

Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian



*Susan, note the correction to the
names below the photo
Anna L. will be ordering several copies
of this issue.*
Yileen

Features & Articles

Margaretha (Bartsch) Kroeker -
- by Anna Ladwig 1

Midwifery (appeal)
- by Judie Dyck. 8

Gordon Unrau (1932 - 2018)
- Memorial by his children 9

Gerhard Ens: Founder of Rosthern
- by Carl A. Krause 10

The Swift Current Reserve and
its Order-in-Council of 1904
- by Victor G. Wiebe 12

A Church in Rhineland Celebrates
75 Years - by Henry A. Friesen..14

A Short History of the Christian
Fellowship Church in Rhineland,
SK - by Henry A. Friesen 15

Ravenhead Remembered -
- by Dave Toews 16

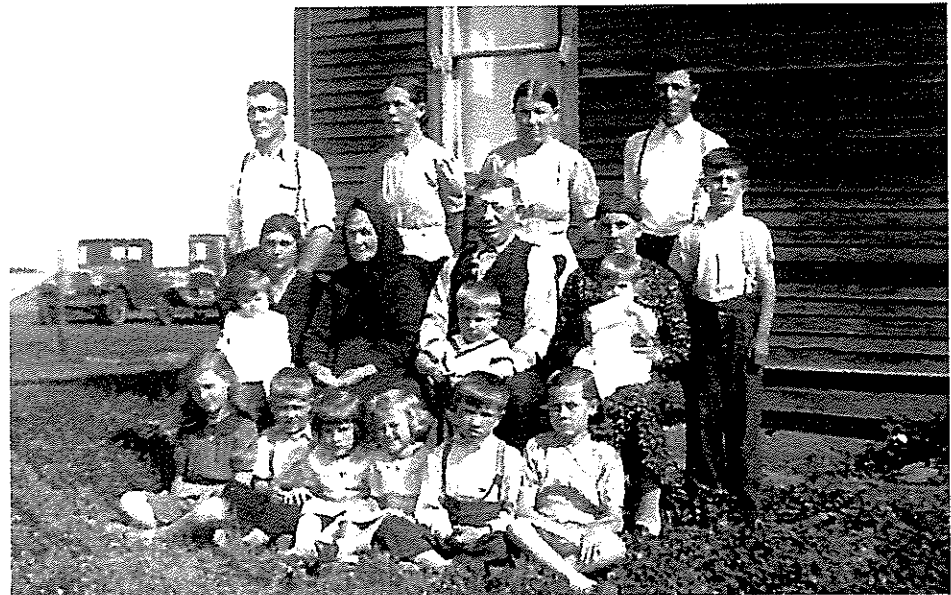
In Search of the Faithful 77
Project Prospectus - Die Zweite
Märtyrersynode: January 13-18,
1925 Moscow
- by Edward Krahn 18

Back to Schleitham, Eleven
Generations Later -
- by Ken Bechtel 22

A Tribute to Vera Falk - by Jake
Buhler & Leonard Doell. 26

Celebrating Our Anniversaries
(AGM Report)
- by Ruth M. Friesen 27

Honour List 28



1941 Bartsch children: (back) Gerhard, Katharina, Margaretha, Johan II,
middle: Margaretha & Johan with daughters-in-law & 10 grandchildren
(3 more born later).

Margaretha (Bartsch) Kroeker (1911- 1999) by Anna Ladwig

Let's start this story with a young man named Johan G. Bartsch, the father of my Aunt Margaretha, and my grandfather. Johan was born on April 1, 1882 in Hochfeld, Manitoba. His parents had immigrated to Canada from Russia a few years earlier. At the turn of the century, the early 1900s, the Bartsch family, along with many others from southern Manitoba moved to the Hague Osler Mennonite Reserve located north of Saskatoon. Johan and his siblings were part of the newly created village near Hague, called Hochfeld, NWT.

On June 26, 1900, he applied for a homestead entry at Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Thus began the process of waiting for his own piece of land to call "Home." Being 18 years of age, he turned his attention to another extremely important matter, "Where will I find the young maiden who will be my wife when the homestead is approved?"

Included in the move from Manitoba were other families that moved with the Bartsches, including the Dyck family. On August 19, 1902, Johan married Margaretha Dyck, (my grandmother), who was born in Rosenort, Manitoba, not far from Johan's birthplace. (cont'd pg 4)

Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian**Volume XXV No. 1 2019 Cumulative number 63**

(First issue of SMH published April, 1996)

Published three times a year by the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan (MHSS)

Editor: Ruth Marlene Friesen

Advisory Committee: Jake Buhler, Verner Friesen

Proofreaders: Verner Friesen, Susan Braun, Linda Unger and Laura Hildebrand

Distribution: Susan Braun

Mailing List: Hilda Voth

Printer: ProPrint, Saskatoon, SK.

Readers are invited to submit news items, stories, articles, photographs, church histories, etc., to MHSS at the email or street address below.

MHSS Office and Archives:

110 La Ronge Road, Room 900

Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8 Email: mhss@sasktel.net

Archive Hours:

Monday, 1:30 - 4 p.m. & Wednesday, 1:30 - 4 p.m. 7 - 9 p.m.

MHSS Board of Directors, 2019

John Reddekopp, President

#105 419 Nelson Rd. Saskatoon, SK. S7S 1P2

306-978-7831 jdredde@gmail.com

Leonard Doell, VicePresident

Box 364, Aberdeen, SK. S0K 0A0

306-253-4419 leonarddoell@mccsk.ca

Jake Buhler, Secretary

830 Main Street, Saskatoon, SK. S7H 0K3

306-244-1302 jakelouisebuhler@sasktel.net

Susan Braun, Treasurer

Box 281, Osler, SK. S0K 3A0

306-239-4201 susan.3braun@gmail.com

Elmer Regier,

142 Haight Cres., Saskatoon, SK. S7H 4V9

306-373-0606 earegier@sasktel.net

Kathy Boldt, Volunteer Coordinator

Box 152, RR#4, Saskatoon, SK. S7K 3J7

306-239-4742 Fax 306-239-4314

Elizabeth Guenther

#635 120 LaRonge Road, Saskatoon, SK. S7K 7Z9

306-979-0605 candeguenther@shaw.ca

Dick Braun

Box 184, Osler, SK. S0K 3A0

306-239-4765 dkbraun4@yahoo.com

Harold Loewen

Box 1286, Warman, SK. S0K 4S0

306-242-7084

haroldploewen@gmail.com

The Editor's Perspective

Ruth Marlene Friesen

You will find a wonderful variety of articles and stories in this issue. I trust you will enjoy it.

It is wonderful to have people contributing articles out of the blue. It makes an editor's work so much easier! I've heard of some editors that must advertise and coax people to write something. I get to choose and place articles according to the spaces available. I set some aside for the next issue. Abundance is fun!

There are sometimes lovely surprises, too. When Anna Ladwig's article about her Aunt Margaretha (Bartsch) Kroeker was brought to me, I got quite excited. I considered Margaret a personal friend of mine when I lived in Hague as my parents' caregiver. I could tell you many stories of things we did together. But rather than get started on that here, I'd like to ask you to read Anna's memories of the dear Margaret that so many in Hague and maybe the whole Sask Valley area knew and loved.

I have a hunch that many of you could write or tell us stories of your experiences with Margaret. So I am inviting you to write them up or call me up and tell your stories to me. I'll make notes and write up your memories for you.

I may be crawling out on a risky branch here, but I suspect we'll get so many stories that we will be able to put together a collection of stories - yes, even a book, to honour Margaretha or Margaret (Bartsch) Kroeker. I think the MHSS Board will even want to publish it. If nothing else, at least an e-book - meaning it can be downloaded from the website and read on our computer. Then we don't have to be frugal and use only black and white photos; we can go for glorious colour!

We could charge people to download it and thus bring in extra funds for the MHSS operating budget. (Of course, if you contribute a story, I'll see that you get a free copy!) You know that an e-book can be printed out and bound as a physical book too, right?

Okay? Are you in?! Got photos to share, too?
Wonderful!

*RMF*

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

AGM REFLECTIONS

by John Reddekopp

Our 2019 Annual General Meeting (AGM) weekend took place on March 1st and 2nd. Based on responses from board members and other attendees, I think it is safe to say that it was a very successful AGM.

It is interesting to note that this was likely the 46th such event since the society began in 1973. I wonder if any of you remember that first one, or some of the first such events.

Dr. Ted Regehr, our feature speaker, is the author of Volume 3 of *Mennonites in Canada*. Ted is also the former head of the University of Saskatchewan History Department. On Saturday, Dr. Keith Carlson, the current head of that same department, spoke about our *Collaboratorium Project*.

Ted Regehr and David Toews, who was also in attendance, are both members of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta. It is significant that we have this connection since both of our societies were originally connected as one organization.

Speaking of connections, we learned that our website, which has 1634 pages, had 40,000 visitors last year. These visitors were from all over the world and they made almost 100,000 visits to the site. Have you visited the website lately?

When I reflect on what I heard and read at this year's AGM, I have to say that this past year has been very interesting and eventful for the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan.

I anticipate that 2019 will be as interesting and eventful as well!



JR

AGM Financial Snapshot for 2018

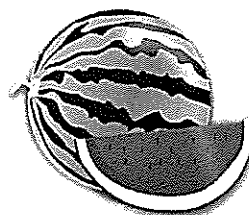
Income for 2018 -\$37,237.09;
of that, \$10,900.00 was Special Donations,
and \$5,625.00 was from the sale of 186 books -
"The Aeltester."

Expenses for 2018 - \$37,377.66;

Day to Day Operation of MHSS \$11,430.02,
(rent, phone, internet, website, stationery, insurance, archive material);
Historian - 3 issues (publishing,
printing, mailing) \$9,352.09;
book purchase "The Aeltester"... \$4,863.40
for 214 copies.

Susan Braun,
MHSS Treasurer

Upcoming Events in Mennonite Communities of Saskatchewan



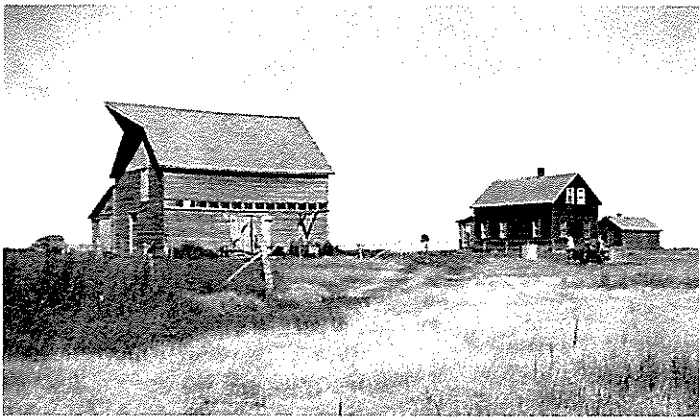
The 25th Annual Watermelon Festival
- July 21, 2019 , 2 - 5 p.m.
Swift Current Mennonite Heritage Village
South Railway St. & 17th Ave. S.E.
Swift Current, SK.



