

# SASKATCHEWAN MENNONENTE HISTORIAN

Official periodical of the  
Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, Inc.  
Volume XIII No. 3, October, 2007



## MHSS to Host History-Genealogy Weekend

by Ed Schmidt

Menno Simons was born in 1492, a year that has become memorable because a global explorer crossed the Atlantic Ocean to North America in that year. Before the end of the sixteenth century, communities of people in northern Europe were identifying with some of the Reformation Anabaptists who called themselves Mennonites. Dialects of Low German were the common language of the area at that time.

You are invited to join the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan in sessions Friday evening and Saturday during the day, November 9 and 10, 2007. The sessions will focus on the history of the Mennonites in Prussia and Poland and will take place at Bethany Manor Fellowship Centre, 110 LaRonge Road, Saskatoon, Sask. An offering Friday evening will be used to expand the capacity of the MHSS archives. A registration (including noon lunch) of \$15, \$25 per couple, will be collected for Saturday's sessions which begin at 9:30 am. More details will be posted and updated on the MHSS Family Archive website: [www.mhss.sk.ca](http://www.mhss.sk.ca). *A Buncha Guys* under the leadership of Rosenorter Elder Peter Regier's great-grandson will start the events with music at 7 pm on Friday, November 9.

Keynote speaker Peter J. Klassen, University professor in Fresno, California, has written books

and many articles about Prussia/Poland. On Friday evening his topic will be *Lights of Hope on the Vis-tula: light that radiated across much of Europe and into America*. On Saturday afternoon Peter Klassen's topic will be *The Lure of an Enlightened Culture: Mennonite Faith Meets Prussian Culture*; currently relevant as Canada engages itself globally.

Ted Regehr, who for many years lectured at the University of Saskatchewan, now from Calgary, will be a participant on both days. On Saturday morning Ted will do a PowerPoint presentation on Prussian/Danzig/Polish Mennonites up to the twenty-first century, which will complement the chosen focus of these sessions.

At another MHSS-sponsored event held on Monday, August 6, Tim Janzen from Portland, Oregon led in genealogy workshops at Herbert, Saskatchewan. Tim returned to Saskatchewan in mid-October to assist some of us in organizing teams to compile necessary genealogical data and collect cheek-rinse samples for the Mennonite DNA Project. Some samples were collected in August. To join a team to collect DNA use the "contact us" at the website or phone the office or an MHSS Board member.

Before noon on Saturday, November 10, Glenn Penner, professor of the University of Guelph, Ontario,

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Photographer - Susan Braun

## 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)

<i>Helen Bahnmann</i>	<i>J.C. Neufeld (1994)</i>
<i>Helen Dyck (2007)</i>	<i>John P. Nickel</i>
<i>Dick H. Epp</i>	<i>David Paetkau (1972)</i>
<i>Margaret Epp</i>	<i>Esther Patkau</i>
<i>Peter K. Epp (1985)</i>	<i>Dr. Ted Regehr</i>
<i>George K. Fehr (2000)</i>	<i>Ed Roth</i>
<i>Jake Fehr</i>	<i>Wilmer Roth (1982)</i>
<i>Jacob E. Friesen (2007)</i>	<i>Arnold Schroeder (2000)</i>
<i>Jacob G. Guenter</i>	<i>Jacob Schroeder (1993)</i>
<i>Gerhard Hiebert (1978)</i>	<i>Katherine Thiessen (1984)</i>
<i>Katherine Hooge (2001)</i>	<i>Rev. J.J. Thiessen (1977)</i>
<i>Abram G. Janzen</i>	<i>Rev. David Toews (1947)</i>
<i>Rev. John J. Janzen (2004)</i>	<i>Toby Unruh (1997)</i>
<i>George Krahm (1999)</i>	<i>Albert Wiens (2002)</i>
<i>Ingrid Janzen-Lamp</i>	<i>George Zacharias (2000)</i>
<i>J.J. Neudorf (1988)</i>	

## President's Message

### Jake Buhler



In May of 1950, Mr. H. K. Boldt, who farmed NW of Osler, turned very ill and was unable to seed his land. In response, eleven farmers with their tractors and one-way diskers, gathered at his farm and in one day put in his entire crop. In August of 2007, unusual rains flooded 16 apartments at Westridge Village in Saskatoon. With less than a day's notice, 42 volunteers, ranging in age from 12 to 76, showed up to clean up a most horrific mess.

Each of you has a story that is different, but similar to the ones mentioned above. *Similar*, because you may have been part of an emergency response in your community or elsewhere. *Different*, because the actual circumstances of your emergency story were different.

If it is true that Mennonites have a tradition of responding to disasters and emergencies, it is not by accident. What is it that brings people together as if by magic? For one, it is not magic. Rather it may be the result over hundreds of years, of practicing *community* wherever Mennonites have lived. One person's calamity is everyone's calamity. And so people have responded, and continue to respond, to local needs, and to needs caused by, for example, Hurricane *Katrina* in Louisiana.

I asked one volunteer why she was cleaning up at Westridge. She answered that she

thought it was right thing to do. This *right thing to do* is an interesting response. It may well include both an element of tradition and an element of biblical imperative. We help in time of need because we have been taught so through example by our families and church communities. It is possible we base all of this on our interpretation of the Jesus way of doing things.

To be *community* Mennonites are connected to each other, and to those beyond. The beauty of being *community* is that there is an almost osmotic exchange between the victim of circumstance and the one who responds. We act within ourselves to extend a response. We do not reach out externally because the one who is being helped is essentially us. We are *community* because the victim and the helper are one and the same.

What are your stories of response to natural and other disasters? Would you be willing to share your stories with us? Unless you tell your story, it may never ever be told.

Cont. from Page 1

will update participants on new resources available to assist in genealogy about ancestors from Poland (Prussia) and Germany. In Saturday's final session (mid-afternoon), Glenn will review the Family Tree DNA (FTDNA) Project, explaining what we have to gain by participating in surname tracking in genealogy using the Mennonite DNA Project which he coordinates with Tim Janzen.

## WE ARE ON THE WEB

The New  
**Mennonite Historical Society**  
 of Saskatchewan  
 website address is:

**[www.mhss.sk.ca](http://www.mhss.sk.ca)**

## Editorial - Verner Friesen

On display in our archives are a host of historical magazines that our Historical Society receives regularly. So why do we bother to add another publication to that impressive collection? As I see it, our unique role is to tell the stories of Mennonite people and families who live and have lived in Saskatchewan, as well as the stories of Mennonite communities and churches in Saskatchewan. We want to include stories from the different Mennonite groups and Conferences we have or have had in the various parts of our province. Thankfully, some of you are helping by sending stories that we would not otherwise be aware of.

The interesting variety of articles included in this issue will tell you about: 1) A pioneer family who began homesteading in southern Saskatchewan in 1911, using a big steam engine for threshing. 2) Five generations of the same family who have lived on the same farm continuously for 100 years. 3) A German publication which had its roots in Saskatchewan and has faithfully served Mennonite people in Saskatchewan and beyond for over 80

years. 4) A person who grew up in Saskatchewan who, with her husband and family, is living and working among Muslims in Burkina Faso, Africa. 5) A child born during the Russian Revolution, at the very hour that her father was making supper in the adjoining room for a house full of rowdy Russian bandits. 6) The good old Baton's catalogue which served pioneer communities well beginning in 1884.

In this issue we also, again, inform you of special events, past and still to come, some sponsored by our Historical Society and others that may be of interest to you. Two book reviews make you aware of new books about Mennonite people and Mennonite life.

We sincerely hope that you will receive pleasure and inspiration from reading what is in these pages. We appreciate getting responses from our readers. Please remember to check your address label; yellow highlighting indicates that your \$25 per year membership is due. You will not want to miss receiving the next issue of the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian which, we expect, will be out next February.



Picture of

### EATON HOUSE

Courtesy of the  
Western Development  
Museum, Saskatoon

See more on Eaton's on  
Pages 27 & 28

## Report on CONGRESS 2007

By Victor G. Wiebe

From 26 May to 2 June 2007 the 76th annual Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Canada met in Saskatoon. This was part of the 100th anniversary celebrations of the University of Saskatchewan. The week long meeting titled CONGRESS 2007 was a success. There was a registration fee for the Congress but anyone could attend by paying a daily \$15.00 registration.

Each year Canadian teachers, scholars and academics meet and read scholarly papers and report on their research. Because there were several hundred different presenters and since many Mennonite academics teach and study in the humanities and social sciences there were quite a few papers of interest to Mennonites. An examination of just the titles of the papers revealed about 10 presentations with the word "Mennonite" in their title. A dozen more papers were given by other prominent Mennonite authors. Authors usually gave a 20 minute paper followed by about 10 minutes for questions and discussion. Of course visiting was one of the big activities of the Congress.

I attended about a dozen papers in areas that interested me and found that several of these presentations surprised me because they provided information about Mennonites where their titles gave no indication of Mennonite content. For example Gary Bowler presented a paper titled "The Canadian Battle for Christmas." This paper described several groups that protested against the celebration of Christmas by Canadian Government agencies. One group that protested were Mennonite youth in Manitoba. This puzzled most people because as Christians Mennonites liked to celebrate Christmas but it seemed to Bowler that Mennonites disliked the excess that always accompanies Christmas.

Another paper was by Catherine Bowler titled: "Left to tell? Canadian Missions and the Challenge of the Rwandan Genocide." The author examined how the Mennonite press reported on the genocide. Mennonites were chosen because we have a strong well established press but had no missionary or church programs in Rwanda. The Catholic and Adventist press reports were also examined as churches that had large missions and organizations in Rwanda. Examining the Mennonite press revealed to the author that Mennonites were rather naive in their reporting and in understanding the situation.

Because Mennonites had people and programs set up in neighbouring Zaire (now called Democratic Republic of the Congo) we began to help the refugees who escaped to Zaire and our press reported the awful condition of these people. As it turned out, the refugees who fled to Zaire were actually the people who had done the genocide and were on the losing side of the war caused by the genocide. Mennonites, in feeding and assisting refugees, actually enabled them, in part, to recover and go back and do more killing. A very unrewarding outcome to refugee assistance.

There was one session on the morning of Tuesday 29 May of the Canadian Society of Church History devoted to the topic: "Exploring the North American Mennonite Experience." Bruce L. Guenther chaired this session and three authors, Brian Froese of the Canadian Mennonite University, Royden Loewen of the University of Winnipeg and our own Alan Guenther of Briercrest College and Seminary gave papers. In the future most of the papers will be published in a variety of journals.

