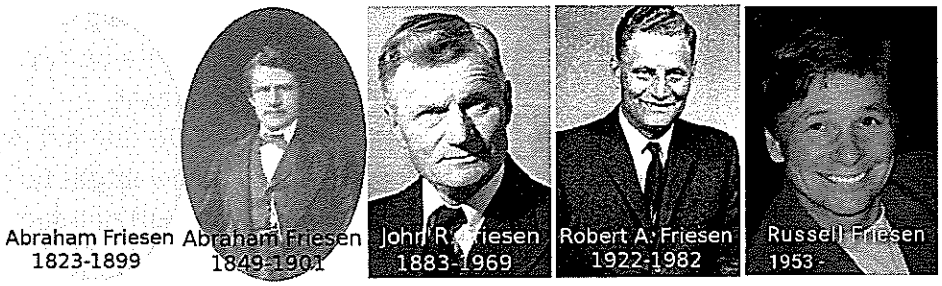
Official periodical of the
Mennonite Historical Society
of Saskatchewan, Inc.
Volume XXIV No. 2, 2018

Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian

Features & Articles

Five Generations of Friesen Pastors

by Verner Friesen



Russ Friesen, the current pastor of the Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan, is a direct descendant of four successive generations of Friesen pastors. The four pastors served in two different Mennonite congregations in West Prussia, and in the Rosenort group of churches in Saskatchewan, of which Tiefengrund was a member.

I. Abraham Friesen (1823 - 1899)

Abraham Friesen was born on July 27, 1823 in Neumuensterberg, West Prussia. In 1847 Abraham married Sara Kroeker from Weisshof, near Danzig. Abraham and Sara lived and farmed for a few years in Neumuensterberg, where their first three children, Abraham, Jacob and Eliese, were born. In 1851 they inherited a large farm (84 acres) from Sara's Uncle Peter Kroeker in Tiegenhagen. Peter Kroeker and his wife Eva had no children. This farm was located less than a kilometer from the Tiegenhagen Mennonite Church.

Abraham's leadership potential was soon recognized in their new community. In the spring of 1854 the spring winds needed to power the windmills which drained the low-lying land did not arrive, so that the fields remained under water. Abraham became part of a committee that initiated the purchase of a steam-driven windmill system.

He became drainage coordinator and treasurer of that project. He held this position from 1854 to 1856. In 1855 he was elected as minister of the Tiegenhagen congregation. Probably because of this election he gave up the administrative position . . . *(cont'd on page 4)*

Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian
Volume XXIV No. 2 **2018 Cumulative number 61**
(First issue of SMH published April 1996)
Published three times a year by the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan (MHSS)
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Distribution: Susan Braun
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Printer: ProPrint, Saskatoon, SK.
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Wednesday, 1:30 to 4 p.m. & 7 - 9 p.m.

The Editor's Perspective

Ruth Marlene Friesen

Some weeks ago a school teacher wrote, via our website, to ask if we had any authors who would be willing to come speak to the students about their history books and/or the process of writing their books.

I wasn't quite sure how to answer. I felt personally open to the concept. I realized that our MHSS authors are older and some would have difficulty physically to respond to this invitation. So I checked with our MHSS Board members first for their counsel.

In the end, we agreed that certain authors we know might be glad for the opportunity, but since we are not agents or in any way responsible for the authors, the teacher would have to find them on his own.

It occurred to me as I was brainstorming for this editorial - that I could suggest to authors who want more exposure to let it be known that you are available; perhaps with a letter and resume to various School Boards. If you express a willingness to go to small country schools you are bound to get some invitations. You should describe your genre and what kind of things you could share with young students that would be of interest to them.

As an author looking for exposure and opportunities to talk about your book, family history, or whatever, you should also understand that you will likely have to pay your own travel costs - chalk it up to your book promotion budget.

True, the kids/teens are not likely to buy a family history book, but if you hand out info sheets about your book(s) and the kids take them home, who knows what orders might result eventually.

I'm open to more feedback on this, but if you are an author and keen on such opportunties to speak and influence young people, you may send me your name and contact info, and I'll pass it along the next time such a request comes via our website.

Please share your feedback to the Historian - and any ideas that are triggered. *RMF*

The President's Corner

I would like to begin by thanking the readers who offered their thoughts related to the "Mennonites in Softball" article in the previous edition of the Historian.

There is much more that can be written on this topic, especially since that article only took the story up to the early fifties. Many more Mennonites were involved in various aspects of the sport since that time. We hope to tell more of those stories in future editions.

Speaking of stories, I am guessing that many of us remember and were part of the following: In 1954 groups all across Saskatchewan began gathering history and writing books about their school districts. There were government grants and guide booklets telling you how to go about writing a book.

This was all part of the commemoration of Saskatchewan's Golden Jubilee of 1955.

According to the Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan there were 2000 local history books published through this project. These books contain valuable information about the early settlers of the various school districts that existed in Saskatchewan, at that time. Many of the districts had a population made up largely of Mennonites.

I attended a one-room country school in the Osler-Warman area at that time. This was Saskatchewan School District #99; they developed a history book as part of the above project. The area was originally settled by non-Mennonites with names like Lisko, Patrick, and Caswell. By the 1950s, however, there were mainly Old Colony Mennonites in the district.

Our Mennonite Historical Society would love to obtain copies of these books if at all possible. If you are able to accommodate us in some way, it would be greatly appreciated.

I wish everyone a great summer!

JR

EVENTS of Interest to Saskatchewan Mennonites

The Watermelon Festival

July 22 @ 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

The Mennonite Heritage Village in Swift Current, SK., celebrates this summer with the 24th Annual Watermelon Festival. Watermelon and roll kuchen (a deep-fried pastry served with cold watermelon) will be available throughout the afternoon.

2018 Spruce River Folkfest- August 11.

Enjoy music and food and learn more about the Landless in Saskatchewan. This cultural event is held annually to raise awareness of the Landless Indigenous Bands in Sask. Proceeds and donations go to Mennonite Central Committee Stoney Knoll Fund. For more info contact: Ray Funk at 306-764-7903 or Leonard Doell at 306-665-2555.

MHSS Book Launch

Friday, October 19 @ 7 p.m. - Osler Community Hall, 508 1st Street, Osler, Sk.

Saturday, October 20 @ 2 p.m. - Bethany Manor Fellowship Centre, Saskatoon.

The book to be launched is **The Ältester** ***Herman D.W. Friesen, A Mennonite Leader in Changing Times,*** by Bruce L. Guenther. His grandfather Rev. Herman D. W. Friesen lived in the Hague/Osler/Warman area. See page 19 for more details.

Correction

In the last edition of The Historian, I attributed *Mien easchtet Malkjen* (My First Milking) to Jack Driedger. Jack is not the poet, he informs me!

Indeed it was difficult to find the true author. Reuben Epp is often credited. But it turns out Reuben Epp is not the poet. Jack Thiessen identified the true author as Wilhelm Pauls from Manitoba. Chris Cox was able to find the poem first published in a journal called *Harvest*. It appears on pages 122-123.

Jake Buhler

[Five Generations of Friesen ..cont'd from page 1]
of the drainage project.

It was in Tiegengagen that the remaining four children were born to Abraham and Sara - Peter, Johann, and twin girls, Sara and Sara Maria. Sadly, the mother, Sara, died in 1858, only ten days after giving birth to the twins. The twins also died within the year. What a devastating year for Abraham and his children!

Abraham never remarried, though he lived another forty years after his wife's passing. He continued to farm until his retirement to the nearby town of Tiegenhof in the 1880s, while his youngest son Johann took over the farm. Abraham continued serving as pastor of the Tiegenhagen congregation until his death in 1899 at the age of 76, although, due to failing health, he was no longer able to proclaim the Word of God during his last few years. Abraham's obituary states: "He served as minister of our congregation for 44 years, and did so in willing love, loyalty and joyful Christian faith. We mourn in him a dear fellow minister and the congregation mourns a loyal shepherd. His memory will remain among us as a blessing."

II. Abraham Friesen (1849 - 1901)

In 1871, Abraham and Sara's eldest son, also an Abraham, married Catharina Neufeldt. The newly married Abraham and Catharina purchased a farm in Vogtei, a village consisting of only five farms along the Lake Canal. Vogtei was near the village of Baerwalde, where the Fuerstenwerder Mennonite Church was located. In 1873, when Abraham was only 23 years of age, he was elected as minister in the Fuerstenwerder congregation.

Heartache and hardship struck the young Friesen family in October of 1875, when Catharina died after only four years of marriage. Abraham was left with three young children - Abraham, Catharina and Jacob. On November 30, 1876, Abraham married Margarete Regier, the daughter of Peter and Maria Regier. Peter Regier was the elder of the Fuerstenwerder congregation.

In June of 1894, after serving the Fuerstenwerder congregation for 22 years, Abraham and Margarete and their large family moved to Canada. They settled in what became known as the Tiefengrund community, at that time in the Northwest Territories. Later, in 1905, it became Saskatchewan. Abraham's parents-in-law, the Peter Regier family, had moved to the same community earlier in the year.

Under Peter Regier's leadership, the various groups of Mennonite pioneers who had settled in the area joined to form the Rosenorter congregation. At first there were five communities of Mennonites - Tiefengrund, Eigenheim, Waldheim, Rosthern and Bergthal east of Rosthern. Abraham was a very valuable member of the group of ministers taking turns in providing Sunday worship services in these communities. That meant a lot of travelling, in those days by horse and buggy, and sleigh in winter. The Bergthal community, for example, was 22 miles from Tiefengrund. Roads were poor and winter travel was especially difficult at times. On one of those winter trips to Bergthal, Abraham took along his young son John. John later reported that the weather had been very cold, the heavy roads made travel difficult, and in the end very few people attended the service. The Sunday services in those days were held in homes or schools. The first church building was built in the Eigenheim community west of Rosthern in 1896.