A Capella Sing Along
Aug. 18th , 3 - 4 p.m.
At the Sommerfeld Church, Mennonite
Heritage Village
Faspa to be served after sing along
Swift Current, SK.

(cont'd from page 1)

There were still no signs of the homestead being approved! I'm not totally certain what happened next, or where my grandparents made their first home, but I vaguely remember my Dad telling me that they had lived on Johan's parents' yard in a small house, quite possibly a renovated granary. A map of Hochfeld shows that they lived at the south end of the village. I am not sure if they owned or rented a place, but it was quite common for the village to have lots available for the "landless." Maybe he occupied one of these spaces while he waited for his homestead approval.



Johan's homestead application was made on June 26, 1900, when he was 18 years old. It was delayed because the Department of the Interior considered him a Naturalized Canadian until he could prove otherwise by producing a certificate showing that he was born in Canada. They had him confused with his Uncle Johan Bartsch. It appears that they continued living in the village until 1927, when they moved to a farm nearby.

On June 17, 1919, Johan sold 3 acres of land to the Saskatchewan Government for a school site in order to establish an English-speaking public school in the community. Records show that he received \$9,000 for this transaction. This cost him dearly, though, as he then lost his membership in the Old Colony Mennonite Church. Later he tried to reverse this transaction by letter but to no avail. In 1920, Passchendaele School #4084 was opened for 21 days with ten students attending. It remained open until 1960.

When Johan passed away in 1948, his funeral was held in the Hochfeld General Conference Church (Russlandsche Koake). However, the mess-

age was given by the Old Colony Altester Johan Loeppky. I remember very little of the sermon as it was read in German. What I do remember was him saying repeatedly "*Leewa leid, hiat mau, hiat mau*" or, "Dear Friends, hear ye, hear ye".

Grandfather was buried in the Hochfeld Cemetery. (Later, in 1953, my grandmother was buried there as well). This was my one and only memory of being in this church. It had a green and white exterior. As I walked inside, my 7 year old eyes popped open wide! A balcony was located on the right with stairs leading up to it. I had never beheld such in my whole life and could not take my eyes off of this beauty. Perhaps that is why I remember so little of the eulogy!

Margaretha's Parents and Siblings

There were 8 children born to Johan and Margaretha Dyck Bartsch. Of these only four grew to be adults. Of these four children only the two brothers, Gerhard and Johan raised a family. The two sisters, Margaretha and Katharina married later in life and had no biological children. These sisters were very close friends as well as siblings.

Katharina was married at the age of 40 (1953) to Johan Braun. She was widowed at the age of 78, but not for long. Jacob Zacharias had his eyes fixed on her and at the age of 80, she became Katharina Zacharias.



Margaret & David Kroeker traveling in BC

Margaretha was married at the age of 64 to a widower, David Kroeker. The sisters were so closely connected; they even shared the same wedding anniversary date, September 27th.

Margaretha's Early Childhood

Margaretha was the first of two daughters born to Johan and Margaretha Bartsch. She was born on March 17, 1911, in the village of Hochfeld, her Mother now having a namesake. Margaretha spent the first 16 years of her life here in the village before they moved to the farm. In 1913, when she was only two, a polio epidemic afflicted their community and little Margaret was one of the victims. From then on, she always needed crutches to help with her mobility.

This must have been a major burden for my grandmother, because in that same year on April 1, 1913, Margaretha's only sister, Katharina, was born. So, imagine if you can, one immobile toddler and a brand new baby. Grandmother was quite short in stature but she must have been very tall in courage and strength. Twenty years later this dreaded polio reared its ugly head in their community once more. This time two of Margaretha's younger male cousins were victims. They too had mobility issues for the rest of their lives. Their names were Gerhard Bartsch and Peter Bartsch.

Margaretha: The Years 1927 to 1948

In July, 1927, it appears that the Bartsches were finally living on their farm. Surely the \$9,000 from the sale of the school site was put to good use in erecting a new house, barn, and various outbuildings.

My grandfather must have decided that since he could not give the money back to the Saskatchewan Government, he might as well do something useful with it. This is the farmyard where we 13 grandchildren remember visiting our grandparents.

In about 1936, they purchased a camera, which was no doubt Margaretha's idea. She was always full of dreams and schemes and Grandfather must also have been willing to oblige her because from that time forward we have lots of photographs of Margaretha's "adopted kids" which were us, her nieces and nephews.

The earliest photo I could find of Margaretha was taken in July, 1927, when she was 16 years of age and Katharina, with the long dark braids, was



Tina 14, Margaretha 16

14. It appears that they were modelling the brand new dresses that my mother had made for them at Grandmother's request. They were very proud to wear their matching dresses.

From about 1934 or 1935, my grandparents and aunts took care of a mentally challenged adult by the name of William

Klassen. He stayed with them on the farm for 13 and a half years. After Grandfather died, he stayed for another three months with Margaretha and her mother in Hague.

My Grandparents were paid \$20.00 per month to care for him. He called the Bartsch's "Mumpkje and Ompkje" or "Mrs and Mr" and the grandchildren called him "Olah Vellum". His last home on earth was the Rosthern Nursing Home where he died a year later, in 1949.

Margaretha told of how kind and gentle he was with the little children. During Olah Vellum's time at my Grandparents', it was Margaretha and Katharina who were the kingpins in his life. They kept him busy with



Oula Wellem Klassen

various chores, playing with "the kids" and reading old Eaton's catalogues. One day, the girls discovered what he was reading in the catalogues.

Leave it to Margaretha; she hatched a plan. The two sisters clipped all of the ladies' underwear pictures out of the catalogue and then gave it to him to "read." He looked and looked for the pictures but they were gone! He came to the right conclusion that the "Mejales" had sabotaged them, and the war was on. Apparently it took some time to calm him down that time around!

Margaretha: The Caregiver

Margaretha learned the art of caregiving from her parents, who were always willing to lend a helping hand.

Grandfather had a large "Schien" or storage shed on his yard with grain bins on either side of it. The alley between them was wide enough so that the horses could pull the grain wagons through and unload them wherever there might be room.

At times there would be people in need of housing and if Grandfather had a room or two in the Shien or sheds, these would be used as bedrooms. The kitchen was located in the alleyway and most of the cooking was done outside, almost like camping. The family that I remember best is the Peter Hildebrandts. Mrs Hildebrandt was my Grandfather's youngest sister. Their son Henry and I became good friends.

Wife, Stepmother and Step-grandmother

On September 27, 1975, Margaretha at the age of 64 was married to David D. Kroeker. With her marriage to David Kroeker, she had an instant family of two married children and six grandchildren. Talk about no grass growing under her feet; this woman was amazing! What takes most people a lifetime to accomplish, she did in one day.

The Bartsch family got to know David quite well in the next several years.

Once, when Dad was in the hospital in Grande Prairie, Alberta, and very sick, he received a visit from David and Margaretha Kroeker and Johan and Katherina Braun. I was sitting with my Dad and was totally overwhelmed when they walked in because I had not expected to see them. When I was finally ready to speak, I blurted out, "How did you find your way around in this city?" Margaretha's calm and simple reply was, "I always take my mouth with me!"

Reflections from her Adopted Children

Esther says Henry remembered sleeping behind the stove where it was nice and warm. He also spoke of the embarrassing moments he experienced when Margaretha would dote on him in

public.

Adina remembers a visit that she and her Dad made to Hague, when she was approximately 5 years old. Margaretha was her primary caregiver. It was wonderful for she had Margaretha all to herself. Guess what she had for breakfast; syrup cookies, yum!

Margaret was very thankful for the great care that Randy got from Aunt Margaretha for two years and for taking her and Randy in with arms wide open. (Margaret is Margaretha's namesake).

Minnie recalls her compassionate heart. She was pleasant with a good disposition. She was also a good organizer although she tended to be somewhat bossy at times. Minnie recalls joining Grandmother, Margaretha and Katharina in the evenings to do needlework, such as crocheting and embroidering.



The little cousins; Anna & Henry in centre

Justina's memory: She was just fun to hang around with. She recalled eating puffed wheat as a treat. She remembered the Christmas tree that caught fire and very quickly got dumped outside in the snow.

She remembered a visit from the Kroekers and Brauns, when we ate "jebackte Eadshocken met Butta". Well, the potatoes had been baked in the microwave and were ready in a jiffy. Unbelievable! We had not seen that before!

On that same evening, we enjoyed another big laugh at Justina's. The four of them wanted to try out the waterbed. So in they went, all four of them together. What a circus that was; they needed a lot of help to get out of that contraption.

Marie remembers cookouts and tea parties. The cookouts consisted mainly of waffles or thin pan-cakes. There was always a small layer of straw where the waffles could cool without getting soggy.

David told me of a conversation that he had with her about money. Margaretha said that the Bartsches like to spend their money. "I am a Bartsch and I spend my money, *"Daut es mau jelt!"* (It is only money.)

For **Tina**, her favorite memory was "wool pickin' time." The job was not much fun but the rewards made it worthwhile. They received a meal that consisted of chocolate cream pie and vanilla cream pie and she could eat as much as she wanted.

David remembered the day that Margaretha took her electric scooter down a muddy back alley and got very stuck. Someone helped her out of that mess and she drove this rig right into the living room. She was so embarrassed and felt that no one needed to see her clean it up. Apparently she laid it down so that she could clean it easier. Well, a bunch of battery acid spilled on the rug and she was not very popular with mangement for awhile.



Anna remembers how Margaretha would get down on the floor to play Lego with them. Margaretha was always the happiest when she was surrounded by children.

Margaretha: Personal Reflections from Anna

When I used to visit Margaretha, after our move to Alberta, I would ask her to tell me stories about the early years of her life. I always had a notebook and pen along and she did not disappoint me. As the stories were being rehearsed, the photo albums were always close at hand.

She told stories of how the polio had never hindered her from enjoying life. She said that when she was little and races were being run, she was allowed to get a very good head start. This way she would not be left far behind in the race.

Margaretha got most of her education in the

German Private school in the village of Hochfeld.

However, the following story leads me to believe that she also got some schooling at the Passchendaale Public school. Her dad would give her rides to school on his farm equipment because she found it difficult to walk. None of this made sense until I started studying a map of Hochfeld and the surrounding area and came to the following conclusion.

Since they lived at the south end of the village, he would drive to the south road coming from the Hague townsite. There he would cross over the road and he would be on his land (NW 10 TP 41 R 4 West of 3). Here he followed the north fence line to the west until at the northwest corner they would arrive

at Passchendaale school on the same quarter. Now that makes sense to me. Since the girls did not normally go to school beyond the age of 14 or 15 years, the year would have been 1925 or 1926. The move to the farm was made in July of 1927, so were obviously still living in the village. I am not sure whether the schooling was in German or English. So as far as Margaretha's education goes: "That's my story and I am sticking to it!"

Margaretha also shared the story of the time that her baby brother Jacob passed away within hours of his birth on July 24, 1917. In those days it was not uncommon to have weddings or funerals outdoors in the summertime. Many farmers had a big Schien, a large building under one roof, where large events could be hosted and where it would be nice and cool. I am assuming that this is where Jacob's funeral was held.

