

SASKATCHEWAN MENNONITE HISTORIAN

Official periodical of the
Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, Inc.
Volume XIV No. 2, June, 2008



MHSS Gathering Celebrates Low German Heritage Mennonite Heritage Society of Saskatchewan Release

"I never knew *Plautdietsch* was such an old and interesting language" said Vera Falk after attending a weekend gathering at Osler Mennonite Church which focused on the Low German language. She echoed the sentiments of many of the 265 people who came out to enjoy the expressive Low German poems and stories on March 7 and 8 at the annual sessions of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan.



Chris Cox

Osler Mennonite's Chris Cox, a graduate linguistics student at the University of Alberta, used a PowerPoint presentation to show the

development of the Low German language from its origins in antiquity to the present. "The language has adapted to its surroundings and has borrowed words from a dozen other languages", he said. {Excerpts from Cox's interesting and informative presentation will be printed in the next (October 2008) issue of the Historian}. Dick Braun, who has travelled to most Latin American countries where Mennonites speak *Plautdietsch*, gave practical examples of these adaptations to geography and local culture.

Historical Society president Jake Buhler gave examples of the rich metaphors in the Low German proverbs and expressions. Then teaming up with brothers Wilf and Ben, the trio sang a medley of folk and sacred songs they had composed. Eighty year old Jacob M. Fehr from Swift Current, SK read a number of his original poems, and Jack Driedger, a retired school teacher who grew up near Osler at Blumenheim, used his language fluency to muse on the common situations people find themselves in. Finally, Anne and Hank Neufeld of McGregor, Manitoba, sang a number of their Low German lyrics which they have set to folk and religious melodies.

Saturday afternoon was reserved to conduct the annual business of the Historical Society. The year 2007 was a very full year for our Society. At the previous annual sessions in March of 2007 we heard several presentations by Harold

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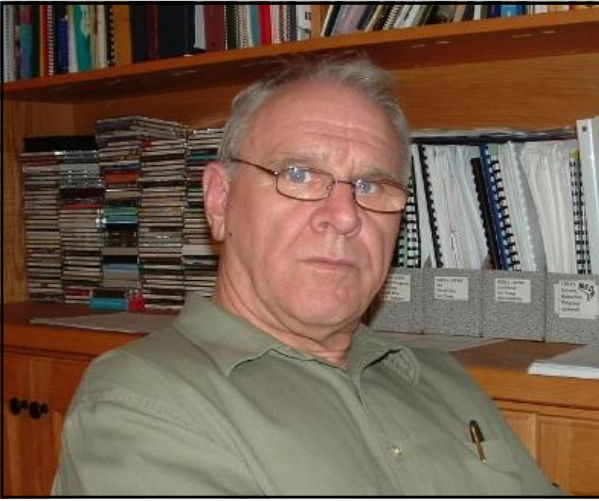
Honour List

Persons who have been recognized for making significant contributions towards preserving Mennonite history, heritage or faith in our province. To add a name to the Honour List, nominate a person in writing (Year of death in brackets)

Helen Bahnmann
Helen Dyck (2007)
Dick H. Epp
Margaret Epp
Peter K. Epp (1985)
George K. Fehr (2000)
Jake Fehr
Jacob E. Friesen (2007)
Jacob G. Guenter
Gerhard Hiebert (1978)
Katherine Hooze (2001)
Abram G. Janzen
Rev. John J. Janzen (2004)
George Krahn (1999)
Ingrid Janzen-Lamp
J.J. Neudorf (1988)

J.C. Neufeld (1994)
John P. Nickel
David Paetkau (1972)
Esther Patkau
Dr. Ted Regehr
Ed Roth (2008)
Wilmer Roth (1982)
Arnold Schroeder (2000)
Jacob Schroeder (1993)
Katherine Thiessen (1984)
Rev. J.J. Thiessen (1977)
Rev. David Toews (1947)
Toby Unruh (1997)
Albert Wiens (2002)
George Zacharias (2000)

President's Corner Jake Buhler



Mrs. Herman Dyck (de Herman Dycksche) was Osler's midwife (Haewaum) in the decades before 1955. In summer she traveled by Model T and horse-drawn wagon to places in the country-side to deliver babies. In winter she rode on sleigh to farm and village where women were about to give birth. She helped to bring me into this world on a cool Saturday night in late November in 1942. My half brothers, Leo, Irvin, and Otto Driedger, were preparing to listen to Foster Hewitt's broadcast of a Toronto Maple Leafs hockey game on the old battery radio when de Herman Dycksche arrived from Osler. My father hurried my brothers off to Taunte Marie and Onkel Yasch Pauls' home across the railway track. To this day, my brothers say I cheated them out of a hockey game!

What are your memories of traditional health workers in your various communities? What feature stories do you have that should be written and published? If you do not have a Haewaum story, what do you know about bonesetters (Trajchmoaka, Kjnibbla, Knoakenoatst)? Please consider telling your stories in the *Historian*. It is one way to honor the memory of health workers whose amazing skills served thousands in former generations.

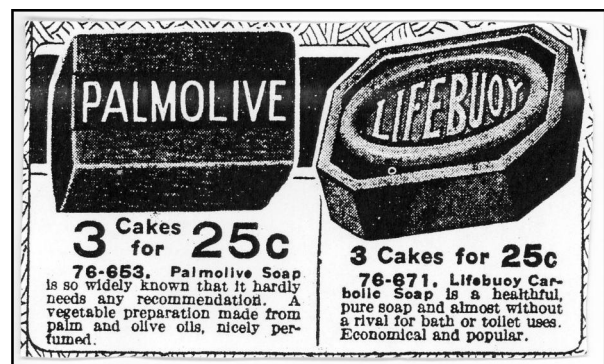
Editorial—Verner Friesen

Back in 1962, after ten years of teaching, I was called by the congregation of Hague Mennonite Church to be their pastor. The first funeral service I was involved with was that of Dr. David Hamm. Little did I know at that time about the 37 years of sacrificial service Dr. Hamm had given to the people of Hague and area as a compassionate country doctor. I am very pleased that we are able to share Dr. Hamm's story in this issue of the *Historian*. And I am indebted to Irma Gerbrandt for volunteering to write the article and for the hard and careful work she put into preparing this wonderful story that deserves to be told.

Yes, there have been frustrations and even a few sleepless nights in the course of trying to serve as (inexperienced) interim editor of the *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian*. Yet it has been a wonderful privilege to follow in the footsteps of long-time former editor Dick Epp and be involved in sharing with you, our readers, so many great stories about Mennonite people, families and congregations in our province. I am grateful to all who have written and contributed these stories. I am also grateful to all those who have helped in various ways in the last few years with the preparation and production of the *Historian*; page 2 gives their names.

Soon, I expect, we will be able to introduce to you a new editor. Stay tuned.

Picture from Eaton's Catalogue from the 1920s and 1930s.
See article on Page 30.



Cont. from Page 1



Ben, Jake & Wilf Buhler

and Neoma Jantz, Winnipeg, on the story of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Saskatchewan. That story has been expanded and published in a book titled *Rooting the Faith* which is available through our Society (See the book list). Other major events of the year were:

- 1) The book launch of Arthur Kroeger's book *Hard Passage* on April 23
- 2) An evening of tribute to the German paper *Der Bote*, which is discontinuing publication after 84 years.
- 3) Another semi-annual Artisans' Day where 22 carvers, quilters, potters, photographers and creators of a variety of other handwork displayed their work.
- 4) The development of our online website at www.mhss.sk.ca.
- 5) A very well attended two-day Genealogy-History event in November on the subject of Polish/Prussian Mennonite history.
- 6) The two-stage launch of the Mennonite-Family DNA Project, beginning in Herbert, SK in August and continuing in Saskatoon and area in November.
- 7) At the same time, the work of our archives and the efforts at identifying new cemetery

sites have continued. Also, the usual three issues of the *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian* were again published. Board members and a lot of volunteers have worked hard to make all of that happen.



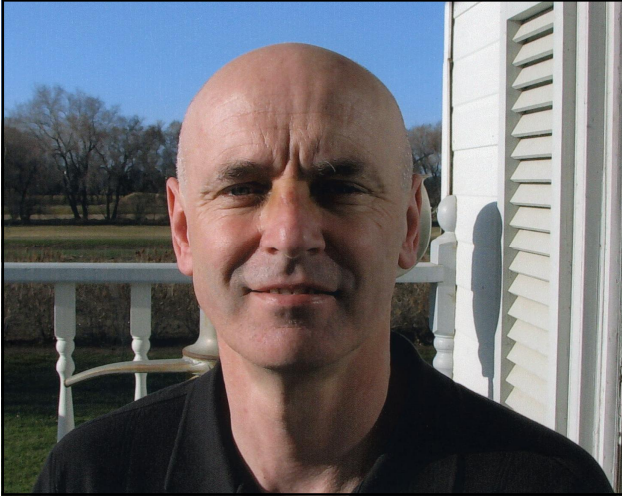
Anne and Hank Neufeld

At the Board elections, three incumbents, Abe Buhler, Margaret Ewert and Ed Schmidt, were re-elected. Two new members were elected, namely George Dirks of Hepburn and Henry Penner of Hague.



MHSS Guests at Osler

Two New MHSS Board Members



Henry Penner

Henry Penner lives on an acreage on the outskirts of Neuanlage village near Hague, SK. He and his wife Kathy have a daughter aged 21 and sons aged 19 and 13. The Penners attend the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in Blumenheim, where Henry currently serves on the Maintenance Board. He has worked in the automotive industry since 1978 and at present is shop foreman at Valley Ford in Hague. In addition he has been volunteer auxiliary constable for the Rosthern detachment of the RCMP for four years. Henry enjoys yard work, landscaping, floor hockey and camping with the family. He also has a keen interest in Mennonite history and has been tracing his family's roots in Ukraine and Prussia.

"In every conceivable manner,
the family is the link to our past,
the bridge to our future"

Alex Haley,
Author of *Roots*.



