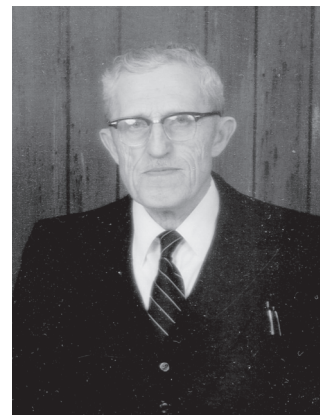


# Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian

*Official periodical of the  
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Volume XVII No. 3, Fall 2011*

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## **Henry J. Funk: a Complicated Life** *By Tony Funk*



Our father's life took some complicated turns, beginning from the time he was born. His life story involves three distinct families: Dyck, Thiessen, and Funk.

Henry's birth mother, Helena Dyck, was born in 1881. Helena was the second youngest child of the Franz Dyck family of Osterwick, Chortitza Colony, South Russia. The Dyck family was poor and lived in the *Anwohner* (landless) section of the village; their village lot was their only property. Sometime prior to 1911, Helena began working as a maid for the Peter Thiessen family in the village of Schönwiese, located thirty kilometres from Osterwick. Schönwiese was the industrial and business centre of the Chortitza Colony.

The Thiessen family was financially well established. For several generations, their extended family had been involved in a substantial flour milling business, in manufacturing, banking, and agriculture. It was here that Helena met Heinrich Thiessen, the second youngest of Peter and Helena Thiessen's fourteen children, born in 1891.

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## **Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian**

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Historical Society of Saskatchewan (MHSS)

*Editor:* Victoria Neufeldt

*Advisory Committee:* Esther Patkau, Jake Buhler

*Pictures Editor:* Helen Fast

*Proofreaders:* Ernie Baergen, Verner Friesen

### **Columns:**

*Book Page & Archives Page:* Victor Wiebe  
contact info: 934-8125 victor.wiebe@usask.ca

*Genealogy Page:* Rosemary Slater  
contact info: 955-3759 r.slater@sasktel.net

*Distribution:* Erna & Elmer Neufeld

*Mailing list:* Hilda Voth

*Printer:* University of Saskatchewan Printing Services

Readers are invited to submit news items, stories,  
articles, photographs, church histories, etc. to MHSS at  
the e-mail or street address below. For material related  
to either the book or genealogy page, please contact the  
respective editors; see above for contact information.

MHSS Office and Archives:  
110 La Ronge Road, Room 900  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8

Tel: 306-242-6105

E-mail: mhss@sasktel.net

### **Archives hours:**

Monday, 1:30–4 p.m.

Wednesday, 1:30–4 p.m., 7–9 p.m.



## **From the Editor's Desk**

**By Victoria Neufeldt**



Here it is, January already, and the Fall 2011 issue of the *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian* is just seeing the light of day. I am sorry for the wait all of our esteemed readers have had. The delay has multiple causes, not least of which was getting caught in the Christmas and New Year's season! I hope all had a wonderful and peaceful Christmas and that 2012 proves to be full of the best kind of challenges and rewards. Below are some winter images that perhaps will cheer your hearts in this snowless season. They are shots I took along Spadina Crescent in Saskatoon, on a snowy Sunday in February, 2010.



## MHSS Board of Directors, 2011

**Jake Buhler**, President

836 Main Street  
Saskatoon, SK S7H 0K3  
Tel.: 244-1392 jakelouisebuhler@sasktel.net

**George Dirks**, Vice President

Box 235, Hepburn, SK S0K 1Z0  
Tel: 947-2158 gtdirks@sasktel.net

**Vera Falk**, Secretary/MC Sask Archivist

Box 251, Dundurn, SK S0K 1K0  
Tel: 492-4731 Fax: 492-4731

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142 Haight Street  
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Tel: 373-0606 caregier@sasktel.net

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Tel: 239-4201

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**James Friesen**

Box 381, Rosthern, SK S0K 3R0  
Tel: 232-4977 jamesfriesen@sasktel.net

**Elizabeth Guenther**

18 – 130 LaRonge Rd  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 8E5  
Tel: 979-0605 candeguenther@shaw.ca

**Erna Neufeld**

512 – 351 Saguenay Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7K 5T4  
Tel: 975-0554 ewn.esn@sasktel.net

**Victor G. Wiebe**, Archivist & Book Review Editor

11 Kindrachuk Cres., Saskatoon, SK S7K 6J1  
Tel: 934-8125 victor.wiebe@usask.ca

### Other Positions

*Cemeteries Project* — Helen Fast, coordinator

Tel: 242-5448 rhfastlane@shaw.ca

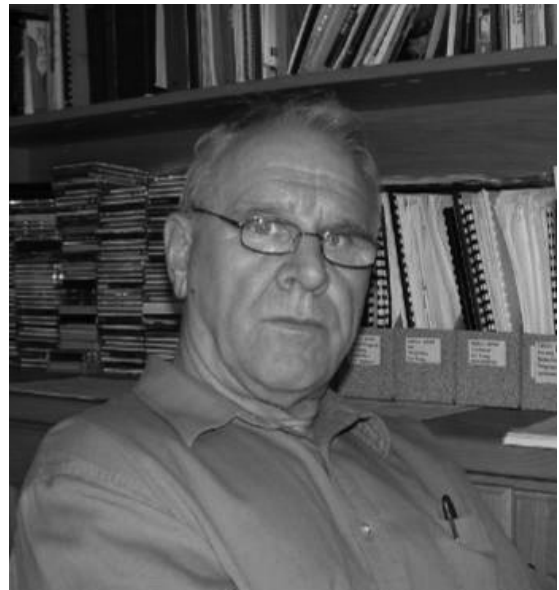
*Cemeteries Project web site* — Al Mierau, webmaster

almierau@shaw.ca


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## MHSS President's Corner

By Jake Buhler



*Silvesterabend* (evening of Sylvester) was once celebrated in a number of Mennonite churches in Saskatchewan. At Osler Mennonite Church in the 1950s, people would gather on New Year's Eve and the minister Rev. Jacob H. Pauls would offer thanks for blessings of the past year and ask God for grace in the New Year. Several songs would be sung. The deacon, Bernhard Buhler, would tell a story, and remind the gathered group of the people elsewhere who needed our prayers and help. Others could join in with their own contributions. There would be a closing prayer and people would go home.

In 1691, Pope Innocent XI ordered that St. Sylvester be honoured on December 31. Sylvester had been pope in Rome from 314–335. During his time, he was known to have promoted peace, following a time of conflict. Today a dozen countries, including Germany, Poland, and Austria, call New Year's Eve by the name *Silvesterabend*. It has become an evening of happy merrymaking and fireworks. Mennonites originating in some of those countries carried their *Silvesterabend* tradition to Prussia, Russia, and finally to Canada. The tradition ended in Osler in the early 1960s as it did elsewhere. How many of you are familiar with this tradition? 



*Continued from page 1*



Henry J. Funk's birth parents, Helena Dyck and Heinrich Thiessen, in undated photos, both probably from around 1910; Helena married twice — her first husband was G. Reimer and her second husband was Peter Neufeld  
All photos in this article courtesy of Tony Funk



The Peter Thiessen home and yard in Schönwiese, Chortitza Colony, in an undated photo

Perhaps you are thinking this is the beginning of a love story, and maybe it was. However, it may also have been the case of a young man from a wealthy family taking advantage of the hired help. Or it may have been a case of a maid wanting to improve her lot in life. We will never know, but we do know that Helena became pregnant and her employment with the Thiessen family was terminated. Helena

returned home to Osterwick where she gave birth to our father Heinrich (Henry) on November 23, 1911. After the birth, Helena carried her baby in her apron to her Uncle Abram Dyck's home (also in Osterwick), where she was taken in, and where mother and child lived for a period of time.

We have been told that during this time there was upheaval at the Thiessen home. Church leaders

visited the Thiessens, where Heinrich Thiessen was confronted and reprimanded. Apparently Heinrich and Helena wanted to get married but Heinrich's father would not consent to the marriage.

