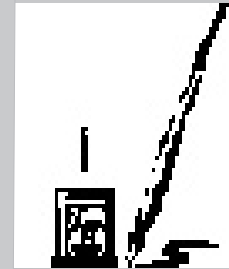


SASKATCHEWAN MENNONITE HISTORIAN



Official periodical of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, Inc.
Volume X No. 1, April 2004

Milestones and Tombstones: Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan

Ted Regehr, a founding member of the MHSS, was invited to make the 30th Anniversary presentation at our Annual Meeting. He looked back at causes and events that brought about the organization of our Society. In doing so he took into consideration many of the historical events that the Mennonite people experienced and showed how our Society got its roots.

Before getting into those events he talked about how history is recorded and that often we get the wrong impression from what has been recorded. Here is part of his opening statement:

Historians and members of historical societies are usually backward looking people—at least in a chronological sense. We are interested in where we came from, who our ancestors were, where they lived, and what was important and meaningful in their lives. That, we believe, helps us to understand better who we are, and to learn what worked or led to positive results, and what created problems which we want to avoid in our time. But historians often look for and write about past events in rather peculiar ways. Some history can best be described as “fact grinding.” It chronicles one date, name or event after another in a flat, factual and, alas, often also uninteresting way. Other historians try to liven up their narrative with interesting, sometimes bizarre, anecdotal material. But individual stories told about the dead, especially if they pertain to unusual events or personal characteristics sometimes distort rather than clarify how and why certain things happened. After reading some history of that kind the great French philosopher Voltaire announced disgustedly that history is a pack of tricks we play on the dead. Voltaire was right, at least when describing some historical writing. Historians do play tricks on the dead. Ted then talked about three of the historiographic crossroads that the Mennonites faced. They are the language transition, the shift of emphasis from separation to integration, and from lamentations about

Regehr cont'd on page 6



Two prominent historians, Ted Regehr and Bill Waiser were keynote speakers at our Thirtieth Anniversary Celebration.

Conscientious Objectors in Our Parks

Bill Waiser from the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan spoke on Labour Camps in our National Parks, where many conscientious objectors from Saskatchewan worked during the two world wars. These men opposed military involvement and were given jobs improving our national parks.

From 1914 to 1945 the National Parks of Canada were used for many groups the government had difficulty accepting as good citizens because they had the wrong skin colour or had other beliefs. The government called them enemy

Waiser cont'd on page 6

**SAKATCHEWAN
MENNONITE
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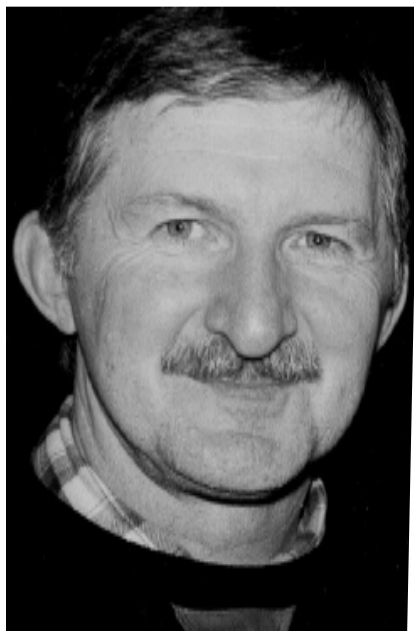
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**Archive Hours
Monday: 1:30-4:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 1:30-4:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

To add a name to the Honour List, nominate a person in writing. Candidates must have made significant contributions to the preservation of Mennonite history, heritage or faith in our province.

Is your membership paid up?

President's Message



Leonard Doell, President

The Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan was formed 30 years ago, to serve the Mennonite community in helping to communicate the stories, culture, faith and heritage of our Mennonite people. During this time it has created opportunities for Mennonites of mainly Russian Mennonite background to learn about their past. There have been some great resources made available to Russian Mennonite researchers during this time and it looks like more is yet to come. The Global Mennonite History Project (GMHP) which is now in process, is an opportunity for Mennonites from the five continents to tell their story. The majority of Mennonites in the world are not Caucasian, low German speaking people with Russian roots but are black and living in Africa. The first volume of GMHP has just been completed about our Mennonite brothers and sisters in Africa. The other volumes still being written are the Asian, Central American, European and North American. When this project is complete we will have

a much better picture of the global story of our people. This project challenges MHSS to look at the way we portray who Mennonites are. Are there ways that we can expand our knowledge of Mennonites on other continents while at the same time appreciating our own unique journey?

One of the unique parts of who we are as Mennonite people is our message of peace. This was affirmed at our Annual General Meeting by our guest speaker Bill Waiser, Professor of History at the University of Saskatchewan. He spoke about the contribution Mennonite conscientious objectors made to developing Canada's parks during World War II. The CO's who were present at the AGM felt acknowledged for the role they had played in being peacemakers in a time of war. There are many stories from our past that still need to be told, that may give us clues as to how to be peacemakers today.

Leonard Doell

Aboriginal Neighbours

Editorial

The First Thirty Years

By Dick H. Epp

Memory often plays tricks on a person's mind when it comes to recalling events that happened thirty years ago. My mind is no exception, perhaps even worse. Lorne Buhr, Edmonton, our first Secretary of the Society, wrote saying that he recalled the car trip to Calgary in Waldemar Regier's old station wagon, but he couldn't remember anything that happened at the meeting. That's the way most of our minds work. Thank goodness for records that stimulate our thinking and remind us of what has happened.

Founders of our society were three young history professors at the University of Calgary, John B. Toews, Henry

C. Klassen and Ted Regehr. They sent out 2000 letters and they received 100 positive responses. After this an organizational meeting was held in conjunction with an MCC meeting in Calgary. Four staunch Saskatchewanians attended: Lorne Buhr, Waldemar Regier, Henry V. Friesen and Dick Epp.

The name of the organization was The Western Canadian Mennonite Historical Society. A year later this organization met on June 16, 1973 in Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon. J.B. Toews was elected President, Ted Regehr, Vice-President, Gilbert Epp, Treasurer, and Lorne Buhr, Secretary. Because British Columbia had decided to go it alone, the name of the organization was changed to The Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

In 1966, the Ontario and Manitoba Societies formed a new organization known as the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. The main purpose of this organization was to help Frank Epp publish *Mennonites in Canada*. Our Society joined the Canadian Society as well.

In 1975, at the Annual Meeting in Calgary, J.B. Toews resigned and Ted Regehr became our president and Allan Hiebert, Vice-President.

A year later, Ted resigned to take on a position with the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. Blake Friesen then took over the presidency. Lena Heese served as treasurer until her death in 1979, after which Heinz, her son, carried on. John A. Pauls also served on the board during this time. In 1980 the torch was handed to me and I stayed in this position serving concurrently on the board of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada until 1996.

During these years I cross-examined myself many times—asking—why did I accept this job? First of all, there was the transportation and communication problem between the two provinces. Eventually, it ended with Henry Goerzen

Editorial cont'd on p. 5

nota bena: mark well and observe

Our Reader's Page: Announcements and Question

Main Centre M.B. Church

100th Anniversary

July 23rd-25th, 2004

"One generation shall praise thy works to another,
and shall declare thy mighty acts"—Psalm 145:4

Friday p.m. . July 23rd

4:00 p.m. - Registration

4:30 p.m. 6:15 p.m.—B.B.Q. Supper

7:00 p.m. "Country Connections Coffee House"

Welcome Home with our Blend
of Country Entertainment & Coffee

Saturday July 24th

9:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m.—1st Guided Heritage Bus
and Riverboat Tour. 45 people

12:00 p.m. 1:00 p.m. Noon Meal—Cold Lunch

11:30 a.m. 3:00 p.m. 2nd Guided Heritage Bus
and Riverboat Tour. 45 people. (lunch)

3:00 p.m. 5:30 p.m. 3rd Guided Heritage Bus Tour.

4:00 p.m. 5:00 p.m. Mass Choir Practice

5:00 p.m. Beef Pit B.B.Q. and Ham Supper

7:00 p.m. Evening program "Our Heritage ^
A Time To Remember"

8:30 p.m.—Coffee Break

9:00 p.m.—Steve Bell Concert

Sunday—July 25th

10:30 a.m. "A Century of Praise ^
A Time To Worship"

Dr. John Redekop

Mass Choir, Communion

12:30 p.m.—Noon Meal

"Memories of Praise—A Time To Share"

Faspa, Farewell

Special Project Offering "Family Life Network
—Russia Evangelism

For further information and registration write to:

100th Anniversary Celebration

Main Centre M.B. Mennonite Church,
Main Centre, SK. S0V 2V0

The Mennonite Heritage

Museum,

Rosthern, Saskatchewan

is sponsoring

The Pull of the Land

A drama written by

Elaine Kowpak and Beth Robertson.

Performed by Sky High Productions,

Harris, Saskatchewan

Dates:

November 13, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

November 14, 2004, 2:30 p.m.

Where?

Rosthern Junior College Gymnasium

For Tickets call:

Sylvia Regier: 1-306-223-4324

Fred Wieler: 1-306-343-8835

Price: Ticket \$15.00 includes coffee and a snack.

MHSS Workshop in Swift Current

at the

Mennonite Heritage Museum

Saturday, May 29, 2004

WORKSHOPS

"Seminar for church record keeping"

by Victor G. Wiebe

"Writing a proper obituary" by

Esther Patkau

SUPPER

Presentation of Life Memberships

Anna Bahnmann

Jacob K. Fehr

Ingrid Janzen Lamp

Entertainment

MHSS Genealogy Day

Watch for details

Editorial cont'd from p. 3

being the only Alberta member left on our board. He resigned to organize the Alberta Society and our name was changed to the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan.

In addition to this, we were broke. There was no money for stamps to mail newsletters to our members and churches so I begged until we got enough to do a mailing. Each year when we had to pay our fees to the provincial government and to the MHSC, I had to approach certain people to help out. It was indeed embarrassing when the bank fees were more than our account balance. Collecting money was always a difficult task for me, even for a good cause; I was never any good at it. It was discouraging to see only five people at the Annual Meeting, and this happened a number of times. Not even all the board members showed up. In spite of this, things eventually got better. I believe my friends came because they felt sorry for me. As we got more members we could begin to do workshops for interested writers and church historians, and a newsletter that grew into the present *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian*. We brought in good speakers, developed a Heritage Program where we honoured men and women who had given freely of their time in the preservation of Mennonite history, heritage and faith. Victor Wiebe published a Bibliography of Saskatchewan Mennonite Authors and that got other provinces and states interested. They were surprised that we had so many Saskatchewan writers. We, too, were surprised, but not anymore. We continued with workshops on topics of Memoir writing, genealogy procedures, keeping church records, and we sponsored the Canadian Book Launch for Ted Regehr's book, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970*. Our organization continued to grow.