George Dirks

George Dirks was born in Namaka, Alberta. After high school, he attended the Coaldale (Alberta) Bible School and then the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. He taught at the Coaldale Bible School till the school closed its doors due to low enrolment. He was then invited to join the faculty of the Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn, SK. George remained on the Bethany faculty for 39 years till his retirement in June, 2007. For about 15 years he served as both Bible teacher and librarian; then for the last two years he was full time librarian. Helping to bring Bethany's library into the computer age was both interesting and challenging. Since retiring from Bethany, George and his wife Thelma are volunteering as chaplains at the Spruce Manor Special Care Home in Dalmeny.

George likes to pursue hobbies like astronomy, photography and gardening, and enjoys grandparenting.

Nota bene: mark well and observe

Our Reader's Page: Announcements and Questions

A Book Launch

of the book

“Menno Simons and the New Jerusalem”

by Helmut Isaak
is to take place

on Saturday, July 12, 7:30 pm.

**at Bethany Manor Fellowship Centre
110 LaRonge Road, Saskatoon, SK**

Menno Simons and the New Jerusalem was published in 2006 and is distributed by Pandora Press of Kitchener, Ontario. Helmut Isaak ministered for thirty years on three continents and did extensive research into the original documents of forty years of Menno Simons' writings.

Isaak was born in Filadelfia, Paraguay. He taught in the Menno Colony for eight years before studying at the Mennonite Seminary and receiving his degree from the University of Amsterdam in 1972. Intermittently between years of research in Europe he taught in Paraguay till 1979 when he relocated to British Columbia. He served as a minister in British Columbia through 2004 when his first wife died. For a year he returned to Europe to write and minister, then came back to Canada where he entered his second marriage in January of 2006. He and his wife Eve then ministered in a small Mennonite Brethren congregation in Alberta till the summer of 2007. Since September of 2007 they have become residents of Mexico, where they are currently on staff at the only Low German addictions treatment centre in the world, which is located in Cuautemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Coming Soon

A Special Event sponsored by
the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan.

Two leaders from the past who have served for many years as teachers and pastors and have made significant contributions in the work of our Mennonite Churches in Saskatchewan

**Jacob H. Epp, Hepburn
John G. Rempel, Rosthern**

will be honoured at a special event to take place
on Sunday, August 10, 2008, 3:00 pm
in the Bethany Manor Fellowship Centre
110 LaRonge Road, Saskatoon.

Also on the program -

Special recognition will be given to the host of volunteers who have contributed so generously to the work of the Historical Society.

Everyone is invited to help celebrate
this special occasion

Coffee to follow

Is Your Membership Due?

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,
Room 900-110 La Ronge Road,
Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8**

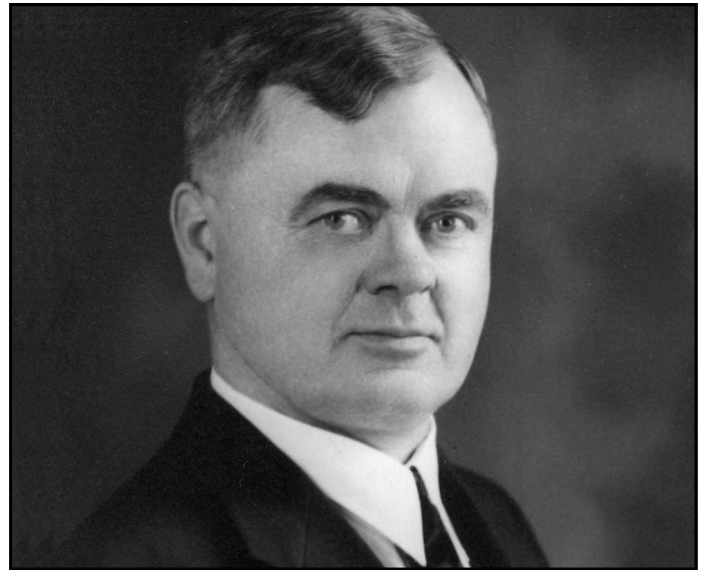
Please make cheques payable to: Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan or MHSS. Memberships are \$25 per year, \$40 for a family membership. Gift subscriptions are available for friends and family members. All membership fees and donations to the Society are eligible for tax-deductible receipts.

Two Leaders To Be Honoured



Jacob H. Epp 1910 - 1993

Jacob H. Epp was born June 23, 1910 to Henry M. and Aganetha (Goosen) Epp in the rural area of Waldheim, Saskatchewan. The Henry M. Epp family spent the years from 1916 to 1921 as church planting missionaries in China. The impressions of those years were indelibly impressed upon Jake's very being. In 1937, Jake accepted the invitation to teach at Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn, Saskatchewan. During the summer months he was field director for the Western Children's Mission. In October of 1939 Jake married Alvena Kruger. From 1941 to 1944, he taught at the Mennonite Brethren Bible School in Yarrow, British Columbia. Following this, Jake and Alvena and their girls returned to Bethany, where he served as teacher, and later, principal for 20 years. During his years at Bethany, Mr. Epp served in all the Mennonite Brethren churches in Saskatchewan sharing his passion regarding the importance of Christ-centered post-graduate education. Jake found it a continual joy to teach and train young people to become involved in Christian work, both at home and abroad. Mandatory retirement followed eleven years serving on the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services in Hillsboro, Kansas. Shortly after their retirement to Saskatchewan, Alvena passed away. Jake continued with interim pastoral assignments, as well as teaching and preaching as opportunities presented themselves. He died January 12, 1993.



John G. Rempel 1890—1963

John G. Rempel, son of Gerhard and Maria Rempel, was born in the village of Nieder Chortitza in the Ukraine on February 1, 1890. John G. chose teaching as his profession and taught school till the outbreak of World War I in 1914. During the war his first alternative service assignment was as a nurse's aide on a hospital train. After the war he resumed teaching, and in June of 1920 he was also elected as a minister in the Mennonite congregation in Nieder Chortitza. In August of 1920 he married Susanna Epp. Three years later John, Susanna and two young sons joined the first group of emigrants to Canada, arriving in Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan John served first as a minister in Langham and then as a Bible School principal and teacher in Rosthern. In addition he served as Secretary-treasurer of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada for seventeen years, and wrote Children's Bible stories for "Der Bote". In 1946 he was elected elder (Aeltester) of the Rosenort group of churches in Rosthern and area, replacing David Toews. In 1952, while attending the Mennonite World Conference in Basel, Switzerland, Rev. Rempel suffered a stroke, and as a result had to give up many of the duties he had been performing. However, during the next six years or so, he was still able to devote a lot of his time to writing, mainly on the subject of Mennonite history. John G. Rempel died on January 1, 1963. John and Susanna Rempel raised a family of three sons and four daughters.

Honorary Member of MHSS Laid to Rest Ed Roth, 1921—2008

Edward Herbert (Ed) Roth, formerly of Ros-thern, more recently of Saskatoon, passed away on May 25th. Ed will be remembered for his renowned auctioneering career spanning over 50 years. He took over the auctioneering business started by his grandfather Heirnrich Wieler in 1900. Ed was also very involved in numerous farm and church related organizations, including 4-H Clubs, livestock judging and MCC Sales.

In his later years, Ed developed an avid interest in local and family history. He provided initiative for founding the Mennonite Heritage Museum in the old red brick building on the Ros-thern Junior College campus. He authored several books, among them “Give Me a Bid to Go”, the story of his life and “My Father was

a Moravian”, about the Roth family roots in the Moravian Church. Together with his wife, Mary, Ed also created a unique quilt displaying the history of the rural schools in the Saskatchewan Valley. Old photos of the schools were printed on to cloth patches which were then put together to make up a unified quilt. This masterpiece required many hours of research and delicate handwork.

Ed grew up in the Eigenheim community west of Rosthern, where the oldest Mennonite Church in Saskatchewan (started in 1896 when Saskatchewan was still the North West Territories) is situated. He was laid to rest in the Eigenheim cemetery, having reached the age of 87 years. Ed was honoured by the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan in 1997 for his contribution towards preserving Mennonite history and heritage.

Can you identify these persons?

The photos are the property of Abe Buhler, Box 1074, Warman. SK. S0K 4S0



Above photo by H.E. Bilden, Ulen, Minn.
Photo at right by G.G. Isaac,
Mountain Lake, Minn.



Our Readers Write

"I do enjoy the Historian, as the articles relate to things my parents talked about".

E. M. Picketts, Asquith, SK

"Thank you very much for the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian. I find it very informative and interesting".

Tina Siemens, Rosthern, SK

"I definitely want to continue to receive the Sk. Mennonite Historian. I thoroughly enjoy reading it. Thank you for reminding me to renew my membership".

Tena Siemens, Fiske, SK

"We read the Mennonite Historian with great interest. Could you print some of the speeches and information about the Low German language in the Historian?"

Helen A. Bergen, Lacombe, AB

"I see Tina Harder has written a good article on the women's work in her community. The other items are very good too. I see my little note at the end of my article (on the Klippensteins of Saskatchewan) will need to be updated. I have since heard of other Klippenstein reunions in Saskatchewan and have a very good book on the Klippenstein sisters done by Gwen Rempel of Lloydminster".

Lawrence Klippenstein, Steinbach, MB

New Entry on the MHSS website

A PowerPoint presentation on
"The History of the Low German Language"
by Chris Cox
can be found at

<http://mhss.sk.ca/Gen/cox/index.shtml>

Arthur Kroeger, 1932 - 2008

On May 10, word was received from the Kroeger family of the death of Arthur Kroeger of Ottawa. Kroeger died of cancer on the night of May 9. He was 75 years of age.

Just over a year ago, on April 23, 2007, it was our privilege to have Arthur Kroeger in our midst as the MHSS hosted the launch of his book, *Hard Passage: A Mennonite Family's Long Journey from Russia to Canada*.

Arthur's parents, Heinrich and Helena Kroeger, came to Canada from the Ukraine in 1926 and settled south of Monitor, Alberta in the so-called Paliser Triangle. Arthur went on from there to a distinguished career as one of Canada's top public servants. For 34 years he worked in the federal public service, for 17 of those years as deputy minister in six different departments. After leaving government he taught in several Canadian universities. Kroeger was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1989 and in 2000 was promoted to Companion of the Order of Canada. He was the recipient of four honorary degrees. In 1999 Carleton University in Ottawa established the *Arthur Kroeger College of Public Affairs* which offers an undergraduate degree in Public Affairs and Policy Management.