Next year's congress, **Congress 2008**, is being planned for the early summer of 2008 to be held at University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Since that is my old home town I think I'll see if I can make a visit out there this coming summer.

# Nota bene: mark well and observe

## Our Reader's Page: Announcements and Questions

### History - Genealogy Weekend

Sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society  
of Saskatchewan

**Friday, November 9 and  
Saturday, November 10, 2007**

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

#### Theme:

#### The Story of the Prussian Mennonites

##### **Friday, 7:00 pm**

Special Music - A Buncha Guys  
Guest Speaker - Peter J. Klassen

"Lights of Hope on the Vistula: light that radiated across much of Europe and into America"

##### **Saturday, 9:30 am**

Registration: \$15 per person, \$25 per couple  
(includes noon lunch)

**Ted Regehr** - Power Point presentation on the  
Prussian/Danzig/Polish Mennonites

**Glenn Penner** - New Resources for Genealogy  
of Prussian Mennonite Ancestors

#### Noon Lunch

**Peter J. Klassen** -  
"The Lure of an Enlightened Culture:  
Mennonite Faith Meets Prussian Culture".

**Glenn Penner** - The Family Tree DNA Project

### The Bill Epp Show

by Victor G. Wiebe

An exhibit featuring a few life-sized and small bronze sculptures of William (Bill) Harold Epp (1930-1995) is touring the province.

#### The Bill Epp Show itinerary:

**December 2007 - January 2008:**  
Art Gallery of Prince Albert:  
142 12th St. W. Prince Albert, SK

**February - May 2008:**  
The Godfrey Dean Art Gallery,  
49 Smith St. E. Yorkton, SK.

**June - July 2008:**  
Barr Colony Heritage Cultural Centre,  
4515 44th St., Lloydminster, SK.

**August - September 2008:**  
Estevan National Exhibition Centre,  
118 4th St. Estevan, SK.

#### Is Your Membership Due?

If your membership has expired, the date on your address label will be highlighted in yellow. 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.

Bill Epp was born on a farm near Glenbush, Saskatchewan and had a life long passion for art. He attended Avery school and took grades 11 and 12 at Rosthern Junior College. Wynona Mulcaster and other Saskatchewan artists were his mentors. Bill first taught school and then in 1967 joined the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Saskatchewan.

He built his bronze casting studio just outside of Martensville, Saskatchewan. Bill Epp was a mentor to an entire generation of Saskatchewan sculptors and was a kind, humble and generous friend and teacher to all he met. Much of Bill's larger sculptures are displayed publicly around Saskatoon.

A large pamphlet simply titled The Bill Epp Show (The Prairie Sculptor's Association, [Regina, 2006]) accompanies the Show.

The Bill Epp Show has already toured North Battleford, Swift Current and Saskatoon.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

When sending us money, please specify whether it is intended to be:

- 1) a donation for the work of the **Historical Society**;
- 2) your membership fee, which includes a subscription to this **Historian**; or
- 3) divided between both of the above.

### I Try

Lord,

Never in a million years  
Could I adequately thank You  
For Your amazing goodness  
Your matchless love—  
But I like to try

## Mennonites Among Muslims

*The September, 2007 issue of the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian carried an article by Alan M. Guenther titled "Mennonites Among Muslims". It told about Mennonite contacts with Muslim communities during the Great Trek to Central Asia towards the end of the 19th century. Below is a story about modern day Mennonite contacts with Muslim communities in Burkina Faso, Africa. Donna (Kampen) Entz is from Fiske, Saskatchewan and Loren Entz from Elbing, Kansas. The Entz family has lived among the Samogho people of Burkina Faso since 1987.*



**Loren & Donna Kampen Entz**  
**Samogho Prayer Page - May, 2007**  
(Used by permission)

Suddenly, the night before Easter, Blangama and others decided that this would be the night to show the Jesus film. It was shown in Kwepiri's courtyard with the largest colour television (powered by gasoline generator) in Saraba, where all elders and older women were invited, and many of our age group as well. There was total silence for the whole film, a rare happening. The courtyard was full, and it was good others weren't aware of it, because they would have been frustrated not being able to hear. The following few days, word got around and people came to us who were upset they hadn't got to see it. Then it was shown to two small groups around people's personal DVD players, with

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black and white televisions run on solar energy. Since then, others have asked to watch the film, and some said that we need to show it every two days for awhile until they really get it all, and everyone would have a chance to see it at least once that way.

After we attended church Easter morning in Samgohohiri, Donna and best friend, Muso Kura, cooked and distributed rice and sauce to share the joy of the Easter day. The next morning, there were many thanks for the food and discussions, especially between Loren and the Muslim neighbours and leaders who received the food. Loren gave many explanations of the gospel message, based on the film for those who had seen it.

Donna continues with her nightly family visits, though there have been interruptions for election campaign meetings and also weddings, which take many (including us) to neighbouring villages. She takes along an African artist's version of the crucifixion and resurrection stories, and discusses that as people are interested, besides continuing with the prodigal son story and Christian songs. These evenings are a delight, as people understand why Jesus came, what his death and resurrection accomplished and even why we came to their village. It's a disappointment when other village activities take priority for an evening.

This last week on Friday Holy Day, when no one goes to the field, a whole group of men congregated in our yard. The discussion was lively about what crops should be planted and in what proportions. With the cotton prices falling and fertilizer prices rising, the group was very open to Loren's suggestions about planting more traditional crops that need less fertilizer than corn. Donna decided to put off computer work, and instead, make a favourite breakfast food for the whole group. It was greatly appreciated, and there were benedictions of thanks. Suddenly, the Imam (leader

of Muslim community) asked us when they would get to see more of this Issa (that's Jesus in the Koran). Another asked if we really didn't want them to see the film. We said that we wanted them to see it, and that's why we tried to set it up on a big screen (my light blue sheet), but that we hadn't got the projector to work on the village generators. We said we were committed to getting it shown. Though it has dragged out longer than we wanted, it's good that people are anxious to watch it, and will pay attention when we do show it. We ask for prayers that this showing could take place and that God speak to people's hearts.

## Reflections on Der Bote

by Dick H. Epp

When I was a young lad of fourteen, my father took me to the office of Der Bote in Rosthern to meet Dietrich H. Epp, the editor. The first thing Mr. Epp said to me was, "So you are D.H. Epp. You have the same name as I." Having said that, he walked over to the linotype machine and typed out my name: "D.H. Epp". When the lead had cooled and the slug came out, he fastened it in a wooden frame, brushed some black ink over it and then placed a piece of paper on top, which he then rolled with a heavy roller. When he picked up the paper, my name was on it. He gave me the lead slug to take home. I had met the editor of Der Bote, Mr. D.H. Epp. I can proudly say that I have met all the other editors since that time.

Today we are coming to the end of an 84 year history of Der Bote. It is in many ways a sad time, but when we look back, Der Bote has served our people well. We are grateful for this opportunity and should join the Psalmist in Psalm 95, "Come, let us praise the Lord."

Our first editor, Dietrich Epp, had a vision of a paper that would serve the new immigrants in a language that they understood. It was strongly supported by men like David Toews, Chairman of the Mennonite Board of Colonization, Abraham A. Friesen, Business Manager of the Colonization Board, and Gerhard Ens,



D.H. Epp (First Editor of *Der Bote*)

M.P. for the Rosthern Constituency, who believed that the newspaper would serve as a reliable communication source for all the Mennonite newcomers. They would now be able to make announcements and present progress reports of the CPR debts, and to let readers know who had recently arrived from the old country and where they were located. A. A. Friesen, who knew the English language and was skilled in business, helped Dietrich Epp make arrangements with M. Frawley, owner of the Rosthern Valley News Printing Services, to print *Der Bote*. Dietrich Epp's prayer had been answered.

So, on January 14, 1924, the first issue of the *Mennonitische Immigranten Bote* rolled off the press. Dietrich Epp, with the assistance of his wife, Malwine, and Agatha Lehn, folded the papers, pasted on the address labels and the one cent stamps and mailed them. Dietrich Epp was elated. In his first editorial he wrote as follows:

"All beginnings are difficult. And I admit that the *Mennonitische Immigranten Bote*'s first attempts may not be easy, since it is new in this country.

Therefore, it may falter, perhaps even stumble; but hopefully, it will soon find a smooth path back into this land with a secure and confident stride, as it should be.

"Also for me, the beginning will be difficult, since I must equip *Der Bote* for its journey. Because of my faith in God and in the good cause, I have undertaken the editorship of this paper. But, also in your faith, dear immigrant brothers, to whom the first issues will come. Accept it in your household and subscribe to it. Include it with your letters to the old homeland, share your experiences in it, your hopes, and your joys; inquire about anything you need to know. *Der Bote* is prepared to communicate with you in all matters. *Der Bote* will be your advisor in all of life's emergencies.

"And to you, dear brothers in Canada, the *Mennonitische Immigranten Bote* will be hoping to find a place at your family table. For your Christian charity in helping us come here and offering us such kind hospitality, we are grateful. Also, with you we want to form a common bond of friendship. We invite you to participate in our life and our future. The *Immigranten Bote* will tell you what it feels like to be an immigrant brother, and from them you will feel their struggles and learn about their spirit. Help us in our new work, subscribe to the new *Bote*, help us with your experiences, give us good advice which we will gratefully acknowledge. By exchanging ideas with one another, our understanding and knowledge will help to bind us closer together.

"We immigrants did not come here to live in isolation, but to join with you, like a large family, and work together to build the Kingdom of God on earth, to unravel the ethical ideals that our faith teaches us and to raise the spiritual culture of our people." D.E.

In 1925 the name changed to *Der Bote* and since then, *Der Bote* has been a messenger to thousands of readers. The column, *Licht von Oben*, has appeared in every issue of *Der Bote* ever since. It tells us that Epp's philosophy to help build the Kingdom of God on earth and to teach our people about the word of God has sustained.

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Epp not only spoke to the immigrants of the 1920's but also held out his hand to the 1870 and 1890 immigrants who arrived in Canada under completely different circumstances and asked them to join Der Bote in presenting the work of the Lord.