Abraham Friesen made many sacrifices as he served the Rosenort group of churches faithfully until sudden death took him away on June 21, 1901. Though only 52 years of age at the time, he had served as a pastor in West Prussia and Saskatchewan for 29 years. The funeral service was held in the Eigenheim church. But the little church could not nearly hold the many people who came so, the weather being favourable, the benches were moved outdoors for the service. Peter Regier

based his message on the words of the prophet Hosea, "The Lord has torn us apart but he will also heal us." Eigenheim pastor, Gerhard Epp Sr., shared a message of comfort based on the farewell words of Israel to his son Joseph "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you."

III. John R. Friesen (1883 - 1969)

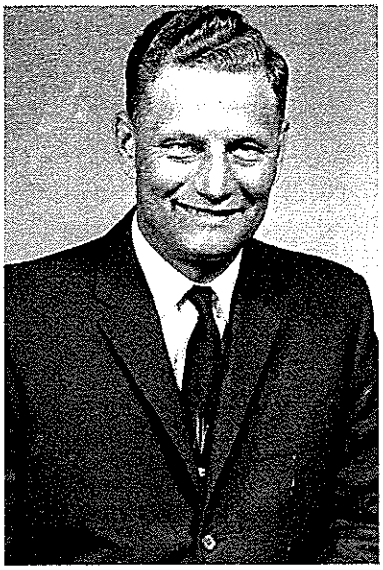
John was born into Abraham and Margarete Friesen's large family. He came to Canada with his family just weeks before his 9th birthday. In a day when school attendance was not compulsory, John attended the Tiefengrund School until the age of 16. During his last years of schooling, his teacher was David Toews, who later became his brother-in-law. John married Wanda Regier on March 20, 1917, and John and Wanda took over the family farm of Elder Peter Regier. When the Tiefengrund church was built in 1910, John was asked to take on the role of Sunday School Superintendent, in which capacity he served faithfully till 1929.

In July of 1927, John was elected as a minister. Accepting this calling was a very difficult decision for him, but he could not find peace within himself till he said "Yes" to the congregation's request to serve them as pastor. He was ordained as a minister on July 28, 1929. Since he had no formal Bible training, we can understand that he found sermon preparation difficult. But he committed himself seriously and prayerfully to the task at hand. Saturday was sermon preparation time, and family members would have to take care of the farm work. He is to have said that the hardest part of sermon preparation was to set aside the usual daily routine and concentrate on study. Nevertheless, his sermons were down to earth and from the heart. He was a caring pastor and proclaimed faithfully the good news of God's love. At one public event, Rev. (Aeltester) John G. Rempel compared John R to the apostle John, author of several books in the Bible, who was referred to as the apostle of love. In addition to serving Tiefengrund, John R. took his turn serving the groups in Garthland, Horse Lake, Carmen, Laird, Hochfeld and Capasin.

Serving the small group in Capasin especially, involved a lot of travelling. There was no pay for pastors in those days; times were poor and the family was large, yet John R. accepted ungrudgingly the responsibilities and sacrifices involved in serving his Lord.

As his health was failing, John retired from farming at the age of 72. He and Wanda moved into a small retirement home provided for them in the garden on their farm. He resigned as minister in 1962, having served faithfully for 33 years. He died on February 27, 1969, of a heart attack.

IV. Robert A. Friesen (1922 - 1982)



Robert and his twin brother Arthur (Tim) were born on July 24, 1922, to John and Wanda Friesen. While visiting relatives in Oklahoma, Bob (as he was commonly referred to) met Lora Mae Horn. They were married on July 18, 1948. Their early married years were spent in two careers - farming in Oklahoma and serving as a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool agent. Bob enjoyed his work as a Wheat Pool agent, but in 1966 he was asked to take on the task of being pastor in the Tiefengrund Church. Like his father before him, he found the decision to accept difficult, but looking back afterward he did not regret having accepted the call. He enrolled at Bethel College in Kansas to prepare himself for

pastoral ministry and graduated in the spring of 1969. While enrolled at Bethel College, Bob served the church in Tiefengrund during the summers of 1967 and 1968. He was ordained as pastor of the Tiefengrund congre-gation on September 7, 1969. While serving the church he obtained some land and continued his interest in farming.

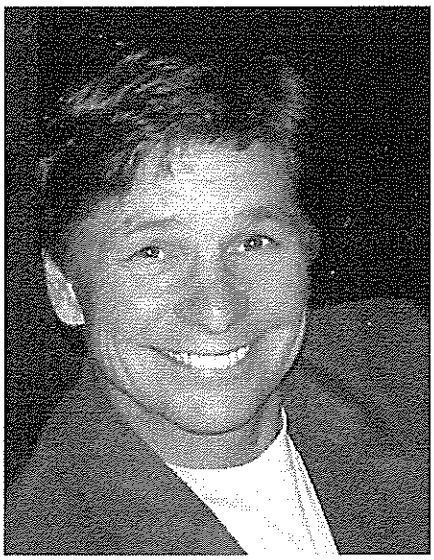
In February of 1981, Bob became ill and his health gradually deteriorated until, after 14 months of illness, he passed away on April 17, 1982. His work as a pastor had been greatly appreciated, and his untimely death was deeply mourned not only by his family but also by the whole congregation. Like his father before him, Bob was a caring pastor who faithfully preached the gospel of God's love.

On the first anniversary of Bob's death, April 17, 1983, according to a July 13, 1983 article in *Der Bote*, the Tiefengrund congregation observed a special time of remembrance. Interim pastor Ken Funk shared how the congregation had struggled with accepting the loss of their dear friend and pastor so early in his life and career. But they also affirmed that, though they sometimes could not understand God's ways, they continued to place their faith in a loving God. They expressed gratitude that their lives had been blessed by Bob's ministry. They had learned from his example of giving so freely of himself to his Lord, the church, the community and his family. They also expressed their continuing love and support for Bob's wife, Lora Mae, and her family.

Sources: The information shared above comes mostly from
a) ***"From Prussian Lowlands to Saskatchewan Prairies: A History of the Tiefengrund Friesens"****, chapters I and III,*
and b) obituaries appearing in Der Bote and the Valley News.

In the case of John R. Friesen and Robert Friesen, some of the information comes from personal memories. What follows is Russ Friesen's own account of his life and call to ministry.

V. Russell Friesen (1953 -)



My wife Lorena and I have lived on a farm in the community of Tiefengrund for all our married life. Our two children have grown up here. We attended church regularly, and were involved in the Laird community as well. Lorena and I were active members contributing in many areas of church life, from teaching Sunday School to being on a variety of church committees. As our faith grew we took on more responsibility. I served as Education Director, Service Committee Chair and later Church Council Chairperson. I also became the primary adult Sunday School teacher. I very much liked leading the class, and my preparation time served to be very educational for me in my faith journey, as I explored what it meant to be a follower of Christ.

Throughout this journey, despite the generations of preachers in my genealogy and suggestions that pastoral ministry might be something for me to consider, I remained adamant that preaching was not for me; and the chain of successive pastors would not be continued through me. Through my brothers, perhaps, but not through me. It seems that it is just this kind of resistance to service that God loves to challenge.

Farming and ranching provided inadequate income to support my family, so I was forced to take on a number of jobs to bolster that income. I was driving truck when God spoke to me through a former member of our congregation. I met her one day and she placed her hand on my heart and told me I was going to be a pastor just like my

father.

That greeting changed the course of our lives as Lorena and I agreed that we had to be open to God's call and allow him to lead us where He wanted us to go.

Within three months we received a call from the Search Committee of the Tiefengrund Church inviting me to become their pastor. Lorena and I had said that that we were going to be open to God's call, and here was the call. Despite my earlier reluctance and with no formal education, God convinced me to take on the leadership at Tiefengrund. On August 1, 2011, I became a fifth- generation Friesen pastor.

It has been through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit's leading, guidance and direction that I am currently serving in my 7th year as pastor in Tiefengrund. I have enjoyed the challenges, and Lorena and I have seen our spiritual life grow exponentially. My prayer is that each member of our church community would also be growing in their faith and relationship to God.

VF

Welcome to Nordenthal -
by Carl A. Krause
Reviewed by Victor G. Wiebe

Carl A. Krause. ***Welcome to Nordenthal.*** Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Published by the author. 2018, iv,146pp, paper covers, $15.00. Copies can be obtained from the author.

Have you ever visited Nordenthal? I think we all have. It is a small Mennonite prairie agricultural village settled near the beginning of the last century full of inter-related families. All lives are interconnected in work, in church, and in daily living. Some of us have even grown up in a type of Nordenthal.

Today, though, villages like Nordenthal are mostly deserted as farming expanded and families have moved away. Carl Krause has kept it alive in our memory with *Welcome to Nordenthal.*

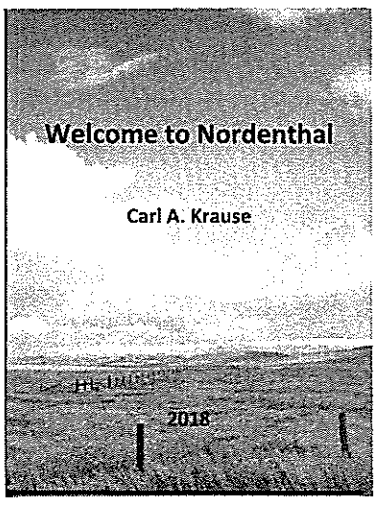
Carl Krause was born in the late 1930s and grew up about four miles north of Eigenheim. This is part of the Hague - Osler Reserve and it was full of small Nordenthal type villages. For those whose German has become a little weak, Nordenthal just means "North Valley." And if you are still puzzling about the location of Nordenthal, it is located in the imagination of Carl Krause.

