Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian

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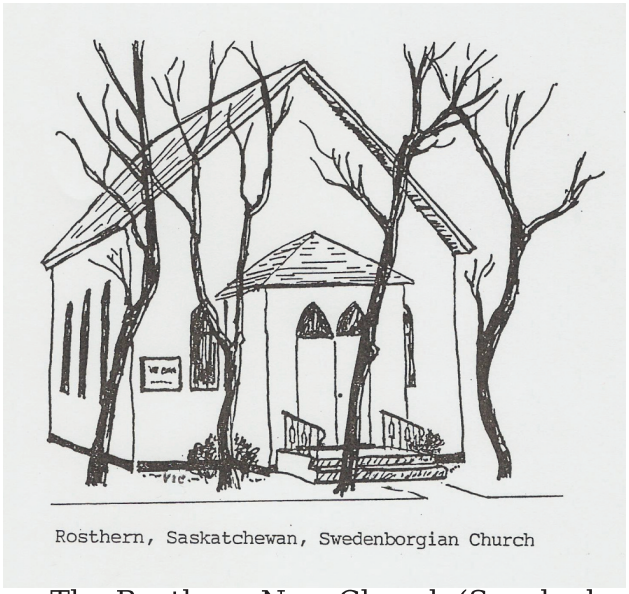
Features:


Rosthern, Saskatchewan, Swedenborgian Church

The Rosthern New Church and its Mennonite Connections

by Victor Carl Friesen

The Rosthern New Church (Swedenborgian) Society was the first such formal denomination in Western Canada, being formed a few years after this area was settled. There has been some question about the exact year of the society's founding. Discussions may have begun in 1897. Not all the early records are available: the secretary at the time worked in the town's flour mill, where he stored the church papers, and the mill burned down. The church's round metal seal bears the inscription: “The New Church of Rosthern established 1899.” However, this has been found to be an error (probably

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The Editor's Perspective

Ruth Marlene Friesen

Last issue I told you how much of editor-work consists of jiggling blocks of test and graphics in a layout so that it will all come together for easy and good reading.

This time I came to a point where it wasn't quite so much fun. Well, it had a bittersweet aspect.

You see, we had some extra articles submitted. That is great news, so - naturally, I wasn't about to decline them, but I found we had approximately four pages more than usual. I got permission to increase the size of this issue, only to find that I was still one page over the required number that is devisible by four. How to decide which one-page article to bump to the next issue? This is the uncomfortable part! I deferred to our President. We came up with a creative solution. Be sure to count ALL the pages in this issue.

Furthermore, I got to thinking of the items that we haven't even touched yet.

For instance, that Music Gala on October 31 at Knox United, where MCC Saskatchewan celebrated their 50th anniversary again (they've been doing it each month this year). It was a superb evening of high quality music from such a variety of ethnic strands that are now part of the braid - Mennonite music. That deserves a report.

I really like the way Esther Patkau keeps discovering people with fascinating life stories to tell. I'm sure there are many others - for, truth be told, each one of us has an interesting life. (The trick is to tell it well, right?)

Above all, it is fulfilling to see how our Historian committee members have written articles or found someone else to submit one. That's the wonderfully fun part! You are bound to find at least one article or story you like a lot.

Now I wish you a blessed Christmas season and a joy-filled New Year!

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MHSS President's Corner

by Jake Buhler

The brutal killing of two Canadian soldiers in October is cause to reflection and remembrance.

We also remember the soldiers, and their families, of the Boer War, WW1, WW2, Korea, Afghanistan, and now Iraq. We also remember all those our troops killed, and continue to kill. We remember selectively sometimes, and forget that suffering goes beyond the Just War Theory. All killing is wrong.

We are now faced with a new religion in Canada: militarism. It is promoted at professional baseball, football and hockey games. The school curriculum promotes study of wars and battles and how we "came of age" in WW1. A number of churches endorse our troops. The military industry lobbies our government to buy advanced equipment. Our government promotes militarism.

The Mennonites, in 1874, migrated to Canada from Russia to get away from militarism.

Conscientious Objectors stood up to ridicule in WW2. We need to revisit the past and hear the stories of those who chose to wear uniforms and those who did not. We must remember and learn from the past. We rarely hear the voice of the Canadian Legion after WW2. "Never Again" was their slogan. That voice has become quiet.

Aulet Baste,
Jake Buhler

denoting the year when the sale was obtained), for the first church minutes, still on record, verify that the society was established in 1898, as the sign on the church building states.

But how did it happen? Rosthern, after all, began as a Mennonite settlement in 1891 after eleven families from Manitoba had homesteaded that spring at Gleichen (Alberta) and found the land there too stony. By midsummer they had backtracked, then headed north to detrain at a water stop beside a creek halfway between Saskatoon and Prince Albert. (This rail line had been completed just the year before.) More Mennonites would follow in the years immediately succeeding. And in the same decade, some of these people not only formed a Swedenborgian society but in 1899 actually erected the first church building in the town. (The Mennonite community earlier had chosen to build its church six miles west in the Eigenheim district, in 1896, where most of its farm population was homesteading.)

Here's what tran-spired. The town's most prominent citizen, Gerhard Ens, arrived in 1892 to become the community's first store-keeper, post-master, justice of the peace, and eventually, when the province of Saskatchewan was created in 1905, the district's first member of the provincial legis-lature. He was also a federal immigration officer and a CPR land agent. On a winter day, a few years after his arrival, he was visited by a Peter Vogt from Manitoba. When Vogt took his leave, Ens noticed a paper sticking out of his guest's fur-coat pocket. “What have you got there?” Ens wanted to know.

It was a pamphlet on religious matters (perhaps something similar to what Johnny Appleseed, a Swedenborgian, might have handed out to Ohio pioneers along with his apple seedlings). Vogt gave assurance it was worth reading and would leave it for Ens' perusal. It gave a Swedenborgian view on a passage from the Bible.

When Ens was left to himself, he quickly read through the pamphlet, a dis-cussion of Elisha's miracle of raising a lost axe head from the water, as told in 2 Kings 6:1-7. Maybe Ens had wondered about the significance of this story before. In any case, he was so taken by the interpretation that he immediately want-ed to tell his friend Abram H. Friesen about it. Friesen was one of the founding settlers of the community (and my grandfather), but he lived on a farm a mile east, and it had begun to snow. A real blizzard was blowing up, in fact, but Ens didn't hesitate to walk through the swirling drifts to share his “discovery.”

Such was the start of the New Church Society in Rosthern. As it turned out, some of the other Rosthern settlers who arrived in the area after my grandfather and Ens already had some familiarity with Swedenborg's writings. Thus a group could be formally organized. Prominent early members, besides Ens and Friesen, included Abram Klassen, William Wiebe, John Hamm, and their families.

The first church originally stood right on Main Street, in the principle business block, at its intersection with First Avenue (where the town library now stands). A few years later it

Cont'd from page 1

was moved two blocks north, to the corner of Fourth Street and First Avenue, and served the members there till 1913.

By that time the congregation numbered more than twenty families, or 150 people all told, including some from the Hague area. The group needed a larger building and so bought the vacated Mennonite town church, built in 1903, which was precisely one block further north, where it served the congregation till 2014. It received a major remodel-ling in 1950 and had a full base-ment and plumb-ing added in 1986. (The Mennonites meanwhile had built a larger church for themselves in 1912, several times enlarged and/or rebuilt since then.)

The original New Church still exists and has had various uses. For a short time it was used as an extra classroom by the public school. Then a third denomination, the Seventh Day Adventists bought it, and it served as their church for more than fifty years: 1921-1973. Following that, an SDA parishioner, Wes Lehmann, moved it to his farm for a storage shed. Swedenborg believed that the sincerest form of worship was a useful life, and so he would have approved of the multi-uses given this house of worship.

Something should be said of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) at this juncture. A son of a Lutheran bishop, he devoted his early life to science – producing the first Swedish texts in algebra and calculus, discovering the function of several areas of the brain, and designing the world's largest dry dock, among other things. Then in mid-life, after some religious experiences, he became a theologian himself, writing explications of several books of the Bible.

It was never his intention to start a new denomination; in fact, he argued against doing so, feeling that his work could inform any religious thinking. Nonetheless, fifteen years after his death, the first Swedenborgian church was formed in London, England. (Poet William Blake was a charter member, although he left the group afterward.) Five years later still, the first New Church opened in the United States and Canada was established in 1817.

The full official name, Church of the New Jerusalem, relates to a passage in Revelation that speaks of a Holy City descending, an ideal society – something to strive for in our lives in this world as we do our best to love our Lord, and to love one another as He has loved us. Helen Keller, a noteworthy Swedenborgian, wrote a book about the faith in 1929, entitled My Religion (now entitled, Light in My Darkness).

The Rosthern New Church has been served by a variety of ministers, at first irregularly by visiting clergymen from Manitoba and the United States. Then Gerhard Ens became acting lay minister for many years. Rev. Peter Peters was resident minister from 1934 to '47 – he also organized the “famous” Rosthern Band. When he left, Rev. John Zacharias was visiting minister from Vancouver. From 1947 to '80, Rev. Henry Reddekopp held monthly services as a “circuit rider,” serving several Saskatchewan societies. Rev. David Somor, onetime head of the Saskatoon

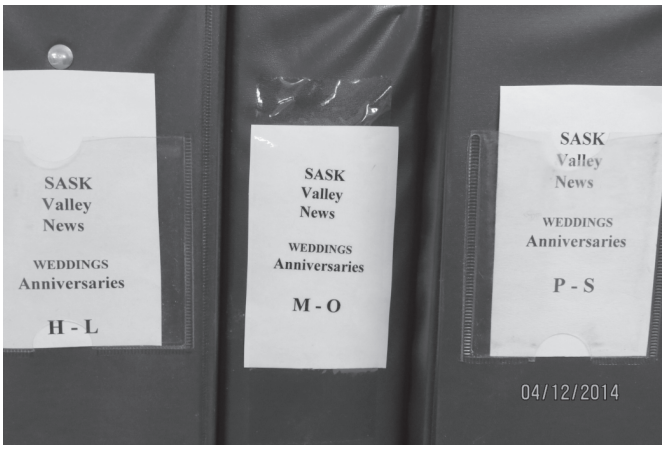
Ministerial Association, filled a similar role to 1996. For the past 18 years, Victor C. Friesen has been acting lay minister, again with monthly sermons. An organist of long serviceo has been Lena Ens, daughter-in-law of Gerhard's brother and great-granddaughter of Abram H. Friesen.