Helena mothered her child for the first year of his life, as it was imperative they stay together for breast-feeding purposes. Then, on Henry's first birthday, he was adopted by Jacob and Helena Funk of Osterwick. The Funks were not related to the Dyck or Thiessen families. The Funks already had an 18-year-old son, Johann, and two daughters: Helena, 14, and Maria, 12. Jacob Funk owned a small grain milling business and also was a farmer.

In 1917, the Russian Revolution began, bringing considerable turmoil to the Mennonite colonies. The Revolutionary Red Army (Communists) was battling the White Army (Imperialists). As their battle lines moved back and forth throughout the fertile Dnieper River Valley they confiscated food, horses, wagons, etc. to sustain their armies. There was no law or order of any kind. The prisons had been opened and freed prisoners had formed into large bands of robbers who moved throughout the countryside at will, stealing anything of value which the preceding armies had not already taken.

In 1919, Henry's father, Jacob Funk, became ill and passed away. Henry was eight years of age; his two sisters, who were still living at home, were 19 and 21. Henry's sisters spent a great deal of time hiding in a dilapidated neighbouring house which the robber bands did not consider worth going into. This left Henry and his mother alone in the main house when rough anarchists would unexpectedly arrive and demand meals and a place to sleep for the night.

On one occasion, bandits were ransacking their house when they found a bottle with liquid in it, assumed it was alcohol, and immediately took a drink — but it was cream separator oil! Thankfully, Henry and his mother were never significantly harmed by the bandits.

Throughout all the turmoil, life continued on. Henry's two sisters were married in a double wedding ceremony on May 23, 1920. Helena married Peter B. Friesen and Maria married George P. Sawatsky.

Many questions were being pondered by the Russian Mennonites during this time. How would the war end? Should they stay in their homeland or should they leave? Would they be permitted to leave? And if they left, where would they go and who would accept them? Thanks to the efforts of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, immigration to Canada became a reality and in June, 1923, Henry's family was fortunate to be on the first trainload of people to leave their homeland. Upon reaching Latvia, Canadian medical doctors examined the immigrants for admissibility into Canada. Henry was diagnosed as having trachoma, a contagious disease of the eyes, and was not permitted to continue on. Arrangements were made for Henry to be cared for by a distant relative whom he had not met previously, someone who also was being detained for medical treatment. The rest of the immigrants then continued on their journey.

Many years later, Henry recalled standing on the wharf as an 11-year-old and watching the ship with his entire family on board sail into the distance. Henry and the other immigrants who required medical treatment were then transported to Lager Lechfeld in Germany. Here, Henry remembered the following days as being carefree and enjoyable, as he had no responsibilities and there was no school — but all too soon the older generation changed that!

After a five-month period of healing, medical doctors determined Henry was medically fit and he was allowed to continue his immigration journey. He first sailed to England, and then crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the *Empress of France*, the same ship that had transported his family five months earlier. Henry landed in Quebec City and then travelled by Canadian Pacific Railway to Rosthern, Saskatchewan, where he arrived on his twelfth birthday. He was met at the train station by his sister Helena and her husband Peter and was then taken to the Isaak Dyck farm, one-and-a-half miles east of Rosthern, where Peter had found temporary employment. Henry's mother, his sister Maria, and her husband George had by this time found employment in the Aberdeen district, so Henry did not reunite with them until Christmas of that year.

Henry did not attend school that first winter, because it was already mid term and also because he did not have appropriate winter school clothing. The following year the Board of Colonization helped him obtain winter clothing and shoes so he could begin his English education at the Rosthern school. However, the shoes he received were not a pair; one was brown, the other black. That, combined with having no knowledge of English and being placed into grade one as a twelve-year-old made him the object of much ridicule.

In 1925, Henry's brother-in-law Peter B. Friesen purchased some land five miles west of Hague. This purchase was financed by Mr. I.P. Friesen, a prominent Rosthern businessman. Buildings were purchased in the nearby village of Hochfeld and moved onto the purchased land. In the spring of 1926, Henry, his mother, and his sister Helena and her husband Peter moved onto the newly established farmyard. (In 2011 this is the Henry L. and Erna Funk farmyard). Henry always maintained that it was their good fortune that the Old Colony Mennonites of Hochfeld and Neuanlage had moved to Mexico prior to the arrival of the Mennonite immigrants from Russia, because this gave them the opportunity to become established.

The move from Rosthern to Hochfeld ended Henry's formal education. He had received four years of German education in Russia (although this had been intermittent, due to the revolution), and one and a half years of English education in Rosthern. However, although life circumstances were difficult, Henry overcame the difficulties and thrived.

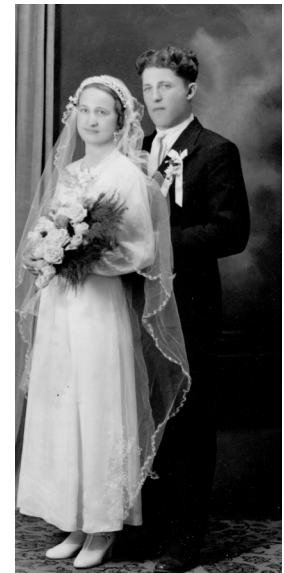
In 1936 at age 24, he married Anna Elias of Rosthern. Anna was a granddaughter of Isaak Dyck, who had supported some of Henry's family when they had first arrived in Canada. Eventually Henry and Anna were blessed with four sons: Otto, Tony, Henry, and Peter. They raised their sons on a progressive grain and dairy farm, one half mile west of the Passchendaele country school.

During those years on the farm, Henry often wondered about his biological background. He had known since early adulthood that his birth mother's family name was Dyck and that his birth father's

**Photos this page:**

*at right:* Henry and Anna's wedding photo, 1936

*Below:* the couple's 25th wedding anniversary, 1961; *from left at back:* Henry, Anna, Tony, Otto; *front, from left:* Peter, Henry L.



name was Heinrich Thiessen but he did not know any further details. Henry's older-generation acquaintances were not willing to divulge information, even though some of them must have known the facts. Finally, in the 1950s, Diedrich H. Epp, the long-time editor of *Der Bote* gave Henry information and contacts concerning his birth parents. (Dietrich Epp was a brother-in-law of Heinrich Thiessen.)



Henry discovered that Helena, his biological mother, had married and had an additional three children. They had remained in Russia/Soviet Union and had experienced many hardships. Henry made contact through the mail with a half-sister named Helena who lived in Alma Ata, Soviet Union, thousands of kilometres east of Osterwick, where they had previously lived. In 1979, when travel to the Soviet Union was still restricted, Henry joined a tour group that visited Alma Ata, as well as other historic Mennonite locations. Henry experienced numerous disappointments on this trip. He learned that his





The Funk family farmyard in 1961

biological mother Helena had died without telling her children that they had an older half-brother. He learned that his half-sister Helena and her family had joined the Jehovah's Witnesses. Another half-sister named Sarah, who also lived at Alma Ata, did not accept that Henry was a relative and refused to meet him. And then, upon Henry's return to Canada, he learned of the unexpected death of his 37-year-old daughter-in-law Gladys, who had been healthy when he had left home several weeks earlier.

Henry discovered that his biological father, Heinrich Thiessen, had also remained in Russia/Soviet Union. In 1921, at age 30, Heinrich had married Elfrieda Priess, who also came from a wealthy family, and they had one son, Paul, born in 1930. Heinrich had been arrested in 1937 during Stalin's purges, banished to Siberia, and was never heard from again. During the period 1943 to 1945, thousands of Russian Mennonites, including Paul Thiessen and his mother Elfrieda, fled to Germany as refugees. Here, Paul became separated from his mother and was never able to reunite with her. In 1947, Paul

immigrated to Canada, where a home was provided for him with his Uncle Franz and Aunt Katjuscha Thiessen in Sardis, British Columbia.

Henry learned that his half-brother Paul Thiessen and his wife Margaretha and children Eric, Karen, and Marion were living in Vancouver, where Paul was involved in the construction industry. In October of 1972 Henry and his son Tony made an unannounced visit to Paul Thiessen's home in order to become acquainted. When Henry told Paul that they had a common father, Paul was shocked, as he was totally unaware of such a possibility. Paul sought to verify this relationship with his Uncle Franz and Aunt Katjuscha later, but they strongly denied it. However, eventually some of Paul's older-generation contacts verified that Paul had a half-brother.