David Toews added a preface to the first issue of Der Bote. He compared it to a newborn child receiving much love. He believed that the reader would treat the new paper in a similar manner. Were David Toews alive today, he would, undoubtedly, say that the child had grown and matured, leaving a legacy to the next generation. Here is what he said: "The Immigranten Bote is making its first appearance. As when a child is born, the older brothers and sisters are curious to look into the cradle to see their small baby brother and to show him their love, and so it will be in our newspaper family. There has been whispering for some time now that a small newspaper would soon make its appearance. Now it is here. In the family, mother and father encourage the older siblings to handle their small brother in a friendly and responsible manner. In the larger newspaper family this is not necessary. The older brothers do not begrudge the small fellow his place in the sun, and that is right. Perhaps the question is loudly asked here and there: Why add another paper to the ones we already have? In the olden days the names given to children always had a meaning. And so it is here. Because of the immigration in the last year, new circumstances have come into being. Friends, neighbours, brothers and sisters, who all shared their joys and sorrows in the old country, brought their traditions to this new land. Through circumstances, they were separated from their loved ones. "Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta are hosting many of our immigrants. Still they wish to be united, in spite of the fact that they are scattered. Our new paper will keep them in touch.

"We cannot expect the bigger and older newspapers to carry the interests of our immigrants. They have different mandates. Through Der Bote the immigrants want to be informed about their former homeland, about the immigration and all questions pertaining to this, about places where they may be able to settle down, summarily, everything that may be of interest to immi-

grants. Der Bote is capable and willing to do this. The immigrants expect this, and rightly so. This paper should cater to their interests.

"We wish the small Bote above all, a friendly welcome. The immigrants will willingly accept it, since it is, first of all, their Bote. The friends of the immigrants will also welcome it because they are interested in the welfare of their guests. The older papers will welcome its appearance, since it is their younger brother. Inwardly, they hope that when Der Bote becomes bigger, it will fulfill its friendly and proven services well.

"Therefore, go ahead little Bote, and fulfill your obligations. Spread rays of sunshine on those who often travel in the dark valleys of gloom. Bring news that they (immigrants) read eagerly, and serve as a uniting force for all those who are scattered in various communities.

"We wish all of our youngsters as well as our Bote growth and success." D.T.

Today we look back with thanksgiving on the many fruitful years we have had publishing Der Bote. Although Dietrich Epp was the founder of Der Bote, others after his death in 1955 have carried on the work of the paper, and today, when subscriptions are under 2000, we see the end coming. Unfortunately, Der Bote will cease to publish as of March 2008. In the meantime we, as a board, are attempting to carry on the work of Der Bote with the same fervor with which it was begun. Readers today still look forward to each copy as it arrives in the mail, and for this we are truly grateful. It is this show of faith which was shown by Dietrich H. Epp and David Toews eighty-four years ago that perpetuates this spirit.

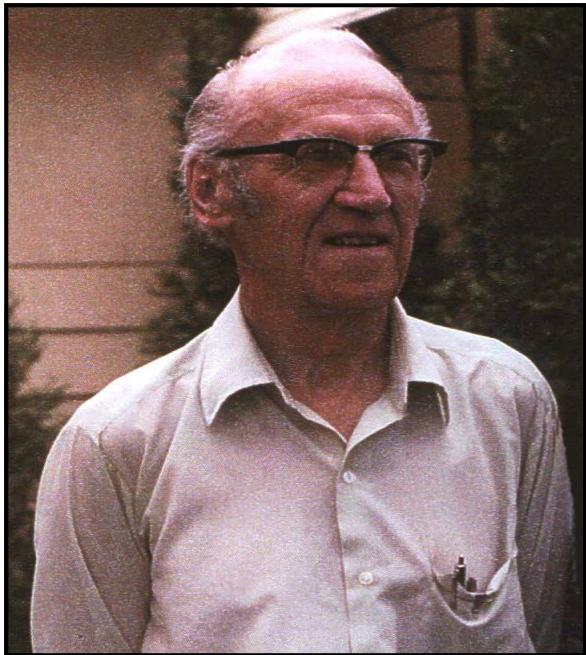


Ingrid Lamp

Present Editor

of

Der Bote



**Jacob E. Friesen**  
1906—2007

## Prominent Local Historian Dies at Age 101

The September, 2006 issue of the *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian* featured the life story of Jacob E. Friesen. J.E. Friesen was on the *Historian's Honour List* for his outstanding contribution to the preservation of local history in the Hague area. Following is the tribute to J.E. Friesen presented by his family at his funeral service on June 30, 2007.

At the age of five, our Dad moved to Hague with his parents Johan A. and Eva Friesen, sister Eva and brothers John C. and Abram C. They moved from Manitoba where the family owned the village store in Rosenort. Dad often attributed his passion for sweets to the fact that he "grew up in a store."

In 1916 the family traveled to California where other relatives resided, and purchased a farm a half mile from Reedley. Dad had happy memories of his two-and-a-half years in California where he and his siblings had numerous cousins to play with. During the fall months through early summer they attended a German school one year and English school the next year. The remainder of his elemen-

tary education took place in Hague. He tasted peanut butter for the first time in California and he has eaten it almost every day of his life from that day onward.

Upon their return to Saskatchewan the family lived for several months in Hague, and then purchased a small farm south of Hague where Dad lived until he moved to Saskatoon to enroll in a business course of bookkeeping. After the classes were completed he went to work for his brother, John C. Friesen, in Rosthern. Here he met a lovely young telephone operator, Agatha Klassen, who would become his wife. Our Mom and Dad were married in Rosthern by Rev. I.P. Friesen on September 11, 1927. To this union were born three daughters: Elma, Sylvia and Carole. They built their home in Hague where J.E. would live for the next 76 years.

By this time Johan had retired, leaving the business to his sons J.E. and Abe, and son-in-law John Wieler. Dad's outgoing personality earned him many friends during the 47 years in Friesen's Dry Goods Store.

From his mother he inherited an artistic talent and much time was spent at his art easel, pallet and brush in hand. Today many of his creations adorn the walls of avid purchasers and can also be found in the homes of this children and grandchildren. Several were donated to the Hague Museum. He was frequently called upon for a "chalk talk" during Sunday evening "Jugendverein" and with 15-20 minutes the theme of a hymn would emerge into a picture. Each week for Sunday School he had a new picture portraying a Bible story: Daniel in the lion's den, ravens providing food for Elijah, and hundreds more. He also drew onto sizeable pieces of fabric, a series of large murals depicting scenes from the Christmas story.

He was intrigued with his forefathers and delved into his personal ancestry. Pen in hand he drew an enormous family tree of his lineage for eight generations on a canvas roll-up window blind. Dad was enthralled with local history. He lived in Hague almost from its earliest beginnings and became acquainted with some of the first settlers. He painstakingly recorded the location of various businesses and the owners in large albums, accompanying each bit of information with a sketch and an anecdote about many of the persons being described. He produced an entire bookcase full of albums portraying the history of Hague.

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Included are the school and staffs throughout the years, the railway station and its agents, the flour mill from its beginning to its fiery demise, and each of the grain elevators and their operators. These annals have been donated to the Hague Museum. To commemorate deceased residents of Hague and area, he has compiled two large albums which record names, pictures, birth and death dates. He drew detailed maps of the old and new cemeteries.

A keen appreciation of antiques led to a small display of a few items on a high shelf in the store. As his interest grew so did the collection, manifesting in a treasure trove of antiquities which occupied a large room in the basement of his home. Antique dealers and other interested folk frequently came by to scrutinize these treasures. Classroom teachers brought their students to examine these objects of long ago and to learn the history and use of them. Eventually Dad lost interest and divested items to his children and grandchildren and to the Hague Museum. Besides antiques, he collected stamps, old coins and silver dollars.

Another interest was music. He played a variety of instruments but most enjoyed the violin and cello. He relished getting together with other musicians for an evening of harmony.

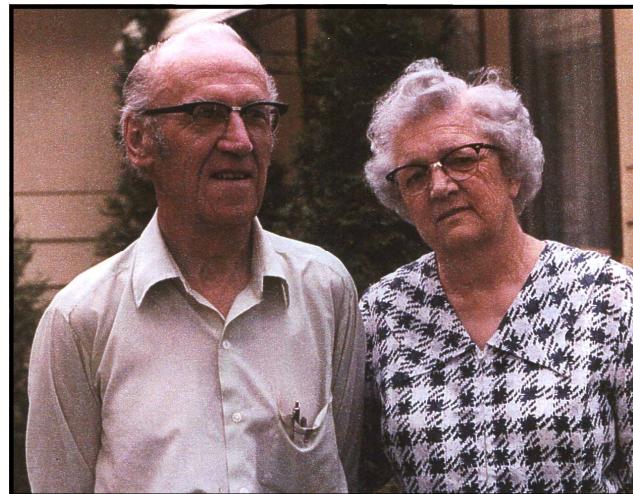
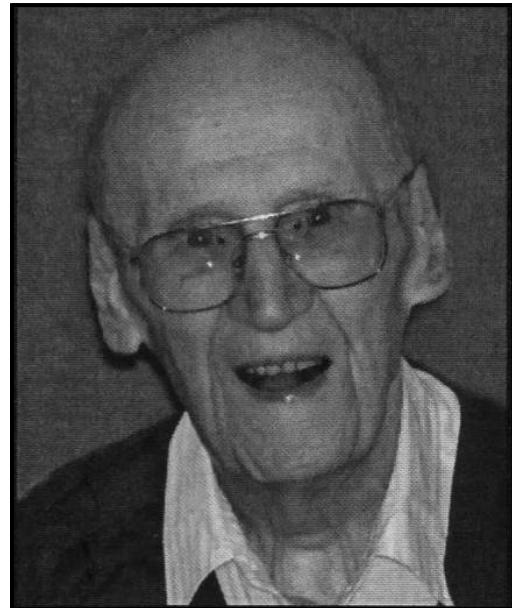
Aside from all this, he had time to teach typng to anyone who was interested. Many typists benefited from his instruction.

In 2002, five years after his beloved Agatha went to be with the Lord, Dad moved from his home in Hague into the Mennonite Nursing Home near Rosthern. Until that time he was Hague's longest resident. He spoke positively and with great appreciation of his 91 years in the Hague area.

The most significant thing in our Dad's life has been his spiritual quest. His love for the Lord Jesus Christ enriched and sustained him throughout his lifetime. He taught Sunday School for 35 years as well as Bible study sessions. While still in his

home, each new day began with scripture reading and prayer at the kitchen table. His well-worn Bibles are a testimony to his faithful discipleship. Most frequently he used a German edition, translated in Low German as he went. At the age of 101 years he still testified of his love for his Saviour and recited Bible verses in ABC order, saying one or more verses for each letter of the alphabet. His heartfelt prayers were spoken volumes from the heart of total devotion and dedication to the One who died for him and has received him into glory.

Dad is mourned by his loving daughters: Elma (Allan) McLachlan, Calgary, Sylvia (John) Schmidt, Prince Albert, and Carole (Harvey) Reddekopp, Warman. Also left to cherish his memory are seven grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren.



