughts of fanaticism and Satan were gone. Satan is nothing but lies, for he has been a liar since the beginning of the world.

Thus joys and sorrows came to us during our life in this world. Sometimes I was happy and sometimes sad, but Jesus had paid for my sins through His blood and Satan could not

rob me of this. During November of 1912, when I had decided to stop working in the butcher shop at the beginning of 1913, Satan came to me again and led me through the desert. He caused me to worry about the cares of this world. All these worries now came to me in a pile and I had no joy for some time. Satan said, "If you stop earning money now, you will soon starve for your savings will soon be gone and what happens if you live until the age of 80 or 90, what then?" These worries just about choked me, even though I told myself continually that the God, who had taken care of me for 60 years, would continue to care for me for another 30 years if necessary.

Everything seemed so dark, but I knew Jesus had forgiven my sins. This went on for some time and one morning we received a letter from our son Jacob in Manitoba and he told us about their church and about their services. They had had a minister speak the closing remarks on the text from Exodus 14 v 15. "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward --." That was a comfort to me, I could grasp it and I trusted the Lord. I felt as though I had been at the Red Sea with no way of escape, high hills on either side and Satan with his army behind me. I told my Lord sincerely that He could lead me, that I felt He would bring me to the goal, even through dark nights, and now I became happy and felt free and the sun shone again for me. I found a poem in "The Zionsbote" (Zions {heavens} messenger [literally translated] church paper of that era.) which seemed to be for me. In part, "My soul yearns for the peace That Jesus shall enfold you. Lead me, after battle and torment into your quiet Zoar; if it is your will."

This is the way I felt; I yearned for peace, for a place where I could be alone with my Savior. The Lord was merciful to me and I could find strength in His word now that I had more time to study His word and every day I find precious truth which I had not known before and which were a real blessing to me and I give glory to God.

1916

I must try to write some more about how the Lord led me in the last several years. I am happy in the Lord and am happy that Jesus said in John 12 v32--," and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me." Jesus was raised up to heaven and has already drawn many to Him, and I believe this to be true.

In spite of this I have often been disappointed and felt cheated by the world, so I must agree with the poet when he says,

"Disappointments are of this world,
But Jesus never, never disappoints."

Everyone can experience this, because He never breaks His promises. In June of 1914 my wife got very sick with gallstone attacks. This was during the conference in Dalmeny, SK. She was so sick that we were certain that she would die. We prayed much at her bedside. The good Lord gave grace and answered our prayers and she recovered. She used medicine and passed out many of the gall stones. She recovered enough that she could do housework, but never regained her strength fully. In the summer of 1915 she got worse again, becoming weaker and weaker until November, when she became bedridden and weakened rapidly. Again she became very ill and we had to take care of her

completely. She had almost unbearable pains internally and in her back for a full two months. We prayed and it seemed there was no answer to our prayers. I went alone and cried to God in earnest. Psalm 50 v15 says, "Then call upon me in time of distress; I will rescue you, and you shall glorify me." I prayed as earnestly as I had when I asked God to forgive my sins, but it was not God's will to hear and I received this answer, "If you would be still, then I could help you." I wanted to be silent, but the next day I cried to God again, because my wife's suffering became greater. I remembered Psalm 145 v18, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." I received the same answer to be silent so I could be helped. I told the Lord that I would be silent. It became clear to me that the answer would be according to I John 5 v 14. It would not be God's will that my dear wife should get well. For according to His inscrutable plan her time was up and the dear Lord wanted to take her home. I was convinced of this and tried to submit to the will of the Lord as I saw it. Then I found another poem which became very important to me.

"Be still my heart
In stillness is great strength
When temptation, care and pain
Cause thousands of fears
Be still my heart, be ever still.

"Thou knowest God is not far
As security, shield and shelter
You shine as a friendly star,
Into the dark night with your word
Be still, be ever still.

"Remember, there must be suffering,
You are not yet transformed
No one has entered heaven
Who did not have his cross to bear
Be still, be ever still.

"With God go quietly
Through rain, night and wind.
At last He leads you to the Father's house
To your last resting place, my child
Be still, be ever still. "

" Oh! Stand still
When God leads in strange ways,
On ways that are not clear
Have you often felt His loving hand
When He led you so miraculously.
Oh! Stand still.

"Oh! Stand still
Let your God take care of you.

He helps you every time,
With Him, Oh man, you are safe
In Him is rest and joy.
Oh! Stand still.

“Oh! Stand still
Soon your woes will end
Then you'll go home, dear heart
and your soul will be gently
Borne by angels
To eternal joy, heavenward.
Oh! Stand still.”

The following summer, to ease my loneliness, I went to Manitoba to my children, Jacob B. Penner's, where I received many blessings. There were also many friends in Winkler, whom we had known when we had come from Russia, 25 years earlier. They were dear people, but I felt lonely here too. I stayed here for two and a half months, but I felt it would be best if I lived at home, where my daughter Susie cared for me so faithfully and lovingly. "I guess I'll have to take my loneliness to the grave with me. Over there will be joy and delight and pain and sorrow will be gone. Isaiah 35 v 10.

1918

Again I will try to write about a few events in my life and how the Lord has been leading me. The good Lord stood by me in my sorrow. When the hard times came, He comforted me through His word or through a song. Especially His promises were precious to me, of which there are so many in His word. Such as, "I will be with you all the days of your life."

Last winter I decided that if the opportunity arose I would sell my house and land. I was able to sell to the Widow, Mrs. George Hoepfner of Waldheim, for \$1330 cash. In March I moved to my oldest daughter Agnes (Mrs. C. C. Enns) near Borden, SK, Great Deer post office. In the summer I built a house - 12' x 14' x 9' - adjoining theirs. I plan to spend my old age here, the Lord willing. I'm in His hands and where He leads me is good. 'The Lord is my portion' says my soul and I will trust Him. I have often found joy in His word and comfort in song, but I feel as if my singing should be suppressed as I often hear such discords that I am surprised myself. It is important to me to know what the Lord's plans are in these serious times. In I Thessalonians 4 v 15 - 18 we find that the Lord will come to get His own. My aim is to strive to be ready when the Lord comes, so He will find me watching. Peter Penner IV died at 2:00 A.M. June 13, 1918, and is buried at the Great Deer CEMETARY, near Borden, Saskatchewan, Canada.

[Translated by his Granddaughter Mary Agnes (Penner) Gossen, October, 1969]