After being president for sixteen years, I resigned from this Society and from the Canadian organization as well, and I am now a volunteer editor of the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian and I work for Leonard Doell and his progressive team. Although I am well past retirement age and should pass the reins of the editor to someone younger, a member at the recent Annual Meeting, said, "Don't resign, we'll all pray for your good health." Some people have strong faith!

When I look back, I'm glad I did not throw in the towel during those hard years because what we have going now is something that should make all Mennonites in this province proud, because we are preserving our history for future generations.

We have looked back, and that is necessary because we have to know where we have come from. To me the future looks bright for the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historical Society. It won't flourish by itself, not even with Leonard at the helm! He needs all of our help and I mean everyone.

In today's news we hear about mergers of banks, bookstores, grocery stores, hospitals, etc., but, believe me, we haven't heard the end of them yet. We as Mennonites will also have to consider mergers, the General Conference of Mennonites and The Men-

nonite Church Conference have merged, and for good reason. We, too, will need the co-operation of all our churches, schools, businesses and MCC if we are to survive.

Take for example, our struggling Archives at Bethany Manor. What a powerful archives our people could have if the conferences, churches, MCC and businesses joined with us in this project. We would all benefit. Consider another example: the small Mennonite museums that are found around our province. Think what clout they would have if they became one co-operative organization with us?

Our venture in 1998 with MCC, where we sponsored the 75th anniversary of the Coming of the Mennonites to Canada from Russia, was a huge success. Why? Because we had more contacts, more ideas, more money, more publicity, and more workers.

Lastly, we need to do something to get our bright young women and men in our schools and universities interested in our history. Who will carry the torch when we old-timers fade away? Enough said. I leave this for you to ponder.

I want to wish this organization well and I challenge the Board to tackle the next thirty years with vigour, enthusiasm, creativity and lots of stamina. May God help us in our decisions and guide us in the right direction.

Members Approve Membership Fee Increase

Beginning immediately the membership fee for the Mennonite Historical Society, Inc., has been raised for single membership from \$20.00 to \$25.00 and for family membership from \$30.00-\$40.00. (Motion passed at the Annual Meeting) This is the first increase in many years. Costs for all Society projects have risen. This includes the operation and supplies for the Archives, the publication of the *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian* and all other supplies and services required to keep our organization strong. We are grateful for our loyal membership and their support with donations that help us keep our fee as low as this. Please remember that all workers in our organization are volunteers and they, too, help to keep the fees as low as possible. Thank you for your continued support—The Board

Regehr cont'd from page 1

the lost Russian fatherland to realistic portrayals of their Canadian experience. This resulted in the organization of an important new organization—the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada—and in the initiation of a major new initiative the Mennonites in Canada history project.

In summary Ted closed with this statement:

Today we can celebrate not only the thirtieth anniversary of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, but a longer series of milestones in the writing of Canadian Mennonite history. The organization of the Echo Verlag in 1944, the Ontario-Manitoba Joint Committee which initiated the Mennonites in Canada history in 1967, the organization of new provincial societies which then formed the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, are only a few of those milestones. If time permitted, attention could also be called to the building of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, the establishment of the Chair of Mennonite Studies, and the launching of the Journal of Mennonite Studies.

Stephen Leacock once said, "I did not realize that the old grave that stood among the brambles at the foot of our farm was history." But that old grave only becomes interesting and revealing history if one knows more than just the inscription on the gravestone. Part of the historian's task is to clothe those inscriptions with human flesh and bones, joys and sorrows, thoughts and emotions. The Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan has preserved much information which makes it possible for historians to do their work. But in the collecting and preserving of material, and in historical writing it is well to remember the warning issued many years ago by George Wrong, a noted Canadian historian, when he said "History is capricious in its awards of fame. It fixes on dramatic incidents and ignores the quiet service that may count for much more." I hope the work of your (our) society can and will fix on both the dramatic incidents and the quiet service of our ancestors.

Readers wishing to read the entire paper may contact the Archives. dhe



Bill Waiser talks with John Driedger, a former CO who came to hear his lecture. Photo by Susan Braun

Waiser cont'd from page 1

aliens. Some were relief workers, the men who rode the rails because there was no work for them. Then there were the Japanese whose property was confiscated and they were placed in concentration camps. Ukrainians, too, were put to work in our parks. Then during World War II the German prisoners of war were put to work in the parks.

When we visit the National Parks we think about the beauty and the enjoyment we can have there, little realizing that many of the roads, bridges, weirs, trails, camp-sites, beautiful landscapes and building were there because of the "enemy aliens" and conscientious objectors who lived in cold shacks and worked slavishly in all kinds of inclement weather during their forced labour in the parks. Conditions varied depending on the Park administrators. Some of the conscientious objectors tell of the good treatment they had in the parks.

It was interesting to learn that the government or other agencies have, to this day, not put up a plaque to recognize the contributions of these men. Perhaps, our Society should get involved in this project?

Bill Waiser spoke to a number of conscientious objectors who were present at our meeting. He seemed to enjoy visiting with them. In his book, *Park Prisoners: The Untold Story of Western Canada's National Parks, 1915-1945*, Bill included many interviews he had with the men who were captors of the system, and they tell of their experiences. This is a book worth reading.

For those of you who want more information on this topic come to our Archives and ask to read Bill Waiser's presentation. Bill has also written another book, *All Hell Can't Stop Us—The On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot*, that you won't want to put down until you have finished it. Bill received the Non Fiction Award from the the Saskatchewan Book Awards for Non Fiction for this book in 2003. We will all be looking forward to Bill Waiser's next book, which will be the official centennial history (1905-2005) of our province. Thank you, Bill Waiser. dhe

My C.O. Story

By Isaac Andres

The Year was 1941. I had just started my year at Swift Current Bible School when my call came to report for military service for the Second World War. Because I wanted to apply for alternative service, I was asked to appear in a military court in Swift Current where I stated my case for being a conscientious objector. After answering many questions

about my refusal to take up arms, I was assigned to serve in Banff National Park as a Conscientious Objector (CO). My service was to last for four months only, beginning in December of that year. After three months of kitchen work, a sign in the office was posted that all previous assignments were extended to last "for the duration of the war". This meant that our four months service was not yet over.

In the spring of 1942 the men and I from our camp were transferred to Horne Lake on Vancouver Island. Here we were involved in tree planting and firefighting. We did some bridge building for trucks to be able to get to the fires. For some of this time I was cook and with the help of a few others we prepared meals for 75-120 men every day. In January, 1943 Vancouver was short of firewood, so the COs were returned to the mainland to cut firewood which the army then trucked into Vancouver.

I recall one instance where the COs were disobedient to their superiors. It was a rainy day when it was too slippery and dangerous to cut wood. When there was one man

on each side of a tree swinging an axe, and if one man slipped it could have been fatal. The matter was discussed and when this incident ended it was forgotten and our men maintained their reputation as being diligent and conscientious workers.

Every night and on Sundays we would gather for short devotions and some singing.

In the spring of 1944 farm labourers were very scarce so many of the Forest Service Camps were closed and the men were assigned to work on farms. I was sent to a farmer at Cantuar, about 10 kms NE of Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Our pay remained at fifty cents a day. The farmer's portion of the usual wage was sent to the Red Cross. I remained in this job until August 1946 when I was released to return to my own farm.

Thus, I had fulfilled my obligations as a Conscientious Objector.

Donors Honoured

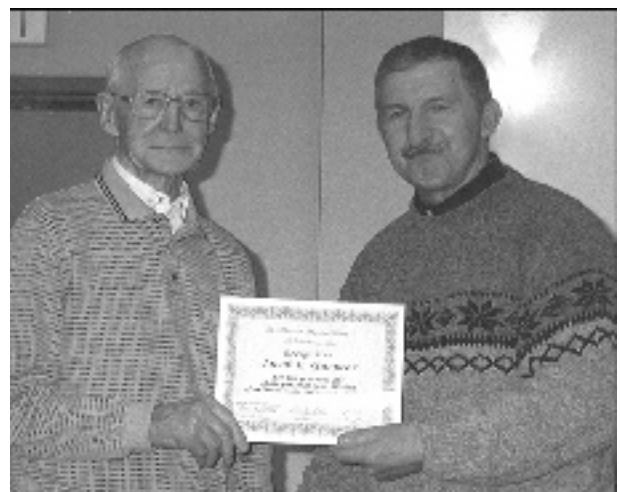
Two generous donors were honoured at the Friday evening program of the MHSS. They have contributed their lifetime collections of historical and genealogical data and personal writings to our Archives at Bethany Manor. They are available for members and friends to see. The Society is grateful to these two men and their families for making such valuable contributions to our future generations. Thank you. A brief biography tells us a little about them.

Jacob Guenter

Why would a farmer ever want to write history? It is a question that many have asked Jacob G. He has asked it of himself. "I didn't want my parents and their parents to be forgotten," he answers. He gives credit to Peter Doell (Leonard's grandfather) for instilling in him a love of history.

Jacob G. was born and raised in the Steele District south of Hague. It was there that he met Annie Doell. For 40 years they farmed at Steele, raising 7 children. They moved to Warman upon retirement from farming. Annie died in 2003. Now in his 83rd year, Jacob G. reads history. He is currently reading *The Last Czarina*. Jacob G. is most pleased with *Men of Steele*, a book he wrote about the history of the very Mennonite people that he lived and worked with all his life.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan



Jacob Guenter receiving his award from Leonard Doell. Photo Susan Braun

thanks Jacob G. Guenter for donating his papers and collections to be preserved in the archives.

Johann J. Neudorf

Born in 1899 in Russia, Johann J. Neudorf was only 19 when he witnessed the death of his parents caused by typhoid fever. Johann survived the scourge having given care and comfort to many. In 1923 he and his wife, Anna, immigrated to Canada where they laboured and farmed just west of Osler. Tuberculosis would soon claim the life of his wife and 4 year old daughter, Gredel. He was left with one son Hansel.

Johann or “Yot Yot” as he was affectionately known, was remarried a few years later to a widow, Maria Schultz, who had two sons. They proceeded to have children of their own. “Yot Yot” once said, “Meena kjinya en meena fruh era kjinya yachten sich met onsa kjinya.” (My children and my wife’s children are quarrelling with our children.)

Johann had been well educated in Russia but the Russian and German training were of little help in Canada. Johann’s daughter, Hella, describes him as not the best farmer but a very good writer who kept a diary, read many books and wrote about life in Russia. He was the local church



The Award Certificate for J. J. Neudorf was accepted by his son and daughter, John Neudorf and Susan Bahnmann, respectively. Leonard Doell made the presentation. Photo by Susan Braun

historian at Osler Mennonite Church. His autobiography is called *Aus Meinem Leben*. Johann died in 1988 at the age of 88 years.