Mr. & Mrs. J. E Friesen



Guenther Farm, as it was in 1948 when Jacob and Annie took over the farm from Jacob's parents.

The barn was built in 1908, the house in 1920.

## One Hundred Years on the Guenther Farm

*On June 23, 2007 close to 300 people gathered on the Guenther farm just north of Osler, Saskatchewan for a centennial celebration. Five generations of Guenthers have lived on this farm over the 100-year period. Peter and Katharina Guenther had moved onto this farm in 1907, having recently come from Manitoba. Currently, Joe Guenther and his son and daughter-in-law occupy the two houses on the yard-site.*

*Guests at the centennial celebration included Guenther and Driedger uncles and aunts and many cousins, as well as some friends and neighbours. Current Lt. Governor of Saskatchewan, Rt. Hon. Gordon Barnhart and his wife, Naomi, were also present. Mrs. Barnhart hails from the Osler community.*

*An interesting feature of the evening was a*

*museum set up to display many items which had been passed on to various members of the Guenther family by the first generation of Guenthers, Peter and Katharina. Also on the program were a power point presentation and the reading of the 100-year history of the farm, prepared for the occasion by Brent Guenther. Following is a condensed version of that historical account.*

### The Guenther Family Farm

1907 – 2007

By Brent Guenther

A farm does not last 100 years because of the quality of the soil, or because of that which falls from the heavens. It succeeds for 100 years because of the kind of people that work, play and love on the land that God has given them. In 100 years, land has been purchased, animals have been raised and buildings have been built and bought. But at the centre of all of these events have been the people who have chosen to work with their heads down and their hands in the soil. One hundred years of success can be attributed to a love for each other

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and a commitment to keep going, no matter what grain prices or the sky had to say about it.

Franz and Katharina Guenther and their family left Russia for Canada in 1875 and spent their first year on the banks of the Red River. Shortly thereafter, the family moved to the village of Schoenwiese, Manitoba, where they farmed with oxen. In 1894, their son, Peter Guenther, married Katharina Loewen, who had recently left Russia with her parents. They were married in the village of Rheinland, Manitoba, and perhaps in an effort to be consistent, they moved to Rheinland, Saskatchewan in 1903.

Peter and Katharina Guenther came by train with their four children, Mary, Katharine, Jacob and Helen. Upon seeing the vast wilder-



Peter & Katharina (Loewen) Guenther family.

Front: Katharina & Peter Guenther

2nd: Katharina, Helena, Anna, Elizabeth & Margaret.  
Back Row: George, Frank, Jake & Peter

ness, Katharina felt that there was no need to unpack - she just wanted to go back to the "other" Rheinland. Peter and Katharina did, however, choose to stay and unpack. While unloading their belongings from the train onto a horse-drawn wagon, the wooden barrel that Katharina had packed all of the glass dishes in, fell to the ground when the horse was spooked by the sound of the train. Peter also fell, but was probably more concerned about the con-

tents of the barrel than for his own well-being. This could not have been a good time for him. His wife didn't want to be there in the first place, and now he had broken all of her dishes. Peter did what many of us would have done and pretended like nothing had ever happened. He took the barrel home for his wife to unpack, and only once he had seen Katharina take every last dish out of the barrel, and saw that none had broken, did he tell her what had happened. There are two things I know for certain - Katharina must have been an incredible packer, and secondly, Peter must have sent many prayers of thanks to God that night.

During the few years that the Guenther family spent in the village, Peter felt the urge to once again move onto a farm. On a cold January day in 1907, Peter took a walk down one of the village streets and met up with a man named Henry Neudorf. It had just so happened that Mr. Neudorf had been having his own second thoughts about his living arrangements on a half section of land just south of Rheinland. Without the convenience of a cup of coffee or a place to sit, they began talking and expressing their wishes for a fresh start. After some deliberation, they decided, right there on the street, to trade places. The most amazing thing about this story is not that they traded places on the spot, but rather, that they did it without consulting their wives! Perhaps Peter had felt confident because he hadn't broken those dishes.

Peter and Katharina wasted no time in making the farm their own and creating a place that would meet their needs. In 1908 they built a new barn that is still a part of the larger barn used today. In 1910 they built a new four-bedroom house with a large pantry and kitchen. During the construction of this house, a tornado came through the area and shifted the house on its foundation so that it would never be completely square. This would not be the last tornado that this house would experience.

Peter and Katharina bought horses, cows, pigs and chickens and began to work their fields with a two-bottom plough, a 10-foot seeder drill and harrows for four horses. These would be the first of many John Deere purchases. Peter learned enough English so that he was able to do business, but often relied heavily on his hands and feet to

get his point across. There were no boys to help out on the farm at this time, so it was Katharine, Helen, Mary, Annie, Elizabeth and Margaret, who were the first real helpers on the farm. Four boys, Peter, Jacob, Frank and George, followed some time after and took up their chores on the farm as they grew up.

As many Mennonites moved to Mexico in the early 1920's, the Guenters bought a couple of quarter sections and donated 10 acres of one section, so that the Old Colony Church could be built on the land. They also bought some more horses and machinery. To house the machinery, they built a machine shed in 1928 which was later used for heifers.

As the lives of some of the children were just beginning, many of the girls were getting old enough to be married. In total, five engagements happened on the farm: Jacob and Katharine Goertzen, Helen and Jacob Giesbrecht, Annie and Abram Giesbrecht, Elizabeth and John Wiebe and Margaret and John Driedger. Of these five couples, four of them spent their first year of marriage on the Guenther farm, living in the same house as their parents. As if their yard and house were not full enough to begin with, the Guenters were kind enough to let a number of friends and relatives move houses onto the yard and live there until they could find other arrangements. Six houses were moved onto the yard in total. Between 1923 and 1927, Katharina and Peter also made room in their own house and summer kitchen for many of their relatives that had come from Russia. It seemed like there was always room for one more.

The hospitality that the Guenther family gave, did not save them from the drought that was about to come. I am reminded of Matthew 5:45, "(God) causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Drought also came to those deserving and those not deserving. During the 1930s, everything was dry and the prices were low. A wagon box full (60 bushels) of wheat got twelve dollars and a few cents. Peter and Katharina used this money to buy presents for the six children they had at home. In 1937 they seeded 300 acres of wheat and 100 acres of oats and didn't get one bushel. During this desperate and difficult time,

Jacob went to Manitoba to work on a farm and rode the rails to get there. (This was a preferred method of travel at this time.) The \$30.00 per month that he made, he sent back to the farm to buy feed. People did what they needed to do, and the Guenther farm was no exception.

1938 was a better year, and this was the first year that the Guenters planted corn, which consisted of 10 acres, planted and harvested by hand. The following year was the best year they had during the 1930s.

1939 was also a great year for love, in that Jacob Guenther and Annie Driedger were married on July 23<sup>rd</sup> by Rev. John Friesen at Annie's parents' home in Neuhorst. They lived with Jacob's parents for one year, and during this time, Jacob and Annie's first child, Cornie, was born. They moved off the farm in the fall of 1940 and bought a house and the northeast quarter of Section 32. Jacob and Annie put much work into their new homestead with new buildings, machinery and livestock. More importantly, they added members to their family, with Frieda, Tena, Joe and Peter, all being born between 1942 and 1947. Back on Peter and Katharina's farm, George was working with his father, and Frank had moved to Saskatoon.

In the spring of 1948, Peter and Katharina offered Jacob and Annie their farm, because George, who had been doing most of the farm work, did not want to farm full time and wanted to move to Saskatoon. This was a difficult decision for Jacob and Annie, because they had put much work into their own farm. But after a few months of deliberating, they decided this would be a good idea. They bought the 204 acres and the buildings from Jacob's parents and traded George their own farm for his portion of the land and the machinery that Jacob and George owned together. Jacob and Annie moved into the main house, and Katharina and Peter moved into a 16' x 28' house that was moved onto the yard. The two houses were joined by a 250 foot lifeline. It was an electric wire, powered by a battery that could be activated by Jacob's parents so that a bell would ring in Jacob and Annie's house if there was ever any trouble, or if they just wanted to visit with a grandchild or two. The special relationships that were forged between the grandparents and grandchildren were made possible by all three generations living on the same yard, and it is something that is still remembered by Peter and Katharina's grandchildren.

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Jacob & Annie (Driedger) Guenther in 1985

Despite George moving to Saskatoon, he and Jacob farmed together for two years. Together, they bought a John Deere Model BR with a 4 1/2 foot tiller in 1949. Not only that, but this tractor had rubber tires! I can only wonder if they ever drove it up and down 8<sup>th</sup> street in Saskatoon to show it off.

Nettie was born on a cold January morning in 1951, and the rest of the clan, Hilda, Edward and Alan were born to the family throughout the rest of the 1950's. It was also in 1951 that the Guenthers began shipping milk. They bought their first registered Rhein Holstein heifer and bull from Ralph Haight in Saskatoon in 1954, and this would be the first of many transactions, and the beginning of a lifelong friendship. The herd today still dates back to those early pedigrees. Jacob sold the milk in eight-gallon cans and they would fill eight of these cans per day.

In 1955 the Guenther farm received electricity, and in 1957 they received a telephone line. It was, of

course, a party line, which helped the Guenthers communicate, but it also helped Grandma keep up on the local gossip. Modern conveniences were happening both in the home and on the field. Jacob often took his father out on the new self-propelled combine, where Peter would say, "I wish I was young again so I could work with that machine." Farming had come a long way since Peter's early days of farming with oxen. Peter was often sick during that year, and during one trip back from the hospital in the fall, he asked Jacob to stop by the fields south of Osler so that he could have one last look at the crops which had looked exceptional that year. Peter had a great love of farming and that was, in fact, the last time he got to look at what he had a part in creating. He died on the farm on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1955.

Katharina stayed on the farm until winter, but she had the help of Frieda or Tena, who would stay with her during the night and take care of the chores. She then went to live with her daughters; first with Jacob and Helen Giesbrecht for the winter, and then eventually, with Katharine and Jacob Goertzen. This is where she passed away on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1958. Jacob understood how hard his parents had



Joe and Linda (Boehr) Guenther in 1985  
Linda passed away in November of 2001

worked to keep the farm going, and now, under new motivation, he vowed he would give farming everything he had.