Picture from the Eaton's Catalogue of the 1920s and 1930s. See Article on Page 30.

Dr. David Hamm—Compassionate Country Physician

By Irma Gerbrandt

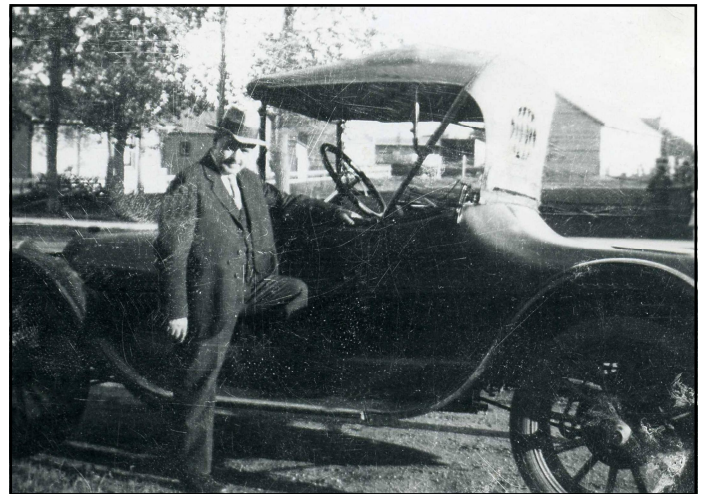


Dr. Hamm served as a medical doctor in Ukraine during the First World War

On October 25, 1962 Dr. David Hamm was laid to rest in the small town of Hague, Sask. He had served the people of Hague and surrounding area faithfully for thirty-seven years. In the beginning he would depend on others to take him by horse and buggy, or horse and sleigh, to make home visits. If the snow was deep he would even occasionally be transported by horse-drawn stone boat; this was a platform on runners with Dr. Hamm and his driver perched either on chairs or a box. Occasionally he was tipped into a snow bank.

Eventually he acquired a car. His first car was a two-door 1914 McLaughlin Buick given to him by Dr. Erdman Penner of Rosthern. (Dr. Penner no longer needed the 1914 model because he had been given a fancy new model by his artist son Erdman Penner, who worked for Walt Disney). It was said that Dr. Hamm was a

good doctor but a poor driver. His son Irwin remembers, “Dad learned to drive a car rather late in life and probably didn’t achieve the level of dexterity that he might have, had he learned earlier. When starting his ‘rounds’ there would first be a mighty roar of the engine, this would be followed by a ‘beep beep’ of the horn, then full throttle backwards on to Second Street. Fortunately for our family, most of the townsfolk were aware of Dad’s driving habits and made allowances. Our garage door opening wasn’t very wide, so scraped car doors were not uncommon. Occasionally, on Dad’s return from a particularly trying night call, we would be awakened by a tremendous crash. Dad had misjudged the length of our garage.”



Dr. Hamm’s first car

“Like most Saskatchewan towns, Hague was situated in a grain growing community, predominantly wheat, and as a result, was hit hard by the Great Depression of the 1930s. With hardly any rainfall, and hot, searing summer winds blowing unchecked across the wide-open prairies, most of the province soon became a huge dustbowl. Only Russian thistles thrived in the parched soil and could be seen tumbling endlessly before the wind. The farmers were hurting, and hurting badly. As farm incomes slumped, so did those of Hague’s business community. Grocery and general merchandise stores were

compelled to extend credit further and further into the future, hoping that 'next year's bumper crop' would enable the farmers to catch up. Those were precarious times for farmers and merchants alike."

"Needless to say, Dad was caught up in the same 'tight money' squeeze. He was not a shrewd businessman, and this was said as a compliment. Most of his patients were extremely poor. Medicare and free hospitalization were unheard of. Sudden illness and medical bills not budgeted for could spell financial ruin for many farmers. Dad was keenly aware of their plight and would generally bill according to ability to pay. In most cases he would even dispense drugs at his own cost - hardly the hallmark of a good businessman! His total payment for pre-natal care, delivery (often on some remote farm) and postnatal care would run around fifteen dollars. Not a very substantial sum even by depression standards! Even that meager bill was often paid in farm produce when money was simply not available."



David and Aganetha Hamm

"As a young boy, I was sometimes puzzled by

my father's short temper when aroused from a deep sleep, to be taken on a maternity case by open sleigh in the dead of winter to some distant, isolated farm house - prematurely - and having to actually wait around for several days for something to happen. Now I understand much better".

At other times Dr. Hamm would be away from home for several days because he was called from one rural home to another without going home in between. For a time Mrs. Hamm would mark on the calendar each time Dr. Hamm was called out at night. Some months there were very few nights when he was not called out.

Dr. Hamm had attended the births of countless children; he himself did not know the exact number. It happened that he would arrive to deliver a baby and find no heat in the house and no husband around, and so he would have to scrounge around the yard for fire wood so that he could make a fire and prepare for the delivery. Some of these farmers could pay nothing but usually would pay later if they could. On more than one occasion Dr. Hamm would go to Mr. J. A. Friesen, an astute businessman, and urge him to cut a long piece of flannelette to take to a delivery where he knew there would be nothing to cover the bed.

One day Dr. Hamm noticed a man pacing back and forth in front of his office. Finally he called to him and asked if he could help him. The man said with tears in his eyes, "My daughter is 21 today and is about to be married. I could not pay you at the time of her birth and now I want to pay you". Tears came to Dr. Hamm's eyes also. It was probably one of the many times when he realized that all his caring had not been in vain.

Dr. Hamm's life began on January 27th, 1880. He was born to Abraham Hamm and Maria Foth (Voth) in the city of Jekatrinoslav in South Russia. His mother died when he was two years of age leaving seven children; the oldest was a sister, barely fourteen. His father did not remarry so the younger children were placed with relatives. Young David and his brother were sent to live with their grandmother

Cont. from Page 11



House in Steinbach, Man. where the Hamm family was billeted

Foth (Voth). From there David was sent to the Johann Epps of Rosenthal, whose children had all died of diphtheria. He lived with them until he was sixteen and finished Zentralschule (High School) in Chortitza. After this, supported financially by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Lepp, he went to the Gymnasium in Jekatrinoslav. The Gymnasium emphasized the classics; they studied Latin, Greek and the writings of the classic authors. For instance, they had to translate Homer's Odyssey. The Gymnasium was looked upon as a training school - chiefly for the mind. Dr. Hamm felt that there were probably other subjects that could have accomplished this. He graduated from the Gymnasium in 1902 and was readily accepted into the College of Medicine at the Royal University in Cherkoff, South Russia. However, there were repeated interruptions in his studies due to numerous student strikes, so he went to Germany to complete his medical studies. In Germany he specialized in eye, ear and nose ailments and in diagnosing diseases. He graduated as a doctor in 1909.

In Dr. Hamm's memoirs he reflects upon why he became a doctor. He mentions that in his early years he had not witnessed anything that made him think that the doctors were very

helpful or successful in treating the illnesses of various family members. He had always thought that if he could go to university he would like to study science. However, he recalls one incident that left an impression on him. He was a healthy child but at the age of eight he was stricken with diphtheria, a dreaded disease. His illness did not seem threatening until he suddenly developed croup and his breathing became very difficult. He felt himself choking and lost consciousness. When he regained consciousness, a tube had been inserted into his trachea and he soon recovered. From then on he regarded doctors from a different standpoint and came to the realization that capable and conscientious doctors could be of value to society. It was amazing that he was able to continue studies at all; the circumstances of his early life could have prevented him from receiving any further higher education.

After graduation Dr. Hamm's first position was as an assistant doctor in the hospital in the Chortitza district, where he remained until 1914. In 1912 he married Maria Thiessen. When the First World War began he was immediately drafted into the 24th Artillery Brigade and his wife went to live with relatives. Dr. Hamm spent most of his time at the front until he was made Chief Doctor of the Cossack Brigade. In 1917 he was able to work in Cherson, a Russian village, where his wife joined him. Since this village had not been plundered as severely as the Mennonite colonies there was more food and they were able to spend the last year of the war in relative calm.

In 1919 the bandits spread through the area under the leadership of Batjko Machno. They took over and robbed and plundered the whole Chortitza colony. Many of the bandits were sick (infected with typhus, a Rickettsias disease) characterized by high fever, delirium and often leading to death. The bandits forced their way into Mennonite homes seeking food and shelter. The typhus germs are carried by lice; the bandits were infested with lice so the people became ill when bitten by the lice. At that time there was no specific treatment available. The doctors and nurses did what they could to alleviate the high fever and delirium. Dr. Hamm was one of

those doctors. It was estimated that during the Russian revolution three million people died during the typhus epidemic and 90% of the population was ill. Dr. Hamm writes that in the whole village of Chortitza there were only three healthy men. They had to walk through the village to feed the hungry bellowing cattle. The hospital and school were full of typhus patients with many lying on the floors. Sometimes the living were lying among the dead for as long as three days since there was no one to bury the dead. Isaac Zacharias writes in his memoirs, "It was so drastic that there was hardly anyone left to accompany the dead to the cemetery and to cover the graves".

The two doctors who were caring for the sick in the makeshift hospital also became ill. Dr. Hamm's wife Maria faithfully cared for her husband. He was just recovering when Maria became ill herself and at the same time gave birth to their first child, a little boy. Two days later Maria died; she required a blood transfusion but there was no blood available. How extremely difficult it was to see her die and not be able to help her! So he was left with a two day old baby. The situation was dire. There was no milk to be found. A Russian neighbour who had also given birth to a child not long before took pity and offered to feed Dr. Hamm's son as well as her own. She cared for the child for the first two months of its life. After that his wife's aunt took the little Alexander. Dr. Hamm writes about what a difficult time that was - his wife gone and he left with a little boy whom he wanted to keep at all costs.

Then Dr. Hamm felt the hand of God led him to a woman by the name of Aganetha Schultz in Osterwick. She was also recently bereaved and had a one year old son. In 1920 Dr. Hamm and Aganetha married. She became his very loving wife and also a very loving stepmother to his son as well as being the mother of her own son.