The MHSS thanks the families of John Neudorf, Ervin Neudorf and Hella Banman, for donating “Yot Yot” Neudorf’s collections for preservation in the archives.

Margaret Snider Elected to Board



Margaret Snider was born on a farm ten miles north of Dundurn. She attended Coates Elementary School, took her high school at Rosthern Junior College and attended Saskatoon Teachers’ College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College and the University of Saskatchewan. After teaching for twenty years, mainly in kindergarten and grade one she retired. Margaret then worked part-time for the Guernsey Credit Union and at the Manitou Springs Hotel in Administration for eleven years.

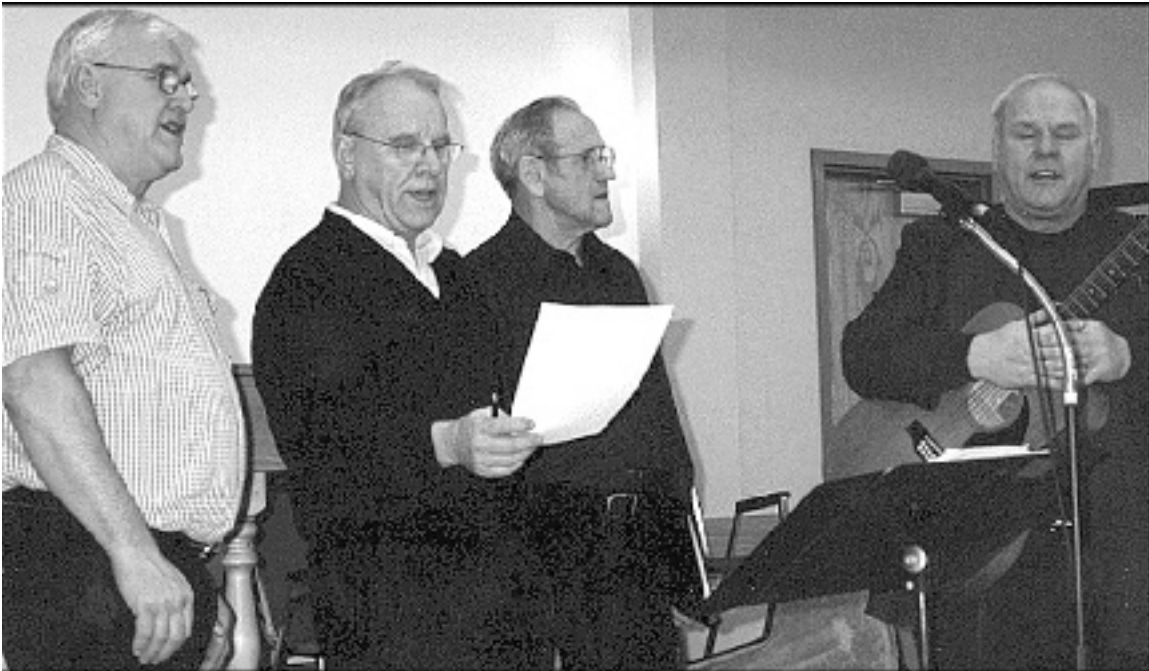
She met her husband, Wilf, while teaching at Guernsey, and they have lived on his home farm ever since. This farm was the original Cressman General Store and Post Office, which was opened in 1905.

Margaret served on the following committees: Guernsey Curling Club, Guernsey Community Club, Central Parkland Lodge Board, Lanigan Regional Home Care Board, Lanigan Gift and Thrift Store

Board and was in charge of the Limosine Promotional Booth and helped with recording shows and sales. Her hobbies include reading, gardening, handwork, curling and travelling.

Margaret’s mother’s side of the family has been traced back to John (Hans) Janzen born March 28th 1752, who married, Maria Bergman born in 1756. Since retirement she has more time to work and finish her genealogy and to serve on the board of the MHSS. Please welcome her to our organization.

MHSS Celebrates Birthday



The Buhler Brother's Quartette performed at the opening evening program with a variety of old songs. Several were in the Low German language, which kept the audience in smiles. Left to right: Wilf Buhler, Jake Buhler, Art Zacharias and Ben Buhler, who is the accompanist on the guitar. Jake Buhler is a board member in our society. He is presently on a three months assignment in North Korea with MCC. Photo by Susan Braun



To the left, is Leonard Doell dishing out pieces of birthday cake to the many guests who came to our celebration. One of the gratifying thoughts and feelings is the knowledge that our organization has many hard working volunteers who keep it moving smoothly. During an event like this dozens of volunteers have their duties to perform—they sell memberships, show people around, set up tables, serve the food, sell books, and at the end of the two days, they clean up.

Many volunteers work the year round. Many are on a schedule. to work in the Archives, where they check material, catalogue, have papers bound, find information for researchers, run off copies for clients, check on new material and more. According to Victor Wiebe, the Archivist, they never catch up—there is always more to do. Others look after the books that have been assigned to be sold. The MHSS Board is grateful for all the work the volunteers do.

You, too, can become involved in a growing organization. We need your support, your participation in our projects such as genealogy, research, writing for the Historian and many other things. Something people don't think of as a service—to find people who have historic documents and information for us to use, to be a sounding board. Thank you for thirty years of help. Photo by Susan Braun



Jacob Loewen and Isaac Andres attended Bill Waiser's presentation. Both had been Conscientious Objectors during the last World War. Isaac Andres contributed a short article to our Historian about his experiences. It is on page six. Thank you, Isaac.

Other men who have served in the CO camps are welcome to send us their experiences while in the camps. These stories will be preserved by us for future use. Do not worry about writing style, just send us the experiences you remember. Thank you. dhe.

Workshop Presenters

The workshops at our Annual meeting were well attended. Ed Schmidt did a workshop on *Brothers Keeper* which was helpful to many who are struggling with the Grandma program. Kathy Szalasnyj directed her workshop to encourage people to write. Her topic was entitled, Recording and Caring for our Past. Kathy serves on the writing committee for the Saskatchewan Centennial Committee. Ted Regehr spoke on his recent book, *Faith, Life and Witness in the Northwest, 1903-2003*. It is reviewed in this issue. See the book page. Ted's paper is available at the Archives. Our thanks to these presenters and to Rev. John Friesen who did the morning devotion for the members. Thank you also for the food which was prepared by Naomi Dirks and her assistants.



The above photograph shows one of many tables of display that Kathy Boldt had prepared for this event. Kathy has done this for many years and every year she comes up with material that many haven't seen before. Her display tells our members that we have a wealth of information in our Archives. Visitors can see the value of preserving our history of our past for future generations.

First Mennonite Choir Performing at the April 24 Meeting—Photo by Esther Patkau



Our Readers Write

Re: the First Women's Sewing Society in Saskatchewan.

In the December issue 2003, the photo in Esther Patkau's article I have some changes to suggest : In the second row: 2nd person Unknown. She is Margaret (Bahnmann), Mrs. Peter Epp, Laird, or her mom Katharine (Wiens) Bahnmann, Dyck , Mrs Elder Peter Regiers second wife. If you know what I mean. Age would be the deciding factor. These two women looked very much alike. Mrs. Regier was the sister to my grandfather Nickolas Isbrand Rempel's Mom, Susanna Wiens.

Received from Nellie Rempel, Ontario.

Mennos in Bolivia

Leonard Doell had asked me whether it would be possible to talk to some Mennonites here about their way of life and some reasons for their decisions to live here. There is a study that involves the Low German speaking Mennonites in the world. I made some inquiries on this topic already, and so far the response is good. I will help as much as I can to get this done. I also want to pay my MHSS dues. —Kathy and Dick Braun,

How do you spell Schlorendarp?

In our last issue I misspelled the village name in the title of The Schlorendarp Settlement by Sadie Fedrau and Bill Braun. I had forgotten to include the "h", sorry. dhe

German-America Day 2003

George W. Bush

President of the United States of America

"German-American Day celebrates more than 300 years of German immigration to our shores, beginning with the arrival of 13 Mennonite families from Krefeld, Germany, on October 6, 1683. Seeking a new life of freedom and opportunity, these immigrants settled in Pennsylvania and founded Germantown near the city of Philadelphia. On this day, we recognize the contributions of those German pioneers, and millions of other German-American immigrants and their descendants, to the life and culture of our great Nation."

Editor's note: The above article comes from Der Postillion Rundbriefe des Saskatchewan German Council, Volume 18, 4th issue, 2003. Contributed by Heinz Bergen, Regina. Thank you. dhe



This is a typical CO camp. Photo sent in by Helen Fast. She would like to know if anyone can identify the camp and some of the men on the photo. Thanks for your help.

Historian Late

My apologies for the late arrival of the S. M. Historian. I had seven pages to complete when I had abdominal surgery. My stay in the hospital was two weeks and now I am completing the work.

In the next issue you will read an exciting story of Mennonite rural school children learning to play ball and eventually becoming National winners. The team is the Osler Monarchs. Watch for it in the September issue.

Readers who wish to make a written contribution on a topic suitable for our paper are encouraged to do so. Look at the various headings that always need new material. Send it by e-mail, if possible and include photos as well. Your comments on articles and other events are always welcome in the *Readers Write* column. **Deadline is AUGUST 4, 2004.** —Dick H. Epp, Editor.

Correct opinions well established on any subject are the best preservative against the seduction of error. —Bishop Mant

FROM UKRAINE:

The Last Sermon in Jalantusch

Editor's Note: *This article was given to my wife, Betty, to translate into English for Al Mierau. When she had completed the story she read it to me and I felt that it was a worthy addition for our Historian. I wrote to the Beckers, now living in Germany, and received permission to publish it. Al Mierau's records show that Anna (Mierau) Becker was born on November 28, 1878, and she died in 1944. dhe*

Peter Becker's (1926-) Memories, recorded by Ella Becker.

It is a hot summer day in the year 1938. In the glaring sun, with neither a breeze nor the slightest breath of air our village seemed to be asleep. The dust-laden leaves of the tall poplar trees that grew along the street hung so low that instead of seeing the underside of the leaves one saw the top. The chickens were scratching unhurriedly near the manure pile, the pigs were stretched out along the barn wall in the shade, the cows remaining on the yard were chewing their cud in the shade of the fruit trees in the garden and it appeared as if nothing in the village had changed.