Welcome to Nordenthal is Carl A. Krause's most recent book. He describes a village, Nordenthal, near the fictional town of Red Leaf, in the reserve north of Saskatoon and whose former villages gather for a final reunion. People gather, visit, share food and tell stories.

The final act of the reunion is to gather 30 stories, each about five pages long into a book of remembrances. In a short introduction Carl tells readers these are oral stories, retold again, but now in print. Stories like these somehow describe the nature and character of a community in a way that a formal history could never do. The stories are gentle, amusing, personal, and very human. I laughed out loud while reading several of them.

Carl, no doubt, has a good memory for stories and a good way of retelling them. These stories do not all originate from one village but, they are no doubt, based on actual incidents from the Hague - Osler Reserve.

Carl's stories in *Welcome to Nordenthal* illustrate that everyone's life interacts with others, and every village, no matter how ordinary, is full of people and events that could be material for wonderful stories. VGW



The Migration to Mexico

by Leonard Doell

- Presented at the Annual Meeting of MHSS March 2018

In November of 1948, a group of about 300 Old Colony Mennonites left western Canada for a new life in Mexico. This group included people from Burns Lake, BC; Osler, Sonningdale and Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and Winkler, Manitoba.

Jacob Wiebe, a bachelor from Blumenheim, Saskatchewan was the delegate chosen by the Old Colony Church to find a new home for them. He made numerous trips to Mexico before their move there in December of 1948.

Ältester Johan Loeppky of the Hague-Osler group, was chosen to lead them to Mexico because he had been a delegate to Mexico in the 1920s migration to Mexico and had the authorization to do so. The Mexican government recognized his name and authority.

Rev. Loeppky said that many of the Saskatchewan Mennonites who were leaving this drought stricken land could not sell their farmland before they left because it was valued too low. Estates were left for relatives in the province to look after.

Ältester & Mrs. Johan Loeppky leader of the Saskatchewan Group.

The group that moved also included Kleine Gemeinde people from Manitoba. The Kleine Gemeinde had the money but not the church leadership, and the Old Colony had leadership but no money, so the migration was convenient for both. Royden Loewen's family from Manitoba was part of the eighty-five Kleine Gemeinde families that also made the move. They too loaded up their trucks with farm machinery and cars with personal effects and headed south to Chihuahua State where they had purchased a ranch known as Los Jagueyes (the place of springs) to which they gave an equivalent German name *Quellenkolonie* (springs colony). Turning their backs on middle class consumerism, they believed that here in this new place they could more faithfully live an old communitarian religious faith that emphasized Christian discipleship.

The Old Colony people from Manitoba began arriving in the summer of 1948 but it was too late to put in a crop.

The Saskatchewan group consisting of eighteen families, did not come until December of 1948.

The Manitoba people were better off financially, having had a series of good crops and now had cash reserves. Furthermore, they had been able to sell their land in the West Reserve of Manitoba at good prices.

Those from Saskatchewan, having experienced four successive crop failures, had little or no reserves, and in many cases, had been unable to sell their land. Much of their motivation had been furnished by Ältester Loeppky's determination.

When the Manitoba group insisted on a separate deed to a specified portion of the Los Jagueyes property, the situation of the Saskatchewan group became hopeless. A number of people returned to Canada without unpacking. Altester Loeppky, discouraged, also went home, leaving one minister with the group in Mexico. Ten of the eighteen families came back to Saskatchewan and eight remained in Mexico, living in various states including Chihuahua, Durango and Zacatecus.

Here are a few things that happened over the course of this migration.

Because the group from Saskatchewan used vehicles to move to Mexico, this contributed to the Old Colony Church in Mexico not accepting them.

The Aaron Unrau's, Rev Johan Loeppky's and the Heinrich K. Bergen's are seen here before their move to Mexico in 1948. Photo: Leonard Doell

An example of families banding together to move to Mexico.

After Ältester Loeppky returned to Canada, the Mennonites in Mexico whitewashed the walls of the churches where he had preached.

Living in Mexico came with risks, and people were concerned with their safety. A hostage-taking took place shortly after their arrival, where three young men were held by Mexicans who demanded 2,000 pesos before they could be released. People were all too poor to pay, but managed to come up with enough money to satisfy the kidnappers and the three youth were set free.

The Johan Siemens family had a 2-ton 1938 Ford truck with a box and a 18 by 16 foot trailer they pulled behind. The Siemens and Wiebe families travelled in this unit, leaving at the beginning of November and arriving before Christmas. The road was very icy before they reached the border and the load was heavy. As they went down a steep grade on the road, the vehicle went off the road and having no brakes in the trailer, they could not stop. It hit 5 poles and finally stopped by the last one, preventing them from going down a steep embankment. They had a wood heater in the back and when they went off the road, the pipes came apart and some of the children were badly burned. In 1950, the Siemens returned to Canada.

The Jacob and Helena Driedger family drove to Mexico in a Model A Truck. In the USA, they had a baby named Heinrich who was born enroute to Mexico.

In 1921, Mexico promised the Canadians complete autonomy over all matters of faith, including military service exemption, private church-run education, church marriage, gender equal inheritance, admission of the handicapped, and local government. The Mennonites' part of the deal was simply to come to Mexico to transplant their farming skills, abide by the laws of the land and help modernize Mexico's rural economy. After the Second World War, Canada, in the eyes of those who had settled in Mexico, was a land of plenty but one that made it difficult for true Anabaptist descendants to live out a life of humility and peace.

In Mennonite circles, there has always been this debate about moving from established communities. Some have argued that Christians were like coal and when spread out in the wider world they lost their glow, while others argued that they were more like manure and useful only when spread out. But a common identity has been there for all Mennonites in each place, as they grapple with the meaning of being a follower of Christ in a strange new physical environment. Some communities emphasized an individual spiritual quest, striving for personal peace, forgiveness, grace and guidance in life.

Other communities strove for separation from the wider world, a communitarian purity and nonconformity that directed them to increasingly isolated places of settlement. The Old Colony people tend to choose the latter.

For more information read: *Seeking Places of Peace, Global Mennonite History Series, the North American History*, published 2012 by Good Books.

LD

Under Siberian Skies - by David Funk

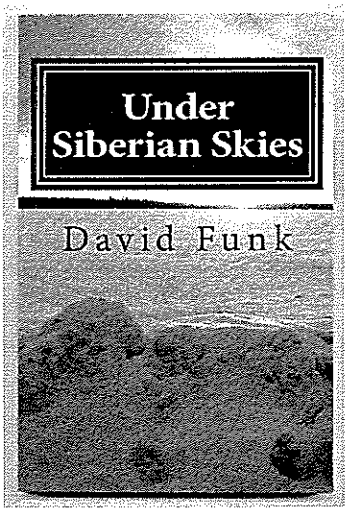
[Abbotsford, British Columbia]

Reviewed by Victor G. Wiebe

David Funk. ***Under Siberian Skies***. [Abbotsford, British Columbia], published by the author, 2017, 251pp. Illustrated paper covers. $22.00. There is also a Kindle edition. Reviewed by Victor G. Wiebe

David Funk

One of the benefits of reading a well written, well researched historical novel like *Under Siberian Skies* is learning how, and with what, its characters lived, worked and survived in another place and time. The details of ordinary life change with technology, with geography, and with seasons, and these ordinary details almost never get into the official histories.



Under Siberian Skies is David Funk's third novel and focuses on individual Mennonites in the years 1928-30 in a new Siberian settlement but now in the very far east. In this novel Funk describes life in Alexandrovka, the fictional rural Mennonite village in the early Soviet period. It was in a time of technical modernization, of rural oppression, in a tense border region, in a time of fear and of Soviet religious persecution.

A displaced young school teacher, Jacob Enns, his wife Naomi, and young son Joseph, in the early Soviet years, try to establish a new life along with dozens of other Mennonite families in the newly established Mennonite colonies in the wilds of southeastern Siberia just north of the Chinese border. They hope to be far enough away from the evils of Moscow's communism that they can re-establish a Mennonite way of life. However, the long arm of communism reached them in a matter of months, accompanied by all the malicious forms of Communist oppression, including collectivization, heavy taxation, informing and spying.

All but one hope evaporates. The one hope is to cross the Amur River into China to gain freedom from the Soviet Union.

After arriving in Alexandrovka, Jacob is hired as the accountant of the newly formed Collective Farm and here he meets the manager, Abram Siemens. In the novel we meet others: the collaborating school teacher, the mechanic, the communist GPU Colonel and a few Mennonite families.

Jacob's family make several attempts to flee, including a frantic train ride to Moscow when he hears news of Mennonites assembling there with a desperate hope of fleeing.

This ill-fated hope is depicted by other characters in Funk's earlier novel, The Last Train to Leningrad. His second failed attempt results in the death of his wife Naomi.