The typhus epidemic had abated. Many of the

older people in the village had succumbed to the disease. The Communist party had taken over the reins of government and Dr. Hamm had returned to work at the Chortitza hospital when a telegram came ordering him to go to work in the neighbouring Russian district of Balinjkojs. This area had not suffered nearly as much as the Mennonite colonies; the people were very receptive and food was more plentiful. The Hamms spent three years there. Their daughter Alice was born there in 1921. Soon the communists began to requisition the wheat crops and the stored wheat supply ran out. To add to that scarcity there was a crop failure in 1922. This was the beginning of the "Hungersnot". How many people died due to starvation was never established, however it was said that the two village priests were hardly able to officiate at all the burials and accompany the dead to their graves. The Russian church bells hardly ever stopped pealing. The children suffered most. The dogs and cats of the village disappeared.

From Dr. Hamm's writings we learn that the communists set up Municipal Health Units, which were to give free healthcare. Their chief purpose was to stop the spreading of the epidemics which were raging through the country - namely, diphtheria, small pox and typhus.

In the years 1922 and 1923 Dr. Hamm was ordered to enquire into the massive deaths due to hunger. However, he was not to use the word "hunger"; "undernourished" was acceptable. The health units held meetings, but they discussed which people were communists and which were not, more than dealing with the problems of disease and prevention. At that time doctors knew very little about specific diseases, their treatment and prevention. They knew little about diabetes and tuberculosis, or about the benefits of vitamins and glucose. X-rays were available only in the big cities. Smallpox was the only disease at that time for which doctors used vaccination. But they knew nothing about the sterilization of equipment. Bacteria and viruses had not been identified nor was it known how diseases were spread. Any surgery was risky. Dr. Hamm writes

Cont. from Page 13

that the only way a doctor would gain medical knowledge was to gather it himself through his practice. He had a special interest in eye diseases, and would have liked to further his knowledge in this field. Later in Hague his help was often sought in this area.

Dr. Hamm was receiving a salary of 2 million Russian rubles, for which they could barely buy two pounds of butter. There was no meat. Fish were also very expensive, although they could be caught in the river. It was very difficult to obtain medicine and material for bandages. So it continued till 1923 when the communists under Lenin suddenly announced a new policy: anyone who wished, could leave their position and could emigrate. Aganetha did not hesitate for her relatives were ready to emigrate. For Dr. Hamm it was difficult to think of going to a new country with only a limited knowledge of the language and no means of earning a living. However, the future in Russia looked very uncertain so they decided to emigrate. They sold all their belongings for two million rubles. Converted to Canadian money it amounted to barely 100 dollars.



Dr. Hamm and family

In the middle of August, 1923, Dr. Hamm, his wife Aganetha and their three children, Alex-

ander, Henry and Alice, left for Chortitza where the evacuation was to begin. They were loaded on to cattle cars and travelled to the Latvian border. Then they travelled by train to a harbour on the Baltic Sea and from there by ship across the ocean to Canada. They travelled on the S. S. Bruton which was an old ship. After 13 days of sailing they landed in Quebec City where they were greeted by Mr. Gerhard Enns from Rosthern, who was a representative of the Mennonite Board of Colonization. The immigrants were being taken by train to Rosthern.

When the train arrived in Winnipeg, Dr. Hamm received an invitation to come to Steinbach, Manitoba and serve as a doctor there. To them at this time all places were the same so they accepted the offer. They arrived in Steinbach with \$50, three children, a trunk full of clothes and some medical instruments.

These were difficult times for the new immigrants who had been forced to leave practically all of their worldly goods in the old country and, at middle age, start afresh in a strange new land. Dr. Hamm was forty three when he came to Canada. Irwin Hamm says that as far back as he can remember "the German term 'Reiseschuld', or travel debt, held a prominent place in my parents' vocabulary. They were extremely grateful to Mackenzie King's Liberal government and to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for bringing them to this great land, far away from the Bolshevik terror. Consequently they, and undoubtedly many other immigrants like themselves, were very conscientious about repayment of this sizeable travel debt - no mean feat for families trying to rebuild their lives in a strange country". It took many years to erase these debts. Yet, in spite of the difficult beginnings, the Hamms were always willing to temporarily billet relatives coming to find a new home in Canada.

The Hamms were warmly received by the Steinbach community but the reception from the local doctor was cool. Also it seemed that there would be some difficulty to obtain a Canadian medical diploma in Manitoba. After two years in Steinbach the invitation came from the town of Hague, Saskatchewan, for Dr. Hamm to fill the position left vacant when

Dr. Uhrich retired. In order to practice medicine in Canada, Dr. Hamm had to pass the examination prescribed by the Canadian Medical Association.

There was considerable red tape but in the end the University of Saskatchewan allowed him to use whatever language he knew, utilizing German/ Russian translators. He successfully passed the examination and set up his medical practice in his home in Hague. Thus began 37 years of dedicated service to the town of Hague and surrounding district. Hague was to be their home for the rest of their lives.

Dr. Hamm was highly respected by the community. There are many stories and anecdotes that tell about his generosity and caring. When asked to describe Dr. Hamm, a lady in the community said he was a "compassionate man". He was also a very sensitive man. He hated to inflict any kind of pain on his patients. It was difficult for him to even lance a boil. It was as if he felt the pain himself. He never talked down to his patients; rather he treated them as equals. When making his diagnosis he weighed his decisions carefully and with forethought.

The following incident suggests something about the moral principles that guided him in his profession. This occurred during the Second World War. A young man living on a farm near Hague was "called up" for army duty. When Dr. Hamm examined him, he found that the man was deaf in his right ear, and so he was rejected by the army. Some time later the man received a letter ordering him to report to a doctor in Saskatoon for another medical examination. The findings were the same and he was again rejected. An older brother was also "called up" and was examined by Dr. Hamm, who found that he had a diseased lung and therefore was rejected by the army. This young man was also asked to have a second examination by a doctor in Saskatoon and was again found ineligible for service. It then occurred to Dr. Hamm that maybe he was being suspected

of showing favouritism to Mennonite young men. He was hurt that anyone would think this of him.

When one thinks of all the changes Dr. Hamm experienced and all the adjustments he had to make in his lifetime one cannot help but be impressed. As I recall Dr. Hamm, he was a very dignified man, small in stature, with a kindly smile. He seemed a gentle, humble man, mild and soft-spoken. When one thinks of the years he spent slogging through the prairies in fair weather and foul, ministering to the sick in Hague and surrounding community, one cannot but stand in awe of such a man. "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Reverend J. J. Thiessen at Dr. Hamm's funeral read Revelation 14:13: Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this; blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth". "Blessed indeed", says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them".

Sources:

Dr. Hamm's memoirs
"Memoirs of A Native Son of Hague, SK"
by Irwin Hamm

Linda Hamm, daughter-in-law
Sarah and Abe Loewen, former residents of Hague



Hamm family residence

Interesting Coincidences

By John E. Harder

(This article is a sequel to “Connecting after 160 Years” which appeared in the previous issue of the Historian.)

Researching my Harder family history has been an interesting and exciting process. Seven years ago I started from very limited information and, after many hours, I have been able to expand my forefather knowledge from 3 generations to 10 generations. The process has been a great journey and has, in three instances, resulted in some amazing coincidences, which left me quite dumfounded at the time they were revealed.

The first unfolded in May 2003 when we were visiting with Bernhard Harder in Germany. Bernhard was a distant relative who had been located after many hours of research. Just prior to leaving for Germany, I had been working on a project involving a seed company from Sweden. In conversation with the foreign representatives I had explained that I was leaving for Germany immediately after completion of our project and that I would be meeting with a recently located relative, who was a retired chemistry professor from the University of Essen. One of the representatives replied that his wife’s father had also taught at the University of Essen.

The coincidence was revealed when, on the first day of our visit with Bernhard and while sitting on a sofa in his front room, we were trying to make small talk in spite of some significant language barriers and I commented on the recent discussion about another professor at the University of Essen. Bernhard was speechless – it was only after several attempts did it become clear that this other professor had been a close colleague of Bernhard’s – he then pointed out a picture hanging right behind us which had been a gift from this very colleague

on Bernhard’s retirement from the University.

The second involved a client and friend of 25 years. The friend, born in Germany, had come to Canada in 1981 when his family purchased a farm in the Tisdale area. He continued to have many family and business ties to Germany – his summers were spent on the Canadian farm and then he would return to Germany for the winter months. Over the years we had discussed my family search and I was always envious that he could trace his family back over hundreds of years. He had, on occasion, assisted me with German translations.

While in Germany in May, 2003, Bernhard Harder had presented me with a wonderful book entitled *Bartholomaeus Tiessen 350 Jahre Familientradition*. The book chronicled a Tiessen family and as a Harder forefather had married a Tiessen descendant, the book contained listings and information regarding my Harder family. The listing, in respect of my family branch, ended with my forefather Hermann Harder, who had immigrated to Russia in 1840, when all ties to my side of the family were severed at that point. Later upon returning to Canada, and after realizing the historical significance of the Tiessen book, I asked my friend to secure additional copies during his next trip to Germany which he managed to do during a visit with the author.

The next winter I was methodically researching the Tiessen book in the hopes of perhaps determining the last owner of a family property, which we knew was at Emaus near Danzig. It was then that I noted that a female relative had married into the Von Hardenberg family, which I knew was the family of my friend’s wife. I immediately contacted my friend, who was then in Germany, and we were both in awe when he confirmed the connection. It was almost unbelievable when he, upon his return to Canada, presented me with a picture of my great, great, grandfather Claas Harder, which he had

obtained from his wife's aunt in Germany.

And finally, the third connection took several years to evolve and it was amazing the matter had not been noted years earlier. An old 1966 letter from a distant uncle, on a maternal side, had revealed that it was my forefather Hermann Harder who had immigrated from Prussia to Russia in 1840 – this information was provided by the distant uncle from data he noted in the book regarding immigration of northern Europeans to Russia and which had been authored by B. H. Unruh. I made several half-hearted attempts to secure a copy of the Unruh book but, being a relative rookie in terms of genealogy, I had not been overly alarmed when I had been unable to secure a copy.