We, the somewhat older youth, no longer had to take the obligatory afternoon nap. We gathered, bored and restless, under the acacia tree. Each one of us knew that this day was not like any other day but for us it was not self-evident

yet. We didn't talk about it; we kept our thoughts to ourselves. We talked about the heat, about the new mown hay that had been cut too early, that there were so few horses in the village and that most of the hay now had to be cut by hand, raked and piled into bundles and that we would probably have to haul all of the hay home on our backs. These were topics that were suddenly important to us after the arrest of most of the grown men. Finally, when the little ones had finished their naps and the mothers were ready, we saw small groups of women and children walking towards us. A box wagon pulled by a team of horses, loaned from the Collective Farm, proceeded slowly from Dueck's yard. A child's coffin, with a lovingly laid out small body, stood on the wagon. Mrs. Dueck held the lines in her hands and dragged herself sadly beside the wagon. The old box wagon rattled slowly through the rutted dusty village street accompanied by a gray crowd of people who had no more tears to shed for the dead. The eyes of the women had long been cried out. Along the way, all those who could still move joined the funeral

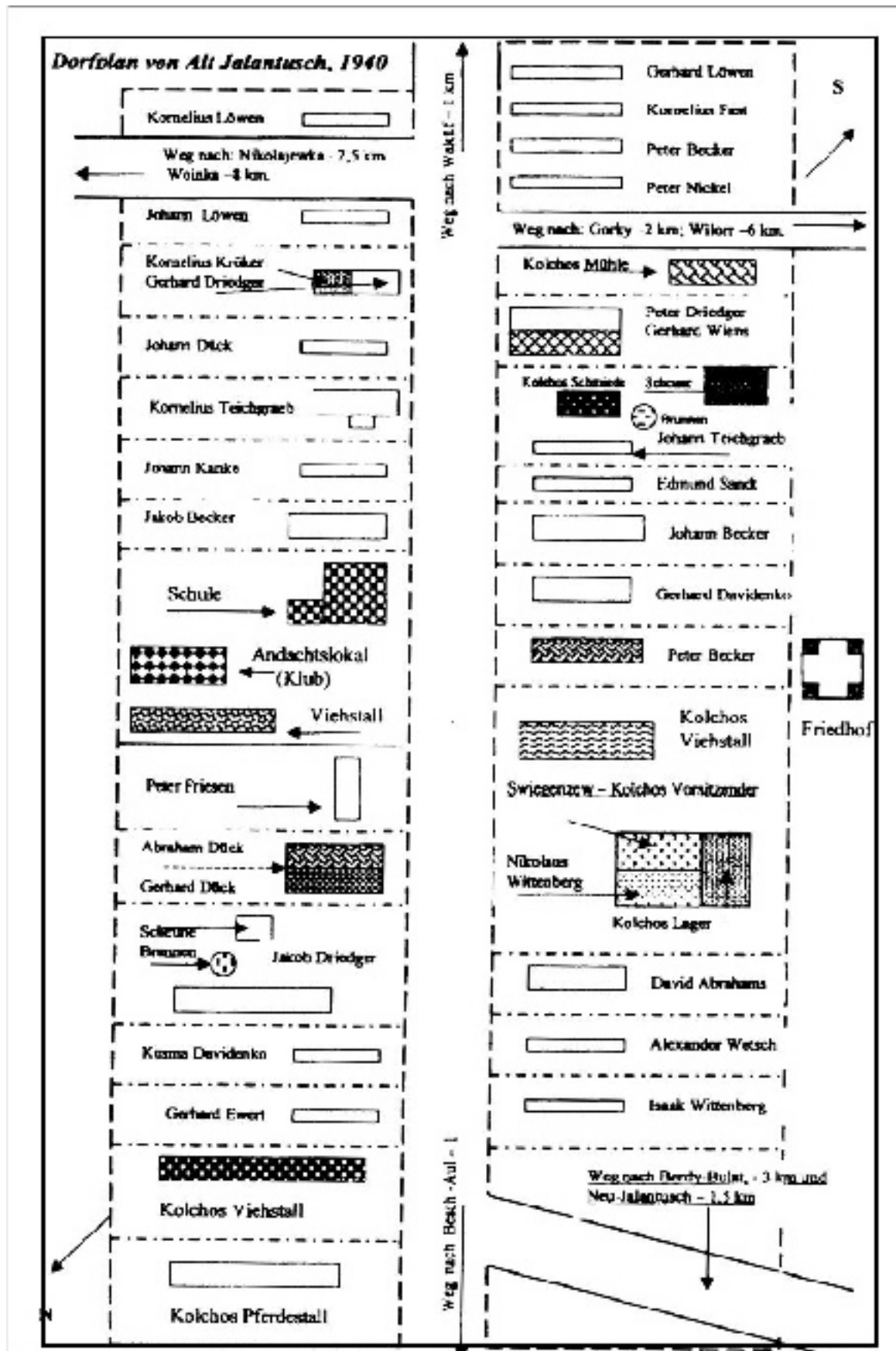
procession. We also joined the procession.

Aunt Anna (born Mierau) Becker and her daughter walked behind the coffin. Aunt Anna had gained the respect and was held in high regard by the villagers. She was one of the oldest and most experienced of the women and was considered to be the leader in the congregation since most of the men were absent. Her husband had died quite some time ago and her son Peter, with whom she lived, was in prison in Simferopol. Reverend Dueck had been arrested recently and many others were also suffering in the prison in Simferopol. Somebody had to keep the community together—it was Aunt Anna.

The funeral procession was getting closer to the village club, which had formerly been a place of worship. We were not

Map of Crimea showing Jalantusch





Aunt Anna seated herself in front of the locked door of the club, in the shade, and the wagon stood near her with the corpse of the 8-year-old Johann Dueck, son of Johann Dueck. She asked the people to become quiet, waited patiently for the opportune moment and began the funeral service with a song. Her three daughters and a daughter-in-law sang along. They all had good voices and we would have appreciated the singing if it had not been such a sad occasion.

The song came to an end and Aunt Anna pulled a Bible from her apron pocket, turned a few pages and found the appropriate verse. Just as she was about to start reading, a neighbor mentioned that perhaps in these troubled and dreadful times it might be better to bury the boy without a sermon. But the woman minister did not allow herself to be persuaded. She hit her hand on the opened page as if to give her courage, took a deep breath, and started to read. We had never heard a woman preach before and we stood there with our mouths open, mesmerized by the reading of the word of God. The funeral service ended with the singing, "We Are Going Home to Heaven" led by the Johann Becker family while Aunt Anna conducted.

We continued to the cemetery that was located behind the house of the Director of the Collective Farm. We had to proceed over his yard. When we arrived the older boys lifted the coffin from the wagon and placed it near the newly dug grave. Aunt Anna held another short talk. The coffin was lowered into the grave with ropes. The funeral had come to an end.

That was the last sermon that was ever given in our village.

UKRAINE

by Marianne Harder

my feet step upon the soil of my ancestral home

I feel a swelling in my heart, of what I cannot tell

it brings an indrawn breath, a sob, and dims my very
eye

this is where my forbears felt both joy and pain
hearts were joined in love
children played

music filled the air with strains of soul-felt praise

to One who brought them here

then terror filled the night with screams of rage

anguish fear and dread spilled from their hearts

to make them numb

hunger ground their inward parts

and gnawed upon their bones

while prayers of desperation to their Savior

disappeared into a midnight sky

will e'er again be felt that innocent joy...
from eyes

o'erfilled with death and pain

the scabs of suffering fall...

or will bitterness fore'r replace

those songs of soul-felt praise...

O, Lord my God, I pray it be not so

may once again a people walk this land with joy-
filled step...

yet ponder still the storm of hate and pride and
greed unleashed

that washed this soil with a million drops of tears
and blood

Father, forgive them all, they knew not what could
come...

and save us through remembering

A Charter of Privileges Granted by Czar Paul I

Editor's Note: *I have had frequent requests from readers that I should print the Charter of Privileges, (1800) so that they could see what deals the Mennonites had worked out with the Russian Czars. Translated from the German text as written by D. H. Epp, Die Chortitzer Mennoniten, pp. 64-67. This book was first published in 1889, Odessa, Russia. In 1984 it was reprinted by Die Mennonitische Post and by Delbert Plett, nearly 200 years after the privileges were first granted. dhe*

We, by the grace of God, Paul I, Emperor and Ruler of all Russians.

This charter received our most merciful ratification in response to a petition that came to us from the Mennonites settled in the New Russian government, who according to their superiors and because of their outstanding industry and proper conduct serve as models to the colonists, deserve our special attention, we have with this charter not only confirmed the privileges and advantages made in earlier agreements but to stimulate their industry and carefulness in agriculture, even more we most graciously want to grant them the following additional advantages:

1. We confirm the religious freedom which was promised to them and their descendants so that they might practice unhindered their tenets and customs. Also we grant most graciously that, when the occasion demands it in court, their verbal "yes" or "no" be accepted as valid in place of an oath.

2. We confirm their possession of the specified sixty-five dessjatin of arable land per family as incontestable and inheritable by their descendants in perpetuity. But we forbid anyone regardless of circumstances to cede, sell or deed even the smallest part of it to an outsider without special permission from the authorities set over him.

3. To all Mennonites already residing in Russia, as well as those who decide to settle here in the future, we grant permission to build factories or carry on any other useful trade, as well as to join guilds and corporations, not only in their own districts but also in cities and towns throughout the whole country.

4. According to the right of ownership, we permit the Mennonites to enjoy any and every use of their land, also to fish and brew beer and corn whiskey, not only for their own use but also for retail sale on their own land.

5. On the land belonging to the Mennonites we forbid outsiders to build inns, taverns and other public houses and the leaseholders to sell whiskey without their permission.

6. We assure them with our royal word that no Mennonite

neither those that have already settled here nor those who plan to settle in this country nor their children and descendants will at any time be forced to do military or civil service without their own wish to do so.

7. We exempt all their villages and homes in their colonies from all types of quartering (with the exception when troops march through in which case the regulations for quartering are to be observed), supplying relay horses, and crown labours. In return for this it is their duty to maintain roads, bridges and the mail coach stations in their district.

8. We grant most graciously to all Mennonites and their descendants complete freedom to dispose of their well-earned personal property as each sees fit. However, if one of them after having paid all his debts wishes to leave the country with his possessions, he must pay in advance the taxes for three years on the property he has acquired in Russia, the amount to be declared dutifully and conscientiously by him and the village authorities. The same procedure is to be followed with the estate of a deceased whose heirs and relatives happen to reside in another country. In addition, the villages are given the right to appoint guardians according to their custom over the property of minor orphans.

9. We confirm the tax exemptions granted to them for a period of ten years, and also extend the same to those Mennonites who intend to settle in New Russia in the future.

After completing an investigation it was evident that, because of crop failures and diseases among their animals, they were in economic need and because of the crowded settlement in Chortitza it was decided to relocate some of these families. In consideration of their need, it was decided that those who stay on their land will have the exemption extended by five years and for ten years to those who are moved to a new settlement. But, when this period has expired, every family will pay for each of its sixty-five dessjatin fifteen kopeks per year, but is exempted from all other taxes.