Henry and Paul corresponded by mail for several years; however it was a difficult situation for Paul, because his wife chose not to accept that her husband had a newly discovered half-brother.

Paul Thiessen died in 1986 at age 55. Henry Funk died in 1996 at age 84. In 2006, the children of Paul Thiessen and Henry Funk began mail correspondence and subsequently made several trips back and forth between Saskatchewan and British Columbia, in order to become acquainted and to learn about each other's family. There has been no contact to date between Henry Funk's children and the offspring of his birth mother Helena Dyck.

—Written by Tony Funk, with input from his brothers  
winter, 2010–2011



*Photo at left:* Henry J. and Anna Funk on their 50th wedding anniversary, October, 1986

*Photo at right:* the childhood home of Henry Funk in Osterwick, Chortitza Colony; photo taken in 1997; *from left:* three owners of the property, Tony Funk, Tony's wife Jacqueline



# Jacob H. Pauls: Orphan, Minister, Father, Missionary

By Jake Buhler

When Jacob H. Pauls was born in the middle of the winter-wheat harvest on August 4, 1915, it was already known that his name would be Jacob and that his initial would be H. His older brother had already been named after their father Heinrich, so that left Jacob Pauls, the grandfather, whose name would be taken for the little boy.

Jacob was born in the Mennonite village of Grigorjewka, South Russia, in the red brick house of his grandfather Jacob and his grandmother Maria (Dueck) Pauls. That is also where his father Heinrich and mother Helena (Unger) Pauls lived, in the crowded quarters of the *kjleene Schtov* (small room), along with older siblings Helena, aged eight, Maria, seven, Heinrich, four, and Margaretha, two. A sister, Margaretha, had died five years before Jacob was born. Another sister, Katharina, was born three years later and also died in infancy.

By the time Jacob was three, dramatic events changed Russia drastically. In 1917, the Russian Revolution spawned anarchists like Nestor Makhnov, who made at least one foray into Grigorjewka. In one visit, this one not by Makhnov, bandits forced Jacob's *Großpa* Peter Unger to give them corn. Unger, who spoke Russian, assisted the bandits. Knowing their superstitions about the spirit world, Unger told them about the bad spirits that were harassing the village. As he spoke, he was loosening the hubs of the horse wagon. Then as the loaded wagon was leaving the village, it collapsed, spooking the horses. The thieves unhitched the wagon in fright and fled the village and the supposed covey of bad spirits! Unger, meanwhile, retrieved his corn.

If one grandfather was grounded in culture and language, the other, Jacob Pauls, was a kindred spirit with grandchildren. At one Christmas celebration, with the house full of family, *Großpa* Pauls called all his grandchildren together and asked them if they wished to see America. All wished to see America! He told them to go to the railway line just a few *Wirscht* (one *Wirscht* = about one kilometre) away

and lick the steel rails, after which they would see America. Fearing the children might do that, all the mothers in the room roundly scolded him for his daring prank.

Jacob's mother Helena was a deeply spiritual person who taught him a High German and a Low German prayer:

*Lieber Heiland, mach mich fromm  
Daß ich im Himmel werd' einkomm'.*

and

*Kjìnche Jesu, buh en Husche  
En meen Heutche saust du wohnen  
Niemohls ruht goanen.*

When Jacob turned three, his personal world collapsed. His youngest sister, Katharina, contracted tuberculosis from her mother and died at the age of six months on September 13, 1918. It was reported that at her funeral, her angelic face looked like she might have been a glass doll. His mother was already gravely ill with tuberculosis and his father was seriously ill with influenza. His sister Maria, who was 11, tended both parents. In her memoirs, written in 1997, she recalls Jacob in a state of anguish, not comprehending the meaning of illness and death. On September 27, as Jacob slept, his mother Helena lay dying. Her last words were "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus". Her request was that at her funeral her mourners would sing "*Engel Öffnet die Tore Weit*" (#15 in *Der Kleine Sänger*). Jacob's father Heinrich, who had not been a believer, was struggling, not only with influenza, but with his nonbelief. Maria describes him groaning in pain and saying that he wished to go where his wife was: heaven. He died in much pain ten days later, on October 7, again as Jacob slept. But he had found peace with God. Less than a year later, Jacob's oldest sister, Helena, who was called Liena, died of tuberculosis at the age of 14. Orphaned at age three, Jacob and his sister Maria, 11, were adopted by their maternal grandparents, Peter and Helena Unger. Maria acted as a sort of





Jacob and Maria Pauls, ca. 1988  
All photos in this article courtesy of  
daughter Mary Hildebrandt

surrogate mother for the next dozen years. The trauma of being an orphan was to last a lifetime. Many years later, Jacob's daughter Mary Hildebrandt recalled her father saying how his grandfather Unger introduced him to guests as the *Waisenkind* (orphan). That pain never went away, according to Mary.

Jacob attended only three years of primary schooling in the German-language two-room school in Grigorjewka. Little is known of his student days. It is likely he was a precocious learner because of his language skills later as an ordained minister. It is possible that an outstanding teacher, Peter Krahn, instilled a love of self-learning in the young Jacob.

Jacob's village lay 130 kilometres south of Kharkov, in western Ukraine, which had been occupied by Russia. And since it was in the zone of conflict between the Whites and the Reds, the village was forced to house a number of German soldiers during the winter of 1917-18. When they withdrew in the summer, a German officer, Oberst Karbe, wanted the villagers to organize a *Selbstschutz* (home defence). The village resisted. The German officer taunted the Mennonites, shouting, "*Ihr habt brave Frauen aber feige Männer. Ihr Feiglinge, ihr Korinthenscheißer!*" (You have worthy women but cowardly men. You cowards, you currant-shitters!) With some humour, a respected elder, Bernhard Penner, responded by say-

ing, "*Daut kunn je enn ennbrinjet Fischeft sennen!*" (That could be a lucrative business!)

In 1919, when bandits terrorized the Peter Unger household (Jacob's adopted family), a frightened little Jacob clung to the long skirt of his grandmother, as men and women were forced to line up on opposite sides of the *grote Schtov* (big room). In the midst of this confusion his young *Taunte* Liese, just 20 years old, found her guitar, walked into the middle of the room and began to sing German hymns and Russian folksongs. The *Kommandant* of the bandit group was moved. He apologized for all the terror his men had caused and ordered them all to leave the village. Jacob would be profoundly affected by the pacifistic attitudes of his family and his village in the face of violence. As he matured he would learn how his village was spared any retribution, first by bandits, second by Bolsheviks, and lastly by the Russian army. Perhaps his childhood experiences would be the reason why so many of his later sermons centred on the love of God.

By the early 1920s, hundreds of thousands of Russians and several hundred Mennonites had died as anarchy and later Moscow policies were starving the rural areas. Mennonites in Grigorjewka, and indeed in many other places, were opting to emigrate to Canada. Twenty thousand would leave Russia between 1921 and 1928.

Jacob's journey began in early September, 1925, by horse-drawn wagon to the railway station at Gavrillovka, about seven kilometres away. From there, he, his Unger grandparents, and his older sister Maria, travelled by train to Kharkov. The journey continued by train through Europe to Berlin to pick up travel documents. A final train voyage got them to the English Channel where they took a steam vessel to Southampton, England. But meanwhile, 10-year-old Jacob had contracted pink eye, which was misdiagnosed by Canadian health officials as trachoma. Canadian immigration officials decided not to allow Jacob to take the next ship to Quebec. His grandparents were impatient and instead of waiting with him, they took the next steamship to Canada. That left his older sister, Maria, who was still only 17, to look after him in a place where neither could communicate in English. For five weeks they waited,

Jacob weeping a lot, which further aggravated his eyes. Living in gender-separated barracks, 10-year-old Jacob had to sleep with the men, separated from his sister Maria. It was here that Maria turned 18 in a state of anxiety. Jacob and Maria had been given US\$50 by their grandparents, \$37 of which was used in England. That left \$13 for the transatlantic trip.