Franz Harder

In the meantime I had learned, from Bernhard Harder in Germany, that his uncle Franz Harder had been prolific in assembling and organizing family information. Bernhard pro-

vided me with numerous copies of documents prepared by Franz Harder of Danzig during, mainly, the 1930s. It was only after several more years that I became aware that Franz Harder had played a role in assembling the many charts and listings, which were presented in Unruh's book. It now became a priority to obtain this book. Upon securing a rather weathered copy, I was dumbfounded when I discovered that there was a small notation after the listing for my forefather Hermann Harder. The notation said simply "H. H. war der Bruder m. Grossvaters. F.H". And all this on the very page, to which my Uncle had referred to in his letter, which had been the start of my research. My research may well have gone in a more direct route had I, in the initial stages of my quest, uncovered the connection. The Unruh book now has a special place in my den.

My research has provided many surprises. The three coincidences have left me speechless. The saying, that every person can be connected to every other person in the world through only seven other individuals, likely has merit.

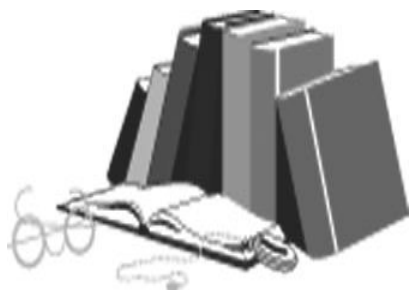
Picture from the
Eaton's Catalogue
from the 1920s and
1930s.
See Article on Page 30



"Everbright" Gasoline Lamp

Specially made for **EATON'S**. The construction has been carefully planned to ensure the greatest efficiency. Has nickel-plated fount, and uses the Coleman generator. Supplied with ribbed shade, wrench, air pump, 2 generators, 2 mantles, 1 cleaning needle and a wire hanger that enables the lamp to be used as a ceiling light. Ship. weight about 11 lbs.

21-M581. Price complete.	8.95
21-M582. Extra Panel Design Shade, as shown on Lamp 21-M592.	
Price, each.	.90
21-R583. Curved Generator for Coleman or Everbright.	
Price, each.	.35
21-R584. Extra Mantles.	4 for .25
Price	
These mantles also fit the Coleman lamp and are approved by our Research Bureau.	
21-R585. Extra Pump. Price.	.75



Mostly About Books

By Victor G. Wiebe
Book Editor

Isaak, Helmut.

Menno Simons and the New Jerusalem.

Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2006. Pp.158.

ISBN 189471069X. Paper covers \$20.00;

reviewed by Ed Schmidt.

For three decades friends watched Helmut Isaak's Dutch Mennonite Conference (ADS) sponsored journey of research as he laboured and ministered in Europe, South and North America. The result is a thin volume of five chapters in one hundred pages of tightly reasoned and seemingly repetitive text plus thirty pages of bibliographic supported notes with a central core thread. The title, *Menno Simons and the New Jerusalem*, spans the twenty-five year ministry of Menno Simons. Though it is not precisely known when Menno Simons was born, some use 1492 and others like Isaak use 1496. It is a convenient memory handle that Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492. Helmut Isaak engages many terms others have used in their research on Menno Simons: Anabaptism, chiliasm, Sacramentarian, eschatological and the unfamiliar to most, a view of baptism as the sign of tau (the Greek letter) in its apocalyptic context of a covenant to submission in a community of faithfulness (pgs. 32 - 35).

The first chapter of this book gives a brief background to Europe in upheaval; the Spanish Inquisition, the sacking of Rome, King Henry VIII establishing his own church and the economic inflation that stressed all Europe. Melchior Hoffman, baptized by the Anabaptists in Strasbourg in 1530, achieved significant influ-

ence in west central Europe and by 1531 Menno was thoroughly convinced that believers' baptism was Scriptural. Some of these thoughts had been present among the Waldensians birthed three centuries earlier in the midst of the anti-Semitic crusades to free Jerusalem from Muslim occupancy. Menno was baptized with the sign of Thau, possibly in 1534 or 1535 by Obbe Philips. The Philips' brothers earlier in their writings did indicate the influence of the history of the Waldensians but Menno never does reference them. What is known is that Menno was immersed in 1537 by Obbe Philip but the six year journey up to this time remains undocumented. Menno taught that neither baptism nor communion conferred grace upon an individual but that grace was obtained only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This was not the ultimate celebration of death but the power of the risen Lamb. Helmut Isaak uses his book's second chapter to look at an eschatological misinterpretation. He takes a continuous strand of Menno Simon's view of the New Jerusalem that spanned all of Menno's significant writings: "The idea of the New Jerusalem was fundamental for Menno, from the start of his Anabaptist writing" (pg.15).

Historians recognize 1525 as the year of the first adult baptism of the Reformation. Menno wrote that by 1526 he already doubted the physical presence of Christ by transubstantiation in the Mass. Despite this and other doubts, Menno began serving as parish priest near Witmarsum in 1524. He was ordained as a Latin Orthodox Priest in Utrecht when it is believed he was 28 years of age and died of natural causes in the Frisian Netherlands after nearly twenty-five years of migrant ministry. His significance lies in the fact that he assumed the responsi-

bilities of leadership at the crucial moment in the Anabaptist movement when it was in danger of losing its original identity under the influence of chiliastic and revolutionary leaders. Menno maintained the original peaceful Biblical Anabaptist concepts while he conceded that "our dear brothers" had "misbehaved a little against the Lord since they wanted to defend their faith with arms" (pg 51).

When Menno wrote the *Spiritual Resurrection* in the 1530s, he may well still have been a Catholic priest, and was careful not to identify with any reformist group. Spiritual conversion, as outlined in this tract, was limited to the individual and was described in nearly mystical terms. Despite the confidence of his writing, however, Menno was undergoing an experience of severe religious agony. His entrenched desire for security and career as a priest did battle with a felt spiritual need to leave the Catholic Church and make a clean break. By the time he wrote the '*Meditation on the Twenty-fifth Psalm*, Menno had abandoned the priesthood. Menno writes in this book of his new-found Christian life and exuberantly describes the New Jerusalem not only as an individualistic redemption but as a living community of God. "Those who know the Lord will live upon Mount Zion....They worry about nothing because the Lord will provide for their needs....Their souls dwell in the fullness of the wealth of the Lord" (73). Menno, in his opinion, had left Babylon and entered the New Jerusalem.

Former studies of the thought of Menno Simons have generally been based on his collected writings which give the impression that Menno's theology remained constant and consistent throughout his lifetime. Helmut Isaak, however, traces Menno's thinking through the 1530s to the 1550s, and discovers great changes in emphasis-- political, social and religious—over the passage of time. *Menno Simons and the New Jerusalem* is the portrait of a man whose theology was not that of the

study, not philosophical, but rather a reaction to the events that were shaking the continent. Menno took leadership when he maintained that Anabaptists were far more concerned with the daily practice of Christian love than were Catholics of the time. While still a priest in the mid-1530s, Menno had essentially affirmed the Melchiorite doctrine of incarnation but later his emphasis was altogether different. "Whereas for Menno the incarnation of the Word of God meant forgiveness, brotherly love, suffering service and a new life, for the Münsterites it became the justification for an apocalyptic crusade" (66). Menno's specific ideology on the incarnation was somewhat subtle and confusing - he was a much better organizer than a writer - but his intent was clear. He was not interested in a future apocalyptic incarnation: the New Jerusalem, he wrote, is already here, in the hearts of believers.

It is interesting to note that the coins minted in 1534 Münster bore the inscription: "Unless a man is born again, he can not enter the Kingdom of God; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; the Word has become flesh and lives among us" (68). Menno's followers continued to be slandered with the epithet "Münsterite," and Menno was forced over the decades to disassociate his movement from the 1534-35 uprising of Münster. His views became increasingly linked with the idea of a suffering church, because he saw no end in sight to civil and religious oppression.

The 1540s, according to Helmut Isaak, were transitional years in the development of Menno's communal values. By the 1550s, his ideas had become entrenched, and he preached the buttressing of God's suffering community by the liberal use of the ban. In his *Instruction on Excommunication*, Menno had turned, according to Isaak, quite authoritarian: "Those who seek unity and peace will receive his instruction with joy ... simply because his teaching, based on God's Holy Scripture, is the truth and there is no other truth" (103). Perhaps, as Isaak remarks, the "continued confrontation with the preachers ... blocked his creative capabilities in the later 1550s" (104). The writer invites readers into this journey.

George Loewen—Missionary to the Marginalized

By Alan M. Guenther



The Abram Loewen family,
fifteen sons and four daughters

A number of things about George Loewen attracted me when I became acquainted with him because I found those things also reflected in my life. He has remained single all his life; he was raised in the Old Colony Mennonite Church; he was involved in missionary work; and to the present day he loves reading and is keenly interested in world affairs, whether in past history or in the present. The fact that we share a common ancestor, Benjamin Goertzen, is another attraction.

George was born to Abram and Helena Loewen on New Year's Eve in 1923. When Helena died about a year later, her parents, Benjamin and Justina Goertzen of Gruenfeldt took him into their home. Benjamin Goertzen had been one of the delegates that had gone to Mexico in 1921 to search for a suitable tract of land to which the Old Colony Mennonites might relocate. They were coming under increasing pressure from the Saskatchewan government to send their children to English schools, and were once again looking for a place where they might have the freedom to

live in obedience to God as a community.

When the Goertzen family finally prepared to move to Mexico in 1927, it was assumed that George would accompany them. However, his father had remarried by this time, and brought George back to join the family, while the Goertzens emigrated to Mexico without him. George attended school in both the Passchendale School west of Hague and the Heidelberg School further north, with teachers such as Simon Bergen and Erhart Regier.

At the start of World War II, George along with his older brothers, Jake, Ben and Abe, went to work in Prince Rupert building wartime housing, as well as Carrot River, Saskatchewan at a sawmill as Alternative Service projects. He also was sent to Conscientious Objectors camps in Alberta (Seebe camp near Calgary) and Manitoba (National Mills near The Pas). Although he had grown up on a farm, he never developed a passion for farming. What drew him as a young man was the logging industry, initially at a sawmill in Carrot River in 1942 and later at the National Mills lumber camp near The Pas as his final C. O. assignment.