The loan that was extended to those who stay

on their farm is to be repaid at the end of the above-mentioned free years by ten annual payments and those who move, in twenty years.

authorities not to hinder them in their peaceful enjoyment of the privileges given to them but in all cases let them experience your help and protection.

Paul Graf von Rostoschin, September 6, 1800

10. In conclusion of this our imperial charter granted

Privacy Act

A motion approving the policy and procedures of the Society to respect the privacy of personal information was passed at the 5 April 2004 meeting of the Board of the MHSS. This is a summary of the policy.

Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan: Privacy Statement

Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan (MHSS) is committed to respecting your privacy. We recognize your need for reasonable control of personal identifiable information that you share with the MHSS. Personally identifiable information is any information that is associated with your name. MHSS uses your information to better understand your needs, interests, and to provide you with better service. Our policy regarding the privacy of your information covers the five information principles. Awareness, Choice, Access and Accuracy, Security, Oversight.

If anyone has any questions or comments please consult the
MHSS Archivist, Victor G. Wiebe, 306-934-8125; victor.wiebe@usask.ca,
or visit the MHSS Archives at Room 900, 110 LaRonge Road, Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8

Lawrence Klippenstein Lauds *Der Bote*

Lawrence Klippenstein spoke about the contribution of *Der Bote* to our Mennonite people over the past 80 years. In spite of the fact that *Der Bote* readers are disappearing there are still many who are very loyal to *Der Bote*, today.

We regret that the full text of his address did not get here for this issue, however we will make it available through our Archives at Bethany Manor.

The indexing process of *Der Bote* continues and Bert Friesen is up to date with the index. He works about a day per issue, about two days per month. Alf Redekopp is making some final adjustments, so that the Index 1992-2000) can go to press. It will be made available to our researchers as soon as it gets off the press. dhe



Lawrence Klippenstein at the April 24, meeting. Photo by Esther Patkau



Mostly About Books

by Victor G. Wiebe

Book Editor

T. D. Regehr. *Faith, Life and Witness in the Northwest, 1903-2003: Centennial History of the Northwest Mennonite Conference.* Kitchener, Ontario. Pandora Press. 2003. 534 pp. ISBN 1-894710-39-8. Paper covers. \$49.95. Reviewed by Victor G. Wiebe

In this sizable book Ted Regehr presents the authorized centennial history of the Northwest Mennonite Conference. Begun in 1903 as a product of the efforts of three congregations in Alberta, it was the child, sometimes the problem child, of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario. The roots of these three congregations were in the Pennsylvania Mennonite tradition and in the early missionary efforts of Ontario and American Mennonites of the "Old" Mennonite background.

The graph on page 10 demonstrated that over the past 100 years the conference both grew slowly and experienced change. Often thought of as an Alberta Conference the Northwest Mennonite Conference had congregations not only in Alberta but also Saskatchewan, Alaska and Montana. Though always a modest size, the conference provided spiritual growth, nurture, strength, and vision to several thousand Christians over ten decades. At the end of the twentieth century most of its congregations have joined Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Alberta so that the Conference is at an end.

Few Mennonites in the Dutch, Russian, North German tradition understand the complexity and diversity of Pennsylvania Mennonite groups, their separateness, specializations and distinctiveness in clothing, family connections and congregational practices and even beliefs. For example there are major differences between those known as "Pennsylvania" and "Swiss" Mennonites. As Regehr points out in this history congregations were frequently composed of mixtures of individual and families from a number of different backgrounds and some congregations held signifi-

cantly different outlook and practices. Controversies and criticism were present yet they found ways of worshipping together and sponsoring joint mission projects.

I found this history text dense, scholarly, and honest, though a bit long. Regehr as a professional historian has forthright, truthful style sometimes even confessing that the facts are just not there to know the history of an event or congregation. Regehr includes enough facts to help the reader understand background reasons for actions and procedures. Included are a number of very interesting personal stories that Regehr uses to illustrate the human nature of all history. The book contains a very good collection of photographs illustrating individuals, families, buildings and most interestingly, ordinary life activities. Unfortunately a number of the photographs are too small and the printing process leaves some of them rather blurred.

Ted Regehr tells the history in 15 chapters plus a postscript. Each chapter ends with a two to four paragraph "Conclusion" in which the author nicely summarizes the ideas and threads of the chapter. As a test I found that in under half an hour one could read all "Conclusions" and through them get an interesting summary picture of the Conference.

Each chapter covers a specific time period with some overlapping. Chapter one "Pioneers" describes the first Mennonite settlers; chapter two "Builders" covers 1902-6 and describes the building of meeting houses and the genesis of the Conference. Chapter three is titled "Additions" and takes the story of new and continuing settlements to 1915. "Citizens" is the title of chapter four and it deals with the question of World War I and the role of Mennonites as Canadians who struggle to fit in. Chapter five described "Non-Conformists" and takes the story up to 1930 the eve of the depression.

Today we look back to rural congregations in decline and some see farming as a poverty occupation but it was not always so. Today when we look back into prairie history we unfortunately look through the lens of the Great Depression, a

ten year period of poverty and hopelessness. The pioneers who settled in Alberta in the early decades of the twentieth century had a much different way of seeing prairie farming. Alberta was the last golden west to be settled. Here one could get a good farm with only sweat; here one could build a new community with friendly neighbours. All one had to do was choose one's best community and take up a homestead. In the early decades if one worked prosperity and contentment was assured. This early hope and energy was present in those early Mennonites but this does not come through very well in this book. I wish it had. One thought I had in reading the early history was that perhaps Mennonites, as very practical people, had tempered wild enthusiasm with the experience of how hard, in reality, pioneering was. Chapter six is titled "Survivors" and here the hard times and distresses of the Great Depression are described.

World War II gets chapter seven with its title "Conscientious Objectors." Chapter eight covers the quarter century 1946 to 1972 and is titled "Mission Workers." From here to the end of the book the focus of the history is on the conference as it works on mission outreach of one form or another and its consequences. Chapter nine titled "Voluntary Service Workers" covers a similar time period as chapter eight but describes a very interesting phenomenon of young men, mostly from the USA, who came to Alberta, in large measure because of the American Draft, but who came to do missions in the wilds of Canada. These men were true pioneers, doing new work in Christian missions, with urban rather than rural peoples, with persons outside of the Mennonite tradition and in remote and isolated communities. They brought an energy and vision that refocused the Conference.

The Conference's move to towns and cities is told in chapter ten, "Urban pioneers" and with this is the reconsideration of Mennonite non-conformity which is taken up in chapter eleven. Leadership and its changes in the third quarter of the 20th century are described in chapter twelve. "Church Planting", "Cross-Cultural Exposure" and "Crossroads" encompass chapters thirteen to fifteen and tell the story to the year 2002. As Regehr describes it the Conference in the last quarter century expended considerable personal, financial and spiritual resources on a variety of mission outreach programs. These were directed mostly to Christians of non-Mennonite background; Hispanic, Indo-Chinese, and others. The final chapter "Crossroads" is a look at the last decade of the Conference as it is in transition with

change and uncertainties. The book ends with a good set of scholarly notes, credits, and a very functional index. The conference's weighty efforts with missions, both pioneer missions and with non-Mennonites surprised me for I was not aware of its great extent. However, while it is informative to read the story in a conference history I feel some efforts are of a much too recent nature to be able to understand their historical significance so that their significance as history is yet to be told. This is an important area that will require time to evaluate.

At the start the history focuses on the founding of individual congregations but this is not a history of the congregations that Regehr writes. He writes a history of the Conference, its leaders, its vision, its hopes, its faith, and its practice as the conference worshiped and worked to show the human face of the living Christ to a small part of the prairie world. Some readers may find this history a bit unfocused but on reflection I think the lack of focus or the lack of a centre may reflect the true nature of the Conference itself. Faith, Life and Witness in the Northwest suggests that the Northwest Conference was probably too diverse and too dispersed to form the traditional tightly

New Books

Waiser, Bill. *All Hell Can't Stop Us—The On-to-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot*; Fifth House Ltd., a Fitzhenry & Whiteside Company, Calgary, Alberta; 316pp, paper cover, \$29.95. Available in most book stores.

Bill Waiser has made of this dark moment in our history a compelling human story of people attempting to negotiate a path through troubled times. — Guy Vanderhaeghe, novelist. (From the back cover)

Bill Waiser won the Nonfiction Award for *All Hell Can't Stop Us* (Fifth House Publishing), the story of the On-to-Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot during the Depression.

Friesen, Ted. *Memoirs—A personal autobiography of Ted Friesen*, Ted E. Friesen, Altona, MB. Printed and bound by Friesens Corporation, History Book Division, Altona, Manitoba, R0G 0B0; 180 pp, hc, 2003. \$19.95 post paid. Available from the publisher.

Friesen sums up his life.

I have asked myself, what impact have I made on the community around me, and society? I have no special gifts. Yet I have been part of establishing institutions, and when I look back I find it amazing. I have been a founding member of the following: Mennonite Central Committee, Canada; Mennonite Central Committee, Manitoba; Mennonite Historical Society of Canada; Friesens Corporation; Altona Mennonite Church; Canadian Mennonite Association.

All of these started in a modest way. All were started in faith, and with a vision for their potential to serve mankind. All have grown exponentially. All are serving to make the world a better place to live. To think that I was a part of this, makes me feel very humble indeed. It also makes me feel grateful that I was permitted to be part of this. Soli Deo Gloria. dhe

Chortitza Colony

ATLAS OLD COLONY

Comprehensive

130 pages

over 65 maps

30 maps from the year 1867 in full color

A 36 item color coded Legend Key

Dissertation by Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein: The Khor-
titza Colony in New Russia

Resource material

In Memoriam

Partially bi-lingual

Heinrich (Heinz) Bergen, Ed.

The astonishingly colored agro-physical maps contain a treasure of new knowledge about the Chortitza Colony as it existed in the mid 1800s during the reign of Tsar Alexander II.