Little 6 year old Margaretha was given a job to do. They set her up on a chair beside the little open casket and gave her a big fly swatter. She was then instructed to chase the flies away from the baby in the casket.

I asked Margaret, "Where did they keep him until the funeral?"

Very matter of factly she replied, "My Dad had

threshed a bunch of wheat into the hayloft of the barn. It was still fairly cool and served as a cooler over the hot summer months." Some people also used a root cellar dug into the side of a small hill. People did what they had to in order to complete the task even though it was not always pleasant. This funeral took place about ten years before they moved to the farm.

Our Last Easter in Saskatchewan

Grandfather had died in February, 1948. Now it was April – with it comes Easter.

I don't know who bought the treats for an Easter hunt. I have no doubt that Margaretha had something to do with it.

There was still a bit of snow on the ground, but not enough to spoil our outside hunt!

Margaretha was there, watching her precious "children" running about the yard. Once again, she was truly happy, surrounded by happy, excited children.

I finally found my treat. I was so thrilled! There was my white glass nesting hen. I could lift her off and see how she had filled that nest with candy Easter eggs!

I still have that hen in my china cabinet and have told my children and grandchildren about that Easter more than once.

That was Margaretha! She was always looking for ways to brighten others' lives. She could be a tease at times, as well.

That's enough for now. I believe we have had enough glimpses into Margaretha's life that we can say that Jesus was the author and finisher of her faith. Thanks to Margaretha for all the interest you showed in us and how you Margaretha and Katharina made our early childhood a happy time! Auf Wiedersehen! (Margaretha passed away August 6, 1999).



AL

Midwifery

My daughter asked, "Why didn't you tell me?" My response, "Tell you what?"

"Your grandmother was a midwife." I had no idea and there began the journey to discover more. To my dismay, her children, including my mother, knew little. All they knew was that when they woke up to find their father making breakfast and their mother's black bag gone, someone was having a baby.

My grandmother, Anna (Letkeman) Loeppky, immigrated in 1926, from Michaelsburg, Fuerstenland Colony in Russia (Ukraine). My grand-parents came to Wymark, moved to Eyebrow, and then lived in Parkerview until they retired to Saskatoon.

I tried to find information on the experiences of midwives who were Mennonite and/or lived on the prairies. Questions: Where did they learn the skill, what were their experiences and knowledge? What was in that black bag? And what of all the joys and sorrows birthing brought?

I would like to engage with others who have knowledge about midwifery of the past. I can be reached at (306) 221-6954 or judiedyck@shaw.ca

I look forward to hearing from you.

Judie Dyck

[Ed. We plan to publish the article Judie will write for the Historian when she has gathered more information about the life and work of Mennonite midwives in past generations of our families. Please contact her if you have experiences or stories to tell.]

Notice: R.M. Maps

The MHSS Archives is looking for some old Rural Municipality (R.M.) maps. When you are cleaning up old stuff and you come across such maps, would you kindly remember us? Don't toss them into the garbage. They are treasures to us and to Historians!

Gordon Unrau (1932 - 2018)

Memorial by children, Grant, Elaine, Lisa

It is strange to think that, from now on, all our stories about this larger-than-life man will be told in the past tense. And who doesn't have a story about Gord? He touched many lives with his humour, kindness and spontaneity.

Gordon grew up in a tiny cabin in Northern Pine, the oldest of five kids (Sue, Abe, Bill, and George). He worked hard from a very young age, ice fishing and logging. Maybe that's why he could whistle and laugh through even the toughest jobs for the rest of his life. He missed out on school, though - so at the age of 21, he went to Swift Current Bible Institute hoping to learn to read. He didn't know he'd find the whip smart beauty there who'd steal his heart. He and Phyllis Toews were married in Swift Current, and she'd be with him ever after, through adventures and mis-adventures, from the gravel pits to Disneyland to long term care.

He was determined to further his education, so he went to high school at Rosthern Junior College at the age of 26. Still the hardest-working guy in the room, he'd carry a little dictionary in his shirt pocket to help him keep up with the new vocabulary he was hearing around him. At night, his little brother Bill would tutor him in math. At Teacher's College, he learned to pass that education along. He would go on to teach in Wymark, and in Martensville, where he also served as principal. Children were drawn to his playfulness - his many nieces and nephews can vouch for this as well. But Gordon wasn't just an educator.

If we told you everything else he did in his working life, you wouldn't believe it. But his ventures were a rich variety, including ice fishing, politics, lumberjacking, septic pumping, trucking, car sales, entrepreneurship, bison farming, and gravel hauling. With Phyllis, he established several successful businesses including a general store and an insurance agency that is still in operation. For Gordon, an attaché case was for keys, wieners, car parts,



*sketch by granddaughter
Beth - with permission*

grease rags, papers - anything that might be needed for the venture of the day.

Rather than pay a ticket of any kind, he would employ his powers of persuasion to write an irresistible letter in his own defense, most often successful - but not always. The Town of Martensville had no patience for Sally, the pet goat kept in town and allowed to cavort on the roof of the shed (much to the delight of passers-by). Many decades later the Town would recognize his brilliance by naming a park for him. This unconventional

approach to life was passed on to all three of his children - Grant (Janelle), Elaine and Lisa (Hamish) - and his grandchildren, Beth and Nigel.

Gord liked going for a Sunday drive with his family, often conveniently swinging by the industrial area. Much to Phyllis's dismay, he thought nothing of climbing around on the greasy heavy equipment in his suit and tie. Any boredom or dismay was quickly dispelled on the next leg of the drive, which would end up at the A&W drive-in, laughing over root beer and onion rings.

He was hospitable and generous to a fault. Having grown up in poverty, he understood the importance of preserving someone's dignity. At his highway gas bar, he'd help out troubled travellers by accepting almost anything in payment for a tank of fuel - a bomber jacket, records, books, two rats in a cage, and once, an original painting from a weary traveller who would turn out to be noted artist Allen Sapp (unfortunately consigned to the burning barrel before that revelation occurred).

Gordon was a prankster. Once, Phyllis told him his marmalade habit was out of control and the current jar would be his last. She was increasingly confounded as he continued to heap it onto his toast each morning, but the jar's level stayed constant. The kids were delighted co-conspirators, keeping the secret of Gordon's economy-sized supply of marmalade stashed in the garage.

Gordon's rumbling baritone was put to good use in choirs, family road trips, the bathroom and just about everywhere else he went. He was a natural with an axe, building many a fire with nothing but damp sticks and his imagination. He had an uncanny rapport with animals and an endless curiosity about the natural world.

He was a gentleman and genuinely loved people; if you ever shook his giant hand, you already know this. He was a beloved teacher, respected community leader, and trusted friend.

(The above creative memorial, written by his children – Grant, Elaine and Lisa – was read at Gordon's celebration of life at Nutana Park Mennonite Church on September 23, 2018)

Gerhard Ens: The Founder of Rosthern¹

by Carl A. Krause



Gerhard Ens & Tobias Unruh

- Rosthern Pioneers

I well remember how I as a child of six or so, while on a shopping trip to Rosthern with my father, noticed a rather portly white-haired older man shuffling along the sidewalk. Not having seen him before, I asked who he was, and my father replied, "Gerhard Ens," and then with a quiet chuckle added, "Lord Plushbottom." a reference I did not then understand. And then

my father walked over to speak to this man and the two engaged in pleasant conversation. I came away from the event with appreciation for an older man who, perhaps because of his gait and appearance, had acquired a humorous nickname, but who was really a very fine gentleman.

And who was he? Although we know very little

about his earliest years, Gerhard Ens was an accomplished person in many respects, accomplishments he achieved in his adopted country, Canada.

Born in Neuendorf, Chortiza Colony in South Russia (now part of Ukraine) on January 9, 1864 (December 28, 1863 – Julian calendar), he had immigrated to Canada with his family in 1891², first to Manitoba and then in April 1892 to what became the Rosthern community, then still part of the North West Territories. He and his family came by rail on the newly opened railway, a railway built by the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railroad and Steamboat Company and opened but two years before Ens's arrival³. The party of 20 families had two passenger cars as well as other railway cars carrying their settlers' effects⁴.

Ens took up a homestead one mile north of the present townsite and opened the community's first store and post office in a boxcar that was loaned to him by the CPR, the CPR having assumed operation of the railway in 1889⁵. He also built the first house, a small shack 18 feet square with his store occupying the front portion of the building⁶.



Gerhard Ens, Kansas
1898

The store, post office, and house were but three of Ens's firsts. There were others. As Ens recounted for a 1926 interview published in a newspaper called *The Star*, "When I arrived in Rosthern, there was no Rosthern."⁷ So, he went about bringing in other services. He was the first Justice of the Peace and the first representative of the Rosthern Constituency in the Provincial Legislature after the Province of Saskatchewan entered Confederation in 1905. Despite his being the only non-British, non-Canadian member of the legislature⁸, he nevertheless served as government whip in the Liberal government of Premier Walter Scott.

Ens also served as agent for Clifford Sifton, a vigorous promoter of immigration in the federal government of Wilfrid Laurier⁹.

And on a more personal note, Ens and his wife were parents of the first girl and, a year later, the

first boy born in Rosthern¹⁰.

An example illustrating the resourcefulness and compassion of Ens concerns an event that occurred during the winter of 1892-93, a very severe winter. An elderly man of Lutheran background died. Because there was then no Lutheran pastor in the community, the closest one being in Balgonie more than 200 miles away, Ens was asked by that Lutheran pastor to officiate at the funeral. And, so, on a bitterly cold day, Ens officiated at a brief graveside service, the first funeral in the district¹¹.

Although Mennonite by birth and upbringing, Ens left the church probably around 1900. He had become fascinated by the writings of Immanuel Swedenborg and in time became part of the Swedenborgian church also known as the Church of the New Jerusalem¹².

Despite this personal shift in religious affiliation, he continued to work to bring Mennonites to Canada, whether from Russia or from the United States.

And, as we have already seen, his influence spread beyond the immediate community as evidenced by his election in 1905 and re-election in 1908 as Member of the Legislative Assembly. In other words, he could well be described as "a mover and a shaker" in that he initiated several insti-

tutions and services, influencing many people in the process.

Ens passed away January 2, 1952, while a resident of the Invalid Home (now the Mennonite Nursing Home) on the Mennonite Youth Farm near Rosthern¹³. He was 88 years old and had been in

failing health for three weeks. He was survived by his widow Maria, two sons, and six daughters and their respective families.

Interestingly, his funeral was held at the Mennonite Church in Rosthern, on January 7. Not surprisingly, the church was filled to capacity.