Jacob and Maria arrived in Quebec City on the S.S. *Melita* on November 1, 1925. They then took a four-day train that took them through central Canada and halfway through the vast Prairies, landing in Osler, Saskatchewan. There they were met at the train station by a total stranger, Cornelius Driedger, who in his Model T took them to Reinland to rejoin their grandparents. But within 10 days, they were placed on the Cornelius Kjnals Driedger farm where Maria would become a maid, and Jacob would attend Osler Public School #1238.

On Christmas Eve, 1925, Maria heard her ten-year-old brother Jacob sobbing pitifully in his bed. He explained to Maria that there was no bowl set out for him, for gifts of nuts, candies, and toys, a tradition he had grown up with in Russia. She assured him there might be gifts, and in the morning he indeed received a few small presents. But there was no halvah, a treat common in Grigorjewka at Christmas.

For four years he attended Osler public school, struggling with a new language: English. He excelled in arithmetic. German, which was taught after school, was where he could show off his fluency. Jacob recalled to his daughter Edna Zacharias many years later that his teachers were Mr. Derksen (who always read Bible stories), Mr. Peters (who sang many songs with his students), Mr. Nickel (who had students from grades one to 10), and Mr. Andres (whose teaching skills in arithmetic were most enjoyable).

Even as Jacob was adapting to the new life in Canada, where most of his friends were *Kanadier* Mennonites and not *Russländer* Mennonites, his older sister Maria was being courted by Cornelius Driedger, owner of the farm. They married in 1927 and 15 months later, Leo was born. Jacob, meanwhile, as a 15-year-old, felt the need to be reunited with his grandparents and his older brother Heinrich in Morden, Manitoba. John Pauls, Heinrich's son, re-



Jacob Pauls ca. 1935, when he was 20 years old and working on the farm of Cornelius and Maria Driedger, one quarter of a mile southwest of Osler

lates that his father and Jacob worked for a less-than-generous farmer near Morden, who gave them a broken motorcycle in exchange for their hard harvest labour. Jacob spent the next two years working near Morris, Manitoba on the Snarre family farm.

Heinrich's largest influence on his younger brother was a spiritual one. Jacob made a commitment to God that he would be prepared to serve in whatever way the Spirit would choose. And as things would turn out, the call would come soon.

In late 1933, in his 19th year, Jacob returned to Osler to work for his brother-in-law, Cornelius. His earlier commitment to God led him to baptism and on May 22, 1934 he was baptized by David Toews. The next fall and winter (1935-36) he attended Rosthern Bible School, a decision that would have long-lasting consequences.

Working and living on the Driedger farm had its very fine moments. He fell in love with Maria "Mary" Schmidt, who was also working there. They married on August 2, 1936 and moved into a modest house on 80 acres of land that has now become the south part of Osler. The land had belonged to Cornelius' father Johann, from whom Cornelius took ownership. Cornelius and Maria arranged for Jacob and Maria Pauls to take ownership of the land.





Jacob and Maria Pauls on their wedding day, Aug 2, 1936

Melvin, Edna, and Mary were born in a house on this land. Melvin died within 16 days of being born.

Otto Driedger, a nephew, related that in the late summer of 1937, Jacob took one more trip to Manitoba. He had been married only a year, but the total drought in Saskatchewan called him to find feed for his small operation and the larger Driedger farm. He worked hard with others to bale hay and gather potatoes. These were loaded onto a railcar and shipped to the Driedger farm at Osler. Jacob returned home in late fall.

On January 23, 1938, the Osler congregation called Jacob to be their minister. On August 9 of the same year, he was ordained by *Ältester* David Toews, alongside Cornelius Boldt, son of Rev. Jacob T. Boldt, the first minister of Osler Mennonite Church. Jacob had celebrated his 23rd birthday just five days earlier, on August 4. The following Sunday Jacob used the text from John 10 to preach a sermon entitled "The Good Shepherd". Jacob would return to study one more year at Rosthern Bible School during the fall and winter of 1944-45.

In 1942 the Matzner farm, located only a quarter of a mile south, came up for sale. Jacob and Mary acquired it and the 160 acres of pasture and cropland. It is here that they began a mixed farming practice, concentrating on raising chickens for their eggs. Each of the older children recalls every phase of the egg business. On this farm, seven more children were added to the family. The old house was inadequate for the growing family and in 1952 a

new house was built. However, the exterior was not completed. In 1955, while the Jacob Pauls family was visiting relatives in British Columbia, Bernhard Buhler mobilized the community. In less than two weeks they added siding and trim and painted the entire house. This act was a strong affirmation for the minister they appreciated. Upon the Pauls' return they could hardly recognize their own house!

What characterized the Osler ministry of Jacob Pauls, that lasted from 1938 to 1963? His commitment to peace and non-violence was unwavering. His experience as a young boy in Russia had solidified that position. No sooner had he been ordained, but the Second World War broke out. Jacob signed the military documents for conscientious objectors from the local congregation; people like Bill Boldt and Peter Kruger, to name only two. But there were youth in the community, although not members of the church, who did sign up to go to war. Never did Jacob Pauls single them out or cast judgment on them. The sermons of Jacob Pauls invariably included allusions to the love of Christ or to the love of God. *Die Liebe Gottes* was a phrase that members at Osler would hear often.

Tolerance characterized another part of Jacob's ministry. In 1951, when Albert Lobe, a Lutheran, applied for membership at Osler, Jacob (and the deacon, Bernhard Buhler) visited the Lobe home. Bert Lobe, his son, recalled that Rev. Pauls asked his



Jacob and Maria Pauls, ca. 1948  
Children, from left to right: Wesley, Bob, Mary, Edna;  
five more children were born in later years



father if he wished to be re-baptized. Mr. Lobe said that his infant baptism had been confirmed when he was a youth and he could not deny that experience. At that moment the deacon and minister exchanged nodding looks and Rev. Pauls replied that he would be a welcome member in the church. It was a simple but profound act of acceptance. Was Jacob Pauls reminded about how he had arrived in Canada a few years earlier wearing different clothes and how the Canadian government had welcomed him and his sister into the country?

When the evangelist Janz brothers set up their tent on the A.M. Neudorf farm just a quarter of a mile east of Osler in 1950, it put Rev. Pauls and the Osler Mennonite Church into a quandary. The church had not been asked to participate in this evangelistic revival movement that the Rudnerweide Mennonite Church was targeting especially at the Old Colony Mennonite Church.

Some members attended the meetings regularly; others did not. Leo Driedger was a case in point. He was involved. A church meeting was called to discuss the matter. His stepfather, Deacon Bernhard Buhler, defended Leo. Others were critical of

Buhler and suggested he should be removed as deacon. Jacob Pauls, who had chosen not to attend the Janz meetings, was caught in the middle. Either way he was entrapped, so he played a neutral position. He had a tacit respect for the Old Colony church. Was this one reason why he was reluctant to become involved? Much later, Betty Guenther, daughter of Old Colony *Ältester* Herman D.W. Friesen, reported that Jacob Pauls and her father had met from time to time to discuss mutual concerns.

Jacob Friesen, who would later spend 35 years as a missionary to Japan, related an incident that likely occurred during the crisis surrounding the Janz revival campaign. On a summer Sunday morning, Rev. Pauls was late for church. When several people went to look for him, they found him walking in a grain field. When they reminded him that the people were waiting for the sermon he replied, "*Ich habe kein Wort bekommen*" (I have not received any word [from God]).

In 1956, when the Brunk brothers set up their much larger tent just northwest of Osler on native pasture, Jacob and the Osler congregation participated, because they were a sponsoring church. The Brunks



The Osler Mennonite Church catechism class of 1952, shown at their baptism, with their teachers, Rev. Jacob Pauls and assistant instructor Peter Kruger, and *Ältester* John G. Rempel. Front row, from left: Susie Thiessen, Margaret Friesen, Dorothy Friesen, John Rempel, Tina Neudorf, Hella Neudorf, Evelyn Friesen.