Order from:

Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan

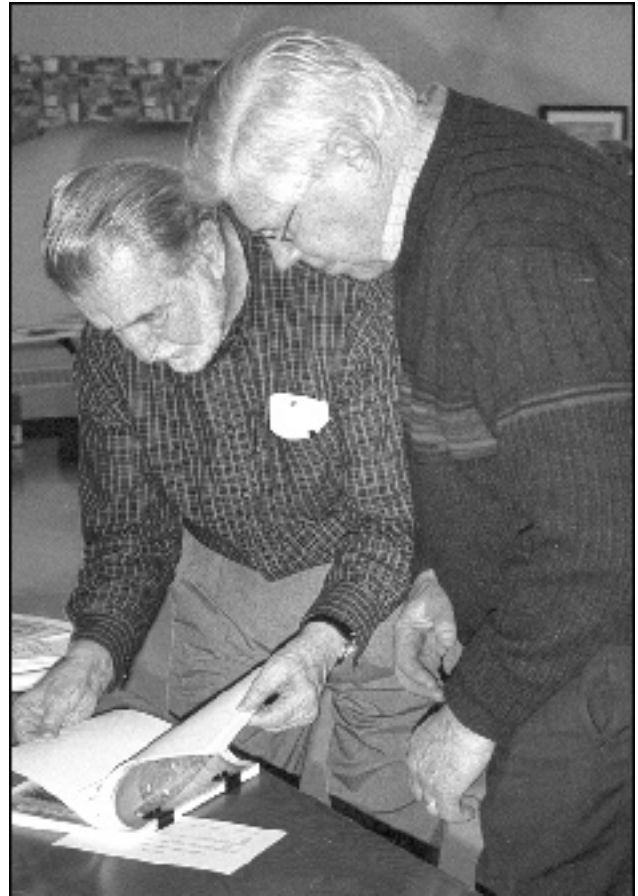
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Saskatoon, S7K 7H8, Canada

Canadian cost \$35.00, plus \$2.40 mailing plus tax.

Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind—Addison

A good book is the best of friends,—the same today and forever.—Tupper



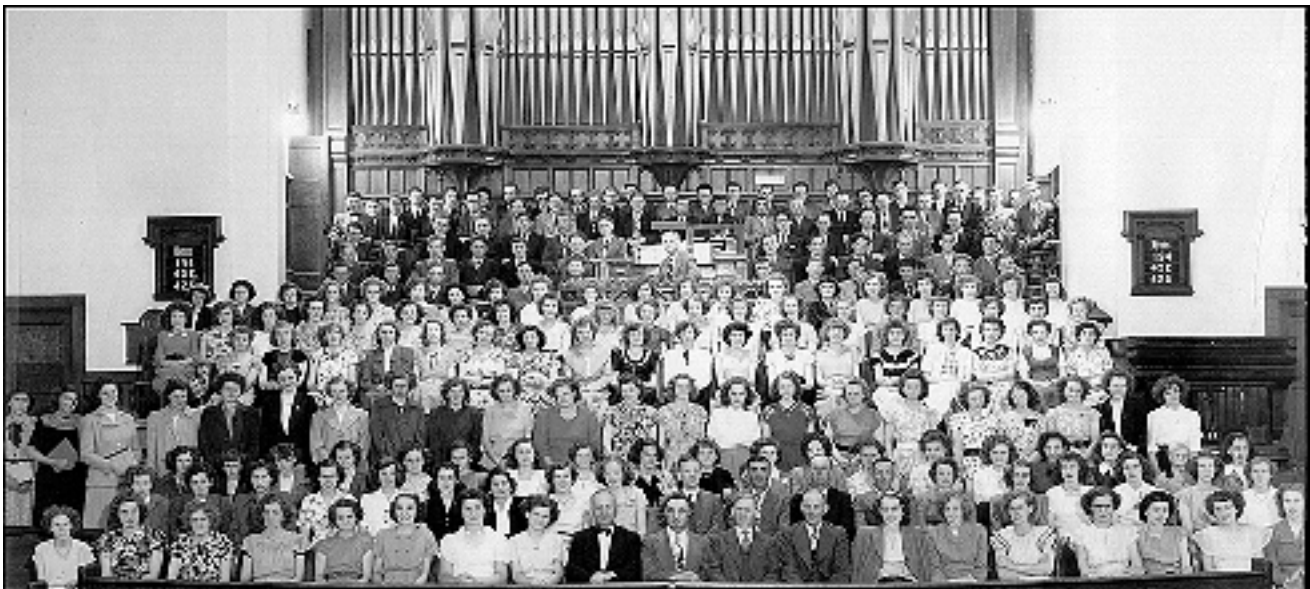
Heinz Bergen, compiler and editor of the Chortitza Old Colony Atlas is showing it to Ted Regehr during the Annual meeting. The atlas is available for purchase from the Archives at Bethany Manor. Photo by Susan Braun

Crokinole Tournament

A successful Crokinole Tournament took place on April 24, 2004. Some twenty tables were filled for the tournament. Winners were: A Tournament: Tom Kehler vs. Ike Rempel; B Tournament: George Wiebe vs. Lucas Fehr; C Tournament: Les Friesen vs. Henry Friesen; and the D Tournament: David Buhler vs. Jack Driedger. Congratulations to all who had fun in participating and also to those who managed to win. Our special thanks to Menno Penner and his assistants who prepared the playoff schedules.

David Paetkau—Music His First Love

Editor's Note. The biography of David Paetkau was compiled from articles and photographs sent to us by the four Paetkau children, Elsie Dolden, Hilde Carlson, Eric and Verner. Other information was obtained from Frank Epp's book, *Education with a Plus* and anecdotes from former students. We are thankful for all the assistance we received. Gratefully, dhe.



Saskatchewan Song Fest, 1949. David Paetkau was the conductor. He is sitting in the front row centre, wearing a bow tie.

David Henry Paetkau spent seventeen years teaching at the Rosthern German-English Academy (now Rosthern Junior College) during which time he made an impressive contribution to choral music at the school. Frank Epp in his book, *Education with a Plus* writes, "David Paetkau's tireless diligence and uncompromising dedication to the very highest standards in music left a lasting impression upon the musical life of the school. He also pioneered in raising the performance level of Mennonite church choirs." (p.12 *Education with a Plus*)

David was born on January 20, 1903 in the village of Memrik in the Memrik Colony, Ukraine. He was the middle child of nine siblings. Three of them were sent to Siberia, the others and their mother immigrated to Canada. David received some teacher training at the Mennonite Teachers' Seminary in Chortitza in 1920 prior to leaving Russia. He arrived in Canada in 1926 and was given work in Reesor, a northern Ontario forestry and lumber community. He arrived with a suit and tie but some of his co-workers loaned him some suitable clothes for working in the forestry industry.

In June 1927 David married Helene Unger in Reesor. He-

lene was born on October 7, 1905 in New York, Ignatyev Colony in Ukraine. She was the second child of five. Prior to coming to Canada in 1926 she had received one year of teacher training. Her first job in Canada was at the Kaufmann Rubber Factory in Kitchener, Ontario. After this David and Helene moved to Rosthern. Four children were born to them: Elsie, Hilde, Eric and Verner.

He was asked to join the teaching staff at the German-English Academy in 1935. His assignment was to teach German and religion as well as music and choral work. John G. Rempel shared in teaching religion with him the first years.

In 1938 at the Conference meeting in Eigenheim Paetkau was asked to join the music committee for the General Conference Mennonite Church of North America which was assigned to produce a new hymnal, *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten*. His job was to check the music for accuracy. Others on the committee were D. H. Epp, editor of *Der Bote*, a former choir conductor, teacher and *Vorsänger* (One who leads the singing of a congregation) in Chortitza and Rev. John G. Rempel, elder

of the Rosthern Mennonite Church. The Hymnary was published in New York, 1942, in the German language and was used in Mennonite churches in North America for many years. It is still in use in churches that have German services. (Foreword in *Gesangbuch der Mennoniten*)

The Academy Board managed to purchase a second hand radio-phonograph in 1940 for the school. Twenty-four 78-rpm records came with the phonograph and Paetkau used these, and his own private collection, extensively to teach music appreciation. The Grade XII classroom was filled every Sunday afternoon with students who came to listen to classical music as interpreted by David Paetkau. During this time he also organized a History of Music course for Grade XI students and a Choir Directing and Voice Training class for Grade XII.



In 1945 David Paetkau published a collection of songs in the *Liederalbum* which was used by Mennonite church choirs in many provinces. A second edition was published later.

In 1948 Paetkau's select School Choir was named the Mendelssohn Choir. The new name arose from their successful performances in 1948-49 of Mendelssohn's Hymn of Praise and Psalm 95. Before that the choir had mastered

Schiller's *Das Lied von der Glocke* and other demanding works. The choir sang in major centres in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Subsequently, the sale of some 500 records containing the Hymn of Praise as well as 12 German folk songs and chorales helped to forge a strong link between the congregations and the school. (p135, *Education with a Plus*)

Since Paetkau always entered his choirs at the Rosthern Music Festival, the general public was impressed by the quality of their singing. Inspector of Schools, J. MacLeod, said in 1951, "David Paetkau's work in music is inspiring and the whole superintendency and district gains as a result of his love for music."

In the fall of 1951 David Paetkau received a sabbatical from the Academy Board. In 1952 Paetkau graduated with a Bachelor of Education, and was offered the principalship at the Academy. Since the resignation of other staff members no candidate had come forward to take this position. Paetkau was willing to accept the offer provided that he could get security of tenure. The Board refused this request, and David Paetkau resigned after seventeen years of dedicated service. As a farewell gift the Board gave him twenty dollars worth of records.

In the summer of 1952 the Paetkau family set out for Alberta, where there was a position in the little town of Picture Butte, about 20 miles northeast of Lethbridge.

In 1954, they arrived in Coaldale where David accepted a teaching position and they moved into a new house, albeit on a yard that was still prairie sod. As he had at the last house in Rosthern, the first he had ever bought, David, with the help of the rest of the family, set to work landscaping. He particularly felt the urge to plant trees. A white picket fence was put up, manure was hauled in on Nick Unger's truck and spread, and dozens of flowering shrubs were planted. The neighborhood was filled with good people, church and school were again within walking distance. Life had more material comforts and feelings of wellbeing than ever.

Leaving RJC had been a mixed experience, but there were happy occasions for David to return there. One visit was particularly satisfying to him. He was invited to address the graduating class of 1957 at RJC. David chose for his theme "Be true to your first love", speaking to the importance of following the calling you hear in your youth. It was an opportunity to sum up his broad range of experiences as a teacher and musician, as he followed his "first love", music, from his childhood years to his retirement.

In February, 1959, David's mother, Sarah Harder, passed away at age 89. She had been living in a seniors' home in

Coaldale, after spending many years with her son, Peter Paetkau on the farm in Rosemary. The funeral was in Rosemary, and at the funeral the choir sang one hymn which overcame David. It was one his mother had sung for him when he was a boy, and which he had subsequently put into the Liederalbum, from which the choir was singing. A remarkable talent that David had, and one which was of central importance in his Liederalbum projects, was his ability to remember the music of his childhood and youth, some of it introduced to him by his mother.