**Excerpts from the last part of the story of the Guenther Farm:**

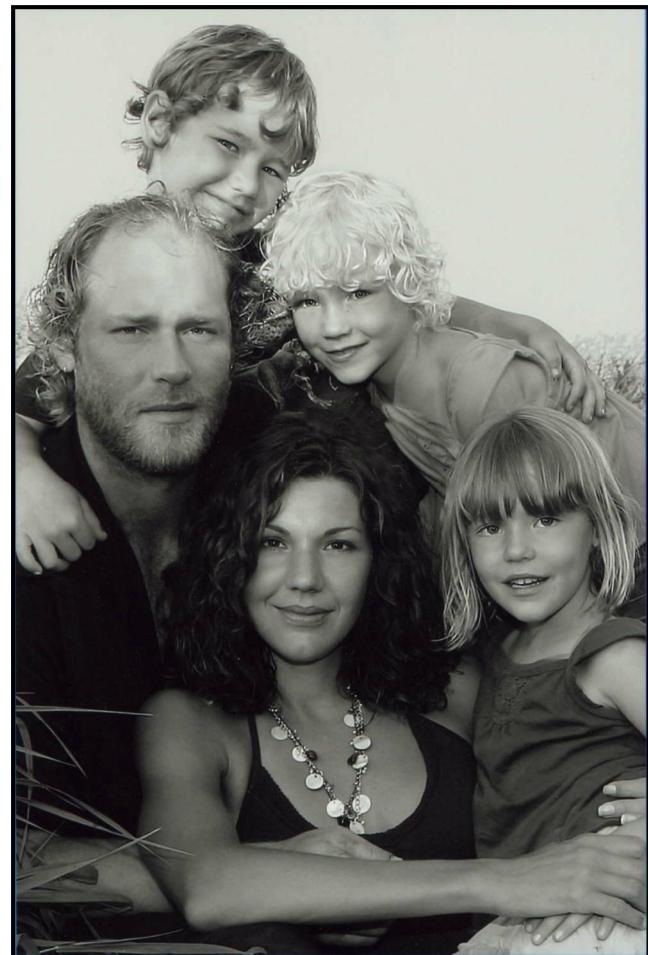
In 1979 Joe and Linda Guenther took over the dairy portion of the farm from Joe's parents. Jacob and Annie had a new house built on the yard site, and Joe and Linda moved into the older home.

July 4, 1996 was an eventful day for the people of the Osler region. Jacob remembers mowing the grass at the Rheinland cemetery and glancing up to see a dark and dangerous-looking sky. Shortly after he arrived home, it began to storm heavily with lightning, thunder, wind, rain and hail. Jacob and Annie looked out of their dining room window and saw the silo coming down. They did not go into the basement. The house began to shake, but they still did not go into their basement. The wooden patio furniture flew by their window and then came back for one more pass in the opposite direction. It was only then that they decided it would be a good idea to go into the basement. Joe and Linda were in their basement with water up to their knees, watching and feeling their house go up and down. The storm did not let up for about two hours, and both couples spent what must have been a very frightening time in the basement. I can only imagine how many times Grandma would have said, "Oh, but nei." They lost power for 24 hours and received five inches of rain in two hours. When they emerged from their basements they saw the devastation. Joe and Linda's house was badly damaged, and so was the barn. All the corrals were down, trees were down, and the garden was completely under water and hail. The t-shirts said "In Osler We Blow Our Tops", and to think, the meteorologists just called it a "plough wind".

They woke up the next morning and went to work. It never crossed their minds to give up. It took much money, time and hard work to get things back to where they had been, but the Guenthers were ready

for it. Like the flooded corn in the garden that refused to die, the Guenthers were also able to push through this difficult time.

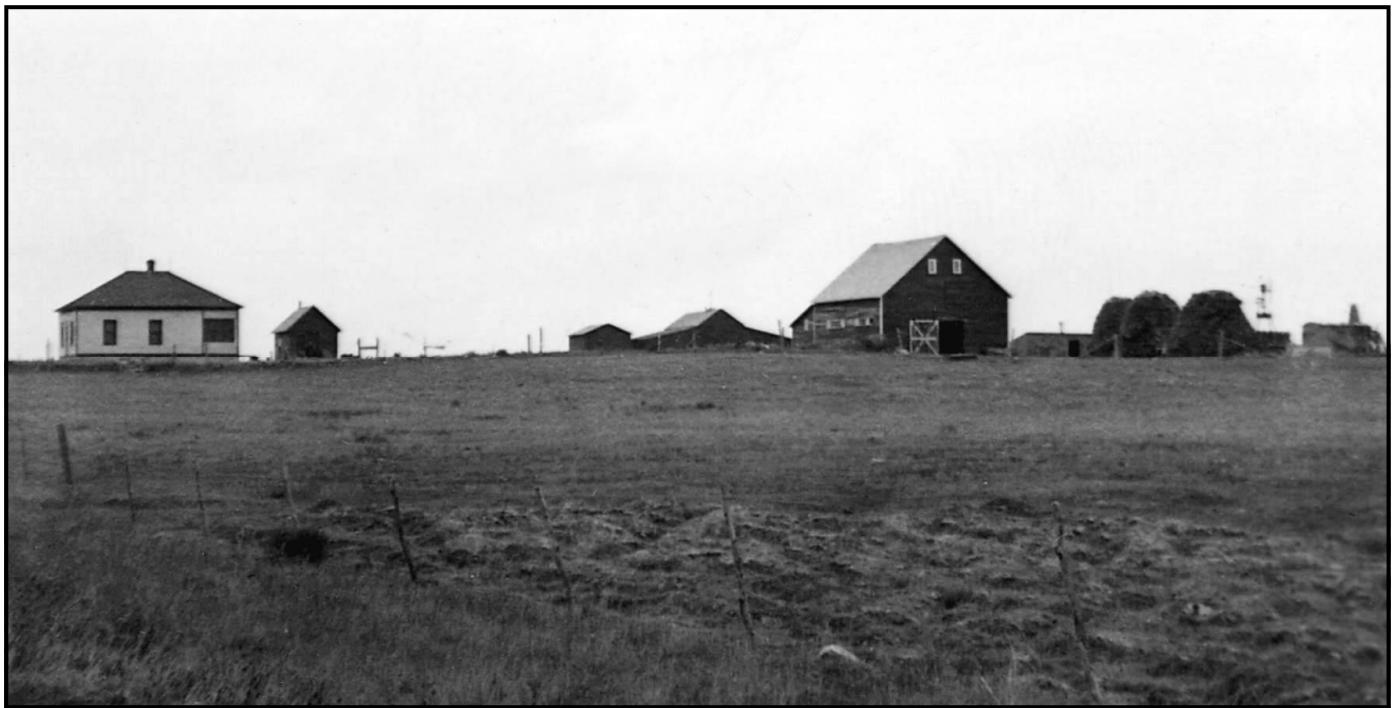
In October of 1996 Jacob and Annie moved into Warman. Upon asking Jacob about retirement, he responds, "I've actually been retired for forty years. I just do what I want. I love getting up in the morning and going to work. I'm always up for the challenge." Nothing could sum up 100 years of the Guenther Family Farm better than that statement, "I'm always up for the challenge." Positive attitudes are hard to come by in farming, but the Guenther family has never run short of them. They have remained strong because of the commitment and love they have for each other and for what they do. You are still able to see it in the eyes of the grandchildren. If you ask Joe's grandchildren if they want to grow up to be farmers, they respond simply with "Yes." May God continue to bless this farm and the people who live and work here.



Chad & Miranda (Hamm) Guenther, with Son Ethan and twin daughters, Isabelle & Abigail.

**SAMUEL & ELIZABETH (FUNK) LEIDING**

By grandson, Jim Lyding



Farmyard of Samuel &amp; Elizabeth Leiding north of Neville, Saskatchewan

By the time that I was starting school at the age of six, my paternal grandparents' journeys through life had already ended. They both died young, according to today's standard--she at 55 and he at 68. Death deprived me of any significant relationship that I could have had with my Dad's parents.

My grandfather, Samuel Leiding, was born on July 6, 1875, the first of eleven children born to Solomon and Maria Leiding. The family emigrated from South Russia and arrived in Quebec City on May 30, 1892. From there they proceeded to Gretna, Manitoba, and then on to Winkler.

My grandmother, Elisabeth Funk, was born on February 9, 1879, the thirteenth of fifteen children born to Jakob and Anna Funk. This family also emigrated from South Russia and arrived in Quebec City on June 19, 1876. From there they proceeded to Schanzenfeld, south of present-day Winkler. Elisabeth was born after

the family's arrival in Canada.

Samuel and Elisabeth were united in marriage on November 25, 1899 in Winkler. From this union were born five sons: Samuel, Jacob, Johan, Peter, and Hermann, and a daughter, Anna. Samuel, Jacob, and Anna were born in Manitoba. The remaining three were born in Saskatchewan.

Prior to coming to Saskatchewan, Samuel and Elisabeth were baptized and became members of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

In my possession is the Dominion Lands Interim Receipt dated February 17, 1911, certifying that Samuel Leiding has paid the sum of ten dollars for Homestead NE 7-12-12-W3 which is north of Neville, Saskatchewan. The Leidings, however, established residence on SW 8-12-12-W3 where Samuel, who was a skilled carpenter, constructed a barn, a machine shop and a spacious house, and also dug a well. Before the house was built though, the family lived in an area which was partitioned from the



Samuel & Elizabeth (Funk) Leiding

rest of the barn. I also remember a summer kitchen located near the house, an ice house, and a smoke house.

Also in my possession are photographs of my grandfather's steam engine and threshing machine. In later years, there was a Minneapolis-Moline harvester (combine), a John Deere tiller (one-way), and an Oliver 99 tractor. On August 10, 1940, a one-ton Ford truck was purchased from Great West Implement Com-

pany in Swift Current.

On October 12, 1934, Grandmother Elisabeth was called from this life due to complications from diabetes. She was laid to rest in the Neville cemetery.

Grandpa Samuel remarried to Amalie Schaak on April 3, 1935 in Winnipeg. She and her youngest son, Edgar, came to make their home on the farm. In the fall of 1942, Samuel and Amalie moved into Swift Current where they resided on Chaplin Street East until Grandfather Samuel departed this life on September 15, 1943 due to encephalomyelitis. His resting place is in the Mount Pleasant Burial Park in Swift Current.

Although my memories of Grandpa Samuel are rather sketchy, I am proud to be a descendant of someone who helped to "open up" the area north of Neville in the early 1900s.



Samuel Leiding's threshing crew and steam engine, 1916  
Upper left standing, Samuel Leiding,  
standing on ground second from left, Samuel Leiding, Jr.