Middle row: Peter Kruger, Annie Peters, Tina Banman, Tina Wiebe, Anne Neudorf, Mary Friesen, Elsie Martens, Mary Driedger, Jacob Pauls.

Back row: Ervin Neudorf, Pete Peters, Henry Banman, Leo Kasdorf, Dick Friesen, Jack Driedger, Jake Peters

were part of the Old Mennonite church from Virginia. Jacob and Maria's farm supplied the eggs for the two families. The tent meetings did not change Jacob's theology. Jacob remained positively evangelical but was never fundamentalist.

In many ways Jacob was fortunate to pastor the Osler Mennonite Church in its golden era. Youth in unprecedented numbers flocked to the church that had started in 1928 as a melting pot of Old Colony, American, and recently-arrived Russian Mennonites. In 1952, for example, Jacob Pauls taught catechism to 20 candidates who were baptized by *Ältester* John G. Rempel. One of those baptized, Tena Neudorf Sawatzky, described Rev. Pauls as far more than a minister. She described him as someone she looked up to for his sincerity and spiritual leadership. By 1961, Jacob's nephew Irvin Driedger was conducting a choir of 30, all under the age of 25. The youth group contained as many as 40 members. The youth were the church.

Rev. Pauls' approach to the transition from German language to English was simple: use both languages. So the choir sang in two languages and the minister or ministers preached in two languages. This transition lasted 10 years and ended in 1964. There was never any conflict.

When Rev. Pauls left Osler, after serving for 25 years, there was a bittersweet feeling about it all. He was offered to be lead minister but would work with a younger "paid minister". He declined. He had spent nearly a lifetime serving and leading the church. It was difficult for him to be totally gracious, but at the same time he was never ungracious. The church had always given him an annual stipend of \$500, hardly enough to offset his actual expenses. Jacob and Mary spent the next six years (1964–70) helping to establish the Warman Mennonite Conference Church. Jacob became the pastor and the church grew rapidly. His salary was very modest, but his output was considerable. After 1974, he became a sort-of *reisender Prediger* (travelling preacher) speaking in dozens of churches by invitation.

In 1974, Jacob and Maria joined his sister Maria with her husband Bernhard and his brother Hein-

rich with his wife Katie in a historic trip to Russia to visit his sister Grieta (Margaretha) and her two daughters. For one week they were allowed to be together. Jacob recalled that the first day was spent weeping over 50 years of separation. And then the stories of hardship under Soviet Stalinism were shared. Grieta's husband, Jacob Wiens, was forcibly abducted in 1939. He was never heard of again and may have been shot for his pacifism. She and her two daughters were sent to Siberia for a dozen years. Many more stories were shared.

Jacob and Mary's missionary work began in 1973–1974, when Jacob served as a minister in a Mexican Mennonite Conference Church in Steinreich, Mexico. From 1977–1979 they served under the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church in Port Rowan, Ontario, working with Mennonites who had returned from Mexico. It was a controversial assignment that Mary had trouble accepting at first. Jacob accepted the assignment without first consulting his wife. Mary once told her sister-in-law, Maria Buhler, that her husband sometimes communicated better with strangers than with his own family.

Then from 1980–1982 Jacob and Mary served in the Burwalde Mennonite Conference Church in Chihuahua, Mexico. His Mexican and Ontario ministry was done in the Low German language. He was preaching in his third language, having used High German and English earlier. All of this with three years of German schooling, four years of English schooling, and two years of Bible school instruction. Dick and Kathy Braun visited the areas in Mexico where Jacob and Maria served. They reported that the people loved the ministry of the Paulses.

There was another ministry that occurred in 1974. The Osler Mission Chapel, an offshoot of the Old Colony Mennonite Church, was looking for land to construct a building. Corney Guenther, one of the first pastors in that church, related that Jacob and Maria Pauls sold the land to them for one dollar. Furthermore, Jacob acted as an advisor to the early leaders, who also included Jake Wiebe. Jacob and Mary must have remembered that the land they were giving to the Osler Mission Chapel had once

come to them out of a generous arrangement involving Cornelius Driedger. A circle of generosity had been completed.

In the summer of 1980, the Osler Mennonite Church sponsored an appreciation night for Jacob and Maria Pauls. A packed church heard tributes from a number of people. Shortly thereafter, the Paulses left to serve again in Mexico.

In a conversation with his daughter Edna Zacharias, Jacob Pauls confessed that if he could relive his life, he would change his priorities from God first, church second, and family third, to God first, family second, and church third. Was Jacob accepting blame for several of his sons who left the church community? It certainly was on his mind. Jacob and Mary's friends and siblings would not have agreed with Jacob, knowing it takes more than parents to raise children. Jacob himself was orphaned at age three and never had parents. But Jacob was loved by his siblings, and especially by his wife Mary, who was the one who accommodated throughout their life together. And Jacob loved in return. His many grandchildren told stories at his funeral about how

their grandfather would hug them and give them a whisker rub. He followed the sporting and cultural exploits of his grandchildren, perhaps more than he had with his children.

The death of Jacob's wife Mary on July 9, 2005, after almost 69 years of marriage might have devastated Jacob. On the contrary. Jacob's daughter Mary recounted that her mother died in her father's arms. Jacob had seen much death in his lifetime. He dwelt on the many blessings Mary had left behind. Jacob looked ahead, paying attention to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He loved them much.

When Jacob's son Leonard died on July 13, 2009 at the age of 57, it was cause to reflect on how nature turned the sequence of life around — parents should not outlive their children. Jacob had to cope with a son who suffered from substance abuse. It was not easy, but Jacob survived because he understood hope and love.

Jacob died on May 21, 2010. He was almost 95. He and Mary had lived at the Warman Nursing Home where they had made many friends. At the funeral, *Ältester* George Buhler of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church described Jacob as a giant among Christ's



The children of Jacob H. Pauls, with grandchildren & great-grandchildren  
at his funeral on May 21, 2010



followers. His niece Helen's husband, Herman Kuhl, reflected on the faith that Jacob had to see him through much tragedy and much joy.

For the author of this story, Jacob Pauls was more than an uncle or a minister. He was also a neighbour who lived across the railway tracks. He was a farmer who drove his small Ford tractor with a three-point hitch. He had a small Allis Chalmers combine, a set of harrows with six sections, and the disk was six feet wide. The two horses were Toots who was black, and Mable who was white.

His rambunctious sons were a handful. Their mother would make two dozen cookies, and almost before they had cooled they were gone. When no one confessed to the cookie-pinching she replied that since no one had stolen them she would stop making disappearing cookies! It was then that Bob, Wes, and Ed confessed that they had taken just one...maybe two!


After the Paulses got electricity in 1954 and I could see the lights a quarter of a mile away, I observed that the light in the small study stayed on long into the night on Saturday night as *Onkel Jasch* (Uncle Jake) was preparing sermons. One fall evening in 1956, when the Buhlers helped the Paulses to carry hundreds of chickens from the summer barn to the winter barn, the skies lit up with the most spectacular northern light display anyone had ever seen. We all stopped and looked up in wonderment. *Onkel*

*Jasch* spoke as a prophet might have, that in the end times, such events will occur.

Those who knew Rev. Jacob Pauls will recall that he could not sing at all — not two notes in tune. Yet he loved music. If there is one fixed memory I have, it would be on a Sunday night as the *Jugendverein* evening service was closing; he would say "*Zum Schluß singen wir noch das Lied, 'Die Zeit ist Kurz, O Mensch sei Weise'*" (in closing, let's sing the song, "Time is short, let all people take heed"). One of the lines can be translated to say, "Only once do you pass this way, so leave good footprints behind you." Jacob Pauls may have had a few flaws, but the footprints he left behind are worth following!

#### Sources:

Interviews: Jacob Pauls (1980), Maria Buhler (1986 & 1987), and Otto Driedger, Edna Zacharias, Tena Sawatzky, Bert Lobe, Jacob Friesen, Mary Hilbrandt, Helen Kuhl, John Pauls, Cornie and Betty Guenther, Dick Braun (all 2011).