Finally Abram Siemens tells Jacob of his daring plan for a mass escape and Jacob joins. Jacob's first task is to sneak across the Amur River with a trusted Chinese guide and arrange for the villagers reception in a nearby Chinese town. Next the entire village of Alexandrovka make a subterfuge, and in secret prepare sleds, food and belongings for leaving in the dead of winter. Several other villages in the colony are asked to participate but only the village of New York agrees. However, on the day of leaving the New Yorkers delay.

The Alexandrovka villagers take their chance on the evening of 16/17 December, 1930. Through danger, excitement and some disruptions on that bitterly cold evening experienced like a miracle they arrive in China!

Under Siberian Skies is fiction, but this novel is about one of the truly great historical adventures in Mennonite history, the escape of an entire village across the Amur River into China and then on to the Chinese city of Harbin. In mid-December in Siberia 218 Mennonites really did plan and carry out this very dangerous mass escape.

David Funk incorporates quite a number of real historic details in this novel and as in his other novels, at the end, gives readers a "Historical Notes" section listing several books to read for more information. I found this added information useful.

This historical novel would have benefited by including a simple map of the area described, as its geographic setting is unknown to almost all of us. I read several historical accounts of the escape and got out my Mennonite Historical Atlas (Schroeder and Huebert, 1990) and also checked with Google Maps to get orientated while reading. Sometimes Siberia is compared to Saskatchewan. So how does this part of Siberia compare to Saskatchewan? Here for readers is a little geographic tidbit. If crossing the Amur River in Siberia occurred in Saskatchewan, about where would it be - north or south? Well - the Amur River crossing was at 49.6 degrees north latitude which is about where Shaunavon, Saskatchewan is - or just above the USA - Canadian border! Thus we in Saskatchewan can relate to the Siberian pioneering, weather and land but are blessed with no Communism!

A good read.

OGW

Use Your Archives

Meet Peter Adsten, one of the Friendly Volunteers at the Archives (by the Editor)

Peter Adsten is a retired business owner who volunteers in the archives.

His assignment is to catalogue and keep the book lists up to date. This includes lists of English books, and also the German ones. Even though German is not his native language he is able to prepare the list of extra used books for sale, and make up both the German and the English lists. He emails these lists to me, as webmaster, and I put them up on the MHSS website so that they are kept up to date.

Peter describes his work for us: "I have been working with used books that have been donated to MHSS. The books are first documented with a Deed number, then filed by author's name in our growing book collection. If we already have two books of the same title on our shelves, then the extra book is priced and added to our German, English or Plautdietsch ***Used Books For Sale*** section. Lists of the Used Books For Sale are included in issues of the Historian and are also advertised on our website.

A select few of the donated books are considered rare and are stored in the Secure Room. A list of these rare books can be found on our website.

Another ongoing project I am involved with is the organization of photographs that have been donated to MHSS. Photographs are sorted, identified, scanned and uploaded to the Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID). Access to the MAID database is located at *archives.mhsc.ca*.

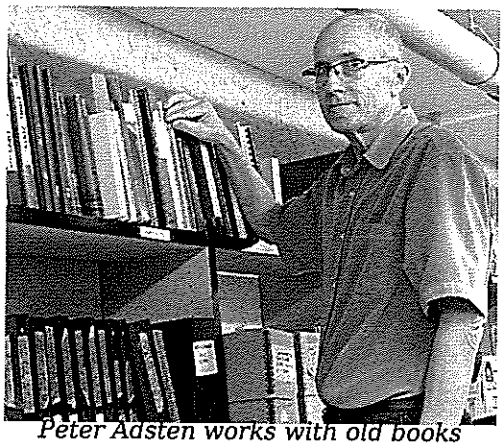
I am usually at the archives either Monday or Wednesday afternoon, unless I am required at my other volunteer job at the Western Development Museum."

Kathy Boldt, the one in charge of the volunteers, says that besides filing books in the STACKS, Peter has scanned thousands of photos for MAID, and to be used in the archives.

Peter has brought to our attention that some of the rare books are very old Bibles with pages of family records in the front.

We feel that these could be a source of information that could mean a lot to genealogists looking for missing links. To make people aware of these hidden treasures, we have some photos of such pages to give you a better idea. Look for them on the next page.

Peter's list, 26 pages of Rare Books, notes what family records or comments show up in each book. That list is online at *mhss.sk.ca/books/RARE-MHSS-BOOKS-May-2-2018.pdf* - or, you can ask for it at the archives.

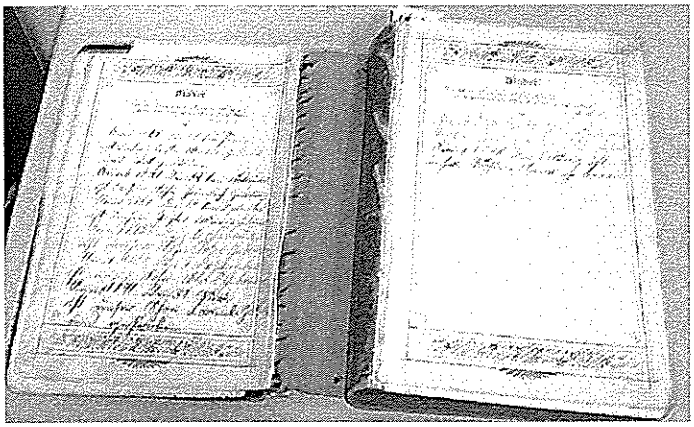


Peter Adsten works with old books

What the Rare Bibles at the Archives Look Like

It has been well-known for many generations that if you wish to keep your family records in a safe place, you should write it into your family Bible. It is somehow assumed that that is one treasure that will always remain in the family and be easy to find. That proves not to always be the case anymore.

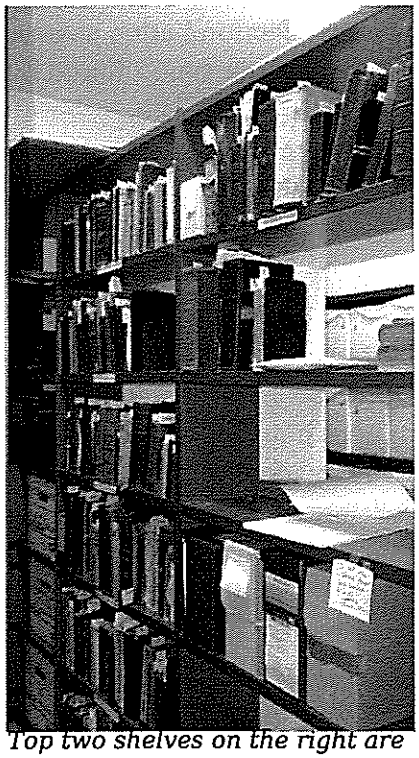
More often now we have old Bibles and rare books come into our MHSS Archives. Often these are steered to us by a second-hand shop that has received these old Bibles as a cast-off donation, but the staff recognize that these volumes may have great historical value.



We need to let people know of these family heirlooms. Those individuals especially, who are doing family genealogy research may be thrilled to discover names and dates that are vital proof for missing links in their searches. Of course, we need to get this information out there where you can learn about it.

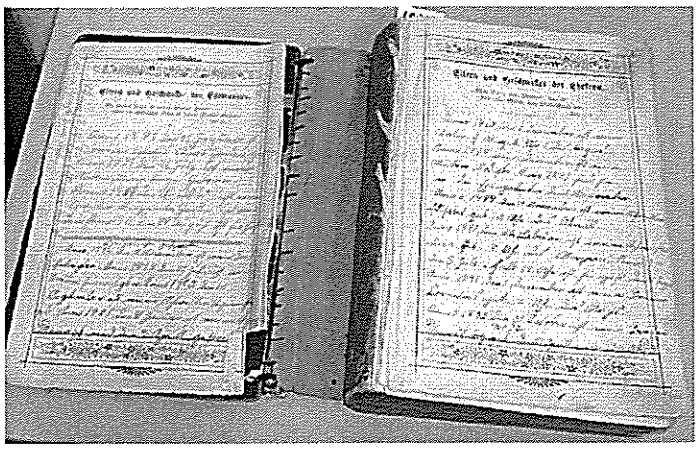
In May of 2018, Peter Adsten, a volunteer at the archives, prepared a 26 page document listing Rare Old Books. Most of these are German; a few are in English. About a shelf and a half of these rare old books are big family Bibles with some pages of family records in the front. Although Peter has recorded the names of the heads of the families in each Bible, he has not entered every name given in the individual Bibles.

Therefore, we recommend that you open or download and read the latest Rare Books List, keeping alert for names that could be part of your family tree. Then you need to call the Archives and make arrangements to visit when Peter is working there, so you may - with his help - examine these books for clues that apply to your family records.



Top two shelves on the right are specifically old Bibles

Please note that once books are in the archives they cannot be removed. They are kept permanently in the archives, and these rare books are kept in a specially locked room. However, you may visit and look at these books for your research.



To give you a glimpse of such Bibles, we have above, some photos here of one German Bible which includes 5 geneology pages of Peter K. Harder, born 28 September 1906, and Tina Wiebe born 29 May 1906, and their children. Most of this information is written in that elegant Gothic script that is becoming rare, too.

RMF

A Very Short History of 4 Anabaptist Languages

- Jake Buhler

Plautdietsch or Mennonite Low German: When Mennonites fled persecution in Holland and Belgium, and migrated to the Vistula Delta of Poland in the mid-1500s, they took their Dutch, Frisian, and Dutch Low Saxon dialects with them. Their spiritual leader was Menno Simons who lived from 1496 to 1561. He remained in Holland and eventually died in Germany.