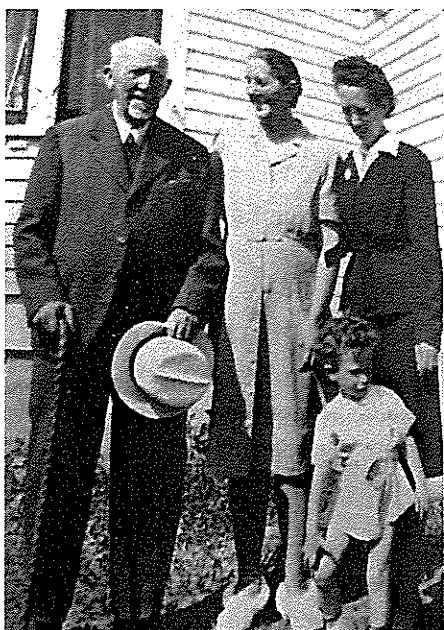
Among the speakers was the Hon. Walter Tucker, then the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly and the Liberal member of the Legislative Assembly for Rosthern Constituency, Ens's former constituency. Tucker mentioned how Ens's death "breaks another of the few remaining links with our pioneer days"¹⁴. In his tribute Tucker also talked about Ens's commitment to his country: "*Canada to him was the finest country in the world and unswerving loyalty to Canada was his constant watchword. This was fittingly recognized when he was chosen by the late Prime Minister of Canada Mackenzie King to go to Ottawa to take part in the ceremonies marking the coming into force of our Citizenship Act. At this time he was one of the first Canadians to receive a Certificate of Citizenship*"¹⁵

As for the nickname Lord Plushbottom, it was probably appropriate for Ens. The nickname was not meant in any way to demean Ens. Granted, he did resemble the Moon Mullins cartoon character in appearance and also for his accomplishments for, as one writer described Lord Plushbottom, he was "a well-bred Englishman ... (in a) shabby crowd"¹⁶.

So, too, Gerhard Ens. Although not an Englishman and although his was not a "shabby crowd", he achieved many firsts as a non-English speaking immigrant in what was not only a foreign land, but also a country that was developing a culture very different from his own background. It was a culture to which he not only adapted but to which he also made numerous contributions. Even today, more than 65 years after his death, Ens is remembered for the unique role he played in establishing the Rosthern community.

References:

1. Ens, Adolf. *Subject or Citizens?* (Ottawa ON: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), p.98.
2. "Gerhard Ens," Website:



Gerhard Ens with daughter Ann Epp, granddaughter Mrs. Fred Dhuez, and great-grandson Lyle

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerhard_Ens

3. "Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railroad and Steamboat Company," Website:

https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Qu%27Appelle,_Long_Lake_and_Saskatchewan_Railroad_and_Steamboat_Company&oldid=843047759.

4. *Old & New Furrows, The Story of Rosthern*.

(Rosthern SK: Rosthern Historical Society, 1977), p. 20.

5. Epp, Frank H. *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920*, (Toronto ON: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), p. 311.

6. *Old & New Furrows*, op. cit., p. 20.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 20..

8. Waiser, Bill. *Saskatchewan A New History*, (Calgary AB: Fifth House Ltd., 2005), p. 84.

9. Epp, op. cit., p. 311.

10. *Old & New Furrows*, op. cit., p. 20.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

12. Epp, op. cit., p. 402.

13. "Rosthern's First Citizen Passed Away Wednesday,"

Saskatchewan Valley News (Rosthern SK, 1952, 50, 1), p. 1.

14. "Rosthern Pioneers Given Last Rites," *Saskatchewan*

Valley News (Rosthern SK, 1952, 50, 2), p. 1.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

16. "Moon Mullins," Website:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moon_Mullins#characters_and_story.

CAK

The Swift Current Reserve and its Order-in-Council of 1904

by Victor G. Wiebe

What is an Order-in-Council?

Before democracy, monarchs had the absolute authority to give orders that must be obeyed. Then came democracy and in Canada we have a people's chosen and regulated Parliament that now gives those democratically composed orders that must be obeyed. However, most of us don't realize that that absolute authority, that royal prerogative of the past, did not just disappear. It is still retained in the hands of the Governor General in Council (note: the Council is the Federal Cabinet or more

properly, The Privy Council) and in theory almost any order can be given. There are some limits that are set by statutory authority on what orders can be issued, but the control is almost always by tradition. The usual process is that the Prime Minister or a Minister of the Crown writes out an order and it gains legal authority when signed by the Governor General. While Orders-in-Council may seem to contradict democratic procedures they have been very useful in getting the business of running the country accomplished. Once signed, those not dealing with national security are published in the Canada Gazette.

Mennonites have benefitted from some Orders-in-Council and have been victimized by others. The Mennonites were permitted to settle in block settlements in Manitoba and Saskatchewan from 1873 to 1904 through Orders-in-Council but immigration in the 1920's was stopped for a time by another. There have been 45 Orders-in-Council in Canada that specifically mention Mennonites.

The Swift Current Reserve

Below is the full text of this Order-in-Council number "1904-1905" establishing the Swift Current Reserve and was approved on 13 August, 1904. It has the official title: Reinland Mennonite Association granted certain lands near Swift Current Assa [Assiniboine District] - Min Int [Minister of the Interior] 1904/08/08. This text is transcribed from the original handwritten document.

On a report dated 8 August, 1904 from the Minister of the Interior stating that an application has been submitted by the Reinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba for the setting aside of certain Townships in the vicinity of Swift Current in the District of Assineboia [sp] for the purpose of establishing a Mennonite Colony. It is urged by the petitioners in support of this application that the Mennonite Community of Manitoba are anxious to facilitate the settlement of their young men who are desirous of locating in the North West Territories, and with that object in view it is their intention to make them such monetary advances and afford them such other [page 2] facilities as will enable the persons who will locate on the new colony to make a success of their enterprise.

The land applied for consist of all available odd and even numbered Sections within Townships 13 and 14, Range 12, Townships 12, 13 and 14, Range 13 and the East halves of Townships 13 and 13 Range 14, all west of the 3d Meridian. These lands for the most part, with the exception of such odd numbered Sections as have been accepted by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, are vacant. They are reported as not being of a class which would make them suitable for farming by ordinary settlers, no demand therefore having, on that account, being received by the [page 3] Department of the Interior. As a matter of fact the Department has not felt warranted in encouraging new settlers to locate within this district, but the Association, guided as it is by the results which have attended the efforts of the Mennonite community in other parts of Manitoba and the North West Territories in founding colonies is satisfied that under the place which it is proposed to follow they will be able to work the lands applied for with success.

The Minister is of the opinion that under the circumstances it would be in the interest of the public, and especially of the district in which it is proposed to found this colony, to grant the application of the petitioners, and we [page 4] therefore recommends that all the lands both the odd and even numbered Sections, remaining at the disposal of the Government within Townships 13 and 14, Range 12, Township 12, 13, and 14, Range 13 and East halves of Townships 12 and 13, Range 14, all west of the 3rd Meridian be set aside as a reserve for the establishment of a colony by the Reinland Mennonite Association of Manitoba. The terms of such reserve to be that no one, unless aided by the Association, or otherwise approved by the Department of the Interior, is to be allowed to make homestead entry within the tract mentioned, and that such reserve shall be continued for a period of three years from the date of the [page 5] present Order in Council. The nominees of the Association will, at their option, homestead either the odd or even numbered Sections.

The Minister further recommends that the Association be permitted, upon causing the four quarters of any even numbered Section to be homesteaded, to contract for the purchase of an adjoining odd numbered Section at \$3.00 per acre in ten annual installments with interest at the rate of 5% per annum upon the unpaid balance, no patent for the purchased Section or part thereof to be

issued until the homestead duties have been performed upon the adjoining Section or a proportional part thereof in respect of which the privilege of buying the [page 6] odd numbered Section has been given.

The Committee submit the same for approval.

[Signed] Wilfrid Laurier

[Signed] Approved [the word is unreadable] / Aug. 13.04. / Minto

Comments on the Order-in-council

By 1904 most of the land in the Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve had been taken up but members of the Reinland Mennonite Church in Manitoba still needed more land. Led by Reinländer Obervor-steher Franz Froese, they hired J. B. McLaren, a solicitor from Morden, Manitoba, who had frequently worked with Mennonites and then met with the federal Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, who had both goodwill and confidence in Mennonites. They persuaded Sifton to prepare and have Order-in-Council 1904-1905 proclaimed.

The Order-in-Council gives the details of what land can be taken up by Reinlanders and also severely limits access by any others. The Reinland Association was what we today know as *Old Colony* Mennonites. Thus, Mennonites of other Conferences could not homestead there and indeed had to look elsewhere. This resulted in settlements like Main Center or Pella being set up, or joined by other Mennonites seeking farms and gives an explanation why Mennonites had scattered settlements over the broader area in southern Saskatchewan.

The document notes that the Swift Current area was less suitable for farming and we know that the area has a tendency to be dry, which in 1904 was likely thought to be more useful as ranching country. However, the Canadian government had a quarter century of seeing Mennonite farmers thrive and it now gave them the trust that if they thought the area is good for farming they would be given exclusive rights to a portion of it. The fact that land not taken up could be purchased by successful homesteaders on easy credit also shows government trust and in helping to keep non-Reinlanders out and the community closed to outsiders. Though

the Order-in-Council gave the reserve closed status for only three years, in practice the Swift Current reserve was closed until 1909.

Finally, there is no indication of settling in hamlets rather than on their individual homestead quarters. The Reinlanders in Manitoba and in Hague-Osler settled in hamlets, as did Doukhobors, but almost no other homesteaders settled that way. Nevertheless, Reinlanders knew that in the Dominion Lands Act there was a "Hamlet Privilege" clause. Thus, they established these hamlets in their Swift Current reserve and most everyone lived in that form until many left in the 1920s for Latin America. Though the federal government wanted all homesteaders on their own quarter section of land and in 1907 abolished the "Hamlet Privilege", they didn't interfere with these homesteaders. Today, in what was the Swift Current Reserve, the village of Blumenort still exists as a wonderful example of how the single street, "Strassendoft," style hamlet was settled and organized around about twenty pioneer homestead families.

UGW

A Church in Rhineland Celebrates 75 Years

by Henry A. Friesen

On October 7, 2018, the Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) in Rhineland, SK celebrated 75 years of continuous ministry. The morning's regular worship service was enhanced by the presence of two former pastors (Alvin Buhler and Doug Pankratz) and more than one hundred guests who joined them for this special day. Current Lead Pastor Tim Knelsen said he was particularly pleased to give guests "an idea of what the church looks and feels like today as far as the service style, the music, the preaching, etc." The theme for the day was *The Faithfulness of God* and the fact that the church leaders were able to introduce a new Associate Pastor, Owen Retzlaff, gave everyone present the sense that the church congregation is still active in carrying out its mission.

The highlights of the day included the annual Thanksgiving meal and the celebration service that took place later in the afternoon. Between these

two events and during the fropa that followed, members of the current congregation had a chance to catch up with old friends and meet former attendees. The "Picture Timeline" set up by Pastor Tim's wife Heather provided lots of opportunities for people to reminisce and see the 75 years in a short snapshot.