Recent executive members included Art Abrams of Waldheim as president (then succeeded by his daughter Lillian Epp), and James H. Friesen, as secretary-treasurer for the last forty-four years.

The aging membership has declined over the last years, finally amounting to only eight people, with some driving up from Saskatoon. Each service in the last decades has been followed by a potluck lunch and good fellowship – a worthwhile gathering of scattered parishioners. However, the time has now come to end our services: "*every activity and every purpose has its proper time*." (Ecclesiastes 4:17). Thus, Rosthern, still a town of many churches, will have its very first one closing down. It has served the Swedenborgian New Church Society for 101 years.

Plans are now underway for the church building (and lot) to be donated to the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Rosthern, the building (originally constructed by Mennonites) to be moved to the Museum site and so becoming part of a new Mennonite Interpretive Centre.

Use Your Archives



You can use your MHSS archives for family research. One common search is for exact death dates, usually found in obituaries. Our archives volunteers carefully clip and file every obituary in the Sask-atchewan Valley News, and in the Canadian Mennonite.

We have the index to all those obituaries on our website. So if you want to do a quick check before making a personal trip to the archives, go to our website, at *mhss.sk.ca/Deaths/* and look for the link to the latest index (spreadsheet in PDF format). There is one for the Sask Valley News, and one for the Canadian Mennonite. The files are updated once or twice a year - thanks to the faithful record-keeping work of Elmer Neufeld.

In the index listing you will find the name, and if in the obituary, there will be a birth date and a death date, the place, and the issue and page number in which the obit was published.

Armed with that information you can go to the archives and ask to the see the original obituary in the binders. You may ask for a photocopy too.

Another thing we collect is clippings of any weddings and anniversaries that were published in these papers. Often there will be photos, and more details, like the names of children, their spouses if married, and the grandchildren.

Sometimes bits of history and unique stories are told about the married couple in these articles.

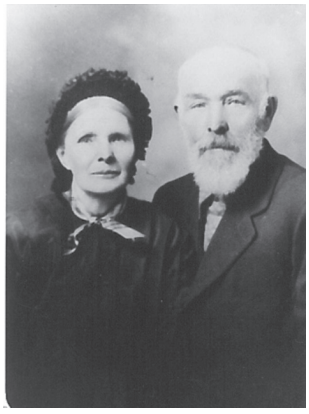
Caught in a Snowstorm by Leonard Doell

In the winter of 1962, a group of church members from the Schoenwiese Berg-thaler Mennonite Church met for a "Brudershaft" or brotherhood meeting. When they attempted to go home after the meeting, they were greeted by a huge winter snow storm. For the readers who are not familiar with this church, I will first provide you with a little background about them and then share with you the story about what happened to them as they tried to find their way home.

The Schoenwiese church when in Blumenheim

The Schoenwiese Bergthaler Mennonite Church was located near the village of Schoen-wiese, which is approximately 10 miles straight north of the Town of Warman. Church services were initially held in the home of Jacob and Sarah Guenther on the NE 13-40-5- wof3, about a mile southwest of the Village of Schoen-wiese. They had a 26 by 40 foot home, which could house many people who lived in the area.

A church building was built in 1911 on two acres of land donated by church members Johan and Helena Doell. It was erect-ed on the SE 24 Tp 40 R5 W of 3. This land was originally homesteaded by Johan Martens in 1899 and after his death on October 31 1902, the land was sold to Johan Doell. The first wedding in the new church building took place on 6 August 1911, when Katherina Doell, daughter of Johan and Helena Doell was married to Franz Peters by Rev Cornelius Hamm.



Johann & Helena Doell

The contractor for the church construction was Henry Wilker and his partner Edward Dehmke from Rosthern. They put up the building with the help of six or seven local volunteers. At the same time that the church was being built, Mr. Jacob Guenther was having a new house built west of his old place. Mrs. Guenther prepared meals for the contract-ors of their new home as well as the labourers at the church. Included in the two acres set aside for the church there was also land for a ceme-tery. Up until 1941 Berg-thaler people were also buried in the Schoen-wiese Village cemetery.

An addition to the original building was constructed in 1923. In 1966, Sunday School rooms were built from lumber from the dismantl-ed Rosthern Bergthaler Church. The Schoen-wiese Church was closed in 1971 and the follow-ing year the building was moved to Blumenheim. The Old Colony Church paid for the cost of moving it. Both churches used the church for worship on alternate Sundays. By 1994, this church was used solely by the Bergthaler Church. The last service in this building was on Palm Sunday March 23 1997, conducted by Rev. Peter U. Ens. Later the Sunday School rooms were dismantled and the original building was moved on Aug 7 1997 to its present location on the Saskatchewan River Museum grounds in Hague.

On the 7 Feb 1962, The Saskatchewan Valley News reported that 15 motorists had been rescued at Neuhorst, that had been stranded in the season's worst blizzard. " Shortly before four o"clock last Saturday afternoon a cavalcade of 11 cars carrying 15 people, 14 men and one woman left the (Schoenwiese) Bergthaler Church in the

Neuhorst district, north of Osler and turned south headed for home. They had attended an afternoon meeting of the church and had not noticed the rising winds and heavy snowfall. By this time however, an old fashioned prairie blizzard with winds up to 40 miles per hour was rapidly fill-ing in all the roads and reducing the visibility to zero.

Two miles south of the Gruenthal road, at four o'clock, the cars came to a halt, unable to move any further. They were to sit there until five o'clock the following morning when the last passengers were taken from the cars and moved to a private farm dwelling two miles away. Henry Wolf, a member of the stranded group, finally made his way home two miles from the scene and later that evening turned in a call for help to the Osler telephone exchange. The call was relayed to Hague, about 12 miles northeast of the scene where the night operator Jack Newlove got busy. A call to Rosthern for help was channeled to Bill Flath of the Bergthal district, owner of a propeller driven snow plane. Arrangements were made with Cpl. Jack Waterman of the local RCMP detachment to accompany Mr. Flath. After a stop at a local garage for fuel and a new battery, the two left Rosthern at the height of the storm, shortly after midnight, on a 25 mile trip to the scene of the stranded motorists. They stopped at Hague where they picked up George Dueck, who acted as guide, and some groceries, and at about 2 a.m. they were on their way again. Although no trouble was encountered by the rescue group, going was slow due to zero visibility.

In the meantime John Fedrau, a Hague resident who had heard about the plight of the motorists and knew the area well, made telephone contact with two farmers living about 4 miles from the scene. They were A.H. Friesen and Henry Friesen who were unaware of what was happening. Both started their diesel tractors and were able to get through to the scene before the rescue team but were unable to move any of the cars. Help finally did arrive for the 15 at about 3 am when the snow plane from Rosthern arrived on the scene. All of the passengers were evacuated to the Jacob Peters farm in Neuhorst about 2 miles away. Mr. Flath could only take four passengers at one time and had to make four trips in order to make the transfer.

None of the occupants in the stranded cars reportedly suffered from the 12 hour ordeal. To conserve what gasoline they had in their cars, they warmed them up in rotation with the passengers moving from car to car in groups. Among them reportedly was an 83 year old man. Mr. Flath, Cpl. Waterman and George Dueck returned to Hague at about 6 a.m. where they enjoyed a hot breakfast at the Dueck home before proceeding to Rosthern. The two local men arrived here at 8 am Sunday morning.

There are a few more details about this event written in an article by J.G. Guenter in the Hague -Osler History book 1895-1995 (p. 508-509). He writes that the 83 year old man happened to be Rev. Heinrich Martens from Warman and that this incident had not harmed him, since he lived to be 106 years old.

There were two men with whom I talked who remembered the event and how it impacted them. Peter Giesbrecht was living in Neuhorst at the time and when he heard about the motorists being stranded, went to William Hildebrandt's to borrow his horse and sleigh. Peter then went and picked up passengers and distributed them to various homes in Neuhorst. John Peters' parents, Jacob L. and Mary Peters, had gone to Hague Hardware that day, and when they returned they became part of the cavalcade that got stuck on the road with the group from the Bergthaler Church.

J.G. Guenter also writes that Henry Wolf said that it was only by God's goodness and grace that in this incident all the people were spared and again found shelter from a prairie storm.

A Nineteenth Century Russian Mennonite Teacher and his Father Complain - by Dr. John B. Toews, Professor Emeritus at Regent College in Vancouver.

This article first published here!

Setting

Current documentation for the Russian Mennonite story will ensure lifetime projects for many a young scholar, especially with the availability of recently microfilmed materials from Russian and Ukrainian archives. Yet the content of these manuscripts is largely official in character and rarely depicts personal or village life. Such information can only be garnered from rather few nineteenth century sources. Three surviving diaries allow us to somewhat touch the fabric of everyday life. They essentially speak to the life of Mennonite ministers in both the Khortitsa and Molochna settlements, yet also provide some insight into the life of the village teacher. The David Epp (1839-43) and Jacob Epp (1851-1880) diaries are available in the archives of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Mennonite Library and Archives in North Newton, Kansas, houses the Dietrich Gaeddert (1860-1976) diaries.