In Poland, over time, Mennonites mixed in East Low German dialects learned from their Lutheran neighbours. As well, they, for the most part, worshipped in Dutch. But over the next 250 years, a Low Prussian dialect emerged that we call, today, Plautdietsch or Mennonite Low German.

By the time they migrated to Russia in 1789, there was no Dutch language used – only High German (for worship) and Low German (everyday speech). Also note that by that time Prussia had taken over Poland.

In Poland, when Mennonites first settled in the Vistula Delta around 1550, they were tolerated, but not always accepted. They drained the wetlands of the Vistula Delta, and became excellent dairy farmers. They learned many trades and were held up as the hardest working class in Poland. They had their own schools and kept their non-military beliefs strong. This was not always tolerated by Polish and Prussian rulers. The house-barn combination had its beginning in Poland.

In 1789, thousands of Mennonites migrated from Prussia to South Russia (today's Ukraine) having been invited by Czarina Katharina.

Mennonites thrived there, and over time numbered over 100,000. They spoke their oral and unwritten Plautdietsch in their homes and High German for worship. Two dialects of Plautdietsch developed: Molotschna and Chortitza.

Russia began to enforce Russian language study and army enlistment. In 1874 many Mennonites, migrated out of conscience.

One group, mainly the Molotschna speakers, went to Kansas and other Midwestern states. A smaller group of Molotschna also moved to Canada. A much larger group of the Chortitza Plautdietsch speakers (Old Colony), moved to Manitoba and settled in the east and west reserves.

In 1895 several thousand moved to the Saskatchewan District of the NWT. They settled in the Hague-Osler, and Swift Current Reserves.

From there several thousand moved after 1922 to Mexico, and later to a number of other South American countries.

In the 1920s more than 20,000 Molotschna and Chortitza arrived in Canada fleeing Stalinist Russia.

Hutterisch: An oral language spoken by Schmiedenlaut, Dariusleut and Lehrerleut Hutterites in everyday conversation. In church services, High German is used. Its origins are from the province of Carinthia, Austria. Pennsylvania Deutsch speakers can understand some some Hutterisch, but Plautdietsch speakers not so easily. Jacob Hutter was born in 1500, became an Anabaptist leader, and was burned at the stake in Innsbruck, Austria in 1536.

Hutterites migrated to Moravia, Romania and Hungary, and South Russia. Hutterites were almost wiped out in Europe. But some survived. After 1878, several hundred moved to South Dakota. After 1918, seeking more freedom, hundreds moved to Canada, mainly to Alberta and Saskatchewan. They practice communal living.

Amish: They speak an everyday oral language called Pennsylvania Deutsch (Dutch is not correct); that originated as a dialect in Switzerland.

Conrad Grebel in Switzerland was one founding Anabaptist in 1525. In 1693 there was a schism when the group divided and followed Jakob Amman from whom the group got its name.

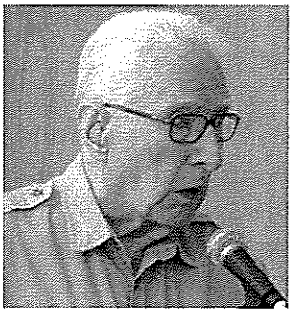
At the beginning of the 1700s, a group moved to Pennsylvania. After 1825 a group moved to Ontario. The Amish learn English in school. Many Amish still use the High German in worship.

Swiss Mennonites: Their Anabaptist origins are in Switzerland, followers of Felix Manz (1525) and others. Many were persecuted and killed. Some moved to the Palatinate in Germany, and others to Pennsylvania in the early 1700s. After 1820, several thousand moved to the Waterloo, Ontario area. Today many from this group belong to Mennonite Church Canada after they merged with the General Conference Church. Fewer speak their original language which is Pennsylvania German, which is very similar to what the Amish speak. Swiss Mennonites did not migrate through Poland and Russia.

JB

The Great Depression
by Jack Driedger

– presented at the Annual Meeting of MHSS March 3, 2018



My talk is not based on research about the depression years in Saskatchewan. I will talk about my experience living through the Depression, and how it affected me.

The Great Depression started in 1929 when the stock market crashed. As a result, jobs became extremely scarce all over the world.

I was born in 1926. Since the Great Depression years were from 1929 to 1939 I remember the time very well. Saskatchewan was especially affected by the Depression because it was also hit by a severe drought and a plague of grasshoppers.

I remember hoping for rain day after day. Whenever we saw heavy black clouds forming on the western horizon we hoped so much that they would bring us the rain we desperately needed. Time after time our hopes were dashed. It was another black blizzard of wind and dry sand.

The sand was everywhere. Everything in the house was covered in sand and dust. You just couldn't get away from the sand. If we wanted to eat out of clean dishes, we placed the dishes upside down on the table and then turned them right-side up before we ate.

As a young lad, I had no worries. My parents did all the worrying. As far as I was concerned, we always had enough to eat and a safe place to live. I accepted the world as it was. I thought everyone lived like we did. Later I learned that people in towns and cities actually ran out of food when the father, the breadwinner of the family lost his job. They had no gardens, no hens that laid eggs, and no chickens and pigs to butcher and no cows to milk.

Men, called hobos, travelled on freight trains to look for jobs. When a freight train slowed down or stopped at a railroad station they waited until the train started moving again. Then they climbed up the exterior ladder of the freight cars to sit on the roof for a free ride. When the train stopped at a town where they might get a job, the men got off to try their luck once again. I remember seeing hobos standing on top of freight cars.

My uncle and aunt, Cornelius and Maria Driedger, lived near Osler. They never turned down a hobo begging for food. News travelled all over the hobo world about a location like the Driedger place at Osler where you could get a bite to eat.

The idea of governments helping the unemployed had not occurred. There was no welfare for poor people. People in the city were actually starving. The government of the day had to do something so they started issuing monthly relief cheques.

When we had a crop failure in 1937, my father was thinking of applying for government relief. As winter approached, father felt we could survive another winter without resorting to relief. We had just butchered pigs and had wheat from the previous year ground into flour. We had potatoes in the bin and father still had $15 cash.

The next year father had to apply for relief. Our monthly relief cheque for groceries was a little more than $9.00 for a family of six. After the first month father found that we didn't actually need $9 for groceries. But the relief cheque was for groceries. We even got a few luxury food items like a box of prune plums from BC.

Buying anything new was almost unheard of. The Salvation Army Store in Saskatoon sold used

clothing that we could buy at 50 cents a bag. We usually found something that somebody in our family could wear.

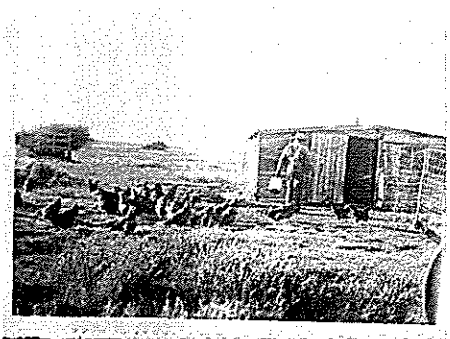
People from Eastern Canada heard about the situation in Saskatchewan. They shipped apples and smoked salted codfish which we could pick up at no cost from the freight cars at the local railway station. They even donated baled hay for feed for cows and horses in winter.

Unfortunately, Saskatchewan people did not know what to do with smoked, salted and dried codfish. You couldn't fry them because they tasted terrible and were much too hard to chew. We just did not know what to do with them. My father buried them on a quarter section of land a mile from the village. He didn't want some government inspector to find out what we ungrateful people had done with the fish that some kind Newfoundlanders had sent us.

Years later we heard that the thing to do was to soak the codfish in water for days to remove the salt. Then you fried them. It was unfortunate that these instructions did not come with the fish.

I remember the nuisance grounds where we now see Woodlawn Cemetery. Here people dumped discarded items like food leftovers from stores and restaurants, broken furniture and scrap metal, whatever they needed to get rid of. Others freely helped themselves to whatever they could use.

Some homeless men lived in crude shelters they had built from scrap sheets of tin on the nuisance grounds. They collected items from the nuisance grounds to sell to people looking for whatever they needed.



(Father feeding our chickens)

Hatcheries that had more chicks than they could sell as summer approached killed them by gassing them and discarding them on the nuisance grounds. Hundreds of chicks survived when they were dumped out in the fresh air. People from our village of Blumenheim told us they picked up hundreds of chickens running around the nuisance grounds.

Junk dealers collected used items that people cast away, like broken furniture or whatever else they couldn't use. I remember that people travelling to Saskatoon would make sure to stop at a junk dealer to see whether they could get whatever they needed.

There was a large family in our village. My parents hired one of their daughters as a maid for ten dollars a month. The government paid half the maid's salary while my parents paid the other half. It was agreed that the girl would not accept the $5 from my parents because they couldn't afford it. This helped our family as well as the girl's family because there was one less mouth to feed.

We lived a mile and a half from Renfrew School. Sometimes, when we had a real dust storm we could hardly keep the sand out of our eyes on our way to and from school. We all carried a handkerchief in our pockets. In order to keep the sand out of our eyes, we stuffed one end of the handkerchief under the front of our caps and the other end in our buttoned up shirt collar. We could see enough through the handkerchief to find our way.

On the way to or from school we sometimes stopped to play in sand drifts that were not there the day before.