The afternoon celebration itself featured a number of special guests including Trevor Kirsch, the representative for the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches (FEB) with which CFC is affiliated. Pastor Kirsch, in turn, brought greetings from the FEB President Kevin Stone. Current members Danielle and Travis Johnston led the congregational worship while a number of additional music presentations involved both past and present church members. These included Frank, Calvin and Sandra Rempel accompanied by their sister Leona Knelsen, Anne Wall and her daughter Jolaine as well as Gail Nelson and Winona McLachlan. Their contributions added a wonderful element of thanksgiving and praise to the service. Those who participated in the "open mic" at the end of the service made it clear that the work of God which had its humble beginnings back in 1943 had made a significant impact on many lives and that its effect is still being felt all these years later.

Pastor Tim, himself a third generation member of the church, had this to say about the day: "... I enjoyed watching the church rally together around this special day and work hard to make it happen.

This is characteristic of our church, everyone is willing to pitch in and I saw that happen. But also, it was encouraging to hear how God had impacted so many people in a number of different ways throughout the history of our church...The 75 years that Rhineland CFC has been active is a picture of many people following God, striving to be faithful and obedient to Him in their lives, and seeing Him work in and through them. I think the words in Hebrews 2:1-4 ring true... we need to pay close attention to what we have heard and hold on to what we have believed so that we don't drift away... We have 75 years of great history, and I'm excited to see what God will do in the next 75!"

HAF

A Short History of the Christian Fellowship Church in Rhineland, SK

- by Henry A. Friesen

In the early 1950s our family - Henry and Helena (Rempel) Friesen - began to attend the Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) in Rhineland, SK. At the time it was one of the few villages on the Mennonite Reserve near Swift Current where an alternative to the Sommerfelder Church was being offered. The "family story" is that our father wanted his children to learn about God in a language they could read and understand more easily, namely English. When my parents heard that Sunday school was being offered in English in the nearby village of Rhineland, they began to take us there. It was a major change for our family and over the years, my siblings and I have remarked how our experiences in CFC were foundational to the start of our spiritual journeys.

One of the initiatives that led to the establishment of the CFC was a series of evangelistic meetings held in the village of Schoenfeld in 1939 and conducted by Rev. I.P.F. Friesen and Rev. George Froese of Manitoba. Jacob (J.J.M.) Friesen, a nephew of the two evangelists, and his wife Margaret were among those who were impacted by these services. They joined the Emmaus Mennonite Church in Wymark (a Mennonite General Conference church) shortly after these meetings and in 1943 Jacob was ordained by this church/conference and placed on the list of rotating ministers who served the nearby churches.

That same year (1943) Rev. J.J.M. and Margaret Friesen moved to the village of Rhineland and along with their friends and fellow seekers, Henry and Lena Funk and Peter and Elizabeth Wall, laid the foundation for what would become a thriving evangelical church congregation. Together these couples led English Sunday School classes which, at first, included only the families in their village. It wasn't long however, before other Mennonite

families from nearby villages began to send their children as well. When the attendance and interest increased, those early supporting families purchased a small church building in Blumenort and moved it into Rhineland (1947). This "new" facility provided more room and more opportunities to expand the increasingly popular Sunday night services.

Throughout the late 1940s and into the early 1950s, the congregation grew both in numbers and in leadership. John Regier from Swift Current regularly came to lead a choir while Albert Fast, a teacher in the village, lent his musical ability to lead a small orchestra.

Evangelistic services played a key role in the

church's growth and its vitality. In 1950, Rev. I.P.F. Friesen and George Froese were invited back and held services in Henry Funk's large new quonset, and in 1957, another set of evangelistic meetings were held in J.J.M.

Friesen's quonset with

Henry Unrau as the speaker. During those years Missions Conferences were also held and with all the numerical growth that these services fostered, the congregation was in a position to build a brand new building. In what was clearly a venture in faith, J.J.M. Friesen writes that already "in 1943 with the help of Bro. Henry Funk, we bought a sixteen acre lot in the village of Rhineland." God rewarded their faith, for this property became the site of a brand new church building in 1958, the same year that they became a recognized church.

It was during these years of growth that another important ministry began when three businessmen from Swift Current; J. P. Wiebe (Nodge Manufacturing), Jake Heinrichs (Cindercrete Block Manufacturing) and John Wiebe who was in the trucking business, approached Rev. J.J.M. Friesen to begin a Low German radio broadcast. The church supported the endeavor and soon thousands of people across the province were touched by the outreach of the CFC church in Rhineland.

In addition to the local missions such as the



Current Christian Fellowship Church building in Rhineland, SK

Radio Ministry, the congregation had a strong sense of needing to support "foreign missions." As early as the 1950s they held missions conferences and gave significant support to these missionaries: Kay Unger (India), Freda Rempel (Taiwan), and Henry and Lois Hildebrandt (Kenya). This desire to communicate the Gospel beyond its rural setting has never really left the church as they continue to support missionaries and other Christian ministries both locally and around the world.

In May of 2016 I had the privilege of preaching at a service in Rhineland. It was the first time I had been there in a very long time and, together with twenty-five or so of my first cousins (on the Rempel side of the family) whose early faith had been shaped by the CFC church, we marveled at all that God had done through the faithful members of this rural church. In my sermon I said that, just like the people of Israel, we take the events and experiences of the past and turn them into stories in order to carry the meaning forward. My aunts, uncles and cousins have done that. So too have hundreds of others who look back with amazement and thanksgiving at how the work of God, through the faithful members of the Rhineland Christian Fellowship Church, has affected and continues to impact our lives these many years later.

*The primary source for the above is the Rhineland Church's 40th Anniversary Book: **Christian Fellowship Church, Rhineland, SK. 40 years 1943-1983.** (History book written by the church and published in 1983). Other information came from personal conversations and emails with those whose parents were part of the early beginnings of CFC.*

HAF

Feedback: ,,,from Dave Toews, St. Albert, AB
The Dec 2018 edition of the Historian is an excellent issue, I sat down and read it from cover to cover. I especially enjoyed the Rosenhof stories, my friend Dave Dyck is from there. He lived through all that and knows most of the Wielers pictured. Carl Krause always writes interesting little clips, we knew Carl and Lily from Nutana Park Mennonite. And Victor Carl Friesen's softball story rings a bell in me as do all sports stories.

Ravenhead Remembered

by Dave Toews



Author, standing between Lana Johnson (waving) and Bonnie Mae Pethick The smiling happy-looking little boy in the front row looks out expectantly at me from the school picture.

It was September 1952, the year Princess Elizabeth ascended to the throne as the Queen of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. I was seven years old, and had just started grade one. What do I remember? What is reinforced by pictures, stories by family and friends and reconstructive memory?

Reconstructive memory - "recall that is hypothesized to work by storing abstract features which are then used to construct the memory during recall."

Some of what I can reconstruct is from my father's ledger, where the farm and family income and expenses were meticulously journalized. The Mammoth 5 Cent Scribbler consists of forty-two pages written alternately in German and English.

One can see that father's English improved as the years progressed. There is no direct reference in the ledger that I started school, but shoes were purchased for \$3.01 and T. Eaton Co. mail order parcels in the amounts of \$38.46 and \$33.87 were received that fall. The only regular income shown was for cream, eggs and family allowance, with the occasional sale of chickens, pigs, cows and grain.

I started at rural Ravenhead School, close to Mayfair, Saskatchewan, when I was seven because in the fall of 1951 I was stricken with pneumonia

and had to spend two weeks in the isolation ward in the North Battleford Union Hospital. When my mother came to visit me, she could only look through the window in the door; a painful, tearful experience for a young boy. When she later returned to take me home, there was a big snowstorm and the train had to be rerouted through Saskatoon. We stayed in a hotel and ate in restaurants; quite an adventure for a six year old farm boy. The trip took two days rather than two hours.

It's clear from my report card that English was not my mother tongue. My language grades; oral, printing and spelling improved slowly throughout that first year. My sister Anna Marie (right hand end of the middle row), two years ahead of me, had brought English home to us, so I had had a bit of practice. Under "Character and Citizenship" it shows that I may have been somewhat of a reluctant student the first few years.

Our teacher, Mr. Mike Shklanka, two years out of Normal School, lived with his parents on a neighbouring farm and drove his new 1951 Ford to school every day. He was very proud of his car, it is visible in the school picture.



Mike Shklanka at 80

I was able to contact Mike in December 2010. At 80 years of age, he is long retired after a 36 year teaching career. When I called him, he knew immediately who I was and inquired about my siblings Anna Marie and Ernie by name.

I asked Mike if he would write about his experiences teaching at Ravenhead.

Unfortunately he declined; he was busy writing his memoirs. I mentioned I had recently returned from Ukraine.

Later in an email he noted, "I too was in Ukraine in the summer of 1973 as a member of a group of Teachers of Ukrainian in Canada studying at the Kyiv Taras Shevchenko University. (Those were the Brezhnev years! We had lots of surveillance.)"

Some of the best times we had were going to and from school. It was always an adventure; running barefoot through spring rains, crunching over fall leaves and skiing in the winter over the crystalline snow. All we had were basic wooden skis, with homemade leather harness straps over our boots. We walked south along the dirt road to Louie Johnson's corner where Anna Marie and I met our cousins Elizabeth and Hilda, and continued past Johnson's slough. Along the winding path and up the steep treed hillside beyond, down Mike Pyra's big hill and through the fence we went into the schoolyard.

We were not a pampered lot; through rain, hail and sleet, through snowstorms and sub-zero temperatures, we endured. Our parents warned us to be careful, but we were never driven to school.

There were some dangerous times; being chased by a bull, lost in a snowstorm and fording swollen creeks during spring run-off. Fortunately no one was ever seriously hurt!

The school, a one-room building covered with red asphalt brick siding, and heated with a 45 gallon barrel heater, was constructed in 1914 at the cost of \$1365. The horse barn/woodshed cost \$120. The teacher's residence was added in 1930. The enrolment peaked in the 1930s at 29 and dwindled to 13 by the time the school was closed in 1954, after my Grade Two year. For the start of my third year we were bussed on Freddie Prystupa's bus to the Mayfair town school. It was the beginning of school centralization in Saskatchewan. And a whole new world opened up to me.

Ravenhead School was at the hub of our lives for ten months of the year. There were exciting games to be played at recess and noon hour; prisoner's base, hide and seek in the bush and barn, and of course softball. In winter we ate frozen lunches huddled around the blazing heater, drinking hot cocoa from our thermoses.

The Christmas Concert was the highlight of the first half of the year. The temporary stage was of planks set up on sawhorses, with bed sheets for curtains strung up with safety pins on a wire. All the students were in several plays and skits. Mr. Shklanka stood behind the curtain prompting us as

we stumbled through our lines.

People came from miles around dressed in their Sunday best. The Ukrainian ladies all had fancy fur coats, much to our mother's chagrin. Of course, Santa came at the end of the evening to hand out Christmas goody bags and a few presents. There was always the smell of a strange brew on his breath, much to our parents' disapproval.

Along with the passing out of report cards, the July 1 sports/field day signalled the end of the school year. I don't remember any success at sports at that time; it wasn't until I was 12 that I blossomed as an athlete.

Today the school site is a canola field farmed by our cousin, Stuart Toews, a successful third generation Saskatchewan grain farmer. There is a small faded sign nailed to a corner fence post that denotes that this is the former location of Ravenhead School. "The passing of an era, already almost 60 years ago."