Ten Loewen brothers who worked together in the sawmill in 1953. L to r—Abe, Peter, George, David, Jake, Henry, Martin, John, Julius and Ben



George Loewen in retirement 2008

After the war, George joined his brothers who were logging in northern BC. The following winter, he bought into the business and became a part owner of a sawmill near Burns Lake. This business venture proved very profitable, and soon ten Loewen brothers were working together at the lumber camp.

While he had achieved material prosperity with the success of his sawmills, George recognized there was a spiritual need in his life. His father, who had been elected as the bishop of the Old Colony Church in Saskatchewan in 1951, would write to him exhorting him to turn from the lifestyle he had adopted. Locally, the leaders of the General Conference Mennonite church, including Bishop Nick Friesen, also challenged him to commit his life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, their admonitions and prayers bore fruit towards the end of 1958 when George spent a restless night wrestling with spiritual questions, finally yielding the control of his life to God and receiving His forgiveness. The following spring, he was baptised by Bishop Nick Friesen in the Tatalrose church, after having gone through a study of the catechism with Pastor John Harms. Now one of his great de-

sires was to celebrate the communion meal with his father—a desire that was fulfilled shortly thereafter when his father came to celebrate communion with the Old Colony Church in nearby Cheslatta.

George continued his work in the B. C. lumber industry, but now his involvement in the church became more important in his life. In 1963, he was elected as a pastor in the Tatalrose church, which had now joined the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference. Rev. John D. Friesen was the one who ordained him. Reflecting back on that decade as a pastor of the only E.M.M.C. church in British Columbia, George comments that he greatly valued his friendship with both John D. and Mary Friesen and the encouragement they gave him.

The congregation to which George was ministering was quite mixed; he noticed one Sunday morning that there were as many as eleven different denominational or cultural backgrounds represented. One regret he does have when thinking back to that time is the failure to minister effectively to the First Nations peoples in the area. Even as an employer at the sawmill, he feels they could have done more; he commented that his brother recently reminded him that during all the years they had run the business, they had only employed one person from the in-



Loewen sawmill, 35 mi. southwest of Burns Lake, BC. 1953

Cont. from Page 21

indigenous communities. "We failed our aboriginal people," he says.

In 1972, however, his ministry took a new turn; and opened up many opportunities for increasing ministry and friendships with not only indigenous peoples but many men in logging camps and their families. He had sold his shares in the lumber mills and resigned from the pastorate to join the Shantymen's Christian Association.

For the next seven years, this ministry took him throughout central B. C., along the western coast of that province, and into the Yukon Territories. He comments that it was at that time that he got to know the First Nations peoples better, and established a number of deep friendships with some.

While his primary work was to be a witness of Jesus Christ to the men and women in isolated communities, he also had a ministry of encouragement to scattered believers and small churches he encountered throughout the region. His ministry also extended to Mennonite churches in northern B. C. and in Saskatchewan and Manitoba which participated in his ministry through their prayers and financial support. During the last half of his seven years with the Shantymen, George was based on the western coast of Vancouver Island, teaching the Bible at a camp established at Pachina and ministering to people along the coast.

The desire to expand the coastal ministry prompted several of the missionaries including George Loewen to begin a new organization, Coastal Missions, in 1980. With their home port on the eastern side of the island near Chemainus, the missionaries travelled along the coasts of the B. C. mainland and of the Queen Charlotte and Vancouver Islands. Although George was not a "born sailor," the nature of the ministry was such that he spent much of his time on a boat. Once again, it was to the iso-

lated people along the shores that he directed his ministry of encouragement and exhortation.

After ten years of serving under the direction of Coastal Missions, George retired from that organization, but continued serving in a camp ministry until 1997 at Esperanza on the north-western coast of Vancouver Island, again with the Shantymen's Christian Association (now SCA International). Being a great storyteller, George worked together with my mother (his cousin) to produce a book recounting many fascinating stories of his time in British Columbia, both in the logging industry and in Christian ministry. The book, *Searching for Eternal Values: One Man's Pilgrimage*, by Mary Guenther, is available from the MHSS archives or directly from the author in Warman.

This fall it will be 60 years since George Loewen bought his first sawmill near Burns Lake, B. C. He is now a resident of Bethany Manor in Saskatoon, although most of those intervening years were spent in B. C. The question I wanted to ask him went I went to visit him was "Why did you return to Saskatchewan after having spent most of your life in another province?" His immediate response was, "Family." A number of his brothers had also left the lumber industry, returning to Saskatchewan to farm and to raise their families. So when medical concerns began limiting his ministry on Vancouver Island, he eventually made his way to Osler in 1997, to be near to his siblings as well as nieces and nephews and others of his extended family.

In 2005, he relocated to his current apartment in Bethany Manor. His struggle with gout had become a severe limitation in Osler. But with the changes brought about in his daily routine and diet by the move to Saskatoon, he was soon able to renew his love of walking, at times traversing more than 10 miles per day regularly along the beautiful Saskatchewan River and the streets of Saskatoon.

George's love for history, especially Mennonite history, also continues unabated. Recently when I was doing research on the Old Colony and the English school question, he took an active interest, having

known some of the key players personally. He told me that one project that he would like to see researched and written would be the history of the Old Colony church which existed in Burns Lake from 1941 to 1969. He is concerned that the generation familiar with that church is disappearing, and with it, the memory of that settlement.

George greatly appreciates his rich Old Colony heritage and the godly values his parents and church instilled in him at an early age. He feels that our communities would do well to return to the simplicity of faith and lifestyle that we have left in our pursuit of a more materialistic worldview.

Every morning he does his Bible readings in three languages—English, High German, and Plautdietsch. When he was introduced to a Plautdietsch translation of the Scriptures later in life, he was struck with how reading the Word of God in his first language could affect him more deeply than in English or High German, even though he had ministered for many decades in those languages.

I asked George why it is important to preserve stories of past people, such as those who moved from Hague-Osler Reserve to Burns Lake in 1941. As a history professor, I constantly ask myself (and my students) such questions. Why should I devote my life to researching and recording the stories of those people who have gone before us? In his reply, George directed me to the Scriptures, pointing out that every name mentioned in the Bible is there because each person is significant. For me, at its simplest, as well as its most profound understanding, history is made up of people. And each story of our people of faith is a testimony of the work of God. Therefore telling these stories is actually in some sense bearing witness to the faithfulness of our God. George's story certainly is such a witness.

Books by Margaret Epp still needed by MHSS

The Long Chase: and Budworm Tepees

Shades of Great-Aunt Martha

The North Wind and the Caribou

Sarah and the Mystery of the Hidden Boy

Sarah and the Persian Shepherd

Walk in My Woods

Margaret Epp, Rosella Schellenberg and Esther Loewen Vogt, eds, *Baker's Dozen: Skits for Women's Missionary Circles*

Also all German, Finnish and Chinese translations.

In 1994, Margaret Epp donated a number of boxes of her manuscripts to the MHSS. In it were handwritten, typed and published copies of her work. Since 1949, she has written more than 50 books and innumerable stories for children and articles for adults. Many of her books actually started out as serialized stories in Sunday School papers or in monthly magazines. In the boxes was a story she had contributed to the *Family Herald* in 1959 under the name of M. Forrest Holmes., a word-play on "Waldheim." The collection contains other such fascinating treasures, including an article entitled "Abolish the Singles' Corner," opposing the marginalization of unmarried adults in the church.

The list of the collection she donated is now available online at the MHSS website, making it possible for researchers to know what's available at the archives. What we would like now is to complete our collection of her published works. We have copies of most of her books, including unique items such as the one she wrote under the pseudonym Agnes Goosen. Books we still need are listed above. We would welcome donations of any or all of them.

Mennonite Memorial Planned in Ukraine

Following is a letter received by former Historian Editor Dick Epp from Harvey Dyck about plans of a major memorial for Mennonites who suffered and perished in the Soviet inferno.

Dear Dick,

Your reflections in the MHSS on the history and sad demise of Der Bote reminded me of my appearance before your Society some years ago. It is encouraging to see you sharing your experiences and insights in this way.

I write now in the hope of informing you and your membership of a project to the memory of Mennonites who suffered and perished in the Soviet Inferno. A year from now, in June 2009, we plan to unveil a suitable memorial in the main square of the onetime Upper Khortitsa village, the centre of the first Mennonite settlement in Imperial Russia.

Let me say a little about the "we." I write to you as a co-chair, with Peter Klassen, Fresno, of this project's sponsor, The International Mennonite Memorial Committee for the Former Soviet Union. Our members, most of them professional historians, represent seven countries: Paraguay, Germany, Ukraine, Russia, USA and Canada. Enclosed is a brief description of the project that I'd ask you to share with the Executive of your MHSS and other interested parties.

My purpose in writing is simply to let you know of our plans and to ask you for your endorsement of an undertaking that we think is long overdue. We hope, too, that we might be able to partner with you on aspects of this venture and attract a group of your members to join us in Zaporozhe a year hence to remember, to mourn and to bear witness to what happened. We are similarly taking up contact with sister Mennonites historical societies across Canada and elsewhere. We'll soon have a website up and running with lots of information on

all aspects of the project.

Inevitably we also hope that we might be able to come calling in some way with a collection plate. The BC Mennonite Historical Society will be partnering with us in fund-raising, receiving and receipting donations. A Fund-Raising Committee, headed by Walter Friesen, Toronto, is in the process of formation. He'll be in touch with your Society once we've established firmer contacts.

Dick, I hope this will be the first of several exchanges on this subject. I'd be deeply grateful for your understanding and support of this undertaking and for getting this email into the right hands.

With warmest regards,

Harvey Dyck,
Director, Research Program in Tsarist and Soviet
Mennonite Studies,
Munk Centre for International Studies, University
of Toronto,
and Co-Chair, International Mennonite Memorial
Committee for the Former Soviet Union

Need Volunteers

Volunteers are needed for processing donated material at the Archives.