# Mostly About Books

## By Victor G. Wiebe

### Book Editor

John J. Friesen. **Building communities: the changing face of Manitoba Mennonites**

CMU Press, Winnipeg, Manitoba. 2007, ix, 230 pp. Illustrated paper covers \$32.50

John F. Friesen has written, in *Building communities*, a good general textbook type overview of Manitoba Mennonite history. *Building communities* differs from many Mennonite historical works in that Friesen does not focus on people or even congregations but presents an overview of the whole of Manitoba's Mennonite history. Individuals are of course noted and roles of individual congregations are similarly given but the focus is on the sweep of events, ideas and themes that formed people into communities. The idea of "*building community*" is very much the traditional Mennonite idea of the Church as community rather than the Protestant idea of the individual of faith.

Friesen taught Mennonite history for 30 years at CMBC and Canadian Mennonite University before retiring recently. This book *Building communities: the changing face of Manitoba Mennonites* is the product of that long period of teaching and reflection.

*Building communities* divides Manitoba Mennonite history into three parts. Part I, of eight chapters covers the period from settlement in 1870s to the end of the Great War in 1920. Part II encompasses eleven more chapters and is from 1920 to 1950, the aftermath of World War II. Part III is a bit shorter with seven chapters and continues the story to the end of the twentieth century. These parts constitute the first three quarters of the book. The last quarter contains nine appendices mostly of tables listing churches, private schools, periodi-

cals, Mennonite politicians, Mennonite groups, but first giving the full text of the controversial July 1873 letter from John Lowe, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture. Finally, there are eleven hundred endnotes in the book plus a few more in the tables. I found this a bit excessive. However, as I was reading I was wondering how the book would be used by students of Mennonite history. No doubt the end noting may be a good way to guide them on to other sources.

The work contains almost 200 illustrations, mostly photographs. These are well chosen and illustrate much of Mennonite life activities, congregations, people and events. However, most are a little too small for my liking. The pages have large margins, 5.5 cm. and I wonder if some of the photos could have been enlarged and more use made of the generous margins. My only complaint is that in the printing process many photographs look very light, almost washed out.

One of the most confusing aspects of prairie Mennonite history is knowing and understanding of different names of conferences, congregations and Mennonite "*Gemeinde*." Mennonites have used a bewildering number of similar names and acronyms. They have undergone incessant organizational divisions and amalgamations, and made frequent name changes over a rather short period of time and often over provincial borders. In *Building communities* Friesen does a credible job of identifying Manitoba conference names and name changes, and in explaining basic differences in their practices and beliefs.

Finally, I appreciated the care Friesen took in dealing with many controversies and disagreements that rocked the Manitoba communities. From my Saskatchewan perspective Friesen presents a balanced description of what the different sides felt was important in the disagreements.

- **Jakob, Out of the Village**
  - William Driedger

•  
Your Nickel's Worth Publishing,  
Regina Saskatchewan, 2007  
208 pp. Paperback, \$17.00

Reviewed by Jake Ens

Jakob was born in a small Old Colony Mennonite Village in 1922. This book tells about the life of the village, and the adventures of the boy, as he grows into early adulthood from 1928 to 1944. It is written in a manner befitting the Old Colony setting plain, straightforward, direct, very descriptive - thrifty with words.

The story proceeds from one vignette to another, rather like looking at a series of Alan Sapp paintings each vignette, a short story of its own, connected only through the eyes of the growing Jakob.

The book is divided into sections in chronological order, each section prefaced by a brief description of world events occurring in its time. Although the world stage is far away from the quiet village, nevertheless, the events have a direct and powerful impact on the life of the village, and of Jakob.

Though the stories take place in a small, quiet in the land village, they encompass all of the drama, comedy and tragedy, of life everywhere. The themes of love, hate, birth, death, generosity, meanness, sorrow, heaven and hell

are woven through the stories. The villagers are depicted with startling accuracy, often loving, warm, kind, and generous, and occasionally mean and spiteful. Eventually, they learn to live together by the force of necessity, in what is often a difficult environment.

The death of an only daughter in childhood is told simply but with its wrenching agony clearly shown. The gentle humour, so evident in the village, is revealed with the same clarity. The experiences of growing up, including facing the challenges of puberty, are presented in a manner which can only be described in the Low German dialect of the village: they are discussed "derch de blouhm" literally, through the flower, but more accurately translated as, with tact and circumlocution taken to the extreme.

The stories take place during one of the most eventful times in world history, the Great Depression, the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany, the vicious tyranny of Stalin's Russia, all leading to the horror of the Second World War. The village, where the great drought of the 1930s was an unwelcome addition to the misery of the 1930s, was not immune to the fall-out from what was happening in the world. Many Mennonites felt the agonizing conflict between their deeply held pacifism, and the need to combat the evil that was facing the world. This conflict provides the theme for the final vignette.

A glossary of Low German words used in the stories is provided as an insert at the beginning of the book, a very useful tool for non-Low German readers, as well as for those who have lost fluency in what was their mother tongue.

Most of the villages that were a part of Mennonite settlement in Saskatchewan are still physically in their same location; however, they are now part of the mixed urban-rural sprawl around Saskatoon. This little book provides a detailed, and loving, look at what life was like for Mennonites in earlier years.

## Paraguay Mennonite DNA and genealogical research trip summary

January 8-21, 2007

by Tim Janzen

I visited the Menno, Neuland and Fernheim Colonies in Paraguay between January 8 and January 21 on a Mennonite genealogical research and DNA collection trip. I was accompanied by Edgar Gomez, the Director for International Outreach at the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation in Salt Lake City, Utah. We spent the first week in the Menno Colony. The first three days we were in Loma Plata where we stayed with Wilhelm Funk and then we went to Lolita in Menno South for another day. We spent the first two days of the second week in Neu-Halbstadt in the Neuland Colony. The last three days of the second week we were in Filadelphia in the Fernheim Colony.

Overall, the trip was very much a success. Edgar and I collected 250 DNA samples from Mennonites. It was probably one of the most intense two weeks of my life. I was literally doing Mennonite genealogical research and data collection about 14 hours each day. I was frankly overwhelmed by the amount of genealogical information I received and the number of people who wanted to talk to me quite a bit of the time. In Filadelphia in particular, the response was overwhelming.

The people who worked with Edgar Gomez and me were very helpful to us and were essential to our success in this project. Ingrid Epp helped me develop contacts in the various colonies and also helped plan the itinerary. Laura Giesbrecht, Ruth Thiessen and Ernst Eitzen helped organize sample collections in the Menno, Neuland and Fernheim Colonies respectively. Margita Goerzen and Rosali Goerzen provided transportation for Edgar and me and also helped with translation and overall organization of the whole project, particularly in the Fernheim Colony. Their assistance was particularly invaluable.

There was a lot of genealogical information that I collected that was new to the Grandma database. I entered about 1 000 new people into Grandma in

total and made numerous other additions and changes. There was particularly a lot of new information from people who lived in the Neuland and Fernheim Colonies. The collection of samples in the Menno Colony was much simpler than in the Neuland and Fernheim Colonies due to the fact that the ancestors of the people living in the Menno Colony on the whole are already well documented in Grandma and in most cases I simply had to enter the name and birth date of the person giving the sample and possibly also their parents' names. I had to enter much more data for the people from the Neuland and Fernheim Colonies and had to put a lot of time into finding connections within the Grandma database.

The EWZ records were an incredibly helpful reference source as I was doing research concerning people from the Neuland Colony. During my time in the Neuland and Fernheim Colonies I was reminded of the fact that we are missing a huge amount of information about the people who lived in the Molotschna Colony and its daughter colonies after 1835. In many cases it was very difficult to extend people's ancestries back very far on most of their lines if their ancestors were from the Molotschna Colony. Some people had connections and dates from family records that went back into the early 1800's and in some cases to the late 1700's. Other people knew hardly anything more than the names and birth dates of their parents and I had to reconstruct their ancestors from Grandma and other sources.

Some people I interviewed for as much as several hours since they had a lot of information and there were multiple connections within the Grandma database that could be made based on their knowledge and records. In particular, I enjoyed interviewing the very oldest people who had clear memories of their lives in Russia before they immigrated to Paraguay. Among the people who had quite a bit of information was David Hein, who has meticulously recorded much genealogical information pertaining to his family, some of which was originally collected by his father. I gave each person who contributed a DNA sample a copy of their pedigree chart printed from the Grandma database after I had researched their ancestry as best as I could in the time that I had available. People seemed to really appreciate this. In almost all cases I was able to provide people with additional information about their ancestral lines that they hadn't had before.

I visited two of the Mennonite archives in Paraguay, the one in Asuncion and the one in Philadelphia. The archive in Asuncion has a large collection of books pertaining to Mennonite history, but not that much in the way of primary genealogical research material. The archive in Philadelphia doesn't have that many Mennonite genealogy books, but it does have some very important genealogical materials. Of significant interest are the original church registers for the Fernheim Colony. These give a lot of information about where people were from in Russia and generally include the birth dates and birthplaces for each of the family members. Unfortunately, the names of the parents of the heads of families are not generally given other than the name of the father of the husband of the family. There are no plans to publish the original church registers at this time. I was told that the Menno Colony does not have any early church registers available, but that they do have a vital records office that includes information about births, marriages, and deaths going back to 1926 when the colony was founded.

There are quite a few Mennonite family history and genealogy books that have been published in Paraguay in recent years, many of which are of high quality. I purchased a book entitled "Atlas der Siedlungsdoerfer der Kolonie Neuland" that includes the names and birth dates of the original settlers of the Neuland Colony, but I am not aware of any early church registers for that colony.

This was the first research trip I have taken in which I was using Legacy as my primary program to enter data into the Grandma database. Overall, I have found Legacy to be a relatively good program to use in comparison to Brothers Keeper 6. I think that data entry is slightly faster in general in BK 6 due to the fact that BK 6 doesn't require that each person's data be saved after it has been entered. However, the name code search feature is much faster in Legacy than in BK 6 which makes searches much better. I also really like the format in which I currently have organized the search results.

The most significant problem that I had was that I ran the maintenance function on the Grandma data-

base in Legacy and it took my laptop computer over THREE days to run the function. This forced me for those 3 days to switch to data entry in Grandma 4.27 in BK 6 which I also happened to have on my laptop. Finally I was able to switch back to Legacy after the function had been run, but running the function program in the background slowed down my computer and also made it difficult for me in that I sometimes had portions of new families entered in both my Legacy and BK 6 versions. My laptop is almost 4 years old, but it certainly isn't particularly slow. Other than this problem, all of our equipment worked perfectly and we didn't have any serious technical problems.