David Epp's diaries focus mainly on his many ministerial duties and give relatively little information on the village school. By contrast the extensive diaries of his son Jacob provide frequent glimpses into the Mennonite schools in the so-called Hebrew Colonies where Epp's ministerial duties included the role of school inspector. From his various diary entries (i.e. February 8, 9, 1860, February 10, 1865) it is obvious that a full village school curriculum meant reading, writing, arithmetic, singing and Bible stories. It is also apparent that the village teacher totally determined the success of the local school. If there was no teacher there was no school. More often than not the village was to blame for the state of the school. Mennonites were farmers and that pursuit set priorities. Frequently the cycle of farming determined the length of the school year. Furthermore, parents thought in terms of a minimal literacy, much as they themselves possessed. For the teacher there was no concept of tenure since the village hired or fired at will. Salaries were absolutely minimal[1] as often were the qualifications of the village pedagogue.

Unlike Jacob Epp, Dietrich Gaeddert's diaries do not complain about the lot of the village teacher, perhaps because Gaeddert is also a farmer and not dependant upon a low salary which, as he reports in one entry, was "like the one of the past year" (January 19, 1861). He regularly attended teacher's conventions, yet, like most of his colleagues, seemed content to work in the context of time-honored patterns. He does register excitement about the 1860 publication of H. Franz's Choralbuch and at two teacher gatherings (August 15, 27, 1860) practiced "several melodies" using the Choralbuch. Similarly Jacob Epp notes that at one of his school inspections the children "sang songs from our own hymnbook and at the close sang several chorals in harmony." (February 9, 1860). Singing by zipfers marked a welcome addition to the school curriculum of that day, and eventually enhanced worship services as well.

In the various diary entries the midnineteenth village school teacher emerges as a marginal figure. He personifies the village school and is a somewhat authoritative presence, but it is not always clear what or how he taught or what qualifications were needed to become a teacher. In some ways the always male village teacher was worse off than he had been in previous decades. Earlier, by 1820, the Orloff villagers in the Molochna had organized the so-called *Christlicher Schulverein* (Christian School Society) in order to raise the educational level of the community. Until the late 1840s the Molochna villages could only appoint or dismiss a teacher with the approval of the Society. After 1850 village autonomy – and with it greater caprice – began to reassert itself.

By 1860 school dynamics mainly involved the

local community and the teacher had no appeal beyond the village. There was no common educational philosophy nor any state-controlled system. If teacher and village were compatible it usually meant village expectations dominated and the teacher did little to challenge the status quo. Doing so probably meant dismissal. This one-sided balance of power meant continuity rather than change. Mediocrity was further ensured by the so-called *Pruefung* or public examination that, for the benefit of attending members of the public, regurgitated carefully memorized knowledge soon forgotten once the *Pruefung* was over. Added to this was often an ill-equipped, poorly heated classroom combined with low salaries that might satisfy a time server but not a gifted teacher. In most instances there was also the village constituency that usually believed that excess learning served no useful purpose in an agricultural economy. Then too the approval of the regional elder was needed for most curriculum matters and generally he tended to be conservative. Such piety demanded that children recite prayers, learn to read the Bible and catechism and master elementary arithmetic. Since reading seems to have been based on word recognition rather than phonetics, it usually took some years to acquire the skill. In the end the school was only as good as its teachers and most did not challenge the status quo. Mid-nineteenth century teachers possessed minimal pedagogical training. There was no standardized curriculum. If current documentation is any indication ,teachers frequently changed positions and long term service was the exception rather than the rule.

In his memoirs, Gerhard Isaac Peters includes a brief life sketch penned by his great-grandfather, Isaak Peter Fast, who wished to be a teacher in Prussia. Unable to find a position "I became a weaver like my father and all my brothers." He migrated to Russia in 1837. For a time he settled in Gnadenfeld, "learned the trade of wood painting," then accepted "a teaching position in the village of Schoensee," only to find that the "School Board gave me notice" just before winter since the former teacher decided to return. Subsequently he taught in the villages of Friedensdorf, Franzthal and Liebenau. He observed "very often the uneducated and crude farmer" determined the future of the school and "looked for a teacher who was willing to work for the lowest wages." In order to supplement his income Gerhard became a tinsmith "making buttons and spoons and selling them from house to house."[2]

The 1870s marked a kind of watershed in the story of the Mennonite village school. Compulsory state service generated a crisis in the community. The more conservative who felt this violated their non-resistant views left for America in the mid-1870s. Thanks to a partial acculturation into things Russian those who remained accepted a broader curriculum. The first Mennonite youth also left the Ukrainian steppes in order to obtain teacher training in Switzerland and Germany as well as in cities like St. Petersburg and Kharkov. They brought new talent and assertiveness back to the village school and the community increasingly allowed them greater leadership. Their skills, both in Russian and German, allowed the Mennonites to deal with intensifying russification pressures in manageable dosages. Unfortunately, the prospects of a brighter future in the late nineteenth century did not help the village teachers of the 1860s.

The Complaints of a Son and Father

A very personal profile of this era was left by a young teacher, David Goerz, who dutifully corresponded with his parents between 1863 and 1868.[3] Happily for us, he was a trifle verbose and possessed of a fiery temperament that stated what needed to be said. A talented student, he was offered a one year scholarship to attend the Ohrloff Secondary School that even included a clothing allowance.[4] David was exposed to a rather broad-based curriculum that included subjects like botany, zoology, natural

history, mineralogy and church history. He also studied land surveying on his own[5] noting that he was translating a land survey text from Russian into German. In May 1864, he informed his parents that he had been offered a secretarial post by the Taschenak estate owner Cornies.[6] By July he was living at the estate. Subsequently he reported that he taught the Russian language, that Cornies supplied his clothes and that he "sings and makes music" with an old friend and five female servants who are Hutterites.[7] In the spring of 1865 he informed his parents that he was no longer secretary to Cornies but a teacher at an annual wage of 75 silver rubles. His day began at 800 hours and finished at 1600 hours. During the summer months he was free to be a land surveyor.[8]

Initially David was happy in his profession. He was even willing to forego an offer elsewhere at 100 silver rubles per year. He wrote:

I really can't grumble about anything. I feel so happy in my present situation and have nothing to complain about. My relationship to the students is especially enviable. Is there any greater happiness for a teacher than if his students cling to him with such tender love? I pray to the Lord that He may grant me the patience I need in my profession.[8]

All seemed well in 1866. David was nevertheless deeply troubled by his parent's 1,000 ruble debt and wondered how he might help. In the same letter there was news to report. The president of the Guardian's Committee for Foreign Settlers headquartered in Odessa, Lisander, apparently made an inspection trip to the Molochna Settlement. "Our colony has a bad reputation," David reported. Lisander knew "of no more cantankerous people than the Mennonites, since most petitions and complaints come from them." Apparently the president refused to eat at many of the villages he visited stating that "he would rather eat mouldy bread than take anything from a Mennonite."[9]

Rather suddenly in mid-1867, at least judging by the correspondence, there was unhappiness. His employer Cornies as well as his wife "Madame Cornies," exploded in a fit of anger. During the encounter "Madame chided me like a foolish child."[10] Rather suddenly the joy of being a teacher evaporated.

I don't think Cornies will suddenly dismiss me. He knows the [quality] teacher he has. He won't find such [talent] running towards him on the street. If I left now it would possibly create a breech which I want to avoid. Teachers who know Russian are much sought after in the colony. If you were to travel through the colony you would hear that Braeul in Ohrloff and Siemens in Muensterberg are good teachers, but that the best village schoolteacher in the entire colony is Abraham Goerz in Altonau. And, dear parents, you know I don't want to be bested by my brother Abraham. My brother and Janzen are urging me to take over a village school. They say the situation there is very different from that of an estate. If I made the switch I would again become enthusiastic about the teaching profession. I'm not going to make an impulsive move to a school in the colony. That is a move of last resort when I'm completely fed up – and that's not the case as yet. I'm still young and have no desire to spend the rest of my life between four walls, sacrificing health, experiencing grief and sorrow and making no headway [in my career]. If, as is the case with me, you begin with less than nothing it is impossible to establish your own home without incurring debt. Why does a person work and toil? – in order to gain a small possession he can call his own. That is impossible for a teacher if he remains true to his profession. He may be at a school for several years and then is forced to leave. He can't say "I'll go to a place of my own" that he does not have, a place to lay his head. He is totally dependant upon strangers. Whether things go well or badly depends on the whims of people. So he has worked

for a while and gets fed up. What can he do? He does not have the capital to take up agriculture nor has he learned a trade. He can't do anything but continue to work – work is about as enjoyable as a dog who has had freedom and is then is put on a leash. A teacher is unable to feed a large family unless he has another occupation. And if he has another calling, try though he may, he can no longer be a full-fledged teacher. When his children reach an age when they should be working they must leave home, the girls go into service while the lads learn a trade. The father can give them nothing and when he dies they are very thankful if they don't inherit any debts.[12]

When David asked how his father felt about his last letter,[13] H. Goerz replied with a stinging indictment of the prevailing village school system.

. . . The school system in our Molochna Mennonite Colony leaves much to be desired. A talented and knowledgeable teacher dedicating his time and energies to this profession can easily become discouraged. Aside from some obvious advantages it is a very discouraging situation when his achievements and progressive measures, often attained with great effort and patience, are not valued and recognized. His contributions cannot be adequately valued as long as the village school is subject to local caprice – that is to say where every housewife can shoot off her mouth ("die Nase rumpfen darf" – literally wrinkle one's nose or pucker up one's mouth.) about the teacher himself, his successes and his treatment of the children.

And what about the public examinations (Pruefungen) in the village school? In the end they reveal no differences between a gifted, progressive teacher and one who, because of drink and other unfortunate happenings, becomes a so-called schoolteacher who mechanically drills his students for the public examination. Students remember nothing of what they recited three days later. The examination reveals no notable differences between the two teachers. Yet such a so-called teacher often knows how to flatter his school constituency. If a capable teacher does arrive he is badly criticized, not because he does not know his material, but because he does not know how to deal with his constituency.