Come join a group of enthusiastic, friendly people who enjoy Mennonite History.

Contact Victor Wiebe, Archivist or
Kathy Boldt, Archives Committee.



The Family Tree

Genealogy Editor—Rosemary Slater

Preserving your family history for future generations

My Roots

By Melita (Krahn) Penner

A small trunk made of woven wicker stands in our spare bedroom. At present it contains memorabilia from my parents and items collected during my childhood days. This chest traveled from Rosental, Ukraine in 1926, across the Atlantic Ocean and eventually came to rest with other household goods at Kinder-sley, Saskatchewan. It belonged to my paternal grandparents Jacob Peter and Katherine (Isaac) Krahn who began their journey by train traveling to Riga, Latvia, across the ocean on the ship “Metagama”, landing on Canadian shores, then continuing halfway across the country again by rail to Hanley, Saskatchewan. What were the contents of the wicker chest? Could it have been the roasted buns, cookies and smoked ham that had been prepared for their month long voyage? Or did it contain some important keepsakes like my Dad’s Christmas verses (Wuensche) with their creative hand-drawn cover pictures? The Kroeger clock would not have fit into this container.

My father, Peter Jacob Krahn was 21 years old at the time; his parents wanted to spare him the possibility of being conscripted into the military. His siblings, Tina (19), Anna (16), Abram (14) and Armin (6) accompanied their parents on this adventure, namely to leave their village home and start a new life in Canada.

Father tells about the enjoyable days of his youth in Rosental, a village nestled among wooded hills and valleys, bordering on the



Melita Penner with wicker basket

“mother” village of Chortitza. The Krahn residence was situated two farm yards to the south of the Dorfschule (elementary school). The colony garden and nursery with its variety of fruit and nut trees

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was located behind their yard. On Sunday afternoons, he recalls, the boys walked around exploring nature - the big oak trees, the swallows making nests in the soil on the side of the hill, or they would take the horse and buggy down to the river for picnics, walk on the sandy shore of the Dnieper River, then take a dip or board a boat for a ride. Every evening the boys would gather at the corner of the school just to talk, or would walk over to the various schools or churches to listen to the choirs and bands as they held their practices. Music was important; they sang a lot at the youth parties.

During the three month summer break from school, all the children worked in the fields tending the corn, potato, watermelon and sunflower plants as well as performing other farm chores. Russian people were hired as maids, nannies and farm helpers.

World War I, in 1914, ended the pleasant days of carefree living. My dad's father was called to go as a Red Cross worker, leaving the responsibility of managing the farm to his mother. However, she had outside help for seeding and harvest. Many sad stories were told about the terrible days of the revolution, when the Nestor Makhno gangs came to terrorize the Mennonite people, first of all because they were property owners and also because they spoke another language. The bandits swept through the villages to murder, rape and plunder for half a year. During this time the schools in Rosental and Chortitza were closed because the buildings were occupied by gang members. These men also took up lodging in homes and demanded meals. When food ran out, they brought meat for the women to prepare, no matter the time of day. Our dad told us they took everything, including the best horses, the cattle and then swept up the last grain in the loft of the shed. They came again and again, no one knew when they would

come. Dad related the incident when he had only one pair of shoes left. Because the robbers often came at night, he decided to keep his shoes on when he went to bed. One evening he got tired of leaving his shoes on for sleeping, so he took them off. That night they were robbed and so all he had left to wear was a pair of Dutch sandals. His dad happened to be the Oberschultz (reeve) of Rosental at this time and so many difficult situations came his way. The gangs would demand money; once they wanted two million rubels from the Chortitza settlement. They took hostages, among them, elder Isaac Dyck and my grandfather. They were taken outside the village to dig their own graves; if the money could not be collected, they would be shot. However, as my father explains, the people were gracious and gave their last and so the two million were gathered and the men were set free. Then the typhus epidemic broke out; the bandits' unsanitary conditions brought lice into the homes where they slept. About 130 people died in their village plus some gang members. This was followed by famine. Dad said that when the boys got together, they talked about food instead of girls, as they had done previously. There was no bread in the house for three months; soup was made from the weeds that they picked in the valley. Dad's uncle, Abram Isaac, who had immigrated to Canada in 1892, sent food parcels to the Jacob Krahn family. Then on March 3rd, 1922, a soup kitchen was set up by the American Mennonite Relief Organization. This food came just in time or many more would have perished. M.C.C. also sent tractors; Grandpa Krahn organized the distribution, for which he was given an extra package of food a month. Now with a new government, communism was dictating a different way of life.

Upon arriving in Hanley, Dad's cousin Jacob Harder and aunt, Katherina (Krahn) Harder, took them in. They lived in various relative's homes; the Patkaus and the Kroegers. My dad and his brother Abram bought a quarter section of land and farmed it for two years.

That is when the two older siblings with their spouses arrived at Hanley; Jacob and Elizabeth with baby Liesel and Helen and Abram Walde with Erna.

Through an ad in *Der Bote* from the Board of Colonization, a deal was made with a Chicago Land Corporation who owned five and a half sections of land. The entire family moved to pioneer this land south east of Kindersley in January of 1929. This included buildings, live-stock, machinery and a manager for one year. Everything was there, even a kettle on the stove. The Mennonites were forever thankful to Prime Minister MacKenzie King for allowing non-English immigrants into Canada. For this reason, my dad voted for the Liberal Party all his life.



Grandpa Jacob Peter and Kathrina (Isaac) Krahn—Immigration picture 1926

Grandfather Jacob Krahn died of pneumonia on April 23rd, 1930 at the age of 54. Due to the trauma he endured in Rosental, he had lost the will to start all over again. He is buried in a graveyard half a mile north of the original Krahn farmstead near Kindersley.

My dad lived in a bunkhouse across the road and helped his mom and Armin with the farming. Some group members backed out of the enterprise which meant each family now received three quarters of land.

Today, in the same bedroom where the wicker trunk sits, a blue enamel cup hangs from a shelf. This is not my mother's original cup but it is displayed there to remind us of a story she

often told. She vividly remembers an incident while living in her village of Einlage.



Back row: Tina, Elizabeth and Helen
Front row: Helena (Dyck) and Peter Neufeld
Immigration picture—1926

My mother, Elizabeth Neufeld, the oldest daughter of Helena (Dyck) and Peter Gerhard Neufeld was born February 3rd, 1915. The village of Einlage was a prosperous and busy industrial village north of Chortitza. Mother's maternal grandfather, Abram Dyck (Dück), a prominent farmer, was the first to use a grain binder. Using a cream separator was also new to the locals. Living very close to the Dnieper River, they were called "Dnieper Dycks". Often the family would go for a quick dip in the river before bed time.

Mother's father had learned the art of woodworking and became a finish carpenter. Along with his colleagues, he built the pews for the new large church in 1914. That is the year, on May 17th, that Peter Neufeld married Helena Dyck. He served in the Forestry Service (Forstei) and in addition served with the Red Cross when World War I broke out. Then the revolution came with the destruction by the Makhno bandits. The subsequent famine caused mass starvation; this is where the enamel cup be-

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comes a reminder of mother's story. Because of the shortage of food, my mother, as a child of seven or eight stood in line with her cup at the Food Distribution Centre. She was given chocolate milk (she called it cocoa) and a "very white bun". This was clearly imprinted in her mind; during the famine, their bread and buns were made from various seeds and definitely were not white. Mother also tells about seeing the railway cars plummeting down from the famous arched bridge and landing in the Dnieper River below in 1917. That the centre of the bridge was bombed and destroyed, however, was unknown to the locomotive engineer. In 1932 the village of Einlage was immersed by the rising Dnieper River when the government completed the Dneproges Hydro-electric Dam. The family moved to Kronsgraten but soon talked of immigration. They left on July 24th, 1926, crossing the Atlantic on the ship "Melita". The family with Elizabeth (11), Helen (8), and Tina (5) reached Quebec on September 3rd and arrived in Milden, Saskatchewan on the 7th, being greeted by Johann Reimer. Their father worked hard for farmers who were harvesting a bumper crop that year.

Three months later on December 2nd, 1926, Peter Gerhard Neufeld, my mom's dad, died of an aneurysm at age 36. He is buried at the Milden cemetery. Five weeks later, Grandma gave birth to another daughter, Margaret. Now a widow with four children, penniless and in a new country, the relatives suggested she give up her children for adoption. To her this was not an option. She prayed that God would help her through this difficult time; without the kind support of many people, she says that she might not have survived. In 1927 her two sisters and their husbands, Margaret and Herman Wiebe and Mary & Cornelius Reimer, settled near Madison, Saskatchewan. Grandma Neufeld and her four girls moved in with the Wiebes. Elizabeth, my mother, only attended school until grade five because she needed to help with family finances. At age 15 she be-

gan to work for non-Mennonite families providing domestic help for \$6 to \$10 a month. Eventually she purchased a house for \$125 and with the help of her uncles, had it moved to the Wiebe yard where it became a home for her mother and sisters. Grandma Neufeld was a seamstress, using the sewing machine that she brought along from Ukraine. Most people made payment with produce; she would have preferred some monetary payments.

As Mennonites settled in the south east area of Kindersley and others settling 15 - 20 miles to the south, in the Madison-Glidden area, they organized as a congregation in 1927, becoming part of the Ebenfeld Gemeinde. They met most of the time at the Cornelius Reimers' but also in other homes depending on road conditions. A church building would not be built until 1945.

My dad, Peter Jacob Krahn and my mom, Elizabeth Neufeld both attended the same young peoples group. They were married in the Herman Wiebe home on a very cold day, November 4th, 1933. They moved into the bunk house at the Kindersley farm. The early years were difficult with the drought and dust. Mother often told me that the year that I was born (1937), was the poorest year of the "Dirty Thirties". She did not even own a baby blanket to wrap around me to bring me home.

They enjoyed their mixed farming operation and recovered quickly, economically. The house was expanded as the family grew. Eight children were born to them, however the premature twins, Armin and Anna, born June 17th, 1942, both died within a day. Other children were; Hertha Katherine, November 4th, 1934 (married Hans Nickel), died June 30th, 1999; Edith Helene, February 7th, 1937 (married John Hebert); Melita Elizabeth, December 12th, 1937 (married Menno Penner); Werner Peter, March 12th, 1941 (married Gertrude Plett); Lydia Marguerite, November 23rd, 1945 (married Peter Schroeder) and Velma Irene, May 26th, 1950 (married Peter Guenther), died January 2nd, 1986.