One of the highlights of the trip for me was finding a second cousin, once removed, named Walter Siemens, who is a descendent of my great great grandfather's brother Franz Janzen (b. 1840). I had been hoping to locate descendants of his branch of the family for almost 30 years and was pleased to finally find this branch of the family. I had found this branch of the family in the Busau church records about 5 years ago and those records told me that they had moved from Crimea to the Omsk area about 1911. However, I didn't know what happened to them after that. I was somewhat surprised to find that some members of the family had moved to Paraguay in 1929. I found out about this as I was entering the data into the Grandma database from one of the last pedigree charts that I had collected. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to meet Mr. Siemens at the time he donated the sample since he came only for about 5 minutes or so and I didn't review his pedigree chart until just before we left for Asuncion. I also found a Mierau cousin I hadn't been aware of.

I also enjoyed visiting Lewina (Wiebe) Doerksen, who had worked on my parents' farm in Oregon 20 years ago for 6 months as a Mennonite Central Committee trainee. She now helps run a home in Asuncion with her husband for 50 children who come from troubled backgrounds.

The DNA results that have come in from the testing done thus far give fascinating insight into the geographic origin of various Mennonite surnames. The Y chromosome results strongly suggest that the progenitors of Mennonites with the surnames Epp, Loewen, Wiebe, and Hiebert, as well one line of Janzens and one line of

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Wielers, were Frisians and thus originally lived in the area of Friesland, which is located in the north-eastern portion of the Netherlands. The results for Mennonites with the surnames Fehr, Thiessen, Neufeld, Friesen, and Wall indicate that their progenitors were of Anglo-Saxon origin, suggesting that they originally lived somewhere in the vicinity of the Netherlands or northwestern Germany. The data for Mennonites with the surnames Dyck, Bartsch, and Reimer would suggest that their progenitors lived along the coast of Europe, possibly as far south as Spain at one point. The data for Mennonites with the surnames Froese, Ratzlaff, as well as one line of Wielers and one line of Schroeders, would suggest that they were part of a common European variety called the Atlantic Modal Haplotype.

At this time the results indicate that the surnames Froese, Hiebert, Janzen, Schroeder, and Wieler have at least two progenitors for each of these surnames. The results for people with other surnames such as Penner, Wiebe, Dyck, Braun, Friesen, and Epp suggest that each of these surnames has only one progenitor based on the results for people with these surnames who have been tested thus far. Additional testing of men from other surnames will provide more information.

Mitochondrial DNA test results are only available for 15 people of Prussian/Dutch Mennonite ancestry at this time. The results indicate that none of the 15 people tested share a close maternal ancestor. Mitochondrial DNA haplogroups represented thus far from the people tested include haplogroups H, I, and J. No autosomal DNA or X chromosome DNA data is available yet. Hopefully, this data will be available within the next year or so. It seems clear that as we accumulate more and more DNA data from people of Mennonite ancestry that we will be able to gain further insights into the origins of each Mennonite surname and will also be able determine genealogical relationships that can't be determined through traditional research.

I hope to be able to take another trip to Paraguay in

the next year or two to collect more samples and genealogical data and to share the DNA results for the people from whom we collected DNA samples on this trip. I would like to go for at least 3 weeks on the next trip that I take there. It would be nice if I could visit some of the other colonies that I was not able to visit on this trip, in addition to revisiting the Menno, Neuland, and Fernheim Colonies.

### ARAB PROVERBS

Squeeze the past like sponge,  
smell the present like a rose,  
and send a kiss to the future.

The woman killed herself with work,  
yet the feast lasted only one day.

God sends almonds to those without teeth.

The wound of words is worse than the wound of swords.

Ask the experienced rather than the learned.

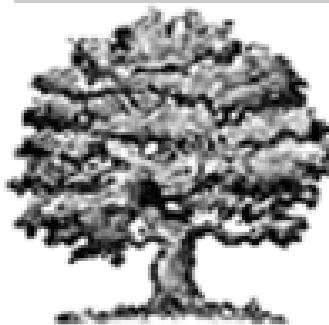
Trust in God but tie up your camel.

There are plenty of people  
who will give you advice,  
but very few who will give you bread.

A loving eye to all your faults is blind,  
while hating eyes will every weakness find.

While the word is yet unspoken,  
you are the master of it;  
when once it is spoken,  
it is master of you.

When you are dead,  
your sister's tears will dry as time goes on,  
your widow's tears will cease  
    in another's arms,  
but your mother will mourn you  
    until she dies.



# The Family Tree

Genealogy Editor—Rosemary Slater

*Preserving your family history for future generations*



Grandmother Maria Lehn with Elsbeth Penner. Aunt Katie Lehn, Maria Lehn Penner, Peter J. Penner, Grandfather Isaac Lehn with Helen Penner. Taken in Lechfeld, Germany in 1923.

## Profile - Elsbeth Penner Bergen

(Reprinted by permission from *Bethany Manor Chronicle*,)

My mother, Marie Lehn Penner, and father Peter Johan Penner, lived with a widow Dyck in Rosenthal near Chortitza (in present Ukraine). Mrs. Dyck's cottage at this time was occupied by fifteen rowdy Machnowitze (Russian bandits) of the Russian Revolution.

The day was November 3, 1919. Next to the room where these bandits were very rowdy, my mother lay in labour, giving birth to her first child - a daughter. While my mother was in agony giving birth, my father was ordered to cook supper for the 15 bandits. All the men were drinking and rowdy, except one young Russian boy, who had been forced to join this group of bandits. He didn't take part in their drinking or loud conversation. Instead he hid behind the oven. He had heard the new baby cry. When the troop was

leaving the next morning, Sasha (as I call him) asked my father's permission to see the new baby. Daddy had remembered the boy's quiet behaviour from the night before, and allowed Sasha into mother's room. Quietly, he approached the bed where mother lay, took a silver teaspoon from his pocket and gave it to mother, saying he wished the child would grow to be a healthy, strong young woman, and have a long life. The teaspoon has survived the years since then, as has the child. I am that child, and the teaspoon now is with my daughter, Elsie Bergen Epp.

The Mennonite Board of Colonization had worked out a plan for Mennonites from South Russia to emigrate to Canada, the USA or South America. Because of the starvation that was sweeping across Mennonite villages in Ukraine, my parents were among the first to accept this offer. My parents, with me and sister Helen, left Rosenthal in the fall of 1923 on a freight train to Riga, then to an army camp in Lechfeld, Germany, where all emigrants were screened. Canada did not accept anyone with health problems. My grandparents, Isaac Lehns, uncles Isaak and Jacob Lehn and their families, as well as mother, sister Helen and I, were considered ready to leave, but not my father, Peter J. Penner. It was a grievous parting - my father letting his wife and small children go on the long journey by sea and train. His eyes were not healed.

We reached Southampton, England, where we boarded the ship, Empress of France, to cross the Atlantic Ocean. All the relatives, including mother, were seasick. Grandpa Lehn and I were able to visit the dining room and take exercises on the ship's deck. We enjoyed the trip.

When we reached an island in the St. Lawrence River (Quebec), third class was evacuated because measles had broken out in third class. We were quarantined for two weeks, and then went on to Quebec, arriving at Quebec

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railway station. Aunt Katie took care of me and looked for the train that would take us to Rosthern. All of the Lehns were going to Rosthern. On arrival in Rosthern, we were taken to the Immigration House, the old hospital building. Auntie soon found a job with the bank manager's family. Mother, Helen and I moved to a small house east of the railroad tracks. This house was very cold in winter, so we spent the first winter with the banker's family and another winter with the Ratzlaffs on a dairy farm. The next summer we moved to Herschel to join the Jacob Lehn family on the Ramsay Farm. We shared a large two-storey house with Aunt Katie, grandparents Lehn and Henry Penners family.

In harvest time, mother went to work as a cook in a cook car on wheels that followed the James Madill's threshing outfit. Mother took me along for a week, and then took Helen, while I stayed with Aunt Katie. It was very stressful for mother - cooking for the threshing crew of 18 men and caring for one of us, but she did well. That fall she earned enough to pay our travel debt to the CPR. After harvest we moved to Madill's farm and mother was his housekeeper. Helen and I both started school at Glenellen School, ten miles north of Herschel.

Finally, in the spring of 1928, father was able to join us. Four and a half years had passed, and we felt strange toward him. We did not stay long at Madill's. In the fall of 1928 we moved to a farm in the Luseland area. Father became joint owner with a young man, David Unger, of one of the Gottschalk Farms. Helen and I had to adjust to our father and to our new surroundings. It proved to be a good place.

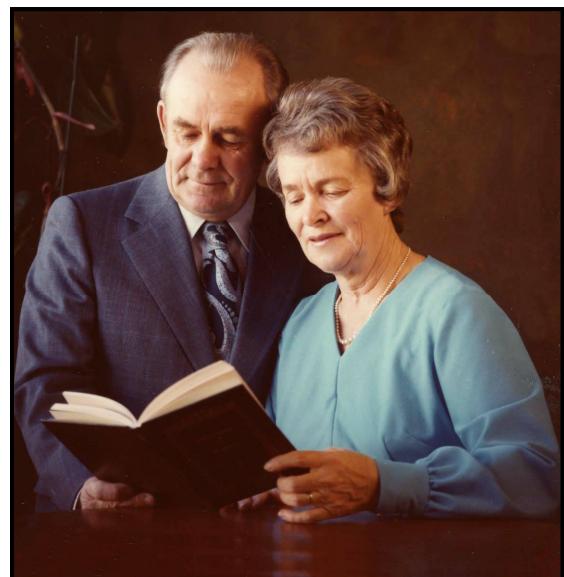
We started in a different school, Baliol School, in a Catholic district. It was a difficult adjustment for two small girls, but we managed. I spent nine years there.

We learned to know three other Mennonite families who lived northwest of Luseland: the Peter Warkentin family, the John Ewert and Paetkau families. Peter Warkentin (senior) was minister so church services were started and held in various homes, so we learned to know the Mennonite families at Superb, 20

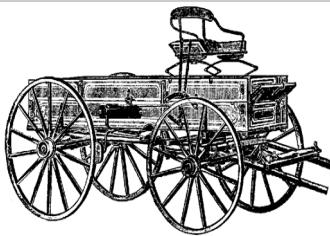
miles to the south. After the Warkentins moved to Superb, a church was soon established. There were many young people, and our parents encouraged us to associate with them. It became a tradition to celebrate birthdays together. We played games. One of the favourites was "Schluesselbund". Partners were chosen and we walked in a circle and sang German and English folk songs. Some had remarkably strong voices. Even "Cowboy Jack" sounded good in four-part harmony! Later, the Solomon Bergen and Abram Olfert families obtained farms in the Luseland area. Membership was growing.