And then there are the services that individual farmers are obligated to provide for the school. For example the heating material is of such poor quality that it is hardly acceptable and when it is delivered the school teacher has to spend weeks of his valuable time making it useable. I've observed such incidents. The Schardenau school teacher not only had to use the manure from his own cattle for heating the school, but had to prepare it as well. It was said that he was so tired that he did not want to do much else. Yet for many years that school teacher knew how to get along with his village constituency. In order to sustain the prevailing harmony he had to make the best of a bad situation (literally come up smiling).

And of course such a school teacher has the finest house in the village and is often envied by the stupid and crude [in the village]. In this enviable beautiful house, next to the living room of the teacher, is a large school room where a hundred or more students walk in and out every day. Naturally this room must be kept clean – and if the teacher cannot keep a servant girl – which of course is out of the question – he must do it himself… He must scrape the accumulated dirt from the floor between the many desks and benches and generally clean the desks. This is no small task. He must do this in the knowledge that a village school teacher, in addition to some grain and other things – mostly consumed by his household – receives a salary of 125 [silver] rubles. This is outrageous when compared to a good hired man whom the farmer pays as much as 150 silver

rubles and who in addition, receives free room and board and free laundry service. Compare that to a trade apprentice who gets up to 300 silver rubles and outside of his work has no further responsibilities or obligations. It's flattering to hear that Abraham Goerz is the best teacher in the colony but what does Abraham Goerz gain? In the end he is like a retired soldier who has sacrificed his health, carries his medals on his chest and in his old age has to beg for his livelihood. Take for example the deceased Braeul from Rudnerweide. He taught there for 30 years and was also a talented oil painter. In his old age he encountered serious financial problems and lived in dire circumstances. His many children could not help him. No one in Rudnerweide offered sympathy to their old teacher. I know this from his son-in-law, Jacob Wiebe from Schardenau...

It seems strange and borders on the comical or vexatious that there is talk of raising school standards while the school teacher – who is the real instrument for elevating standards – is tied to a starvation wage...[14]

Perhaps his father's letter played a partial role in further discouraging David. In Kerch, a port city on the Black Sea, his father had purchased a business site and wondered if the unhappy son might wish to join his parents and apprentice as a blacksmith and work in a small industrial complex.[15] Extremely frustrated, David writes home, but only hints at the real reason for his frustration. His father did not know that David had been in correspondence with a tech-nical school in Frankenberg, Germany and desired to go there.[16]

... I want to give up my teaching profession because it does not satisfy me. Secondly, and most significantly ,I don't want to spend my life between four walls. [Third] I want experience that will make me a useful person... I want to see more of God's great world than the school house and move ahead – further ahead than running up and down on the school floor 50 times a day. I am not satisfied with myself. I am young and want to learn, yes learn a great deal more. I am deeply motivated...

For the past half year I have had a plan that has perturbed and disquieted me, yet gave me hope. It has robbed me of all the joy that youth should bring. The darkness of my future has embittered me and destroyed my [inner] peace. It cannot be realized without a patron and benefactor – and is now shattered by your parental demands.[17]

Early in 1868 David has obviously given up all ideas of foreign study and is temporarily resigned to remaining at Taschenak. He sends his parents a summary of the wages Cornies has paid him during the past years: he received 75 silver rubles the first year and 100 silver rubles during the next two.[18] The letter reminded the elder Goerz of an injustice.

While in the colonies we learned that the old Heinrich Friesen in Mariawohl earned 70 silver rubles as a school teacher. It was really a shame to learn that a village community would pay a man with a family 70 rubles. And yet it's a common practice – the school teacher is responsible for everything – after all as they say in the colonies – he has nothing to do.[19]

The father's letter prompted a similar response from his son.

I have to decide whether or not I'm staying here. Cornies will soon want to hire me anew for the next school year. Villages look for teachers somewhat later and [if I leave] I might find myself high and dry, that is without a job. In order to avoid this I have to keep a back door open. It should not come to this since a good teacher will always find a village school... You may ask why I want to leave Taschenak. I have simply lost my enthusiasm for being a teacher and I will lose it entirely

if I stay here any longer. My brother Abraham says its high time I leave. He should know since he too was a teacher at the Hochfeld estate and experienced my frustrations. Yet there the lordships took greater interest in the school since their own children attended.

That is not the case here. The school nor the teacher are respected... For example a year ago I requested that Cornies supply a blackboard for the school. He promised to do so after prolonged reflection and conversation. I have reminded him of his promise but still have no blackboard. I will become old and grey at Taschenak before I get one... The students soon discern the dependency of their teacher [on this patron]... You can imagine the difficulty I have with a self-willed and saucy student who knows I'm powerless.[20]

The surviving correspondence suggests the unhappy story had a happy ending. Mennonites living in Berdyansk were already seeking to recruit David for a teaching position during the summer of 1868. Hearing of this through David's brother Abraham, Cornies became very agitated (*in eine sehr gereizte Stimmung versetzt*) and the matter was temporarily dropped. Renewed conversations between Abraham and Cornies again generated "sharp words" and "extreme irritability" on Cornies part, yet in the end permitted David to leave for Berdyansk.[21] Yet father Goerz could not easily forgive a man who so minimized the talents of his son.

Humanly speaking it is very thoughtless and even foolish for Cornies to behave in such a fashion and to say such things. It is generally well known that whoever rejects his generosity (literally despises his porridge) is not his friend. Whoever does not want to dedicate his entire being to his Taschenak – does so in word and deed and finds meaning in this life with him [Cornies] – cannot rely on his generosity. You can count on the fact that he will oppose your every wish. His untameable obstinacy may lead to a sudden decision to let you go exactly at a time when you have no other prospects. I'm only saying this to prepare you. A number of such actions are well known, taken without regard to his [Cornies] own welfare and often to the greater detriment of the other person…[22]

In one of the last letters of the collection David simply informed his brother Heinrich that he was preparing to take over the school in Berdyansk.[23] David never intended for us to enter his private world. Yet these echoes of the distant past invite us to share the aspirations and frustrations of a young school teacher beset by circumstances he cannot control. We are sym-pathetic to his plight. His letters generate a slight touch of anger against our forebears who thought mainly of farming success had neglected the finer sensitivities of the human spirit. On the other hand they provide a familial portrait of love and mutual respect between a son and his parents and reenforce our sense of what is fair and just.

ENDNOTES:

[1]. Epp mentions salaries as low as 40 rubles per year, at times supplemented by free fuel, pasture, and grain as well as a land allowance (Entries for February 22, 1867; March 30, December 27, 1871; December 17, 1878)

[2]. Gerhard Isaac Peters, "He leadeth me in the right path," 1994, pp 5-9. A humorous "school story" from the 1840s somewhat modifies the generally dismal portraits of the mid-nineteenth century village school teacher. Apparently a gifted teacher in Alt-Kronsweide, Khortitsa named Gerhard Wieler introduced what must have been phonetics. Village mothers heard a "hissing and chattering" as their children did their homework. Alarmed they stormed Wieler's classroom demanding answers. His only recourse was to appeal to elder Jakob Hildebrand who then ordered the women to stay out of the classroom. Kornelius Hildebrand, "Aus der Kronsweider Erweckungszeit,"Der Botschafter, VIII (1913), nos. 6, 8-19.

[3]. David Goerz Collection (Mennonite Library and

Archives, North Newton, Kansas). P. Fast to friend [H.] Goerz, Kronsforstei, May 26, 1863.

[4]. Ibid., H. Goerz to dear friend Peter Fast, Kertsch, December 30, 1863.

[5]. Ibid., David Goerz to "much beloved Parents," Ohrloff, March 14, 1864.

[6] Ibid., D. Goerz to dear Parents, Ohrloff, May 12, 1864. In the letter David uses the German spelling Taschenak in naming the estate. Helmut T. Huebert in his meticulously researched Mennonite Estates in Imperial Russia (second revised edition) identifies the estate as Alt-Taschtschenak (Russian spelling), purchased by Johann Cornies senior in 1832. It was apparently inherited by his only son Johann. When Johann Junior lost his wife after twenty-five years of marriage his father advised him to go to Prussia where he met and married "Madame Cornies" as Goerz calls her. Judging from the letters of David and his father the younger Cornies appears to have lacked the decorum generally attributed to his father. It seemed that David's world had long surpassed the class levelling often associated with new settlement and frontier living. Cornies was a member of a Mennonite gentry class, David was not.

[7] David Goerz Collection, Goerz to dear parent, Taschenak, July 10, 1864; also September 29, 1864; December 16, 1864.

[8] Ibid., D. Goerz to much loved Parents, Taschenak, April 19, 1865.

[9] Ibid., D.G. to dear parents, Taschenak, November 15, 1865.

[10] Ibid., D. Goerz to dear parents, Taschenak, October 1, 1866.

[11] Ibid., D. Goerz to dear parents, Taschenak, July 16, 1867.

[12] Ibid.

[13] D. Goerz to dear Father, Taschenak, October 5, 1867.

[14] Ibid., H. Goerz to dear David, Kerch, October 11, 1867.

[15] Ibid., H. Goerz to dear David, Kerch, October 11, 1867.

[16] Ibid., D.G. to beloved Parents, November 8, 1867; also November 27, 1867.

[17] D. Goerz to dear parents, Taschenak, November 6, 1867.

[18] Ibid., D. Goerz to dear Parents, Taschenak, January 29, 1868.

[19] Ibid., H. Goerz to dear David, Kerch, March 19, 1868. In a manuscript recently acquired by the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. a father and son relate the largely spiritual dimensions of their life journey. The father, however, notes that in Schoenhorst he taught some 120 children in Neuhorst (1858) 70, and 125 children in Neuendorf (1859-1869).

[20] David Goerz Collection, D. Goerz to dear Parents, Taschenak, May 28, 1868.

[21] Ibid., D. Goerz to dear Parents, Taschenak, August 29, 1868.

[22] H. Goerz to dear David, Kerch, September 24, 1868.

23 Ibid., D.G. to dear brother Heinrich, Taschenak, December 10, 1868.

1858) 70, and 125 children in Neuendorf (1859-1869).