Written: "Maria Buhler Stories," Maria Buhler, 1997; *Osler SD #1238 (1905-1947)*, ed. Jacob G. Guenter, 1999; *Grigorievka*, ed. Ted Friesen and Elisabeth Peters, 1998; "A Tribute to Onkel Jasch and Taunte Marie," Jake Buhler, 1980; *Osler Mennonite Church (1928-1978)*, ed. Leonard Boldt, 1978; *Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in Saskatchewan*, J.G. Rempel, 1950. 



# The Pembroke Years Book Launch a Success

By Rosemary Slater

October 1, 2011 was a day of celebration for former students of Pembroke School in Neuanlage, Saskatchewan. Fifty former students and friends gathered in the Fellowship Centre at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon to launch *The Pembroke Years: 1919–1968*. The afternoon program was chaired by Ben Krahn, grandson of former Pembroke school board member George Krahn. Ben was a member of one of the last classes to attend Pembroke School. The Krahn connection with Pembroke School goes back to 1919, when Ben's great-grandfather, Bernard Krahn, had a portion of his land expropriated for the building of the first Pembroke School. This was the school in which Ben began his schooling, in 1963. The following year, it was replaced by a new school which was only used at Neuanlage for four years before being moved to Martensville to serve as an elementary school there.



The book launch was sponsored jointly by the Pembroke book committee and the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. After introducing the members of the book committee, former Pembroke students Sally Kasdorf, nee Klassen, Deanna Krahn, Rosemary Slater nee Pauls, and Dot Zens, nee Krahn, Ben called on Jake Buhler, chair of MHSS, to address the gathering. Funds from future sales of the Pembroke book as well as current funds on hand

from book sales are being turned over to MHSS to assist in the planned expansion of the archives at Bethany Manor. Jake talked about the importance of collecting the stories of our people. MHSS exists so that those stories will be told and preserved. Jake also entertained the audience with his own memories of Pembroke School, specifically a hard-fought ball game between Pembroke and Hague, for which he acted as umpire.

Dot Zens spoke for the book committee on the process of getting the Pembroke book to print. Talk of a book began in October, 2004 and the first stories and pictures were collected at a reunion of former Pembroke School students at Neuanlage in August of 2005. Compiling a complete list of former students from past school registers took several years, as



life often seemed to get in the way; but by November of 2009 the four-member book committee began meeting regularly. After many stories shared over coffee and many shared lunches, a 226-page book was finally ready for the first printing of 200 copies

## Photos on this page

At left: the members of the book committee: from left: Sally Kasdorf, Rosemary Slater, Dot Zens, and Deanna Krahn

Top: Dot Zens, describing the process of book creation  
Above: Neil, left, and Ike Friesen entertaining with music  
All photos courtesy of Rosemary Slater

in June, 2011. This was followed by a second printing of 75 copies in August, 2011.

Entertainment for the afternoon was provided by the Friesen brothers, Ike and Neil, who interspersed memories of Neuanlage, such as Friday afternoon Red Cross programs, with music. The Friesen brothers' program included "*Großer Gott, wir loben dich*", dedicated to their mother and "The Lord is my Shepherd", dedicated to their sister Lena. They also played "The Pembroke Special", written fifty years ago for Pembroke School. The highlight of the afternoon, however, was Neil's story of how his father promised him a \$25 violin from George Miller's store in Hague if he could learn to play "Mocking Bird Hill" the way it was played on the radio. Listening to it until he had all the intricate trills and intervals memorized, Neil earned his violin. After telling his story, Neil proceeded to hold the audience spellbound with his expert rendition of "Mocking Bird Hill".



Keynote speaker Bill Janzen

Keynote speaker for the afternoon was Bill Janzen of Calgary, chair of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta. He is a former Pembroke School student and son of an original school board member, John H. Janzen. It was Bill's initiative that originally started the Pembroke School book project.

Bill began by delighting his audience with some memories of former school days. Memories of Roger's Golden Syrup lunch pails, CCM exercise books, double-decker pencil boxes, double seats, tonettes, sand storms, cold days with low attendance, the Skunk, the diesel train that went by at 11:30 daily, signalling dinnertime, singing from *Der Kleine Sänger*, and even oiled floors, brought many a smile of recognition from members of the audience. Bill then went on to explain why he thought the story of Pembroke school needed to be told.

As executive director of MCC in Mexico for two years, Bill came into contact with descendants of the Old Colony Mennonites from Neuanlage who moved to Durango, Mexico during the 1920s because of the English school. These people wanted to know what had happened with the school at Neuanlage after they left.

This led Bill to wonder how it happened that an English school came to be built in a community that was strictly opposed to such a school. Research at the Provincial Archives in Regina in July of 2004 led him to believe that the full story, which hadn't previously been told, needed to be told.

The resulting Pembroke book includes history, student and teacher memories, and almost 200 pictures. It describes the school's difficult beginning, followed by the changes that took place when the local school board took over. The concern of board members and caring Christian teachers, who fostered a spirit of cooperation as opposed to the confrontational style adopted by the government initially, resulted in the formation of cohesive bonds that still make former Pembroke School students proud to call themselves "*Neuanlager*".

The afternoon closed with the presentation of flowers to the book committee and our guest speaker. Visiting and more reminiscing over cookies and coffee brought the most enjoyable event to a close.

Books are available for purchase through MHSS at \$15 a copy. *The Pembroke Years* provides a snapshot of village life as it used to be. It also documents the unfortunate results of the provincial government's confrontational policy with regard to education, and the successful implementation of the government's educational goals when cooperation was chosen instead.

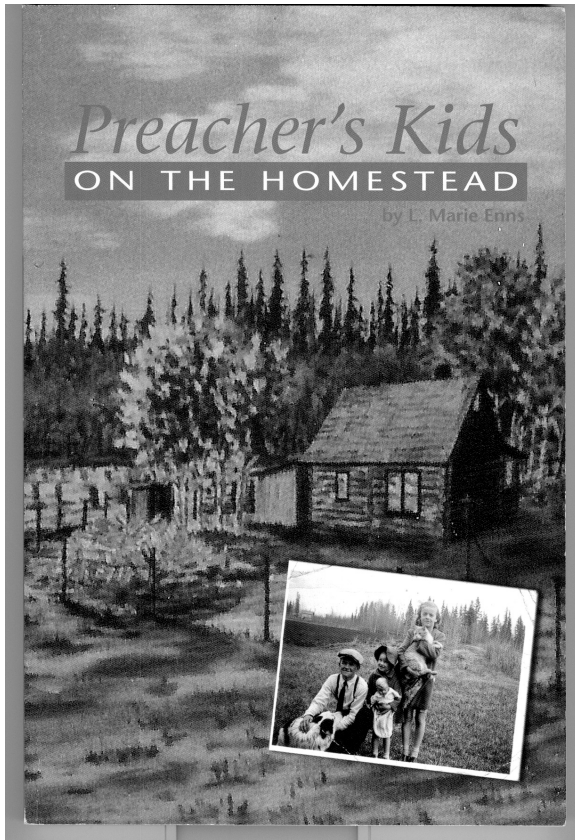






## Mostly about Books

Victor G. Wiebe, Book Editor



Enns, L. Marie. *Preacher's Kids: On the Homestead*. Belleville, Ontario, Guardian Books. 2005. 176 pp. Perfect bound, illustrated paper covers. [Available from L. Marie Enns, P.O. Box 119, Rapid View, SK S0M 2M0, \$16.00]

### Reviewed by Victor Wiebe

The author, Luella Marie Enns, nee Friesen, tells her story of growing up in a homesteading and pioneering Mennonite family in Barnes Crossing in the Rural Municipality of Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. Barnes Crossing was a small hamlet about 24 kilometres north of the Town of Meadow Lake. The story is told chronologically and covers the period of the author's first 25 years of life, from 1929 to about the mid 1950s.

Luella's father was Peter B. Friesen, the founding pastor, then Ältester, of the Barnes Crossing Men-

nonite Church, which was affiliated with the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. Her mother was Susan Friesen. Many relatives also pioneered in the area. The homestead land was virgin bush country that required enormous energy to clear, cultivate, and crop. Luella tells how the families, with limited resources but much optimism, wrestled with the land and environment.