DT

In Search of the Faithful 77 Project Prospectus

Die Zweite Märtyrersynode: January 13-18, 1925 Moscow

by Edward Krahn

On January 13-18, 1925 seventy-seven Mennonite leaders from the Russian Mennonite Commonwealth gathered in Moscow under the auspices of the *Kommission fuer Kirchenangelegenheiten* (KfK). At this gathering during the time of trouble they submitted a petition to the Soviet consisting of 8 basic human rights. When it was rejected the first time, they resubmitted it the next day only for it to be rejected again.

The iconic photo of the leaders at the meeting in the January snow of Moscow reminds us of the importance this meeting held for Mennonites. The following repression of the leadership by the GPU resulted in the torture, imprisonment in the gulags and killing of a majority of the leadership.



77 Mennonite Leaders met in Moscow for the *Kommission fuer Kirchenangelegenheiten* (KfK).

Only 19 of the leaders escaped, mainly to Canada. This led one of the youngest delegates to the conference Gerhard Lohrenz (later to become an Aeltester in Canada), to coin the name for this meeting the Second Martyrs' Synod.

2025 will be the 100th Anniversary of this seminal meeting for the Russlander Mennonites in both Russia and beyond. All the leaders have long since passed on and the event and those Faithful 77 have become faint in the memories of Mennonites today. The goals for the project are to research and document the history of the KfK, the meeting and the group, and produce biographies on as many of those leaders as possible, resulting in the dissemination of this important history for the Mennonite community.

Goals for the Project

1. Conduct primary and secondary background research on the 1925 conference, and the KfK, the delegates to the conference. Most of the information which does exist is found in scattered resources and publications.
2. Try to determine the fate of the 77 and where possible determine where they may be buried.
3. Identify research resources which retain information - historical researchers, publications, archives, museums, family members.
4. Produce a report containing the background research so other historians/students may use this information as a starting point for further research for papers, theses, and publications.
5. Tell the story of the Faithful 77 (e.g. journal articles, websites, publications). Most of the written documentation is in German. The initial intent is to produce the story in English for those who no longer understand German or Russian.
6. A significant number (19) did escape from Russia, and 16 immigrated to Canada, where a number of them played a major role in the establishment of churches for the Russlander Mennonites who immigrated during the 1920s. Much of this information has been forgotten. Therefore, the project will help to remind this current and future generations of this important historical event.

How Can the Event Be Celebrated?

- Honour them in Mennonite churches and by the related conferences in special programs of history, art and song in January, 2025.
- Erect a cairn, and set up displays at Mennonite Museums/Archives featuring the individuals showcasing their story using archival and artifacts.
- Undertake a special conference in 2025 to acknowledge their heroic efforts.
- Promote the story through Mennonite historical journals and publications and inclusion in GAMEO.
- Promote the story through various public media, including interviews and speaking engagements, conferences and workshops.

The Faithful 77 - by Alphabet

Baergen, Bernhard Kornelius - 4
 Bergen, Peter - 52
 Braun, Peter Isaak - 75
 Braun, Daniel Jakob - 53
 Bueckert, Johann Peter - 46
 DeFehr, Cornelius A - 67
 Derksen, Gerhard Jacob - 26
 Dueck, Aron Aron - 36
 Dyck, Peter Heinrich - 31
 Ediger, Alexander Heinrich - 37
 Epp, Heinrich - 13
 Epp, Kornelius - 65
 Friedrichsen, Peter Herman - 15
 Friesen, Franz Jacob - 3
 Friesen, Heinrich Abram - 73
 Friesen, Nikolai - 74
 Froese, Peter Peter - 25
 Gaede, Gerhard Johann - 14
 Goerzen, Jakob Jakob - 70
 Harder, Kornelius David - 23
 Huebert, Jakob Franz - 50
 Janzen, Heinrich Jakob - 57
 Janzen, Johann Martin - 12
 Janzen, Nikolai Franz - 17
 Klassen, Abram - 28
 Klassen, Abram Aron - 42
 Klassen, Peter - 5
 Kliewer, Johann - 44
 Koop, David David - 60
 Koop, Peter Heinrich - 32
 Kopper, Gerhard - 76

Krahn, Isaak George - 45
 Letkemann, Jakob Jakob - 49
 Loewen, David Heinrich - 6
 Loewen, Jakob Abram - 43
 Loewen, Kornelius - 21
 Lohrenz, Gerhard Johann - 8
 Martens, Franz Franz - 1
 Martens, Heinrich Jakob - 77
 Martens, Johann Johann - 10
 Martens, Johann Kornelius - 62
 Martens, Kornelius - 71
 Martens, Kornelius Kornelius - 41
 Neufeld, Peter P - 47
 Neufeld, Johann - 59
 Neustaetter, Abram Kornelius - 29
 Nickel, K - 16
 Paetkau, Jacob Heinrich - 40
 Pauls, Peter Peter - 11
 Pauls, Julius Julius - 63
 Petkau, David David - 64
 Peters, Johann Johann - 7
 Penner, David - 19
 Quiring, Franz Johann - 61
 Rahn, Johann Johann - 27
 Redekopp, D - 34
 Reimer, Aron Aron - 9
 Reimer, Jakob Cornelius - 68
 Rempel, Hermann (Abraham/Aron?) - 20
 Rempel, Jakob Aron - 38
 Schellenberg, Peter Peter - 66
 Siemens, Heinrich Kornelius - 2
 Siemens, Johann - 48
 Siemens, Peter Julius - 18
 Teichroeb, Abraham Peter - 55
 Toews, Aron Peter - 58
 Toews, Jakob Jakob - 54
 Unrau, Heinrich - 72
 Voth, Heinrich Peter - 22
 Wiebe, Johann Johann - 56
 Wiens, Bernhard - 33
 Wiens, Dietrich - 30
 Wiens, Jakob Gerhard - 51
 Wiens, Johann Gerhard - 35
 Wiens, Kornelius - 69
 Willms, Abram Peter - 39
 Willms, Gerhard Heinrich - 24

Numerical List

- Martens, Franz Franz (?-?) Aeltester / KG / Ufa / Exile
- Siemens, Heinrich Kornelius (1868-1955) #957128 Minister/ BG / Ufa / Canada
- Friesen, Franz Jacob (1883-1963) #1028742 Minister / BG / Slawgorod/Orenburg / Canada
- Baergen, Bernhard Kornelius (1884-1937) #175572 / Minister / BG / Neu-Samara / Exile
- Klassen, Peter (?-?) / BG / Ignatjewka #1 / Exile
- Loewen, David Heinrich (1877-1930) #1007246 / Minister / Romanowka, Orenburg / Exile
- Peters, Johann Johann (1885-1937) #424902 / Missionary / Romanowka, Orenburg / Exile
- Lohrenz, Gerhard Johann (1899-1986) #239530 / Aeltester / KG / Schonsee, Sagraadowka / Canada
- Reimer, Aron Aron (1870-1986) #13108 / Aeltester / BG / Schoental, Slawgorod / Canada / United States
- Martens, Johann Johann (1885-1935) #705653 / Aeltester / KG / Olgafeld, Fuerstenland / Canada
- Pauls, Peter Peter (1889-1989) #1252457 / Minister / BG / Nikolojpol, Turkestan - China / Canada
- Janzen, Johann Martin (1885-?) #581344 / Minister / BG / Bahndorf, Memrik / Exile
- Epp, Heinrich (?-?) Minister / Slawgorod / Canada (David Heinrich?)
- Gaede, Gerhard Johann (?-?) #352743 / Leader / BG / Tschunajewka, Siberia / Exile
- Friedrichsen, Peter Herman (1866-1926) #518742 Aeltester / KG / Krim / Exile
- Nickel, K (?-?) Aeltester/ Trakt / Exile
- Janzen, Nikolai Franz (?-?) Minister / Neukirch, Molotschna / Exile
- Siemens, Peter Julius (1866-1930) #515911 / / MB / Gussarowka, Barwenkowo / Exile
- Penner, David (?-?) / Nikolajfeld, Sagraadowka / Exile
- Rempel, Hermann (Hermann/Abraham/Aron?) (1884-?) #533304 / Aeltester / EMBG / Karason, Krim / Exile
- Loewen, Kornelius (?-?) Minister / KG / Blumstein, Molotschna / Exile
- Voth, Heinrich Peter (1887-1973) #428065 / Aeltester / KG / Schoeneu, Sagraadowka / Exile
- Harder, Kornelius David (1866-1946) #176982/Aeltester/KG/Siberia/Canada
- Willms, Gerhard Heinrich (?-?) Minister /KG/Hamberg,Molotschna/Exile
- Froese, Peter Peter (?-?) Minister / KG / Jekaterinowka, Siberia / Exile
- Derksen, Gerhard Jacob (1879-1965) #531178 / BG / Alexanderthal, Molotschna / Canada
- Rahn, Johann Johann (?-?) Conductor/BG/Waldheim,Molotschna/Exile
- Klassen, Abraham (?-?) Unknown

- Neustaeter, Abraham Kornelius (1864-1945) #285844 / Minister / MB / Friedensfeld / Exile
- Wiens, Dietrich (?-?) Minister / EMBG / Konteniusfeld, Molotschna / Exile
- Dyck, Peter Heinrich (1870-1933) #453416 Minister / Kondratjewka, Borissowo / Exile
- Koop, Dietrich Heinrich (1888-1944) # 110002 Minister / KG / Alexanderkrone, Molotschna / Canada
- Wiens, Bernhard (?-?) Minister / KG / Gradiental, Molotschna / Exile
- Redekopp, D (?-?) unknown
- Wiens, Johann Gerhard (1874-1951) # 63677 / Minister / MB / Tschongraw, Krim / Canada
- Dueck, Aron Aron (1895-1937?) #217773 / Minister / KG / Margenau, Molotschna / Exile
- Ediger, Alexander Heinrich (1893-1938?) #209012 / Aeltester / KG / Schoensee, Molotschna / Exile
- Rempel, Jakob Aron (1883-1941) #349212 / Aeltester / KG / Gruenfeld, Chortitza / Exile
- Willms, Abraham Peter (1882-1959) #426424 / Minister / BG / Fuerstenwerder, Molotschna / Canada
- Paetkau, Jacob Heinrich (1895-1947) #435577 / Aeltester / KG / Memrik / Exile
- Martens, Kornelius Kornelius (1880-1938) #1067367 / Minister / BG / Gnandenfeld, Molotschna / Exile
- Klassen, Abraham Aron (1870-1941) #741199 / Aeltester / KG / Halbstadt, Molotschna, Exile
- Loewen, Jakob Abraham (1872-1938) #671085 / Minister / EMBG / MB / Lichtenau, Molotschna / Canada
- Kliewer, Johann (1872-1959) #219092 / Minister / BG / Sagradowka / Canada
- Krahn, Isaak George (1882-1941) #226932 / Aeltester / Dolinowka, Orenburg / Exile
- Bueckert, Johann Peter (1879-1958) #405369 / Minister / KG / Arkadak / Canada
- Neufeld, Peter Peter (1875-1927) #494701 / Aeltester / KG / Chortitza / Exile
- Siemens, Johann (?-?) Missionary / Spat, Krim / Exile
- Letkemann, Jakob Jakob (?-?) #604783? / Aeltester / KG / Karasan, Krim / Exile
- Huebert, Jakob Franz (1873-1964) #474764 / Aeltester / BG / Margenau, Siberia / Exile / Paraguay / Brazil
- Wiens, Jakob Gerhard (1857-1931) #132499 / Aeltester / BG / Tschunajewka, Siberia / Exile
- Bergen, Peter Peter (1872-1937) #223121 / Aeltester / Jekaterinowka (Ekaterinovka), Siberia / Exile