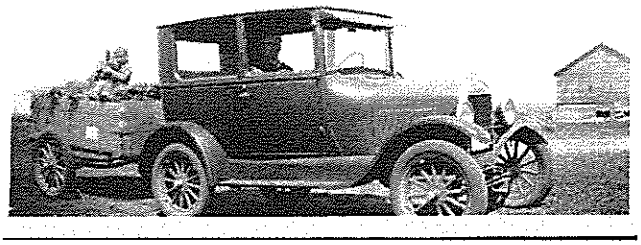
Russian thistles grew everywhere. In a dust storm the thistles lodged against wire fences and stopped the drifting sand. Some fences were eventually covered under the sand with only the tops of the fence posts visible.

Some people peddled butchered chickens and garden products house to house in Saskatoon to make a few dollars.

Would you believe, my father owned the only pair of rubber boots in Blumenheim? People borrowed my father's rubber boots when they dug a well. I recall my father being somewhat upset. A neighbour had taken off his shoes and socks when the water started entering the well he dug. He soon discovered that he could no longer endure the cold water, so he borrowed my father's rubber boots. When he returned them my father noticed that he had not washed the mud

off his feet before he stepped into the boots.

There were only two cars in our village. We had a 1927 Model T and our neighbours had a 1930 Oldsmobile. When my parents made a trip to Saskatoon they could expect that some people would ask for a ride. The common price for a return trip to Saskatoon was sixty-five cents.



It took father an hour and a half at a speed of 20 mph to drive the 30 miles to Saskatoon. At 26 cents a gallon or 7 cents a litre the cost for fuel was a total of $3 for a return trip to the city. One day he took thirty chickens to Saskatoon. At 10 cents a chicken he got a total of $3, enough to pay for the gas. He decided there must be other ways to make some money.

There were no open roads in winter for wheeled vehicles. Cars and trucks were stored in a building or simply left on the north side of a building for the winter.

We lived six miles from the nearest town, Osler. In winter a trail of hard snow developed to Osler. If we had a blizzard for a day or more, nobody wanted to be the first to break open the trail to Osler. The village residents would each hitch a team of horses to a double sleigh and line up on the village street on an agreed upon time to start on the way to Osler.

The leading team would soon get tired from pulling the sleigh through the snow drifts. Before they got too tired, the teamster would pull over and let all the other teams pass so he was now at the rear. By the time they all got home the trail had been driven down over 20 times.

Most people could no longer afford to drive a car, so they used horse power rather than gasoline. They replaced the engine and the body on the car with a grain box and tongue to hitch a team of horses. They named this conveyance a Bennet Wagon in honor of the then Canadian Prime Minister Bennet.

Every farm had a pile of scrap iron salvaged from broken farm machinery. It was a common supply of matorial thoy could adapt whon somothing broke down. If they couldn't find anything suitable, the neighbour might have something to help them out.

There was no government hospitalization or health plan so people had to pay every time they saw a doctor or had to stay in a hospital. Patent medicines or over-the-counter remedies such as anti-pain oil or camphor ointment were common. Rumor had it that there was quite a bit of alcohol in the anti-pain oil.

People would see a doctor as a last resort. If you were in the waiting room to see a doctor you would actually see sick people. Today they don't seem to have anything wrong with people chatting and laughing.

Since families could not survive without parents, if one of them got sick, they would spare no effort to get them well. It was common for children to get sick and die at home because money was scarce and the rest of the family could survive without them.

My parents had eight children. Four of them died as babies or infants. I remember my mother telling me about sister Tina, a lovely and healthy little girl who got diarrhea and died of dehydration when she was teething.

How did the Depression affect me? I just cannot stand to see waste. I empty my plate when I finish eating. I live in Bethany Manor. I cannot stand lights that are left on with nobody around. I hear people say, "Who switched off the light again?" when nobody is reading and everybody is talking. I don't need light to talk.

I have learned to appreciate what I have and I thank God many times every day. I survived very well and I appreciate my good fortune.

JD

John Peter Nickel

(12 October 1926 - 14 March 2018)

A Remembrance

by Victor G. Wiebe

Today, 20 March, 2018, I attended John Peter Nickel's funeral at Nutana Park Mennonite Church where he had his membership. There were about 32 of his family present and only about 20 friends. It seems that if you travel a lot and are quite old, (John died at age 91), then most of your friends and family may have already moved on or died and few are left to remember you. The funeral was full of family telling remembrances of John, his foibles, eccentricities, poetry, his failings and successes, his hobbies, research and many, many travels.

One niece remembered John as the first adult *eccentric* she encountered.

Others told of his many evenings of photo slide shows of his travels, it seemed, to all the world's wonders. John grew up on a farm at Great Deer, Saskatchewan and did he like farming? - NO, absolutely NOT. This must have been a disappointment for his father.

He definitely set his own path. Many reminiscences were funny, insightful and all were heartwarming. Together they made him a real person. I enjoyed all these reminiscences and they brought him back to me.

John was well educated with a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Saskatchewan, and from the University of Manitoba a Bachelor, then Master, of Social Work. This led to work usually in hospitals as a psychiatric social worker. One of his first places of employment was in the Mental Hospital in Weyburn, where two doctors, Abram Hoffer and Humphry Osmund, were experimenting with the treatment of schizophrenia by using the psychedelic drug LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide).

John, who had a very strong sense for the care of people, decided to be one of the experimental patients and was given LSD. This was done so that he could better understand their experiences. He worked in several other hospitals and also as an M.C.C. volunteer in the Appalachian region of Kentucky.

I knew John Nickel from meetings and visits at the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. (MHSS). There John displayed several engrossing pursuits. He was vigorous in visiting Saskatchewan Mennonite cemeteries and recording information from all the gravestones he could find. He expanded on his Mennonite interests and connections by publishing books on Nickel family genealogy and history. John had a good knowledge of German and its old form of cursive writing, enabling him to translate his grandfather's sermons and diaries and to publish them in a book entitled *Hope Springs Eternal : Sermons and Papers of Johann J. Nickel (1859-1920)*. (Nanaimo, B.C, Nickel Publishers, 1988).

This brought new light into the faith and troubling experiences of his Nickel family in the boiling caldron of the Soviet Revolution and Civil War. As one niece remarked, it is a source book that Sandra Birdsell used for her novel, *The Rüsslander* (Toronto, Ontario, Mclean and Stewart, 2001).

In May 1981, John married Norah Gladys Sing and they lived happily in Nanaimo, BC.

After Norah's death in 1989 he returned to Saskatchewan, this time to North Battleford, and then in 2007 to the Rosthern Nursing Home. It was there he died on 14 March 2018. Goodbye John!

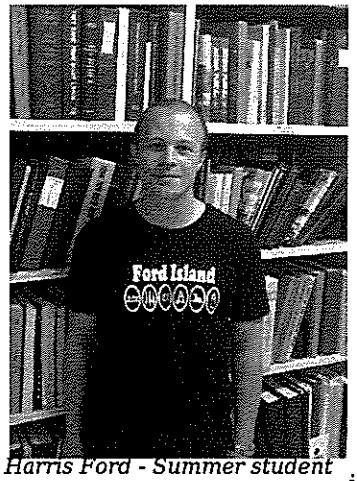
VGW

Several Articles in this Issue Celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Pivotal Events in Saskatchewan History Because . . . .

1948 was a year of a few events and migrations. When I was researching the Taber Beet Fields story, I ran into a letter written in the Steinbach Post from someone at Swift Current about the train-load of people that left for Paraguay. The move to Mexico was another one of those migrations. Abram G. Janzen talked about it from first hand experience. This is also the same time that many of our Mennonite people went to work in the beet fields of Alberta. (Dick Braun)

Our Summer Intern in the Archives

Meet Harris Ford - by Dick Braun



Harris Ford - Summer student

MHSS is pleased to announce we have a university student from the history dept., at the University of Saskatchewan working with us this summer.

We are grateful to Dr Keith Carlson, professor at the U of S History Dept., for working out an arrangement whereby we will have a half-time student. Our portion of the cost is $2500.

The U of S had some seed money, and we got a donation designated for Archival use, which made this project possible. Harris Ford is the student who is with us.

We are going to be looking for a donation of $5000 for the next year for the same project.

One of the first things that IIarris worked at was to coordinate the building of a database site on the computer server at the U of S. This is a big benefit for MHSS as we will be able to store our digitalized files on this server and the U of S will maintain the files so that they are accessible in the future.

He will work at scanning some of our archived material. Victor Wiebe has been working with Harris to determine which documents to scan. Harris will also do some oral history interviews.

Dick Braun is working at organizing the oral history interviews. Harris and his associates at the Uof S want to stress that this project should in the end be a benefit to MHSS, and help to preserve Mennonite history.

Now that I have met a few of the students and staff at the U of S, it is encouraging to see young people so enthused about history.

We are looking forward to a report that Harris will write for the final edition of the Historian this year.

DB

Update on the Summer Intern Interviewing for Historical Purposes

- By Dick Braun

The interviews are going good and the stories are even better.

I had one of my *Dick Braun* moments and decided to call Bryan Funk who owned part of Funks Funeral Home and has been in Rosthern since 1977. Harris and I spent two hours with him and WOW, this was good. I am so happy that I thought of it and he was ok with it. At the outset he said, "I know nothing." But that was not the case.

Now I think we are on a roll. There is one old style auctioneer left here, so I am hoping to interview Richard Mierau of Langham.

We have completed six interviews now. We have a few more to go, then we will see how the time works out.

Harris says that for ever hour of interview, he has about six hours of transcribing. This only a rough formula as each interview is different because some people talk with a lot of meat in a segment of speaking.