[23] David Goerz Collection, D. Goerz to dear Parents, Taschenak, May 28, 1868.

SMH

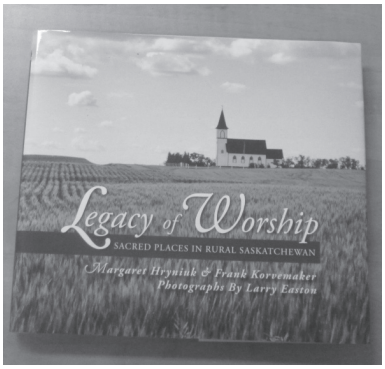
Along the Road to Freedom

Mennonite Women of Courage & Faith paintings by Ray Dirks

Mennonite Historical Society Sask and Mennonite Central Committee Sask will jointly sponsor the Ray Dirks exhibition, Along the Road to Freedom, from February 16, 2016 to August 31, 2016 at the Diefenbaker Center on the University of Saskatchewan campus. Curator Teresa Carlson of the Diefenbaker Center will host the exhibition.

MCC Sask and MHSS are delighted that the Dirks Exhibition will take place at a landmark location on the South Saskatchewan River. It will be an opportunity for thousands of visitors to see the paintings of women who made a difference.

See this colourful brochure for details; *mhss.sk.ca/events/Road-to-Freedom-TOUR.pdf*



Legacy of Worship -

by Hyriniuk and Korvemaker

Reviewed by Jake Buhler

Margaret Hyriniuk and Frank Korvemaker. Legacy of Worship: (Regina: Coteau Books, 2014) 252 pages. Hard cover.

If your question is what kind of buildings do Saskatchewan's people worship in, *Legacy of Worship: Sacred Places in Saskatchewan*, will answer that. Award-winning photographer, Larry Easton, photographed more than a hundred churches, and the authors describe how they worshipped, and continue to worship.

This is Hyriniuk and Korvemaker's second book, the first being Legacy of Stone: Saskatchewan's Stone Buildings. In their just-completed project, the authors and photographer scoured the province in search of a variety of sacred places to include in their book. From the far north, at Stanley Mission, the book describes and depicts Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Saskatchewan's oldest church. From the south at Wilcox is Bethseda Lutheran Church. From Gouldtown is the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church, now part of the museum in Swift Current. From the south-east corner is the Carnduff Baptist Church. And at Delmas in the west is St. Jean-Baptiste Catholic Church. In all a hundred churches belonging to 18 denominations.

The authors and photographer travelled many thousands of kilometers and took 20,000 photographs in rain, wind, and heat. They had to learn theological, ethnic, geographical, historical and architectural language to describe churches and the denominations they came from. For each church building there is a specific backgrounder that tells the story of each place. That is one of the strengths of the book - a narrative of the founding mothers and fathers, and the early struggles they encountered. But the book is not only a serious study. It includes stories of intrigue and humor.

At Stockholm, spinster Britta Siverston from Norway was denied land in 1886. Not to become discouraged, she boarded the train with some Swedes to Whitewood where she disembarked and walked 20 kilometers north to start her own place.

In Grenfell, the authors learned that the United Church had 391 visible pipes that may have been counted more than once during long sermons!

The Mennonite section describes the Arlee Mennonite Brethren Church, Bethany Mennonite Church at Lost River, Eigenheim Mennonite Church, Laird Mennonite Church, Pleasant Point Mennonite Church at Clavet, Horse Lake Mennonite Church near Duck Lake, Sommerfeld Mennonite Church near Swift Current, and Tiefengrund Mennonite Church near Laird.

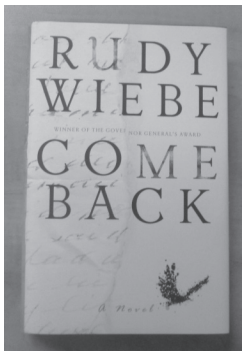
To describe the various kinds of Mennonites is nigh to impossible. Not only did the authors get most of it right, but they captured the essence of the history, the theology and the various architectural styles.

For the serious students of architecture, the authors identified 51 architectural features, photographed each one and described its function.

The book devoted a section to First Nations sacred places and described little known traditions of scaffolded burials.

If you enjoy sacred places, architecture, history and brilliant photography, this book is a bargain from MHSS at $32.00.

Come Back by Rudy Wiebe
Book Review: Jake Buhler



Come Back, by Rudy Wiebe (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2014)
268 pages. Hard cover.
Fiction.

In this novel, Rudy Wiebe imagines that fiction could be real as he hints at his own personal story.

In Come Back, Hal is a pensioned Mennonite professor who is not doing well after the death of his beloved wife, Yolanda. He hangs out at an Edmonton café with Owl, a solid Dene soul-mate who plays back reality when Hal's mind wanders. Over coffee on a chilly day, Hal sees an orange hooded figure on the street who he believes is Gabe, his son, who commit-ted suicide twenty five years earlier. Hal exits the café and pursues the orange jacketed man across the street only to lose him when he gets caught in traffic. The jolt of seeing his son drives him to open a storage box containing Gabe's notebooks. What follows takes up most of the space in the book: we learn from the notebook entries about his troubled travels in Europe constantly obsessed with a pubescent schoolgirl, named Ailsa who at 14 is ten years younger than he; we see dozens of unfinished sentences that allow us to see his struggle with meaning and hopelessness; we learn of his deep appreciation for the literary arts through his quotes from the master writers, and; we learn of his Mennonite roots through flash-backs. At age 24 Gabe returns to Alberta where, after a period of despondency, he kills himself by pumping carbon monoxide into his pick-up cab. The year is 1985.

There is a link between this novel and Wiebe's first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many,* published in 1962. Hal is an eight-year-old set in the boreal forest of Saskatchewan in 1944. That makes Wiebe and his character, Hal, about the same age. And Gabe and Wiebe's son Michael (who also committed suicide) are also the same age. If the conflict in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* was the local prejudices held by an insular community of Mennonites, Come Back reveals a mature Mennonite professor who for 25 years has been in denial and has not resolved his son's suicide. Then in 2010, Hal has a life-altering experience as he reads Gabe's notebooks filled with troubled entries. Hal becomes conflicted with why his son ended his life. If only Gabe could come back there would be answers; and that is where the book's title comes from.

Wiebe's ability to write simply about profoundly complex subjects is one reason why he has been one of Canada's enduring authors. He is a true teller of stories, whether fiction or not. And in many of his books he explores the theme of loss. What if the Cree woman, Yvonne Johnson, in *Stolen Life*, had not been raped and abused and robbed of her life? What if the oracular Big Bear in *Temptations of Big Bear* had succeeded in free-ing his people? What if Helen in *Of this Earth* had not died? And finally what might it be like if Gabe in *Come Back* could return.

There are a number of fine Mennonite writers but too many are angry, who time and again beat up their loyal Mennonite readers, (and I am one; as I think of Miriam Toews). Wiebe is one of the few, perhaps, who towers above most, who provides hope, not anger, and who asks complex questions in a simple way. In Come Back we are not told what it would be like if Gabe could return; we are left to resolve that ourselves even as we try with the untimely deaths in our several communities.

In his introduction, Wiebe takes comfort in the Scriptures when he quotes in his introduction from Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12: "*For now we look through a mirror into an enigma, but then face to face*". Wiebe offers few easy answers but his description surrounding being and non being (read Paul Tillich), is what Come Back is about. Come Back can be purchased from Amazon in hard cover or in Kindle edition for under $20.00.

Die Plautdietsche Akj

Bie Onns Too Wiehnachten

fonn Jack Driedger

Auss ekj soon kjliene Bottsat wea, haud wie too Wienachten bie onns kjeen Wienachtsboom ooda Schmocksachen. Dee Oolt Kolonea jleewden daut wea däm änlijch auss een Auf-gottsdeenst.

Enn'e Städ Heljeowent Stremp opphenjen soo's dee Enjelända, stalld wie jieda 'ne Komm opp'm Desch wua wie emma toom Äten sauten. Ekj docht emma dee Nätkloss schlikjt sikj dan de Nacht bie onns 'nen toom onns aulerhant too Wiehnacten bringen. Nohäa wort ekj enn daut daut nichj soo wea, daut miene Elren doatoo sorjden.

Soo boolt auss onnse Ellren sikj sejcha wearen daut wie schleepen, schedden se' plietsch aulehaunt Scheens enn onnse Kommen: Eadnät, Hausselnät, Stroonät onn Kende. Jeschenkja waut too groot wearen toom enn'e Komm lajen, läden se' opp'm Desch besied dee Komm.

Wienachten ssemorjest kunn wie nijch ea auss Klock sass oppstonen. Wie kunnen daut meist nijch auflüaren, bat wie e'mol oppstonen onn onns auntrakjen kunnen toom kjikjen, waut dee Nätklos onns jebrocht haud.

Ekj wea jlekjlijch, daut miene Ellren soo leeftolijch onn friejäwrijch wearen. Ekj kjrieejch mea onn bätre Jeschenkja auss fäl aundre Kjinja enn onnse Jäajent.

Wienachten no Meddach kjeemen dee Nobaschjungess emma no onnst toom seenen, waut ekj auless too Wienachten jekräajen haud. Wiels ekj emma sea no miene Sachen oppausst, jleijcht ekj daut nijch, wan dee Nobaschjungess met mien Spältijch spälden.

Eene Wienachten haud ekj 'ne Iedee. Ekj beräd daut met Mutta daut see too mie sajen wudd, daut daut jenüach wea, wan ekj fer-meddach met mien Spältijch späld.

Nomeddach wea daut Tiet daut ekj waut aundret deed. Wan Mutta mie daut säd, dan haud ekj 'ne goode Uasäak toom dee Jungess sajen, daut ekj nijch kunn mien Spältijch äwadäl holen. Dän Dach diad daut uck nijch lang, bat dee Jungess nohüss jinjen.