- Braun, Daniel Jakob (1869-1951) #535830 / Minister / BG / Chortitza / Canada
- Toews, Jakob Jakob (1874-1938) #732162 / Aeltester / BG / Alt-Samara / Exile
- Teichroeb, Abraham Peter (1865-1934) #206923 / Minister / BG / Kantserovka, Orenburg / Exile
- Wiebe, Johann Johann (1884-?) #484787 / Minister / KG / Menlertschik, Krim / Exile
- Janzen, Heinrich Jakob (1878-1937) #803893 / Aeltester / BG / Dolinskoye, Neu-Samara / Exile
- Toews, Aron Peter (1887-1945) #224988 / Minister / Chortitz, Chortitza / Exile
- Neufeld, Johann (?-?) / Naumenkovo, Krim Usinsk / Exile
- Koop, David David (1900-1982) #477201 / Minister / KG / Ohrloff, Molotschna / Brazil
- Quiring, Franz Johann (1892-1938) #66080 / Teacher/Minister / Am Trakt / Exile
- Martens, Johann Kornelius (1875-1938) #371259 / Aeltester / KG / Einlage, Chortitza / Exile
- Pauls, Julius Julius (?-?) Minister / KG / Miloradowka, Kriwog Rog / Exile
- Petkau, David David (1882-1943) #209630 / Minister / BG / Kamenka, Orenburg / Exile
- Enns, Kornelius (?-?) / KG / Altonau, Molotschna / Exile
- Schellenberg, Peter Peter (1869-1943) #209596 / Minister / KG / Kalinowo, Memrik / Exile
- DeFehr, Cornelius A (1881-1979) #201720 / Industrialist / BG / Millerowo, Kuban / Canada
- Reimer, Jakob Cornelius (1878-1947) #312960 / BG / Wohldemfuerst, Kuban / Exile
- Wiens, Kornelius (?-?) / Aeltester / BG / Kuban / Exile
- Goerzen, Jakob Jakob (1876-1945) #473574 / Industrialist / KG/ (Templer -Kuban/Palestine/Baden-Wuerttemberg) Died in a bombing raid
- Martens, Kornelius (?-?) Minister / BG / Kuban / Exile
- Unrau, Heinrich (?-?) / KG / Grossweide, Molotschna / Exile
- Friesen, Henrich Abraham (1892-1938) # 664264 / Minister / KG / Schoenau, Molotschna / Exile
- Friesen, Nilolai Johann (1875-1950) #163386 / Minister / KG / Uschalka, Neu-Samara / Exile
- Braun, Peter Isaak (?-?) Unknown
- Kopper, Gerhard (1860-1938) #67146 / Aeltester / KG / Koeppental, Kazakhstan / Exile
- Martens, Heinrich Jakob (?-?) / / KG / Gruenfeld, Schlachtin / Exile

KG - Mennonite Kirchen Gemeinde
 MB - Mennonite Brüder Gemeinde
 EMBG - Evangelical Mennonite Brüder Gemeinde

EK

Back to Schleitheim, Eleven Generations Later *by Ken Bechtel*

Several years ago, I became interested in tracing my Bechtel family history, back beyond our two plus centuries in Canada. My ancestor, Mennonite deacon Joseph Bechtel, had settled in Upper Canada in 1802, becoming the first preacher in the Waterloo district two years later. I am primarily interested in stories rather than simple pedigrees. And I knew precious few of them at that point.

Fortunately, some amateur genealogists from the extended family as well as others had traced our ancestry back beyond the Canadian generations to ancestors in Pennsylvania and Europe. At least one of these, Norma Shantz, had some Guernsey, Saskatchewan connections. They had done the necessary "pedigree work."

Back in 2015, en route to the Mennonite World Conference in Harrisburg, we visited the sites in Pennsylvania where Joseph, his father and grandfather had lived, farmed, and ministered since 1717.

Beginning in Europe

The European story of my Anabaptist Mennonite ancestors seemed less clear, though genealogists both amateur and professional, had traced the family back to the 1600s.

The one major story we had was from the Mennonite Encyclopedia with its brief description of the authorities' efforts to eradicate the Schleitheim Anabaptist community that had thrived there since 1525. In 1641, the military again occupied the village, arrested all the Mennonite men and placed them in irons in Schaffhausen. In May 1642, several of the men broke out of the prison. When they were caught, author Werner Pletscher reports, they were "put in a chain gang, the chains being provided with bells. Christian Bächtold was whipped with a lash." There we have it, the one

very brief story about an ancestor 11 generations back.

In September 2018, as part of celebrating our 30th anniversary, Audrey and I took in a Tourmagination tour of Ireland, our way of getting closer to mainland Europe. We then travelled to Switzerland where we were joined by my nephew who lives in the canton of Bern.

The German Palatinate

We started by travelling to the Mennonite Archives at Weierhof in southwest Germany near Mannheim. This is the area, known as the Pfalz or Palatinate, where they settled after being expelled from Schleitheim. We found some references to the four generations that spent some time there. We then visited each of the locales where they lived and farmed between 1648 and 1717. They were welcomed in the Palatinate to farm lands that had been devastated by the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). This was a conditional welcome, though; their version of the Privilegium was called a "Concession". We also noticed how the spelling of Bächtold echoed the local pronunciation, and thus became Bechtel.



Ken Bechtel at a sign pointing to Schleitheim

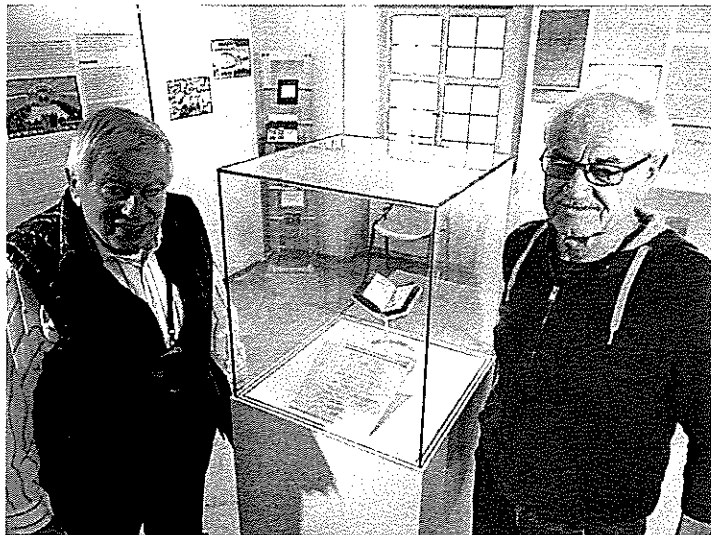
But Beginning in Schleitheim

Schleitheim in the northernmost Swiss canton of Schaffhausen is both a village and a 21.5 square

kilometer municipality right on the border with Germany.

Upon arriving in Schleithem, we did some quick touring of the region and stopped at the town cemetery. To our surprise, many of the surnames were similar to those in my home community and church in Cambridge, Ontario – Bächtold (Bechtel), Meier (Meyer), Wanner, Russenberger (Rosenberger), and Schüdel (Schiedel).

The next morning we had an appointment with Willi Bächtold, the curator of the Schleithem Museum. Presumably he is a rather distant relative as he reports that there were only 15-20 Bechtold families in Schleithem in the 17th century. Herr Bächtold has been the mover and shaker behind this collection for some 30 years. In that our curator spoke only German, it was fortunate that we had our German speaking nephew with us. In addition to the objects collected from the 5000 year history of the municipality, includes an important Roman settlement, they have set aside a special area, the Schleithem Confession Room.



Ken Bechtel and Willi looking at the Schleithem Confession of 1527 (1550 copy)

The Schleithem Confession Room

The feature in this room is their 1550 copy of the 1527 Schleithem Confession, a small book they purchased several years ago by quickly raising about \$50,000 Canadian equivalent. This document was originally entitled the "Brotherly Union of a Number of Children of God Concerning Seven Articles" but is usually dubbed the *Schleithem Confession*. It outlines core distinctions between

the Swiss Brethren and the state churches and other dissident sects. These issues, such as the refusal to bear arms, the swearing of oaths, and using the ban rather than state lethal force for church discipline, soon became hallmarks of other Anabaptist communities as well. The Schleithem Confession is the oldest known Anabaptist confession, adopted just two years after the first baptisms in Zurich.

The museum then contracted with Swiss scholar, Dr. Urs Leu, to write panels telling the story of the Schleithem Anabaptists. These panels in German and English give the context, and tell the story from their 1525 beginnings through their 1648 expulsion and some references to their later destinations. The Schleithem Anabaptist community had begun in early 1525 with Conrad Grebel's work in nearby Schaffhausen. Just two years later they hosted the leaders who crafted this "Brotherly Agreement..."

Imagine my excitement when on the third wall, under the heading "Persecution," I came across the following: "On May 5, 1642, the prisoners succeeded in a spectacular escape attempt from the prison in the hospital." The panel went on to describe their escape route and their journey back up the mountain some 15 kilometers to Schleithem, their legs still in shackles.

My Ancestor, Christian Bechtold (1595- circa 1655)

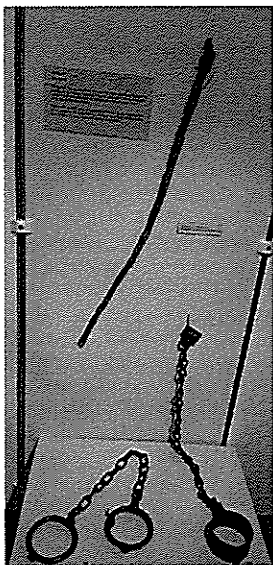
In preparation for our visit, Herr Bächtold had also combed the town archives. He also found tax records indicating that Christian Bechtold (the common spelling in those records) paid taxes on 18 small properties, 3 vineyards and 15 fields or meadows. One was only 10 meters by 200 meters. He was, at that point, one of the largest landowners in the municipality.

These tax records continue until 1648, after which his name is stroked out, verifying his leaving Schleithem that year.

He also found Reformed Church records, indicating that Christian Bechtold and Anna Meier's three children were forcibly baptized as infants. The 1622 entry for his son, my ancestor Christian Bechtold, gives the date, the names of the parents and the godparents. After the father's name, Christian

Bechtold, the pastor writes the word "Täufer," a common shortened form of *Wiedertäufer*, Anabaptist. Perhaps the pastor was proud to document his efforts to "Christianize" these dissidents' children. Soon after our return, Willi Bächtold located and sent us a copy of a 1941 article which included a transcript of the September 3, 1642 Interrogation of Christian Bechtold. He later transcribed the 1642 edict which was issued as a result in late September. The interrogation and edict were written in an older German we've sometimes found challenging to translate.