The story is told in 28 short chapters in a straightforward narration. Most chapters end with several wonderful photographs illustrating the text. We are told Luella became a teacher and this is shown by the quality of the book: it is well written and full of details about daily pioneer life. These details are presented from a child's perspective. Luella describes her childhood as mostly happy but with a very limited number of modern devices or technology. For Luella, there were always chores, but in spite of these her world was both interesting and enjoyable, especially visiting with her extended family and friends.

While the extended family of Luella Marie Enns will get the most from *Preacher's Kids: On the Homestead*, the book will also have wider appeal in that it provides interesting historic details about Mennonite pioneering in the Meadow Lake municipality. Furthermore, it reminds us all of the determination and endurance needed to pioneer in the bush country of Saskatchewan just two generations past.



Henry Poettcker. *A President's Journey: The memoirs of Henry Poettcker*. CMU Press, Winnipeg, Manitoba. 2009, 216 pages. Illustrated paper covers. ISBN: 978-0-920718834. \$26.50

### Reviewed by Margaret Ewert

This autobiography by Henry Poettcker, intended mainly to be a history for his children and grandchildren, is divided into five major sections, each

consisting of several chapters: 1. From Molotschna, Ukraine, to Canada 2. Getting settled in Canada 3. Years of academic preparation 4. The Canadian Mennonite Bible College Era 5. The Elkhart experience.

The first two chapters of section 1 delve into the background of how Mennonites came to Russia, and of the early forbears of the Poettcker family. The author was only a few months old when the family left for Canada in 1925. As in the case of most immigrants, the early years were very difficult. By 1927 the family moved to Pincher Creek, Alberta, and soon a church, meeting in homes, was organized. In 1935, the group learned that an old hotel in a nearby community was to be torn down. They decided to buy the building and salvage the lumber to build a church. Young Henry's task was to straighten the nails that were pulled out so they could be reused.


Although Henry had not completed high school, he was accepted as a student of Menno Bible Institute in Didsbury in 1952. He also spent a year at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, beginning in the fall of 1945. On July 4, 1946 he and Agnes Baergen were married, and then he enrolled at the Coaldale Bible School in Coaldale, Alberta to complete high school studies. Since he had been elected as lay minister in the Springridge Church, Pincher Creek, Alberta, he was often asked to speak at weddings of friends, or when someone was needed to preach in English. He was officially ordained as minister in the summer of 1948.

Feeling the need for further education, he was off to Bethel College, Newton, Kansas, in the fall of 1948. Before leaving Canada he had accepted an invitation to teach at Didsbury Bible Institute. However, Poettcker still felt unprepared after completing his B.A. at Bethel College in 1950, and so continued his studies at the Mennonite Seminary, then located in Chicago. By 1952 he had completed the Bachelor of Divinity requirements, and about this time Rev. J.J. Thiessen of Saskatoon invited him to come to teach at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

He received a release from Didsbury, but then went on to Princeton Seminary for more studies. In the fall of 1954 he finally began teaching at CMBC,


which at that time was still in a large building on Wellington Crescent in Winnipeg. In February of 1956 the college was finally able to hold classes at the new campus in Tuxedo and by 1958 a student residence was built on campus. At age 34, Henry was invited to become CMBC's president.

It is interesting to note that Dr. Poettcker never needed to apply for a position, but was always invited to take one, and so it was that he also became the president of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary in 1978. His account of the years in Elkhart and of his other involvements show that he was never idle, and was invited to countless speaking engagements.

The book is easy to read. Waldemar Janzen, in his well written introduction to the book, says, "In keeping with the humility and self-effacement that has marked Henry's whole life, his autobiography is characterized by understatement. To put it succinctly: Henry has been a much greater and more impressive leader than he makes himself out to be. And this is not false humility adopted in retrospect, but a true quality of character." Since I spent a few years working at CMBC, I would agree with this assessment. 

## ***Request for Information on Johann F. Kroeker***

Marlene (Kroeker) Laramée of Spruce Grove, Alberta asks for information of her grandfather Johann F. Kroeker. He was the first blacksmith in Dalmeny, Saskatchewan. Apparently he was married twice and one of his wives was named Katherine (Katie) Wiebe. Ms. Laramée is searching for any information about her grandfather and grandmother. She does not know her grandfather's birth or death date. Funk's Funeral Home in Dalmeny was contacted. They put MHSS in touch with two older residents of Dalmeny who were able to confirm the information provided, but they have no further knowledge of this family.

Can any of our readers help with this request? If so, we ask you to contact MHSS. Contact information is provided on page 2 and on the last page. 



# **The Family Tree** Rosemary Slater, Genealogy Editor

## **Telling Our Stories: MHSS Genealogy Event, November 12, 2011**

**By Rosemary Slater**

Approximately fifty people gathered in the Fellowship Centre at Bethany Manor on Saturday, November 12, 2011, to enjoy an information-packed day of stories, historical information, and guidelines for doing genealogical research.

### ***Telling our own story***

Conrad Stoesz, archivist for the Mennonite Heritage Centre and for the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg, started off the day with a presentation that included how-to information plus lists of resources and sources for genealogical research.

Conrad told us to start with ourselves and then interview our closest older relatives. Patricia Williams' *Once Upon a Lifetime* is an example of a resource that lists good questions to guide us in writing our own life story and also to use when we visit those relatives.

Newspapers, church records, and archives contain a wealth of information for the genealogist. Tim Janzen and others have put together a fifty-four-page booklet, *Genealogical Resources for the Low German Mennonite Researcher*, which can be accessed online at [www.timjanzen.com](http://www.timjanzen.com). The same site also includes information about the Mennonite DNA project. This has been moving more slowly since the death of James LeVoy Sorenson, philanthropic supporter of Sorenson Molecular.

An online index to the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization Records for 1923–1930 can be found at [www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives/holdings/immigrationindex/](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives/holdings/immigrationindex/). The records are stored at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. For a copy of a specific record, e-mail Conrad Stoesz at [cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca).

Mennonites who fled from Russia to Germany during the 1940s needed to prove their German heritage in order to be accepted as German citizens. Many of these genealogical records are also to be found at

the Mennonite Heritage Centre. In addition, card files and newspaper clippings that were collected by Abram Vogt and his daughter, Margaret Kroeker, were turned over to the Mennonite Heritage Centre when Mennonite Genealogy, Inc. closed its doors. This is just a small sampling of the resources available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre for the family-tree researcher.

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies also carries some genealogical resources. Its emphasis is on personal and congregational Mennonite Brethren, Evangelical Mennonite, and Mennonite Central Committee records. Another important resource at this centre is the Katie Peters collection of 177 genealogies and twenty-seven banker's boxes of obituary files.

Names, dates, and facts provide the framework for our family history, Conrad told us, but the stories provide the body.

### ***The importance of the story***

Our next speaker, Otto Driedger, demonstrated the importance of story as he entertained us with stories of his grandfather, Johann Driedger. Johann was a man ahead of his time or out of sync with his time, however you may choose to look at it. His entrepreneurial and independent nature got him in trouble with the church, which eventually excommunicated him in 1910.

Although he reconciled with the church before his death in 1920, that creative and independent spirit seems to have survived to resurface in the lives of his children and grandchildren, among whom are counted entrepreneurs and professional people as well as politicians and writers.

Jake Buhler spoke next, on the topic of writing a church history, using the Osler Church as an example. "What do you include and what do you leave out?" he asked. The Osler congregation, formed in



1927 by people of Old Colony, Russian Mennonite, and U.S. Mennonite backgrounds, built a church building in 1928, but had difficulty making the payments when the Depression hit. Other divisive issues, such as dealing with divorce in church families, arose in the 1960s and 1970s. What parts of the story should be told? And does one name names? Telling the stories with sensitivity should be a guiding rule.

### ***The astonishing richness of archives***

Following a delicious lunch, Victor Wiebe, archivist for MHSS, took the floor. Although we usually think of archives as preserving papers and books, Victor proceeded to tell us about other archival materials that were unknown to many of us. We saw pictures of beautiful decorated earthenware dishes known as faience produced by Hutterites in the 1600s, which were highly valued at the time and are now rare and very expensive collector's items.