Auss ekj aunfunk no School too gonen, haud ekj jieda Wiehnachten noch eene Freid. Daut wea daut Wiehnachtsprograum enn'e School. Auss wie Kjinja onn Ellren onns dän Owent aula hauden enn'e School dol jesat, weess dee Klock entlijch daut't Tiet wea, daut Prograum auntoofangen.

Dee Leara stunt nü jeduldijch opp onn lüad bat dee Lied daut e'mol enworden, daut hee reed wea, daut Programm auntoofangen. Auss dan auless stell wort, wisst wie, daut wie nü daut easchte Stekj hearen wudden.

Dee Leara musst onns earemol denkjen halpen, daut wie lüda räden mussten, soo daut dee Lied onns hearen kunnen.

Too gooden latst kjeem daut, wua wie aula no jelüat hauden. Wie kjrieejen jieda 'ne Lusch met aulahaunt Scheens toom äten: Eadnät, Kende, 'ne Aupelssien onn fleijcht soogoa 'ne jekoffte Küak.

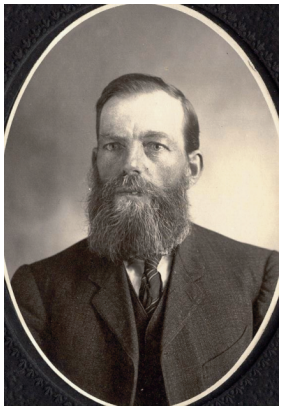
Onn dan wea daut Tiet dee kjliene Kjinja auntootrakjen onn onns opp'm Wajch nohüss brinjen.

Oba daut schleep sikj scheen unja dee woama Wolldakj waut Mutta jemâakt haud.

Hia sie ekj met mien Wiehnachts Spältijch auss ekj 6 Joa oolt wea

Abram H. Friesen - Man on the Move

by James H. Friesen (with Ruth Marlene Friesen)



Abram H. Friesen, my grandfather, was born in Kronsweide, South Russia, on July 23, 1856. His mother died in March 1864, when he was not yet eight. In July 1865 his father died.

Abram went to live with his mother's brother's family in Osterwick. There, he said later, he did not have it too good.

He worked for one year on a carpenter's bench fixing things for other people. (Perhaps as an apprentice).

Abram married Anganetha Klassen in 1883, and they farmed until 1889, when he decided to move to the United States. After a little time and persuasion Anganetha agreed to emigrate, BUT to Canada, not the United States.

Abram agreed, thinking her mind could be changed later. They sold the house and planned to emigrate in the spring of 1889.

However, his foster father had a little talk with Anganetha, and when that was over - she had changed her mind. Their move was off.

Abram then found a half-farm in Neuendorf and they started farming again.

Once more they decided to move to America. He sold this place and while he was away his foster-father talked his wife out of it again, arguing that her husband was no-good, and only that kind moved to America.

Abram was in a real mess now, with no where to go, as all the land around there was taken.

The house-barn home in Osterwick

Well, there was land in the district of Katharinoslaw, east of the Dnieper River. They moved there, but Abram resolved never to talk about emigrating again.

Things did not go well there. His wife said that if she had known what things would be like here we would not be here.

Abram didn't want to discuss it further, but she mentioned it a few more times and finally said, "If we cannot be in Osterwick, then I would rather be in Canada!"

Abram said, "Do you really mean it?"

"Yes," she answered, "But only to Canada."

They left that home in 1890, stopping to visit their relatives in Osterwick. This time, Abram was relieved to note, his foster father did not talk Anganetha out of it.

This family with five young children, travelled down the beautiful Dnieper River, across the Black Sea, then by rail across Europe, after which they went by ship to New York. From there, by train to Manitoba. Altogether they had travelled for 24 days.

They lived in Manitoba for a year. In the spring of 1891 they moved to Gleichen, N.W.T. (now Alberta).

Abram did not like it there, as the land was very stony and they could not find water. Later, he said, that when he had put up their shack, he had not driven the nails all the way in, so that it could be taken down easier.

This group of people were advised by Klaus Peters, that better land was available at Rosthern. So 10 or 11 families of that group went back to Regina, and then north to Rosthern. They arrived at the signpost for Rosthern on the 21st of July, at 11 pm, in 1891.

The only things to greet them were the water tower and windmill, and the name 'Rosthern'

beside the tracks. The only other creatures were the mosquitoes.

Abram really did not like cold weather. So in 1901 he sold what he could, except for the land, and took his family to Odessa Washington. (By this time they had added six more children to the five that immigrated with them, so eleven children came with Abram and his wife to Odessa).

The Abram H. Friesen Family circa 1901-02

Abram left them all there in a warmer climate, and went looking for a better place.

He went through Oregon, and south to Paso Robles, California. But he came back to Odessa and bought land there. The land was very poor and almost nothing grew there, and water was hard to get. So he sold the land he had just bought and moved back to Rosthern in the middle of July that same year.

His wife, Anganetha, died in 1903 at the age of 38 years, after giving birth to two more children, making a total of 13.

However, one child died at age one, and another one died after a fall from a swing, being seriously injured.

In 1904 Abram took a trip to see the World Exhibition in St. Louis, Missouri. When he returned he had gifts for his children, jewelry for the girls, and watches for the boys.

In 1909 Abram became interested in Renata, B.C. He bought 20 acres of land there with the intention of moving. Some of his grown children moved there for a short time.

The Abram H. Friesen homestead at Rosthern

Furthermore, he went into a partnership with a few other people in building a sawmill.

He had rented out the house in Renata; then it was lost in a fire. His family was not interested in moving there.

In the end, Abram lost about five thousand dollars in that deal. (Incidentally, that area is now under water, since the building of a dam on the Arrow Lakes).

In the fall of 1911 Abram H. Friesen made a trip back to the settlement in south Russia, where he grew up. He still had relatives there. He visited there until May 1912.

In later years his family learned that the real reason for the trip was to ask a former girl friend to marry him. But she said 'no', again.

He also had some trouble with his visa, which changed some of his plans.

My Dad said that grandfather Abram was to come back on the Titanic, and one of his sisters verified this, but he did not write anything about this in his diary, so I doubt it was true. Yet the timing was right.

In 1913 Abram made a trip to Kitchener, Ontario. I think he had some relatives there as my more recent research has revealed.

Abram said, “I have seen our northwest, and B.C., three times before. But now I am traveling with my friend Gerhard Ens.”

Gerhard was the first resident and business man in Rosthern. He helped thousands of Mennonite settlers move to this area.

Then Abram made another major trip, traveling with Gerhard Ens, (and perhaps a Mr. Klassen from Eigenheim.)

They left December 29, 1919. Abram wrote in his journal, that they traveled down to Regina first, and

then westward to Banff, and Revelstoke, Vancouver, and Victoria. From there they turned south to Seattle, Portland and on to California, through San Francisco, Long Beach, and the Sacramento Valley.

He mentioned going through Louisiana, Arizona, New Mexico, the southwestern part of Texas, San Antonio, and the lower Rio Grande, always describing the land, its growing potential and the crops common to each area.

Eventually they continued on to Florida, back to New Orleans, and then north to Chicago and back home to Rosthern.

Abram said he was not quite satisfied and mentioned a land agent, who referred him to a spot in Florida. "But," he says, “he should have saved the cost as the soil was poor.”

It appears he had ideas of settling elsewhere, even as far removed from the farm in Saskatchewan as Florida.

They stayed three days in New Orleans, and then returned to Rosthern by way of St. Louis, St. Paul, Chicago, Winnipeg and Saskatoon, arriving back on March 1st.

Abram wrote in his journal that of all the places he has seen on the earth, none was as good as it was on the Steppes of Russia. The black soil there was a foot and half deep!

This ended my grandfather, Abram's many travels, always looking for a better place to settle.

He built a new big house in 1912. I suppose, to impress Katharina Klassen, who finally said, "Yes."

She came to Canada and they were married in 1926. (Katharina was a cousin of Abram's first wife, Anganetha). She passed away too, in 1931.

The new house built in 1912 for Kartherina

Abram continued to live alone on his farm near Rosthern, and walked regularly into town. It kept his constitution strong.

However, he suffered a stroke on January 25, 1934, and his sons decided to move him into the town of Rosthern, into the home of a Mrs. Fast, who cared for him until he died, on April 14, 1935.

Abram's funeral was held in the Rosthern Town Hall, the largest hall in town. It was filled, for he was recognized as one of the original settlers 44 years earlier.

He was buried in the cemetery south of Rosthern right beside the railway on which he had brought his young family, when it was nothing but unbroken plains. Now it was a thriving town with a good business centre, and the hub of a rich farming area, including a government experimental farm nearby, which is now the Rosthern Nursing Home complex.

Despite all of Abram's travels after he took his homestead at Rosthern, which probably stemmed from a dissatisfied spirit, always looking for a better place, he did contribute a bold and daring pioneer mindset that paved the way for the following generations.

awawawawawawawawawawawawawawawa

MHSS congratulates Art Zacharias, Osler, and Don Regier, Rosthern, for receiving Life Time Acchievement Awards at the 5th annual Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism's Awards banquet in Regina on October 5, in the Delta Hotel, Regina. The presentations were made by Her Honour, the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. Many have benefited from the extra miles these men have gone in countless volunteer hours.

awawawawawawawawawawawawawaawaw

Mennonite Inventions and Designs - Part 3

by Dick Braun, Osler, SK.

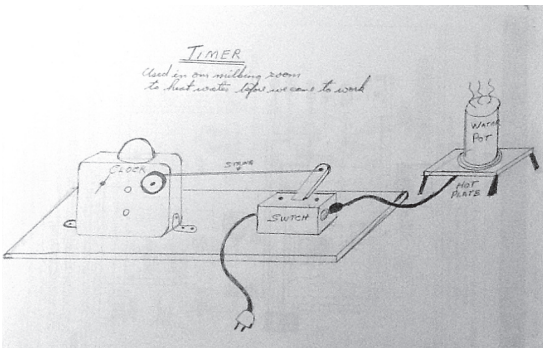
The Giesbrecht Snow Machine

Peter Giesbrecht and John Giesbrecht built a Snow Machine in 1952.