They enjoyed their mixed farming operation for 34 years. During that time many shelter belts were

planted and they also experimented with a variety of fruit trees and shrubs in their orchard. Mother joined the Kindersley Horticultural Society, entering exhibits for approximately 10 years. The farmstead won prizes several times for its attractive appearance.



Peter and Elizabeth (Neufeld) Krahn 1964

They were active in the church; Dad was a “Vorsänger” (song leader) and often was on the building or finance committee. Mother hosted many visiting speakers and choir groups. For two and a half years our Grandma Krahn (Dad’s mom) stayed at our place while she was bedridden. She was still able to continue with her handwork and taught me how to crochet at the age of 10. She died at Glenbush on May 17th, 1949 and was buried there. Grandma Neufeld cooked at the Rosthern Bible School together with her daughter Tina (1944 - 49). Eventually they bought a house in Rosthern where Grandma Neufeld died on June 7th, 1957. My parents semi-retired to Saskatoon in 1967; Dad went back to help out

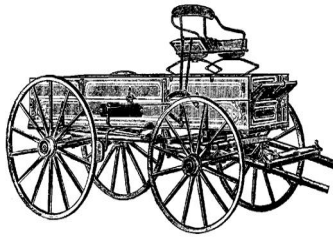
at the farm until 1981. They became members at First Mennonite Church where they enjoyed the German Choir, visiting and bowling with friends. They continued to garden, to travel and enjoyed their children and grandchildren. Mother volunteered at the M.C.C. thrift store for 23 years.

Father died in his sleep on January 7th, 1982 at the age of 76. Mother moved to Bethany Manor seven years later. During her 22 years as a widow she continued to sew blankets and kits for M.C.C. relief, as well as being a helping hand to those around her. Mother passed away at the age of 88 at Central Haven on December 16th, 2003, after residing there for 10 months.

We thank our parents for passing on their Christian faith to us. They were compassionate supporters of M.C.C., the Mennonite Church with its many programs at home and abroad and were true servants of God in whichever community they resided.



Peter and Elizabeth Krahn 1973



From the Past

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

Following are some interesting, detailed memories of growing up in Saskatchewan (excerpts of a longer article) written by Val Zacharias of Calgary. Val says, "I wrote this material for my grandchildren". Catalogue items come from some 1920s and 1930s Eaton's catalogues in the Western Development Museum Curatorial Centre, Saskatoon.

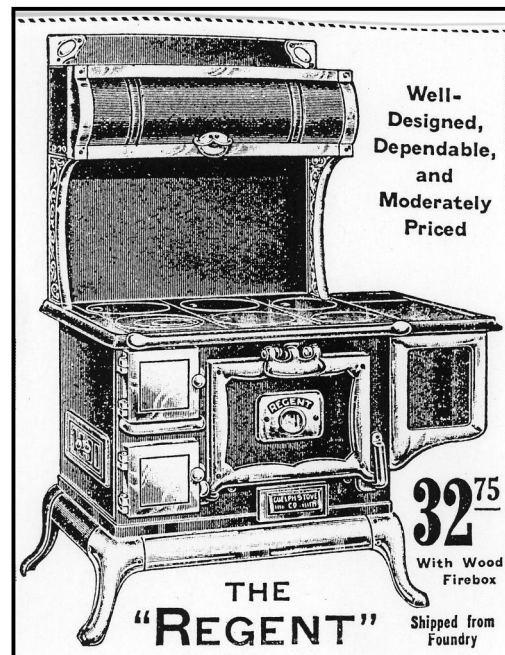


The Zacharias'

I grew up on a farm 5 miles west of Turtleford, Saskatchewan.

The house was double walled and insulated with shavings, so it could be heated relatively easily. Frost made patterns on the windows, however, even though there were storm windows. The patterns were often very beautiful - leaves and fronds, etc. It was fun to sit and melt spots through the patterns with my warm fingers, but Mom didn't like that because it made the windows messy looking. Storm windows had three holes about one and a quarter inches in diameter drilled in the sash, and there

was a little wooden flap that covered up the holes. You could open the flap for some fresh air in the winter.



The cook stove had a fire box where we built the fire, and that was the hottest part of the stove. When you wanted something to cook at slow heat, you moved it to the side of the cook stove. A big

part of cooking was the ability to get the stove to be at the right temperature for whatever you wanted to cook. That was hard enough when you were only cooking on top of the stove, but the oven was heated by the same fire, and there was no good way to balance the heat to the different areas. The oven gauge did not work either, so you had to guess by feel how hot the stove was. The stove also had a warming oven, where we set bread dough to rise, and plates to warm so they would be hot to serve food. Usually the cat slept under the stove; I guess

she was expected to be smart enough to move if she got too hot.



Dad and Scotty (the hired man) cut trees in the winter and hauled them into the yard, and then the neighbours would help saw them for firewood. A pulley on the tractor, with a long belt, was used to drive a big circular saw (about 24 inches in diameter, I think), and several men carried a tree and fed it into the saw. The sawn wood was stored in the woodshed and then used in the house. For the cook stove, the wood had to be split by hand with an axe before it could be used. You set the wood vertically on the big chopping block, and then swung the axe at it. If you were lucky it split the first time, but usually you had to try again, and hope you hit in the same place. (A dangerous job - Aunt Peggy had 13 stitches in her foot when she was a girl, because she chopped her foot instead of the wood).



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Light in the house was from lamps. We had coal oil lamps to use when we needed a little light - for breakfast on short winter days, for instance. The fuel was acrid-smelling coal oil (kerosene in the USA or paraffin in Britain). A wick had one end in the fuel and one that we lit with a match, controlled by a mechanism with a little wheel which allowed us to turn up the wick a little as it burned away.

It was important to keep the wick relatively low, because a

high wick was a fire hazard and also because it smoked and caused the glass chimney to be covered with soot, and then it had to be washed. We also had Coleman lamps which used high test gas. These were used at night to light the whole living room. They were quite dangerous (at least for children) and I was never allowed to light one. They had a mantle

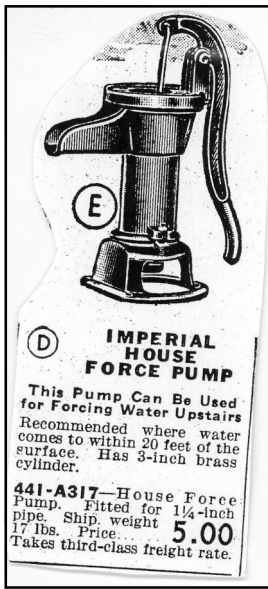
rather than a wick. A mantle was a little bag of thin fabric that we tied over the gas outlet of the lamp. Then we lit the mantle and it burned to ash, but stayed in a shape a little like a teardrop, as long as we did not touch it or jar it. The lamp had a reservoir which held high test gas. It was pressurized with a pump, and when the gas was under pressure, the gas valve was opened and the mantle lit with a match. This lamp gave off quite a lot of light; I could squint my eyes at it and see streaks of light in rainbow colours



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Both my dresser and Mom's had a long narrow "runner" (pretty cloth, usually with embroidery or crochet trim) and on it we always had a hand mirror with a fancy back, and a matching hair brush, always arranged at an angle. The hair brush was never used for brushing hair because the bristles were too soft to do any good. Originally, this "dresser set" had a matching comb, but I think it was thrown away when it lost too many teeth. At that time, many combs had broken teeth and had to be replaced. That changed when nylon combs were used.

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There was no plumbing in the house at first, but there was a hand pump in the kitchen that sucked water up from a cistern below the cellar floor. Lots of people needed to prime their pumps, which meant to pour a little water from the last time in the top to start them, but ours worked with just a few pumps of the handle. When it rained, water was collected from the roof via eaves troughs and

drained into the cistern. If there was not enough rain, we might take open barrels to a clean slough, fill the barrels using pails, then float boards on top of the water to dampen the sloshing on the way back.

Drinking water came from a well, hand carried in a 2.5 gallon enameled pail. The water was very hard and very cold. We brought the pail in and set it on the counter, and everyone used the same enamelled dipper to get a drink.



We used Lifebuoy soap (reddish) and Palmolive soap (green). Baths were in the middle of the kitchen floor on Saturday night. I got the first bath, since I was the youngest member of the family, and then was sent to bed. I think the others used the same water. There was a pail toilet in the basement, I think. There was an outdoor toilet out in the yard, under the trees, beside the woodshed. We were better off than lots of people, because we actually used toilet paper as opposed to old catalogues. There were also china pots under the beds in case you had to “go” in the night.

Houseflies were common, less so in the house because we had screens and screen doors. Mom shouted at us if we left the doors open, and we kept fly swatters handy, which sometimes made a big mess of crushed fly on the wall. Often when we washed walls we were washing off “fly specks”.

If we got an infection, we bandaged the spot with an application of Thermofuge, which sucked out the pus. Sore throats were dealt with by gargling with salt water. Camphor salve and Vicks Vapor were rubbed on our chest to soothe coughs and colds. We took cod liver oil when I was small, and I hated it. I believe we took it for its Vitamin D. When we had sore eyes, Mom washed them with a solution of water and boric acid - mild, I guess. I had a bee sting once when I was out with the hired man, and he soothed it by putting mud from a swamp on it.

I went barefoot all summer, and liked to squish my toes in the mud. Mom couldn’t stand the thought, and she specially didn’t like my habit of letting the mud dry on my feet instead of washing it off right away. Walter and I played together a lot. We did a lot of cops and robbers and cowboys and Indians. We made “horses” out of broomsticks and galloped around on them. Once Walter and I decided to have a funeral, so we buried a doll and never did dig it up again. Once in a while we would thread a string through a large button, both ways, and tie it. Then if you held each end, with the button in the middle, by twirling and twisting and pulling, it would keep winding and unwinding itself.



Val Zacharias with horse and cart