DB

M.B. Historical Commission News Items

Winnipeg, Manitoba — The Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission met June 8 and 9 for its annual general meeting in Hillsboro, Kansas, at Tabor College's Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies. The Commission heard reports from its four archives, awarded grants and scholarships, and planned for ways to continue to serve M.B. congregations in both the U.S.A. and Canada with "useable" historical research.

An Archival Development Grant of $2,500 was awarded to ***Bert Friesen*** for his computer coding project that links a search mechanism with the original source image of the indexed Mennonitische Rundschau, 1910–1919. This online tool will link an index entry to the scan of the referenced

page in the Rundschau. For readers with limited facility in Gothic German print, this tool will be a valuable resource. The Rundschau has been called the "Facebook" of early 20th-century Mennonite communities on both sides of the Atlantic.

An M.B. Studies Project Grant of $2,500 was awarded to ***Anicka Fast*** for her Ph.D. dissertation project: *"Living in the same house: Contested ecclesial identity in the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren missionary encounter in Congo, 1912– 1989."* Like other sectors currently receiving attention (e.g., Mennonites and the Holocaust, Mennonites and Canadian "Indian Day Schools," etc.), Anicka's project considers Mennonites and the mission sector, exploring aspects of the Mennonite story that may be disturbing, given our contemporary sensibilities.

A **Katie Funk Wiebe Research Grant of $650** was awarded to ***Lisa Cornish*** for her M.A. thesis project: *"Listening for the female ministry voice: Mennonite women sharing faith through cookbooks."* Lisa plans to explore the relationship between food preparation/recipes and theological reflection/articulation. While Mennonite cookbooks typically don't designate much space for theological comment, the theological drivers are often still visible. Her project will bring scholarly attention to women's roles in Mennonite churches and to the importance of material culture (food and recipes) in everyday Christian faith.

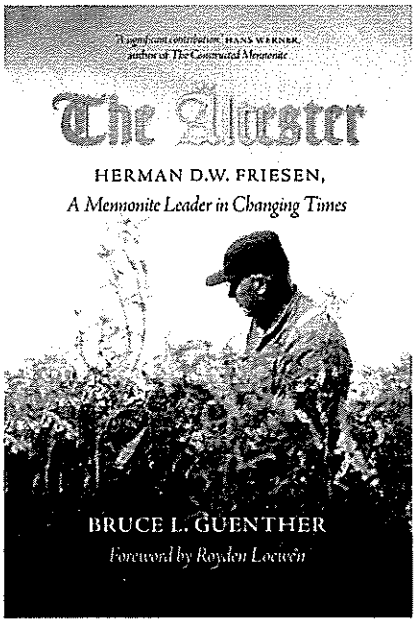
At the Hillsboro meeting, the Commission also heard Emma Sorensen report on her five-week archival internship. She helped with the normal archival tasks at each of the four MB archives and explored the formation of the institutions that became part of the Mennonite Mental Health Services, staffed initially by Conscientious Objectors (Canada) and Civilian Public Service (U.S.A.) workers during the Second World War.

A **J.B. Toews $1,000 college scholarship** was awarded to ***Andrew Regehr*** of Canadian Mennonite University.

(M.B. Historical Commission release)

Announcing a New Book . . .

The Ältester



Herman D.W. Friesen, A Mennonite Leader in Changing Times, by Bruce L. Guenther. Categories:Cultural Heritage, Post-confederation (1867), Religious. Expected to ship: 2018-09-01

Offering a unique window into the Old Colony Mennonite community in Saskatchewan, this biography of Herman D. W. Friesen reveals the life of a man who attempted to modernize his community, often in opposition to traditional religious beliefs.

The story begins on the Hague-Osler Mennonite reserve in the 1910s and 20s. At this time the government was pressuring Mennonite communities to send their children to province-run schools. This set off a series of migrations in which Mennonites left for Mexico, Central America, and other parts of Canada.

During the watershed decade of the 1960s, Friesen was elected as a minister, and later as the Ältester (Bishop). Despite growing up in an environment filled with intense governmental conflict and considerable suspicion towards "the English outsiders," he did not try to organize another migration out of Saskatchewan. Instead, taking a unique approach to leadership, Friesen tried to navigate a gradual process of accommodation to the changes taking place in the province.

Included in the book are Friesen's sermons, translated from German, providing a unique glimpse into the Old Colony Mennonite theology that aided him in guiding the church in a strategy of gradual cultural accommodation.

[NOT available yet! After Sept 1] *BG*

The Berg Family's Move to Taber, Alberta

by Dick Braun

I am Dick Braun, the grandson of the Bergs that this story deals with. I live in Osler, Saskatchewan with my wife Kathy. This story is also one of those that fits into the 70th anniversary category.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta hosted a conference at Lethbridge dealing with "Uprooted Cultures." The Mennonites that came to the Taber area to work the sugar beet fields were part of that culture. The Japanese were also part of the uprooted culture. There were also First Nations people from Saskatchewan who went to Taber.

The Jacob Berg family farm at Blumenthal, Sask.

The sugar beet story interested me as my grandparents were part of that move. The people in the Hague area of Saskatchewan were looking for a place to move to earn money to pay off debt.

The R.M of Warman brought in some people who were looking for labourers. Mr. Philip Baker, president of the Alberta Sugar Beet Growers Association, came to Saskatchewan to recruit labourers to work the beet fields. The 1930s had taken its toll on the economy and the forties had not helped much. The enticing part was that the whole family could work in the field together and best of all - would all earn money.

In the late forties there was a meeting in the village of Neuanlage. In looking back, was the right place for a meeting as there were a number of families growing potatoes, which at that time was also labour-intensive. There were many young men looking for work, and this was an opportune time and place to go to. The other factor was that there were some large families and so income per family would be greatly improved.

Jacob and Marie Berg (my grandparents) from Blumenthal had thirteen children, so the decision was made to move to Taber, Alberta. Jacob and Marie moved with their seven youngest children. From oldest to youngest were Susie, John, Kay (Tina), Margaret, Cornelius (Neil), Abe and Dave.

Their son Jake was already there, working at building irrigation ditches, also a daughter, Ann, married to Peter Friesen. The Peter and Margaret Braun family were there too. Margaret was Jacob Berg's sister.

Their 1937 Dodge truck had a cap built on the back and this is where most of the children would ride. There was another truck loaded with the household wares. The trip took two days from Hague to Taber, with a stop at Maple Creek for the night.

Uncle Dave recalls the South Saskatchewan River Landing hill and how that Dodge had a lot of trouble pulling its way up there.

They arrived at Taber and continued on to Barnwell, just west of Taber. There was a beet farmer who hired the Berg family.

Grandpa Berg liked the soil in the area as it was a bit sandy, just like his land at Blumenthal which made hand labour in the field much easier.

Life soon became somewhat normal as there were church services held in the homes. The Bergs had a large house so it became one of those homes. Mr Peter Braun was an ordained Old Colony minister from the Hague area who served in that capacity. On occasion there was a minister that came from Swift Current, Sask., to do some services.

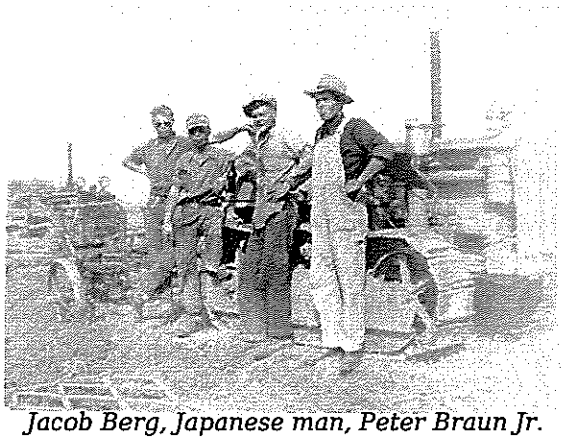
Some of the families that went to Taber from the Hague/Osler area were: the Heinrich Doerksens, the Issac Doerksens, the Wilhelm Zachariases, the Cornelius Harders, the David Fehrs, and the George Friesens. This is not a complete list of families.

Some of these families came back to resume life

here, and some decided to stay and make Taber and area their home.

There were also some families that moved to Taber from the Swan Plain area. The Braun family was one of them. Ann, a daughter of the Brauns, told me how they first stopped in at Blumenthal where their grandparents lived. She said that the whole family needed to refuel as their bodies were run down. The work at Taber was going to be strenuous, and so they needed to go there full of energy.

There were also many families from the Swift Current area that went to Taber, like the Knelsen family and the Martens family. (One of Martens' sons later became my uncle).



Jacob Berg, Japanese man, Peter Braun Jr.

Work in the beet fields was hard and tedious, so to get their minds off that, Grandma would get the children to sing.

Dave was the only child that went to school there, and he recalls the Japanese children in school.

The neighbour family to the Bergs was a Japanese family and so the children spent a lot of time together.

There were also some Mennonite families who worked together with First Nations people. John Braun of Hague tells the story of working in the beet fields with First Nations people from Saskatchewan.

A few years after he was back living at Hague the boss that he had worked for showed up at Hague to visit some of his workers. He wanted to go see the people at the Beardy's Reserve at Duck Lake. John Braun was asked if he wanted to go along to visit these folks, and he did. John says that the Beardy's people could not believe that this old boss would come to visit them.

There seemed to be almost year-round work for most of the people. The spring started off with planting. Soon row after row of beets could be seen over the fields. Then the thinning of the plant rows started as they only wanted one plant every six inches. Then, there was the weeding which was done twice in a summer -- all hand-hoed!

During the summer there were cucumbers and green corn to be picked. The farmers also worked on field improvements.