Peter was born at Reinland, Saskatchewan to Abram and Anna (Guenther) Giesbrecht in 1934. He attended a one room school at Reinland and probably was an easy learner. The yard that Peter grew up on had seen some of this innovative work before as his father and uncle Jacob built a one-way seeder out of a disc and the seeder box off a seed drill.

There were ideas in farmers' heads that maybe things could be done a little easier or faster. With this kind of a machine you could till the soil and seed at the same time. Peter was too young to help build this seeder but I am sure that he will have been around there and asked a few questions as the project developed.

Peter was that way in school too, with some deep thinking. This is a story that Peter tells as it happened. The year was 1944-45 in the La Bassee School in the village of Reinland Sask. (Peter and his wife Mary now live in Kelowna BC.)



I was in grade three. We had a teacher; Miss Miskauski. One day she gave us an assignment to draw a picture of what we thought the future would be like 20 years from now. So that got me thinking. So I drew a picture of a field with a tractor pulling a seeder with nobody on the tractor driving it.

She was making the rounds looking at what we had come up with. When she came to my desk she said, “Peter, why didn't you put a driver on the tractor?”

I told her I was thinking in 20 years the tractor would be able to drive around the field without the driver. She said to me, “You really think so?”

Well, it has taken a little more time than 20 years. But I had a friend here in the Okanagan who built a tractor that would cultivate between his trees without him being on it. I think we are getting close to when my farfetched ideas will come to pass. They are now building cars that will drive down the highway without a driver. I thank my teacher for getting my brain going.

Peter built a miniature horse and sleigh when he was 12 years old and the teacher kept it. Some 40 years later, the Reinland School had a reunion and the teacher brought it for display.

Peter’s cousin, Corny Guenther, tells how he needed to fill a barrel with water out of the dugout. Corny being of short build needed a bucket that was different. Peter built him a bucket with a long handle soldered to it, so he did not need to bend over so far and could reach the barrel with ease, filling it in a very short time.

Peter’s mind was always turning, and so it was when electricity came to the family farm. They had a small dairy farm, and with electricity on the yard now, there were many opportunities to make changes.

Peter came up with an idea of how they would have hot water in the barn when they got there in the morning.

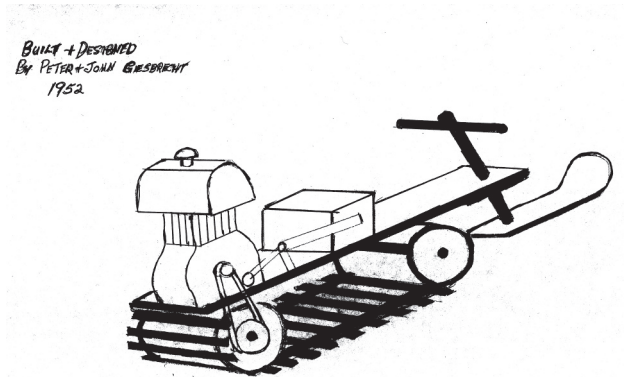
Peter built a time clock to turn on the hot plate to heat a pot of water. The time clock was an alarm clock with a wooden wheel mounted on the alarm windup and a string fastened to the wheel. The other end of the string attached to a knife switch so that when the alarm went off the wooden wheel would wind up the string and pull the knife switch to the 'ON' position. Now when they got into the barn there was a pot of hot water for cleaning the udders before milking.

The way we see it, Peter was the inventor of the time clock, because if there was such a thing

Peter did not know about it. Peter went on to be an electrician and had a business in Osler for some years ,Giesbrecht Electric.

Peter and his cousin, John Giesbrecht, built a snow machine in 1952.

History tells us that there was a snow machine of sorts built in the Northern USA in about 1946. It then took another 10 years before North America saw a snow machine on the market. This was a machine that would not have been around here to copy or even on the



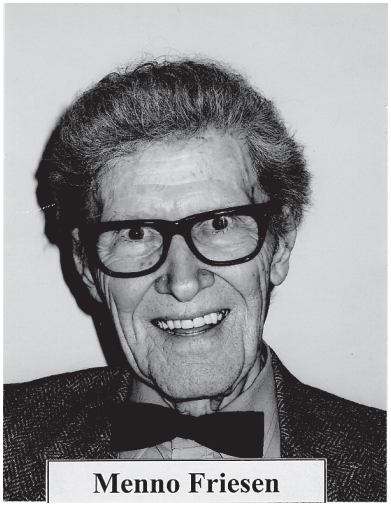
market. They had an idea that was to become reality in the near future but it would take some years before Polaris would build a snow machine and market it.

Their machine was constructed mostly of wood. The shop that Peter and John worked out of was not much of a shop and so working with metal was not an option. The framework of the machine was all wood and the ski and even the pulleys were wooden. The track was a binder canvas with some reinforcing and wooden slats riveted across it.

The wooden pulleys did not work very well in the snow, as wood slides very easy on snow. It was the same when the snow got between the pulley and the belt.

The power unit was the auger motor. It had all kinds of power, and an added benefit was that the motor was rarely used in winter.

Just think, if Peter had delved into the snow machine idea some more, today's snow machine enthusiasts could be riding on a machine that could be named the Reinlander or the Giesbrecht or maybe the PeterJohn.


Menno Friesen

Menno John Friesen

A tribute by Esther Patkau

April 25, 1917 – September 6, 2014

Menno Friesen, a long-time prominent business man, was called to his eternal home in September 2014. Though well-known in the community, he was a reserved person, with a deep committed faith in the Lord God to whom he remained faithful to the end.

Menno, son of John C. and Katharina Friesen, was born in Hague, Saskatchewan. His parents were involved with the church, and from an early age Menno heard the gospel message and placed his trust in the Lord.

His father, John Friesen, who had come to Hague from Rosenort, Manitoba in 1911, opened a family general store in Hague, and as a boy, Menno helped his father in that business. Later the family moved to Rosthern, and there his father, in the 1920s, together with a business partner opened another store. When that partner left for British Columbia, Friesen became the owner of both stores.

Menno bought the “little store” from his father and also a building in Rosthern, together with the stock for $20,000. He moved the little store into the bigger one and called it Friesen's Department Store. For many years that store served the community well.

Years later he opened Famous Furniture City

and Uncle Ed's Furniture in Saskatoon.

In an interview on his 95th birthday, he reminisced: “On a trip east to Toronto, I did the usual buying. On the way back, I was reading the paper and there was something about an uncle somebody doing something. I was thinking of a name for my Saskatoon store when suddenly it dawned on me that I was going to call the store " Ed's.” That's how the name Uncle Ed's came about. I started one in Saskatoon and another in Prince Albert, and one in a small community. From there it became Uncle Ed's.[1]

Over the years he was successful in business but also suffered many loses and survived them all. In 1996 he sold the Saskatoon store. A short time later he experienced one of his darkest days in business. He was at home when he received a call that Uncle Ed's Furniture store was on fire. He drove downtown and watched the fire destroy the beautiful building with five floors of furniture. It was devastating.

Menno stated that the key to his business success was the way his customers were treated. “We always went the extra mile in anything. We never had squabbles of any kind that I remember.”

He recalled a day when he went to collect from a customer. The man said he would pay when he could. Menno trusted him. Some time later the man appeared at the store to settle his account.

Menno was for many years (2000-2014) a resident of Bethany Manor in Saskatoon. He was proud to live independently as he did. In the past two years he had to give up driving his car and his practice of walking two miles a day. But he continued to sing in the Bethany Manor choir and participate in the orchestra.

He loved words and was observed reading the dictionary – just for fun! He liked to write poetry, and he played a very competitive game of Scrabble. He was also an artist and would sketch portraits wherever he was with whatever materials he could find, even a seriette at a restaurant; the walls of his condo were covered with his paintings.

He was genuinely interested in every person whom he met. He truly lived by the Golden Rule, putting the interests of others first.

Despite his illness, his faith in God remained unswerving.

Looking back on his life, he recently said that it was all “so beautiful”; he would not have wished to change a thing. “It's been a very enjoyable life.”

Menno's beloved wife Alice predeceased him in 2007.

He is fondly remembered by his four children: Sharon (Ken) Neufeld, Dawn (Rudy) Wiebe, Glenn Friesen, and David (Judy Smith), by his nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He is also survived by three brothers: Jack, Buno and Edward, and his cousins Jack and Irvin Driedger, and many nieces and nephews. He was laid to rest in the Rosthern cemetery.

Notes:
1. Saskatoon Express, April 30, 2012. p. 3

SMH

Annual General Meeting of MHSS

Mark and reserve **March 6 and 7th** for our Annual General Meeting.

The guest speaker will be John Friesen of Winnipeg. He is very knowledgeable of Mennonite history and will talk on the Friday evening about Mennonnites arriving in Manitoba. Then, on Saturday, about how the Mennonites arrived in Saskatchewan.

Many in this province have historical roots and stories that include one or both, of this historical background. Whether you know a little or a lot of these stories you will want to hear John Friesen's presentations.

Further details in emails and posters.

George Loewen - The Joys of Being a Missionary

by Esther Patkau

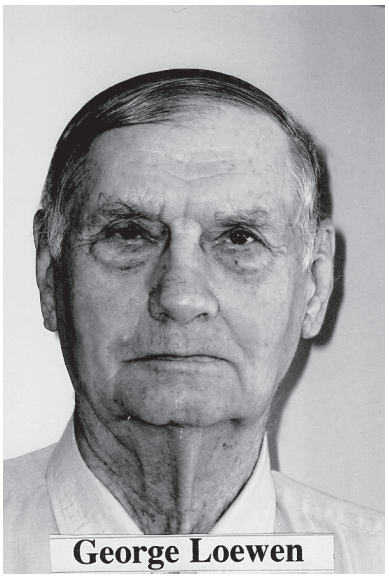
George Loewen lives at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon. He can be seen daily with a cane in his hand, walking the halls or the length of the parkades. In summer he could also be seen with a knapsack on his back walking the train bridges of Saskatoon, covering many kilometers each day, making conversation with the people he meets and enjoying the great outdoors of God's creation. He keeps an accurate tally of the distances walked, and according to his records, in his lifetime he has already walked around the world – the distance at the equator! He has an interesting story to tell – a life full of adventures – walking with the Lord!