In 1941, Peter Bergen, eldest son of Solomon and Maria Bergen, and I, were married. In time we acquired a farm east of Luseland and were blessed with six children (now all married): Elsie and Delmer Epp, Rudy and Rita Dejardiner, Peter and Sandra Stuckey, Ken and Mona Letkeman, Raymond and Cheryl Penner and June and James Holt. They, including ten grand-children and one great-granddaughter, are scattered from Ontario to Vancouver. After three years in long-term-care in Kerrobert Hospital, my husband, Peter, passed away. Our youngest son took over the farm after his marriage in 1976. After spending 26 years in town with Peter, I moved to the Luseland Golden Lodge. And now my moving days are over—I came to Bethany Manor March 2, 2007. There are many things for which to praise the Lord.

- Elsbeth Bergen



Peter & Elsbeth Bergen 1979



# From the Past

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

## THE EATON'S CATALOGUE

by Jack Driedger

Where have the years gone? I'm sure many readers of the Historian will recall the Eaton's catalogue. I remember it so well and was shocked to learn that the last catalogue was published 31 years ago! During the thirties it was our shopping window to that world out there that we seldom saw. Almost anything one could dream of could be ordered from Eaton's. By now it is hard to believe, but I remember the time when every town in this province had a railroad connection. After all, towns were established and grew around the loading platforms that the railroad companies constructed about every 12 to 20 miles.

Six weeks to a month before Christmas, the local post office was overloaded with people buying money orders and postal notes. The money to pay for the items ordered from Eaton's could be sent in one of two ways: you purchased either a money order or a postal note. We always bought the cheaper postal note.

It was said that every pioneer family had two books: the Bible and the Eaton's catalogue. There is the story of the housewife who wanted to impress her pastor when he dropped in for a visit. She asked her little girl to fetch that book from the living room that "Mommy always reads." To her dismay, her daughter returned with the Eaton's catalogue.

I recall browsing the Eaton's catalogue hour after hour as soon as I was able to turn the pages. When our parents weren't looking over

our shoulders, we looked at the pictures of women displaying ladies' underwear, always ready to instantly flip over the pages to another section of the catalogue.

When a new catalogue arrived, we took liberties with the old catalogue. We amused ourselves by cutting a man's head out of the pages showing men's wear. Then we turned to the pages showing women's wear and covered the head with the cutout of a man's head. We got some mighty laughs out of that.

One could buy almost anything imaginable from Eaton's: toys, tools, clothing, household goods, harnesses, musical instruments, cream separators, sewing machines and even houses. When you ordered a house you got everything you needed to build your own: nails, lumber, doors, hinges, windows, shingles and even the paint. House prices ranged from around \$700 to over \$2,000.

During W.W.II, some items were almost impossible to get. We had a Kodak Brownie box camera. I remember so well that you just could not get a film for that camera. If anybody saw you with a camera, they would invariably ask you, "Is there a film in it?" I was always able to get a film from Eaton's mail order catalogue. The secret was to address the envelope to "The Shopper". One time when I did not get the film I had ordered, I realized I had forgotten to specify "The Shopper".

If Eaton's didn't have the color or the exact item you specified, they substituted another item of equal or better value. Sometimes this resulted in a real bargain. If you were not satisfied with the item, there was no problem getting a refund.

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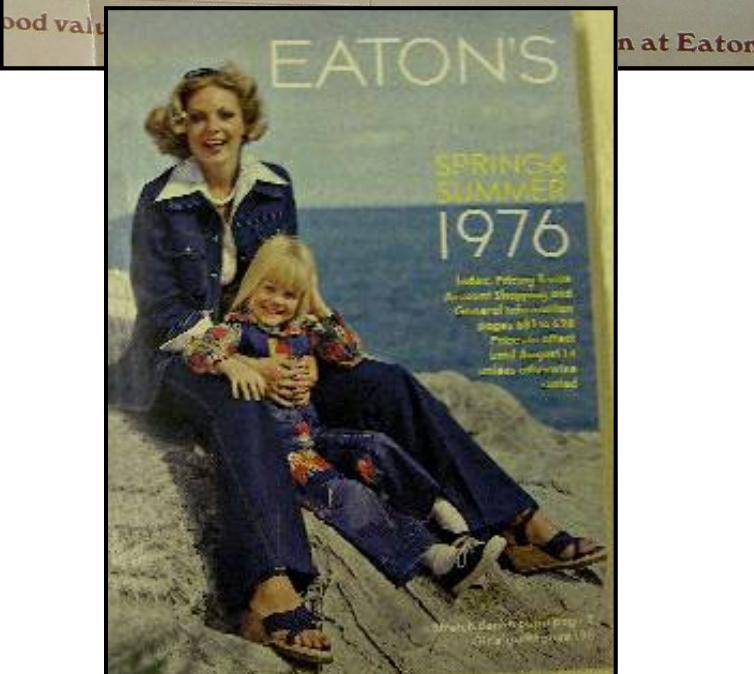
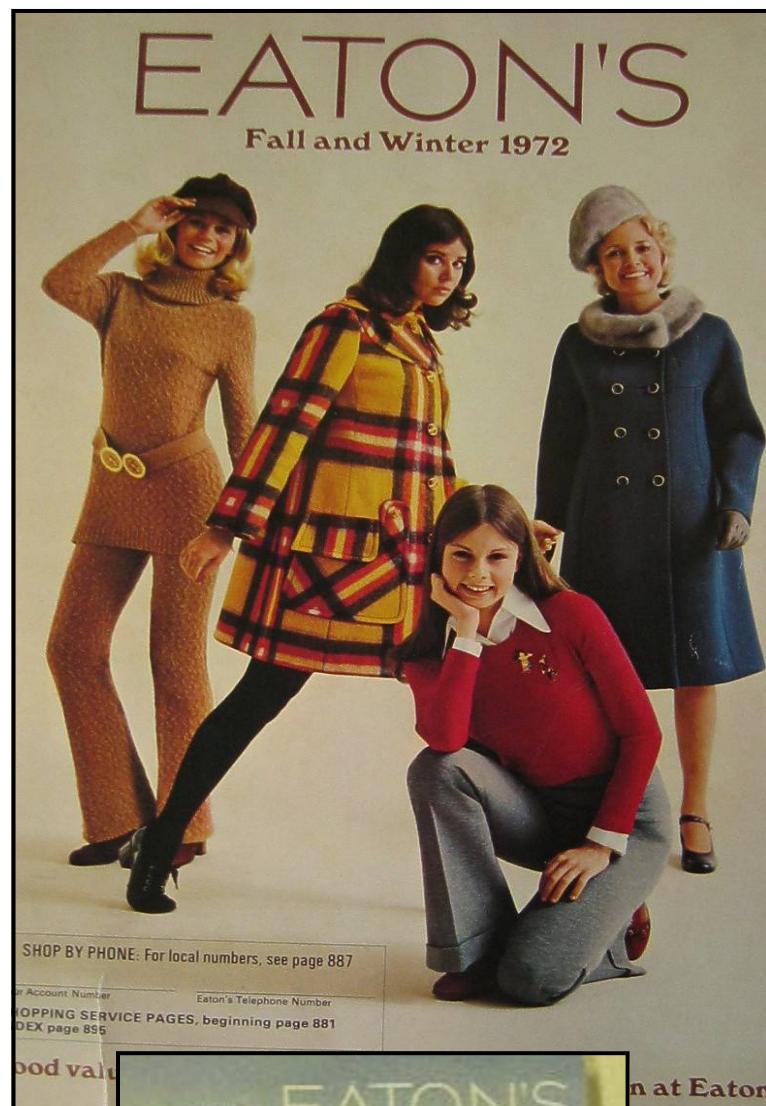
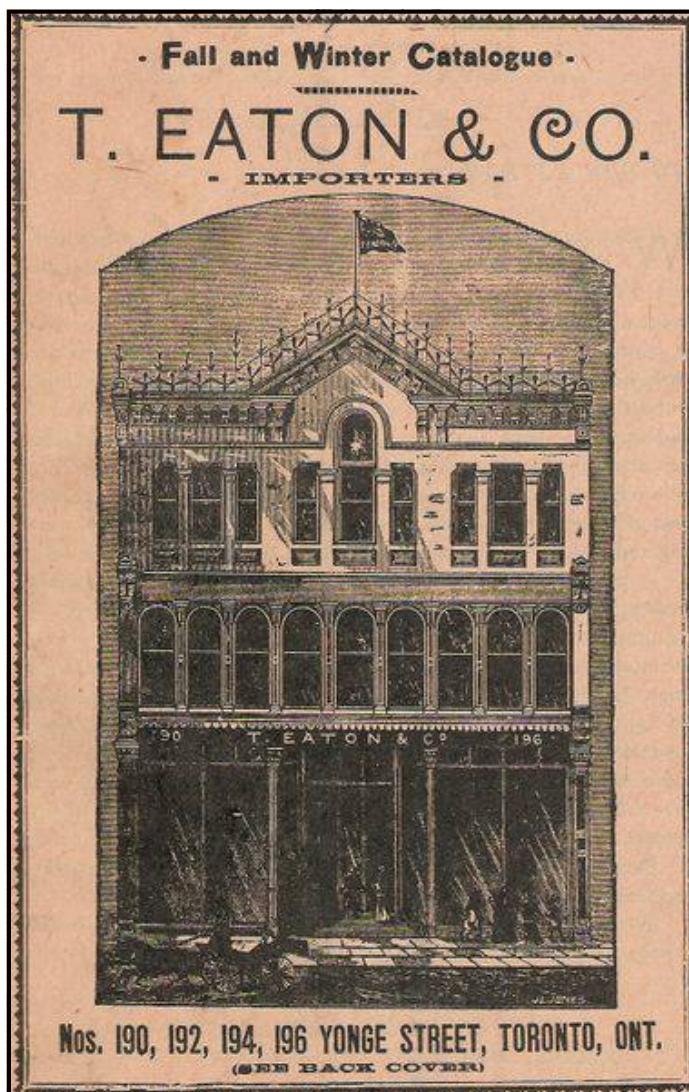
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When I taught in a one room country school during the fifties, I wrote Eaton's a letter once a year, asking for a donation of one or two items for raffle prizes to raise money for the school Christmas concert. They always generously donated excellent items.

Although our school district could not afford it, you could order Christmas gifts for the children in your school. If you specified the gender and age of each child, Eaton's shipped the gifts individually wrapped for each child.

The Eaton's catalogue was truly a window on the world.

The front cover of the first Eaton's Catalogue  
In 1884 courtesy of Wikipedia.



The front cover of the last Eaton's Catalogue,  
courtesy of the Western Development Museum,