Around the time the family moved to Coaldale David began in earnest writing the book, *A History of Music and Musical Instruments*. This book, like his occasional talks, was also a summing up of his broad knowledge of music, although it required, in addition, a great deal of outside research. He worked very hard on the book, finally able to have it published in 1960. In the spring of 1962, the Mixed Chorus of the University of Alberta visited Coaldale on one of its spring tours, and David was proud to see a copy of his book presented to Dr. Richard Eaton, the director of the choir. However, the history book never attained the popularity of the earlier works, particularly the two editions of the Liederalbum. Royalties from the latter, admittedly small by that time, continued to arrive in the 1970s. The songs collected and painstakingly transferred to paper by his own artistic hand clearly found resonance among Mennonites in

various countries. The high level of musical achievement represented by the Rosthern music festivals that David organized and directed were cultural highlights and very well received, but the songbooks probably did even more for carrying forward Mennonite culture. In later life he felt, sadly, that the rich music found in them, originating in the old country, was disappearing in modern congregations.

David was a serious person who felt that everyone should aspire to high achievement in music or in some favourite hobbies or pastimes. But that didn't mean that he had no other interests. Music, of course, was a strong motivation in his life, whether in his work or in his leisure. Saturday's opera from the Metropolitan in New York invariably filled the house. Sundays David would be listening, musical score in hand, to the New York Philharmonic play the "B's": Beethoven and Brahms his favorites.

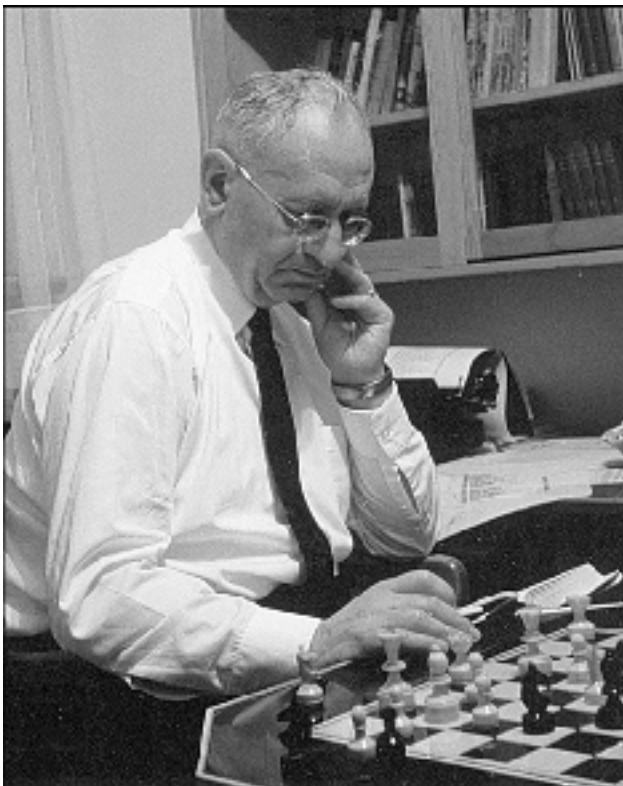
Painting also became a hobby during part of his life. He attended art classes in the summers, first at Emma Lake in Saskatchewan, and then at the Banff School of Fine Arts. His paintings hang in the homes of his children.

Chess, in the early years at Rosthern, was a passionate hobby with Paetkau. David was chosen to play for Saskatchewan in a national tournament in Saskatoon. This conflicted with the Choir that he was directing in the Rosthern Mennonite Church so he got a substitute for the choir and he and Peter Rempel, another teacher at the Academy, went to play in the provincial tournament. They received criticism for this from some of the constituents. In every town he lived, there were always chess players who became deeply involved in Paetkau's hobby.

Paetkau loved literature, and perhaps surprisingly, was a particular fan of the English Greats like Dickens and Shakespeare, particularly. German literature was another of his loves, of course, Heine and Goethe ranked high in his view.

During the Alberta years, David and Helene would often travel to Waterton, with Verner in the back seat. The trips always included a hike to Bertha Falls.

Retirement to Richmond, British Columbia, occurred in 1968. The years spent struggling to become a teacher in Canada, and teaching at the Rosthern Academy, resulted in his pension being about half of the maximum, but David and Helene never seemed to suffer financially after retirement. They bought a house in Richmond and planted trees, the third round of planting in 20 years. Here they lived a peaceful and relaxing life. In some ways, this period was very rewarding—many old friends and ex-students lived in the Vancouver area, and the gentle climate and rapid estab-



lishment of the garden and the fruit trees brought a lot of satisfaction. Two children, Elsie and Eric, lived nearby, and their grandchildren were available for spoiling and feeding. In the last four years of his life, David took up bowling. He felt a bit at a loss for important responsibilities, and said as much, but there was no doubt that he was ready for a rest. Death was untimely, at only 69 years, for a person who had spent no time, ever, in hospital. The community's awareness of his contributions, and the respect he enjoyed, brought out many friends and former students for his funeral service. The small choir that he had been directing sang, director-less, songs David had taught them, songs that had been sung to him by his mother when he was a young boy. David always saw himself first and foremost as a teacher. In fact, he suggested that his epitaph should simply read: "here lies a teacher".

A Few Recollections

The Face Says it All

Former students of David Paetkau will recall that he had a very flexible face. In the classroom he most often wore a rather stern expression but he could break out into a broad smile with his eyes glistening. That stern flexibility served him well as a conductor. His contention was that a conductor should never be the centre of attention. Consequently, when he faced his choir he stood erect and still, his hands at his sides. When he saw that all singers were attentive, his right hand would come up to his chin, his index finger would extend and when the finger struck the downbeat, the choir was expected to respond. He never waved his arms. Singers knew from the expression on his face whether to sing with more volume or less. The sternness of his expression may well have been a reflection of how intensely he felt about the music he was conducting. Whatever the case, it was a style that served him very well. Many budding singers learned to appreciate choral music under the tutelage of that index finger and continue to be grateful for it to this day. —Ernie Baergenn

One Who Didn't Make the Choir

Each Fall Mr. Paetkau would have a compulsory audition where students would try out for the Mendelssohn Choir. I did not make the grade so I was shunted to the spare classroom where Mr. Peter Rempel supervised us. Instead of allowing us to read or kill time, he got us to write. This was for me a great opportunity for which I am still grateful today.

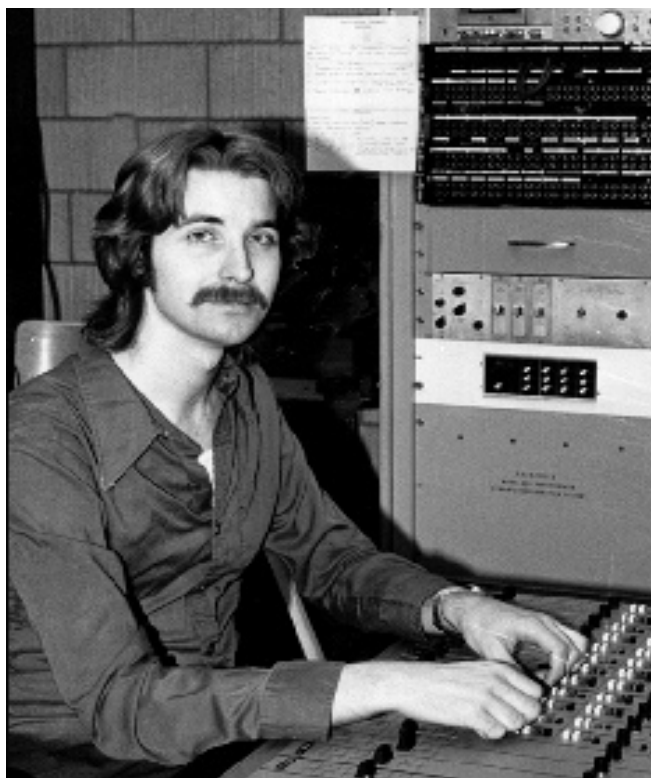
The irony of this experience is that at the end of my Grade Twelve, Mr. Paetkau suggested that I become a choir direc-



Helene and David Paetkau. Photo taken in 1959.

tor. He said there are many choir leaders who can't sing but they have a good feel for music and its interpretation. I felt honoured, but other than doing classroom music during my teaching career, I have never risen to the occasion of standing on a podium and waving my baton to a great choir or bowing to a delighted audience. —Dick Epp

If you have an anecdote or story of David Paetkau, please share it with us. Send to the editor. dhe



Paul Dolden, a grandson of Helene and David Paetkau, is continuing the "love of music, in the electronic and digital style.



Mendelssohn Choir 1950

The photo was taken at First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon during the choir's spring tour.

(Names supplied by Ernest Baergen.)

- Back Row: Dennis Bartel, Bill Kruger, Reuben Hamm, Albert Wiens, Ernest Baergen, Jack Driedger, Waldemar Regier, Ernie Reimer
- Third Row: Cornie Driedger, Arthur Harder, Laurence Bartel, John Klassen, Melvin Friesen, Cornie Dick, John Neudorf, George Riekman, Louis Loewen
- Second Row: Rev. J. J. Thiessen, Nita Neufeld, Elizabeth Janzen, Rita Epp, Margaret Tessman, Judith Klassen, Marguerite Willms, Ruby Klassen, Edna Regehr, Laura Enns, Tina Friesen, Hildegard Pries
- Front Row: David Paetkau, June Wieler, Hildegard Dyck, Katherine Goerzen, Joyce Loewen, Esther Schmidt, Ella Epp, Elsie Nickel, Mary Epp, Irma Wiens
- Seated: Erma Krahn, Katie Koop

Our Grateful Thanks

In our last issue of the SMH we had an enclosed page with a "wish list" for our Archives. Our members' response was excellent. We now have a photocopier for those who come to do research. This was a much needed item and it is being used by happy clients. A small fee is charged for making copies. Also, Victor G. Wiebe, Archivist, has been able to purchase acid free envelopes, files and storage containers for preserving the materials that have been donated to the Archives. This assures that the records donated will be preserved for future generations. Thank you to all who donated so generously to our Archives. —MHSS Board



The Family Tree

Genealogy Editor—Rosemary Slater

Preserving your family history for future generations

Hooked on Genealogy

By Rosemary Slater

“Where did you get that information?” That is a question that has been asked of me quite a number of times since the GRANDMA 4 CD (Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry) appeared in December, 2002.

On the 28th. of June, 1890, Abraham Pauls, eldest son of Kornelius Pauls and Agatha Zacharias, born March 26, 1869 in Southern Russia, copied the Family Chronology of Abraham Zacharias out of his parents Family Chronology Book. In October, 1891, Abraham married and began recording his own family chronology, recording births, deaths, baptisms and marriages of his children until 1936. Shortly before his death in 1948, Abraham Pauls, then living in Brazil, made handwritten copies of his family records and sent them to each of his two oldest sons living in Canada and married with families of their own.

As the daughter of one of those Canadian sons, I was intrigued by the pages of names and dates from an unknown grandfather in an exotic foreign country. Thus began my lifelong fascination with family history and the extended family it represents.