Many paintings formerly attributed to Rembrandt were actually done by a Mennonite painter named Govert Flink, one of Rembrandt's students, who lived from 1615 to 1660. Other Dutch Mennonite painters of the time were Cornelius Drebbel and Jeronimus Cornelisz. Many Mennonite preachers were painters. The city of Muenster is closely, and rather notoriously, associated with Anabaptist history. In 1514, the city minted a coin with no pictures on it, in accordance with Anabaptist beliefs. One hundred years later, a blacksmith reissued this coin but added his initial, differentiating it from the original. After the First World War, when German currency was in free-fall, Muenster issued paper currency (*Notgeld*) with various Anabaptist pictures on it, to facilitate commerce.

In 1982, Canada Post issued a Christmas postage stamp with a picture of sculptures created by Hella Braun, a Mennonite from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Victor concluded by emphasizing the importance of getting the story associated with any items or collections that you might wish to donate to the MHSS archives.

### ***Obituaries as a source of information***

Obituaries are an important source of genealogical information. For many years, volunteers have clipped and filed obituaries in binders that are available for

the use of researchers at the archives. Many obituaries can be found in newspapers, but without an index, these are mostly inaccessible. Elmer and Erna Neufeld have devoted years to creating indexes for these obituaries. Elmer described the various indexes that are now available at the archives. There are indexes covering *Der Bote*, 1924 to 2008; *The Canadian Mennonite*, 1997 to June, 2011; and the *Valley News*, 1973 to 2011. In total, 38,000 obituaries have been indexed to date.

### ***GRANDMA and other resources***

Ed Schmidt, who has been actively involved in updating GRANDMA (Genealogical Register and Database of Mennonite Ancestry) files, gave us an update on the online database for GRANDMA. The Flickr program can now be used to store pictures and obituaries associated with GRANDMA files online.

Ed also listed some resources that tell the Central Asian Mennonite story. The documentary 'Through the Desert goes our Journey' co-produced by Walter Ratliff in 2008, 'Pilgrims on the Silk Road,' written by Walter Ratliff, and 'The Journey of Faith in a Hostile World,' by Herman Jantzen, are some recent publications that deal with a little known part of Mennonite history. For anyone interested in a more hands-on experience of Mennonite history, Ed mentioned the TourMagination trip to Central Asia and Tashkent coming up in May of 2013.

Dennis Fisher brought the day to a conclusion with a description of the research he conducted in exploring his family history. As the youngest of twelve children, he had little information available to start with. A visit to Salt Lake City in the 1990s to access the resources of the Church of the Latter Day Saints provided him with valuable information to further his quest. Ships' records, family pictures, and copies of original documents were some of the other resources that Dennis found useful. The results of his research are now available in book form, *From Johann to Heidi: Two Centuries of Fishers*.

Refreshments were served at breaks and at the beginning and end of a most enjoyable and informative day. An extensive display of books for sale, manned by Werner and Vera Falk, added value to the event.



## ***MHSS Holds Fall Weekend Event at Bethany Manor on the Themes of Peace and Genealogy***

### ***Remembering Our Peacemakers***

Remembrance Day, 2011 was commemorated at Bethany Manor in a different way from the official public ceremonies in the city. The focus was on peacemakers. Speakers were Rev. David Neufeld, former pastor and MCC worker, who opened the evening with a reflection on peacemakers he had met over the years, including a Buddhist monk.

Conrad Stoesz, of the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, spoke on Mennonite peacemakers, including conscientious objectors, and expressed his concern for the militarization of Canadian society today.

The evening was also notable for bringing together with the Mennonites another group that has historically practised pacifism: the Doukhobors. The third speaker was Bill Kalmakoff, who told the history of the Doukhobors and described their position on peace.

### ***Genealogy Day***

The Friday evening presentation was followed on Saturday, November 12th, by Genealogy Day. This was a day-long event, beginning at 9 a.m.

NOTE: A full account of the day by Rosemary Slater can be found in the Genealogy section, pages 20–21.

Eight presenters spoke about various aspects of the pursuit of genealogy: Conrad Stoesz of Winnipeg described the genealogy resources available at the Mennonite Archives in Winnipeg; Otto Driedger of Regina spoke about his grandfather, Johann Driedger, who was excommunicated from his church in 1910; Jake Buhler, MHSS president, explained how to write stories about your church and about people; Victor Wiebe, MHSS archivist, described the genealogical resources available in the archives; Elmer Neufeld spoke on obituary resources available to researchers; Ed Schmidt spoke on updating the Central Asian Mennonite story; Ken Paetkau told

the Paetkau family history; Dennis Fisher described how he pursued the Fisher family tree.

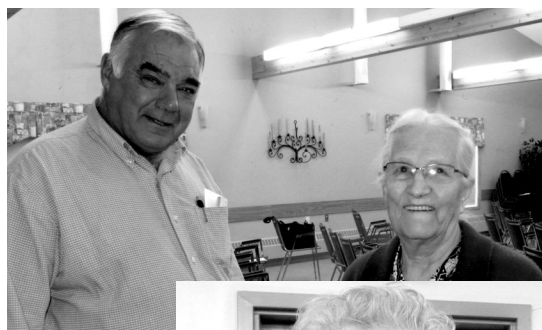
The day included a break for lunch. The formal part of the day ended in mid afternoon and was followed by refreshments. All the sessions on both days were free. The only cost to participants was \$8 for those who chose to partake of the noon lunch offered by Bethany Manor on Saturday.



#### ***Photos this page:***

*Top:* Conrad Stoesz, who spoke on Friday and on Saturday  
Photo by Leonard Doell

*Above, from left in foreground:* Conrad Stoesz, Bill Kalmakoff, Victor Wiebe, at coffee time after the program on Friday  
Photo by Karin Fehderau



Enjoying break times at Genealogy Day

*Photo at far left:* Dick Braun, *left*, met his former neighbour from Neuhorst, Mary Wall

*Centre photo:* two old friends, Menno Friesen, *left*, and Dennis Fisher meet at Genealogy Day

*Photo above:* Elmer Regier chats with Conrad Stoesz

Photos by Leonard Doell



Some of Saturday's speakers

*From left:* Elmer Neufeld, Otto Driedger, Jake Buhler, and Ed Schmidt

Photos by Leonard Doell





## The Back Page

### Honour List

This list recognizes persons who have made significant contributions towards preserving Mennonite history, heritage, or faith within our province. (The date in brackets is year of death.)

To add a name to the Honour List, nominate a person in writing.

For information on the members of the Honour List, see the web site: <http://mhss.sk.ca>

*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*  
*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*  
*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 web site:* <http://www.mhss.sk.ca>

*Cemeteries web site:*

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~skmhss/>

*Mennonite Encyclopedia Online:*

[GAMEO.org/news/mennonite-encyclopedia-online](http://GAMEO.org/news/mennonite-encyclopedia-online)

### Electronic Bulletin Board

[MHSS-E-Update@mhss.sk.ca](mailto:MHSS-E-Update@mhss.sk.ca)

Use this electronic bulletin board to post information on upcoming events, programs, and activities, and other information that will be useful to everyone interested in Mennonite history, culture, or religion.

### MHSS Membership

If your membership has expired, the date on your address label will be highlighted. To ensure that you will not miss the next issue of the *Historian*, please send your membership fee promptly to:

The Treasurer, MHSS  
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 Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8

Please make cheques payable to: Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan or MHSS.

Memberships are \$30 for one year; \$55 for two years; \$75 for three years.

Gift subscriptions are available.

Membership fees and donations to the Society are eligible for tax receipts.

### Send Us Your Stories

Readers are invited to submit news items, stories, articles, photographs, church histories, etc., to be considered for publication. Send them to us at the e-mail or street address given at right.

MHSS Office and Archives, SMH Editor  
 110 La Ronge Road, Room 900  
 Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8  
 E-mail: [mhss@sasktel.net](mailto:mhss@sasktel.net)