George was born December 31, on a farm on the Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve. He was cared for by a loving mother who passed away when George was only 14-months old, so his grandparents, the Goertzens, took him in as their son, but at age four George returned to live with his father and new stepmother.

Though he helped with work on the farm, his heart was not in it; he began searching for his niche in life but didn't know where to find it. World War II (1939-1945), spreading across Europe, touched even the prairie population in Western Canada. In 1941 George and his three brothers had opportunity to go to Prince Rupert, BC. to build 'war-time houses'. They weren't carpenters but there were menial tasks to be done and they worked three months, then returned home and gave their hard-earned cash to their father.

In 1942 George and his two brothers went to work in a logging camp at Carrot River, cutting down trees and bringing the logs to camp, and sawing up to 30,000 board feet a day.

In the years that followed George spent time working on farms and in various lumber camps as a CO (conscientious objector). He also worked in an Ontario nickel mine, in a saw mill near Ootsa Lake, B.C., and together with his brother, bought a saw mill. They were successful in this business venture. Eventually, his brother sold his share in the saw mill to George.


George Loewen

In 1950 a church group was formed in Grassy Plain, B.C. There George met his Saviour on December 27, 1958, and a few months later in spring he was baptized on his confession of faith in Christ Jesus. His search for purpose in life was found. Life now had goals – to honour his God.

In 1963 George was elected as pastor in the Tatalrose Church and ordained by Rev. John D. Friesen, on August 4, 1964. In the years that followed George ministered to many, and saw the hand of God at work to change people and situations. He witnessed many miracles.

In 1971 six church groups joined to renovate a children's camp 12 miles from Tatalrose, building four cabins and a chapel-dining hall.

At one point they needed a welder, and brought their dilemma to the Lord in prayer. The next morning, a man who had lost his way, drove into the camp and stayed for night. When he learned of their need, he stated that he had all the necessary equipment with him, and offered to do the welding. He had gone 70 miles out of his way to become the answer to their prayers. God works in marvelous ways!

Starting in the early 1950s, George was involved in fighting forest fires for 15 years. In the 1960s he was promoted to 'fire boss.' Many are the stories he can tell of God's protection,

guidance and provisions in this work.

In 1969 George sold his saw mill, but continued to work for the new owner for a year. Then the site had to be cleaned up, leaving it in its natural state. All the proceeds from the sale (a healthy sum) he donated to charity.

The Lord moved George from one ministry to another. He helped build a children's camp, then relinquished the pastorate at Tatalrose, and in 1972 he joined the Shantymen's Christian Association. Their mission is to visit the lonely, the outcasts, and those in hard-to-reach places, bringing them the Gospel. He and his friends visited numerous logging camps; later, at times he visited on his own in the northern part of B.C., and into Yukon Territory. He met many other believers and immediately sensed a precious bond with them; but he also came across those who were against Christian teachings, and of course, he resorted to prayer, asking guidance from the One who knows all the details of every individual. Many amazing results happened.

He visited many pastors of small congregations, listening to their concerns and encouraging them.

While he was in the Fort St. John area, he helped the Buick Creek Church to organize, draw up a constitution and accept members. The church is still functioning.

In March 1976 his work at Fort St. John was completed and he left for Vancouver Island and Pachina along the Pacific Ocean.

Here the work, through a branch of Shantymen's Ministry, was different from the previous area. Missionaries were stationed at various places along the coast; the people came to them for encouragement.

George was one of the instructors at an organized training course for young people – six to eight people at a time at camp. Again he witnessed changes for the better in those who took the course; he made friends with many others; there were also adversaries.

One day a meeting was held with 300 First Nations people in attendance. The leaders wanted to make the people aware of their rights. His friend, Ed, from the Ohiat Band, stood up and said, “Remember this land is not ours, but God's.” It was enough to make them recede and allow that statement to penetrate their hearts.

In 1979 the Pachina group withdrew from Shantymen's mission, and with that, this phase of George's ministry ended.

In 1980 the Pachina group formed “Coastal Missions.” All the former buildings had to be demolished and the entire area returned to its natural state. The mission relocated to another site, a large rented house in Chemainus, and then, with the Lord providing funds, they were able to buy a house they could call their own.

Again, George could practice his carpentry skills; he built a table, other furniture, and even a car port. Coastal Missions never made a plea for funds; they depend-ed on prayer and the Lord always provided.

The Coastal Messenger

Coastal Missions also had a boat ministry along the B.C. west coast. Storms were common; they often encountered rough waters, and many boats have gone down. They stopped at fishing villages, logging camps and lighthouses along the shore to visit the keepers. It gave the mission workers opportunity to share the Gospel. The unchanging faithfulness of God was continually demonstrated.

In 1980-1982 Coastal

Missions had a boat sailing on mission tours. Every year from January 1 to April, the boat had to be overhauled to make it seaworthy for the next season.

At the end of April George and his friend, Brian, and two others headed for Victoria to attend "Boat Days" where people swapped their boat stories, and then continued on to other places.

This 48-foot wooden Coastal Messenger followed a vast circuit on the coast of British Columbia and parts of Washington and south-east Alaska, making many trips but eventually it was showing signs of age, and a new one was needed. For five years they were without a boat, and when the new boat came the visits along the coast resumed. But George did not travel on the new boat.

In 1990, after having been with Coastal Missions for 10 years, George retired.

The next six years, 1991-1997, he spent at Esperanza, a place he had learned to love through his coastal trips.

The Lord has honoured these Coastal mission workers who were willing to give their all to serve the Master.

At Esperanza, besides helping at summer camps, George built a greenhouse, where he grew tomatoes for a few years. He loved gardening.

One summer when the camp needed a cook, he wrote to his brother Jake and wife Mary, inviting them to come to Esperanza. They came and enjoyed their ministry of serving about 100 Native campers so much they were willing to return the following summer again. Besides kitchen work, there were many other tasks that needed attention; they also developed good relationships with the native people. In all, they spent five summers there, and had many positive experiences.

George spent 21 years on the islands of the west coast, on the sea shore and on boats. He retired at age 65, then returned to Saskatchewan to the area where he had spent his childhood years, but found that it was not home anymore.

He visited Calgary, but that too, was not home. He returned to his home on the island, but realized he no longer was one of them; he was their guest.

Eventually he purchased a trailer close to Victoria, a trailer that was open to missionaries when they traveled to Victoria. More than half his time he spent at Esperanza, only occasionally returning to his trailer.

The years he had spent with the mission were financially meagre, but George recalls that they were good years when the workers had totally depended on the Lord to provide. During those years he visited churches too numerous to count. He has travelled north to Alaska, south to California and east to Toronto.

He has been called a home missionary because he did not serve overseas.

In 1999 he returned to Saskatchewan to make his home in Osler, and in 2005 he found another home in Bethany Manor in Saskatoon.

His regular daily activity is to spend time in the Word, fellowship with the Lord and going for a walk. Formerly he walked up to 13 miles a day, but age is slowing him down somewhat. He has walked all the bridges in Saskatoon, and he continues to "walk with the Lord."

His story is recorded in a 175 page book, ***Searching for Eternal Values – One Man's Pilgrimage*** - by Mary Guenther, 2003. Fascinating reading!

O du frohliche,
O du selige,
gnadenbringende
Weihnatchszeit!
Welt ging verloren;
Christ is geboren:
Freue, freue dich,
Oh Christenheit!

Honour List

This list recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions toward preserving Mennonite history, heritage, or faith within our province. To submit a name for the Honour List, nominate that person in writing, and forward to the MHSS Board.

The date in brackets is the year of death. The profiles of some of the honorees are on our website. *http://mhss.sk.ca/tributes/* (If you can provide the ones that are missing, the editor would be glad to hear from you).

Helen Bahnmann
Abram J. Buhler (†1982)
Helen Dyck (†2007)
Dick H. Epp (†2009)
Jacob H. Epp (†1993)
Margaret Epp (†2008)
Peter K. Epp (†1985)
George K. Fehr (†2000)
Jake Fehr
Jacob E. Friesen (†2007)
John D. Friesen (†2004)
Jacob G. Guenter (†2013)
Gerhard J. Hiebert (†1959)
Katherine Hooge (†2001)
Abram G. Janzen
John J. Janzen (†2004)
George Krahn (†1999)
Ingrid Janzen-Lamp
Abram M. Neudorf (†1966)
J. J. Neudorf (†1988)
J. C. Neufeld (†1994)
John P. Nickel
David Paetkau (†1972)
Esther Patkau
John D. Reddekopp (†2011)
Ted Regehr
John G. Rempel (†1963)
Ed Roth (†2008)
Wilmer Roth (†1982)
Arnold Schroeder (†2000)
Jacob Schroeder (†1993)
Katherine Thiessen (†1984)
J. J. Thiessen (†1977)
David Toews (†1947)
Toby Unruh (†1997)
Albert Wiens (†2002)
George Zacharias (†2000)

Web Sites

MHSS: mhss.sk.ca

Cemeteries:
freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~skmhss/

Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: (GAMEO)
gameo.org/news/mennonite-encyclopedia-online

E-Updates Ezine (announcements email):
Subscribe by entering your email on our website here: mhss.sk.ca/E-Updates.shtml

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You are cordially invited to send in feedback, news items, stories, articles, photographs, church histories, etc., to be considered for publication. The editor is willing to help polish it up so it looks professional, she just cannot read your mind. See contact info ->

MHSS Office and Archives, SMH Editor
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or email directly to: Ask-Ruth@mhss.sk.ca