In the winter of 1995, having recently retired, I decided to translate my grandfather’s “Familien Chronik” into English and enter the information from it into a computer genealogy program for the benefit of my children. Then it seemed easy enough to add the information from the “Abram J. and Maria Toews Family” book published in 1989 which included my mother’s family. And then, why not my husband’s family? And the families of my sons-in-law, since this information was intended to benefit my children, and my grandchildren, present and future.

I had carefully chosen a computer genealogy program that was rated top of the line. Unfortunately, the program was so complex that I never learned how to use most of its features, including the entering of sources for my data. However, since I knew where I had obtained my data and since this was just for the children, who hadn’t shown any interest in ‘Mom’s obsession’ so far in any case, I wasn’t particularly concerned about this omission.

Meanwhile, my genealogy program kept going through upgrades, periodically crashing and threatening me with loss of all my information. Finally, one day in the summer of 2001, I looked at the database total names, now sitting at over 44,000, and decided I needed some backup protection in case some mysterious computer virus or an unforeseen disaster wiped out my handiwork, an interlocking collection of names all connected to me in one way or another. As my off site back up plan, I transferred all my information to a much simpler genealogy program, Brother’s Keeper, and made copies of my database for two cousins in Manitoba and two cousins in B.C.

My database by now resembled an enormous jigsaw puzzle without borders to which I continually added pieces as they fitted in. Shortly after delivering my database copy to one of the B.C. cousins, I received an e-mail from Tim Janzen, heavily involved with the GRANDMA4 project, asking permission to include my information in GRANDMA 4. In my

reply to Tim, I told him he was welcome to the information but probably wouldn't want it because it didn't include sources.

Imagine my surprise on December 23, 2002, when the doorbell rang and a courier handed me a copy of GRANDMA 4, compliments of the compilers and thanking me for my contribution. Oops! So what am I doing now, and probably will be for the next ten years? Yes, you guessed it,

entering sources—and answering e-mails, letters and phone calls asking “Where did you get that information?”

So let this cautionary tale be a warning to all ‘hobby genealogists’ like myself. Write down where you got it, from whom you got it, when you got it, and why you got it. Someday someone will be asking you, “Where did you get that information?”

Workshop on GRANDMA and Brother's Keeper

led by Ed Schmidt

About fifty attendees were present at the 11 a.m. workshop. I am grateful to Trevor Willems (trevor@saskatoonprinthouse.com) for donating the use and operating the computer/projector. He has assisted in the production and printing of a number of local family histories that included genealogical information. I will resort to one single illustration out of those used. To some extent I have removed personal names to avoid unintended complications. A variety of artifacts and active on screen exchanges with participants were used to demonstrate the value of the GRANDMA data.

The candid records of Judeo-Christian history start with some stories of dysfunctional relationships. In Genesis 4:9, Cain is asked to respond to the question, ‘Where is your brother?’... Cain retorted, ‘Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?’ Are we “brothers”?

For the past few years I have been attempting to overcome some dysfunctional genealogical family blind spots. As a current example I'll use Roy who was born in 1918 in Oregon. A relative of his was a person who often ministered here at Bethany Manor before his death in the fall of 2001. This relative, Rueben, and I shared moments of humour. Both of us had many years ago learned to know the Toews boys, as we called them. Dr. J.B., who at one time lived just east of Hepburn, gathered the Mennonite Brethren Church records from anywhere he could obtain them and took them to Fresno, California. This effort became significant in the California Mennonite Historical Society GRANDMA Project name base.

Over the decades, Rueben and I sparred in friendly ways about how we successfully marginalize others. When some fall into disfavor with a segment of society, such a Church community, the cemetery marker remains but names vanish from the Church history. Rueben's mother was a relative.

of Roy's. In GRANDMA she is listed as Elizabeth without her maiden name.

When we live on the northern edges of the American Great Plains we soon learn to accept the meaning of ‘peripheral’. For many decades I have been engaged in the histories and genealogical nodes of the families that over the last two centuries joined the migrations of agriculturally oriented people that settled into the area north of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In a familiar way we have called this the Saskatchewan Valley that is defined by the confluence of two rivers. Many of us have ancestors who ventured into this area as stakeholders more than a century ago to be agrarian pioneers. These agriculturally oriented people left behind the river areas of Europe, Asia, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and several dozen states from New York to Florida on the east across the continent through Texas to California, Oregon and Washington on the west. Their expression was frequently that the “soil tasted right.”

There is a reality that follows these re-settlers who trek around the globe. Most often we deny that the moves are done for financial pursuits of independence that are nurtured by generational dysfunctional-family relationships. Most often a family tried to populate their geographic region independently or for reasons of disagreement banned one another from accepting each other with equal dignity. Then to offset those outward pushes there were attempts to nurture fondness from a distance by “staying in touch” and tracking what would be today called the DNA nodes of networking relationships.

Rueben and I would discuss why older pictures, just like tombstones in cemeteries or names on buildings, somehow remained but when it came to genealogies they become forgotten or their sources of records are not granted

validity. Together we hoped that History Books would preserve these dilemmas and eventually provide some reconciliation.

In the book, published in 1976, Roy observed that “(He) enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1936 as an apprentice seaman and retired as a Commander in 1961, after 25 years service. He was educated at Oregon State College and the University of Arizona. Roy is the only person in this book who made a career of the military

service, which shows you what kind of Mennonite he is. He spends his time gathering information....” Such personally fragmented histories don’t get into local history books. The current generation needs to be engaged so that the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan Archives can become a repository for genealogies and histories that should not be lost. It was possible to interact with a number of people at the workshop and trust the Archives will in the long-term benefit.

John P. Nickel Honoured

(Following is an excerpt from the tribute paid to John Nickel by Verner Friesen on Saturday, April 24, 2004. dhe)



John P. Nickel receives his lifetime membership from Verner Friesen. Photo Esther Patkau.

Over his lifetime, John Nickel has been involved in many things. He began his professional career as a teacher in rural schools. He went on to acquire two social degrees and worked for 16 years as a psychiatric and medical social worker in Saskatchewan and in the N.W.T. He was also involved with MCC in community service in Kentucky and in Nova Scotia.

What we want to focus on today is John’s contribution to preserving the stories of the past. He has written four books and the fifth one on the contribution of *Der Bote* over its 80 year history is still in progress. The four books are: *Thy Kingdom Come*, a record of violence and faith during the Civil War 1918-1923 is based on his grandfather’s diaries (1978). *The Nickel-Nickel Family of Prussia, Russia, America and Canada* (1981). *Hope Springs Eternal*, the sermons and papers of Johann J. Nickel (1859-1920), a dedicated grandfather, minister and teacher in Russia (1988). *Hope Beyond the Horizon*—stories by Mennonite refugees

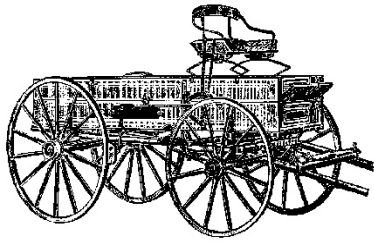
fleeing the Soviet Union after World War II (1996).

In 1975 John began recording Mennonite cemeteries. To date he has recorded more than 50 cemeteries in Saskatchewan and over 10,000 names from the headstones in these cemeteries.

Today, with the help of Helen Fast, who prepares the lists for the website, and Al Mierau, webmaster of the Cemetery Project, these names and more have been recorded on the MHSS website. This website gets up to 1500 hits per month from all parts of the world. John has made it possible to have the present generation research our website in order to find their relatives. Researching the cemeteries is one step in helping to give honour where honour is due—one step in remembering those who have gone before us. The website can be found at this Internet address: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~skmhss/>

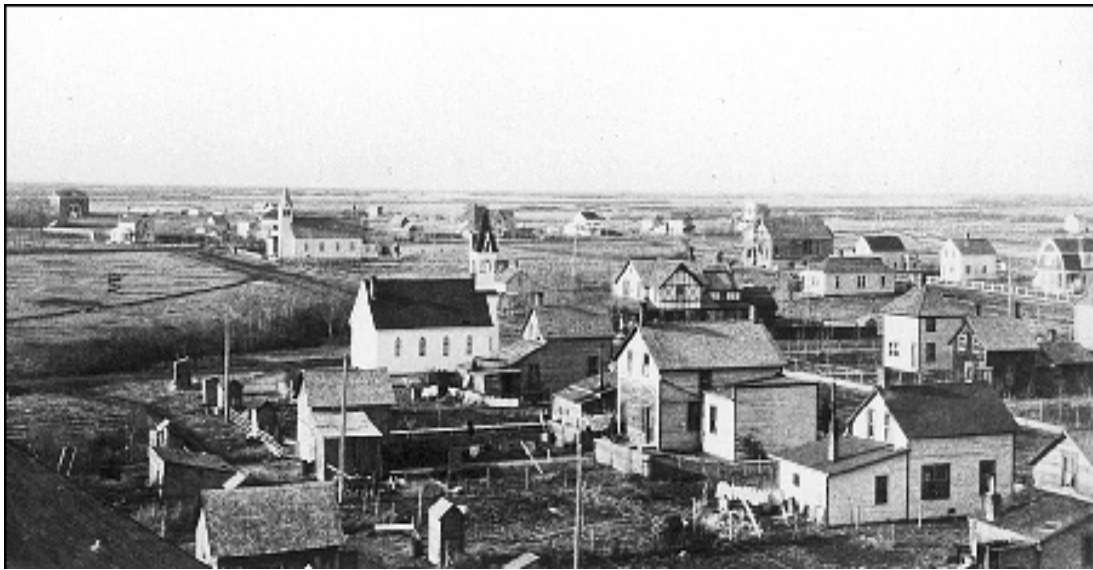
Thank you, John, on behalf of the MHSS for your tireless efforts in recording information from our cemeteries as well as faithfully preserving the story of your ancestors and other Mennonite sisters and brothers.

The Christian cemetery is a memorial and a record. It is not a mere field in which the dead are stowed away unknown. It is a touching and beautiful history, written in family burial plots, in mounded graves, in sculptured and inscribed monuments. —Joseph Anderson



From the Past

The best of prophets of the future is the past...Byron



The above photo of the town of Rosthern was taken in 1904. Helen Dyck sent the photo to us. Rosthern celebrated their 100th anniversary last summer. Thank you.

The photo to the right is from my collection that my Father left us. He is on the right in the bottom row. If anyone can let me know who the other men are, it would be much appreciated. I know that there are several other photos like this available. If you have one please share it with us.

Who took the photo? Was it taken by a professional photographer who combined the moon shot over the town of Rosthern? Who was it? My Father had a postcard size negative of this in his files.

If readers have other photos of interest please share them with us. dhe