Grandma Berg was always out in the field together with her children working some very long days. However, the young people still had some energy left for the weekend. Some young people could be found at a dance on Saturday night. This is how my two aunts met their future husbands.

Susie Berg married Abe Martens in Taber, and stayed for a few years, but they moved to Waldeck, Saskatchewan, to raise a family.

Kay Berg married Henry Martens, and ended up staying at Taber the rest of her life. Kay worked the beet fields even after they were married. She was not afraid of hard work, and she continued to do this work well into her fifties. The Martenses ended up working for a farmer, and later purchased some of their own land.

As one story goes, Grandpa Berg worked with a Japanese man, and one day they were trying to start a tractor. The Japanese man was too small to crank the engine. Jacob Berg, in his broken English, said to the Japanese man, "I crank him, and you shook him, but he goes."

My uncles tell me that working with the Japanese people was a good experience.

The Bergs ended up staying four years, then coming back to Blumenthal, Saskatchewan. The family had done well. Two girls had married, they bought a 1952 Ford truck, and they came home with money which was used to purchase some better used farm machinery and to build a house on a new yard. They were also able to pay off their debt.

The Bergs never lost touch with Taber, Alberta, as their one daughter and her family remained there. Also, the Peter and Margaret Braun family had stayed there. Kay and Henry Martens made

Loading at Barnwell, to move back to Hague.

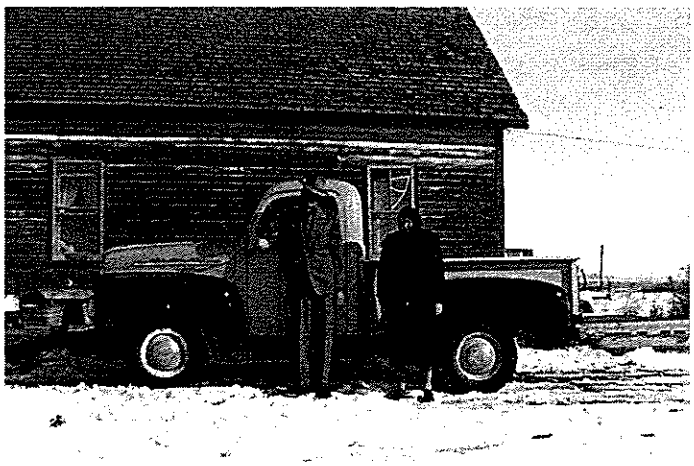
many trips to Saskatchewan. Always they had their camera with them.

When aunt Kay passed away I was asked to give a history of why and how these people ended up in southern Alberta.

Aunt Kay and Uncle Henry Martens became members at the United Church in Taber. The Old Colony church did not gain much momentum.

In addition to the oral story we also found some letters in the Mennonitishe Post, from 1948-1951, that were interesting and informative .

Mr Jacob Berg would encourage his friends from back home to write in to the Post. He would use words like *"Na frint, waut dies du nach emma?"*



Jacob and Maria Berg

There was also a case where someone went to Banff to be in the healing waters; on the way home to Hague, he stopped in at Taber to visit.

Mr Peter Braun was also an avid writer to the Post. He wrote about local happenings, and that he had bought a new car, and gone shopping in the USA for Christmas.

I remember my grandparents coming back to Saskatchewan and being able to stay at their place during the summer school break. Grandpa and Grandma Berg were very kind people and fun to be with, and I think some of their way of life was a result of working with another culture.

DB

(Cont'd from page 23 - ***Mrs. Friesen)***

person but was very easy to scare. Story has it that there was some bandit on the loose and so she made her husband check out the whole house before she would go in for the night.

She was very innovative; after all, when you are a chiropractor there might also be the need for medicine, and so she got into making moonshine. But I am sure it was only for medicinal purposes, or when the stress got too high.

Mrs. Friesen had a soft spot for her grandchildren. Just for them she served bought ham, bought milk and Wagon Wheels. Well, she also had a soft spot for the dog, as he was served wieners and jello.

When it was time to move into the Altenheim in Warman some of her clients followed her. This was frowned on by the administration. So the clients found a back door to get to her room for this special visit, especially when it was a van full of Hutterites. Can you imagine that she still had the strength to be a chiropractor after retiring into the Altenheim?

By far, this not a complete story about Mrs. Friesen, as each person that came to her house for help would have a story to tell about the experience. Then there would be the family stories, as the Peters people were known for their wonderful way of letting you in on exactly how it was.

DB

Mrs. Friesen, the Chiropractor

by Dick Braun

Katherina Friesen (nee Peters) was born June 26,1905, and died October 15, 1981. Being born to the Peters family in Neuanlage, Saskatchewan, one might think, would automatically give her the genes to be a chiropractor or bone setter, or a *trajchtmoaka*.

Mrs. Friesen, a very gifted person, started her bone setting at a young age when a farm animal had a leg that was out of place. She worked on the animal until it was fixed. From there it just went on to helping people with problems.

She had a brother who was also good at this work. There were, and are, nephews who also had the gift of bone setting or *trajchtmoaken*.

She married George Friesen of Gruenthal and continued with this work. She was also a midwife.

One of the things that the grandchildren talk about is the all-familiar smell that was in their grandparents' house. The *blitzoil* smell is strong, and was used as an ointment, and also as a massage lubricant. I am sure that when that smell comes up somewhere, all kinds of memories come to mind.

Mrs. Friesen's knowledge of the human body was extensive. This helped in her midwife practice. During the years of no medicare midwives were often called in to help with a birth. Dick Braun of Neuhorst remembers that in June of 1955, Mrs. Friesen was called to help with the birth of his brother Abe.

She also knew just where to put her fingers and thumbs so that you were in a lot of pain - or could not move. Dr. Heinz Heese tells the story about how he did not have much faith in chiropractors; that is what the medical profession thinks. One day Mrs. Friesen came to him for help, and his answer was not what she wanted to hear. She got up and put a clamp on his shoulder which made him completely immobile. He was very surprised, as he had no idea that you could do that to a person. This changed his attitude towards chiropractors; for sure towards Mrs. Friesen.

One day a man from Hepburn showed up at her house with a dislocated jaw. The man had been kicked by an animal. She stood in front of the man and assessed the situation. Without saying anything, she hauled off and plowed him with her fist on the other side of the jaw. The jaw popped back into place. The man stood there, opened and closed his mouth a few times, and all was fixed.

She was well known for her rough way of chiropracting, so much so, that many times she was just called *Buchle Frieishe.*

The grandsons talk about the hockey injuries they had, and that they would come to grandmother after a game or practice. She was not very fond of this 'sports thing' and so the *trajchtmoaken* sometimes got a little painful.

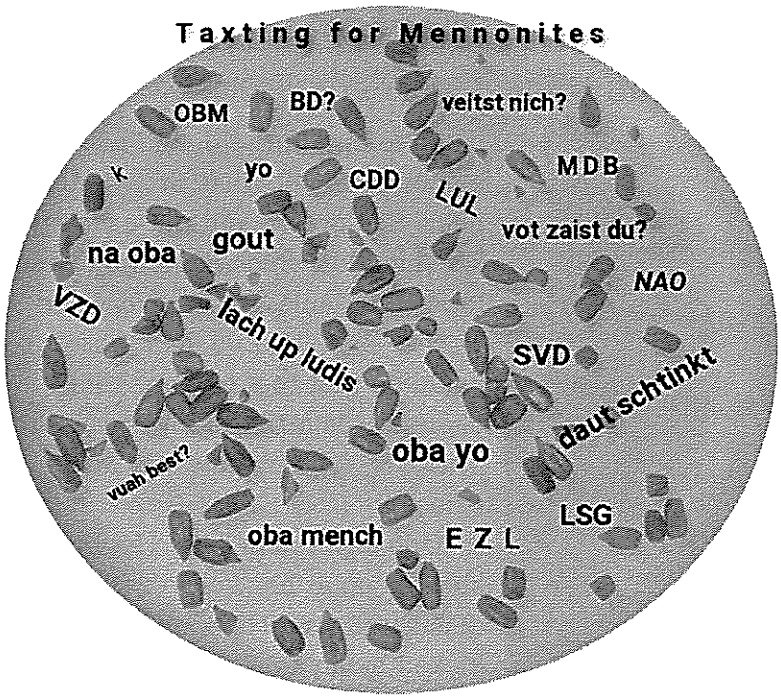
Her son John talked about the times that the Saskatchewan Roughriders came for a fixing. This must have given her great joy, inflicting some pain on those big tough guys.

There are also the times that the Saturday night wrestlers from Saskatoon would come for an adjustment after an evening of showing off.

One of her famous *spreijchwuat* sayings she had was, "Well it hurt when it went out of place; then it has to hurt going back into place."

She seemed to be such a tough

(cont'd on page 22 - ***Friesen***)



Inside Message:

LUL - lach up lüdis - Laugh out loud
OBY - oba yo! Certainly!
NAO - Na oba! - Oh my!
VN - Veitst nich? - Don't you know?
DS - Daut schtinkt - That stinks
CDD - Chjantz du deme? - Do you know them?
VZD - Vot zaits du? - What did you say?
EZL - Ech zie lote - I'm late
OBM - Oba mensch! - Oh man!
BD - Best dull? - Are you angry?
B@@ - baking cinnamon buns
MF$ - Me falt yelt - I need money
VHY - Vie hant yast - We have company
VB - Voah best? - Where are you?
MDB - Mei dreckt die book - My stomach aches
LSG - Lote'et schein goni - Enjoy yourself
SVD - Sie vi die - see you

Websites

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