Christian's interrogators were interested, first, in how they escaped from this secure prison. The prison room was heated with a type of tile covered stove called a *kachelofen*. Though we had seen one in a monastery near Mannheim, we hadn't realized its significance until we read about this escape. According to Christian, given their hard imprisonment, concerns about the hardships faced by their families, and threats of even harsher treatment if they didn't return to the state church, they "discussed how to break out and return to their women and children and earn their bread."



the leg irons used

"Between 9 and 10 in the evening Grazin Bletscher and his brother were able to free themselves from one of the leg irons so both of them could stretch them separate from each other. With their free hands they were able to loosen the tiles from the oven (a '*kachelofen*') one at a time to create an opening large enough that one after the other could crawl through. Grazin was the first and then the rest of the six followed

the hospital where they were imprisoned aided them or advised them. They escaped using their own means. Fearing capture and returning to prison, they crossed the border into the village of Fütz where they paid to be sheltered in the woods and field, worked, and at night returned to their women and children in Schlaittheim." (Note the older spelling of Schleitheim).

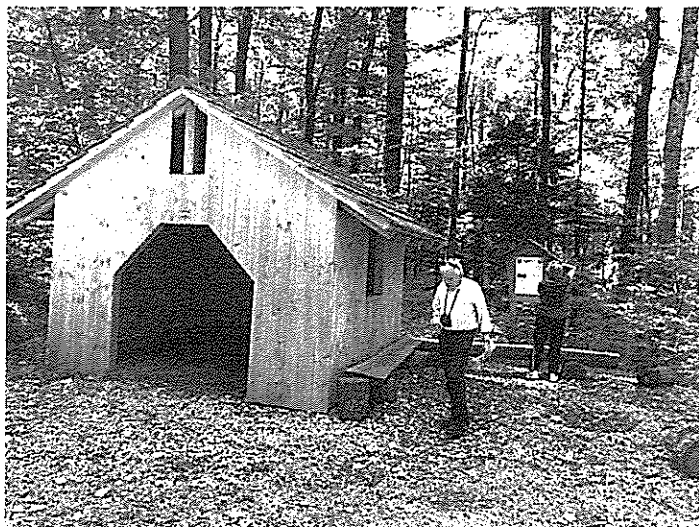
These interrogators, Hans Jakob Hoffmann and Matthens Schalk, seemed particularly infuriated that Christian "holds strongly to his belief in the Ban. He persists in his error." I suspect that Christian, like some other Anabaptists, may have raised biblical challenges concerning the Church's use of state force to enforce conformity to Church doctrine and practice. The Ban, as explained in Article 2 of the Schleitheim Confession, was based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18 about private warnings and public admonition. When those failed, the ultimate punishment was exclusion from communion. This ban would apply, Christian said, to "blasphemers, cursers, and swindlers." In frustration, these interrogators wrote that "Even though we spoke to him with many earnest and serious words, nothing caught." The edict the authorities issued soon after complained about these "hard-headed, obtuse and malicious" Anabaptists. Their "Mandat" included punishments of 100 guilders for harbouring an Anabaptist overnight, and 20 guilders for even talking with one. These would be the equivalent of more than \$9,000 and \$1,800 current Canadian dollars. We look forward to receiving a fuller and more accurate translation of this edict.

The Täuferweg, the Anabaptist Path

After our three hours with the very informative and enthusiastic Willi Bächtold, we enjoyed a light lunch at the Löwen restaurant in town, then headed out to the Täuferweg, the Anabaptist path. En route we passed a pasture full of heifers and were reminded of some of the efforts of the authorities in the capital, Schaffhausen, to crush the Anabaptist movement. In 1595, they ordered that Anabaptists be forbidden to pasture their cattle with the common herds, an injunction the village elders did not enforce. For the most part their Reformed neigh-

towards the mill and town walls in complete darkness. They climbed through an arrow slit (a small opening to shoot out of) in the wall, through the pit surrounding the town and up past the Munot fortress, through the vineyards and found their way through the forest back to Schlaittheim and their women and children. No one outside of

bours disapproved of the government and state church's suppression tactics. In addition to sharing resentments of the state church's tithe system, they spoke positively of their Anabaptist neighbours' lifestyle. As one panel at the Schleithem museum noted, "Time and again inhabitants of Schleithem were censured by the council for their lack of cooperation."



Anabaptist worship cabins along the Täufferweg path

The Täufferweg, a footpath still in existence by that name between Schleithem and Merishausen, now has five informative plaques telling the Anabaptist story in German, French and English. By the 1540s, the Anabaptists were meeting secretly for worship in a cabin deep in the woods along this footpath. Standing there was like having our feet on hallowed ground, though we forgot to take off our shoes! Would I, or we, be willing to walk their path of faithfulness in the face of such obstacles?

We Did Find Stories

I wanted stories, and we found them. While none of the other ancestors inspired such a trove of written accounts, we found enough for each to begin to paint a picture of their times, troubles, talents, and triumphs. A particular pleasure for me has been gathering these into a booklet for my siblings, nieces and nephews. But more about that quest another time.

KCB

A Tribute to Vera Falk

by Leonard Doell & Jake Buhler



This evening, we as a Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan want to

honour and pay tribute to our dear friend, Vera Falk, for her 26+ years of faithful and dedicated service on the Board of our Society.

In the fall of 1992, Vera was elected to the MHSS Board at the AGM in Regina.

One of the highlights of those first years for members of the Board was meeting in the home of Dick and Betty Epp and being spoiled by the generosity of Betty Epp's hospitality.

Vera has been a very committed Board member, rarely missing a meeting. She served as secretary for many of those years, while at the same time submitting a regular column in a local newspaper, plus sending in reports to Mennonite and other papers about MHSS events.

Next to Dick Epp, Vera has been the longest serving member of the MHSS Board since the Society began in 1973.

Throughout all those years, her husband, Werner, has not only been her chauffeur, but also her constant companion and support.

Together they volunteered to attend and represent MHSS at many Heritage events, at the Western Development Museum, at Saskatchewan History and Folklore events, like the Watermelon Festival, etc. It is here that they would set up displays of books and materials and engage in conversation with people about Mennonite history.

They helped to physically move the RJC Archives from Rosthern to Bethany Manor, and then helped the set up of our first attempt at an Archives in the back corner in the basement of the Villa and then again, when the Archive space became available underneath this worship hall. They helped to renovate the space to make it into the beautiful facility it is today, which then meant moving all the books and

materials now under this new area! They have also have sold countless books for MHSS, helping to sustain the society financially over the years.

Vera and Werner have been very generous not only with their time, but financially, and in other ways. They have donated many resources to the Archives to benefit researchers and to preserve items for future generations.

Vera has also been very generous with her baking, sharing cookies and muffins for events like today.

She is also the person who thoughtfully shared many words of comfort and condolences to Board members when they were walking through hard times. We have really appreciated that Vera is a team player, always wanting the best for the MHSS program.

We give thanks today for the faithful and dedicated service that both Werner and Vera have extended to MHSS, and to the wider Mennonite community. We will miss your presence on the Board, Vera, and Werner hanging out in the back room, waiting for you. We want to wish you the best of health and God's richest blessings for the future.

[To Audience:] Please join us in giving a heartfelt thank you to Vera for her commitment of service to our Board for the past 26 years, and to Werner, for his unwavering support.

This is not a farewell, for we hope to stay connected with you in the future.



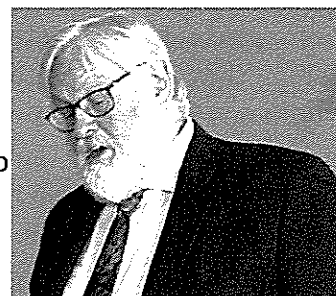
Presentation - of Service Award

(left-right:) President John Reddekopp, Werner Falk, Vera Falk, Leonard Doell. (March 1, 2019)

LD/JB

continued.. Celebrating our Anniversaries - pg.27

A little booklet was published, but Victor's research uncovered more details. He was not done checking all the facts yet, so another book may need to be written about this story!



Victor Wiebe

A Question & Answer time after Victor's story proved that most of us had not heard or read the details of this story. Real interest was aroused.

Ted Regehr was asked for his response as well.

We took a break for a delicious lunch by our favourite caterer, Helena Ens. (When asked for her recipe for that wonderful soup, she said it would be hard to recall all the ingredients, as it was original).

For our afternoon session at 1:25 pm, Dick Braun was the chairman. He introduced the Collab-oratorium, (a new word), which was a History project of Dr. Keith Carlson, Head of the Department of History at the University of Saskatchewan, working together with organizations such as ours, to provide internship jobs for History students, so they can learn to collect oral and written stories of various people groups. Dr. Carlson presented the start of the project.

Harris Ford, the student who worked with MHSS last summer, reported on the things he did, and how he learned so much from the stories of 11 seniors Dick Braun lined up.



Harris Ford

Harris interviewed and recorded them on his cellphone - then spent about six hours transcribing each of those recordings for written records. These are on a large database at the university, but we may have access to that information at any time.

He also scanned many of the earliest issues of our Historian, and digitized two church books. [Ed. for more details/photos check on our website, <https://mhss.sk.ca/reports/>]

RMF

Celebrating Our Anniversaries March 1 - 2, 2019

Our AGM Weekend (a Report - by Ruth Marlene Friesen)

As has become our tradition, Friday evening was a special evening about our Mennonite history, with Dr. Ted Regehr, as our guest speaker. Again that brought out a good audience.

John Reddekopp, President of the MHSS Board, welcomed everyone. Susan Braun, the Treasurer, made some announcements about membership and tax receipts for donations, then John Reddekopp prayed the invitational prayer.

At this point, Jake Buhler and Leonard Doell joined John and called up Vera and Werner Falk. They gave a fine tribute to Vera - and Werner, her right hand, and presented her with a plaque of recognition and gratitude for her 26 years of faithful service on the Board, most of them as Secretary. (See the full tribute on the previous page).

For special music Ben Buhler played his guitar and sang "Turn, Turn, Turn." Ben told us that Art Zacharias had passed away 11 days ago, bringing to an end their quartet, Joy Singers.

However, Ben's brother Jake Buhler joined him and they sang as a duet, "I Will Lift Up My Eyes to the Hills." Ben's wife, Diane, accompanied them on the piano.

Jake Buhler introduced Dr. Ted Regehr, who was a part of the birth of the MHSS, and taught in our university. So he is one of us - even if he lives in Alberta now.

Ted retold our history stories to us, particularly, of the major Mennonite migrations. First the arrival of the original settlers in the Rosthern area and then the Hague-Osler Reserve.

But then in July of 1924, there was an outgoing migration of Mennonites from this area to go to Mexico - because of the German School issue.

In the 1920s there were more incoming migrations of Mennonites occurred when many were desperate to escape the persecution and hard times in South Russia. The first wave was known as

the Rosenorter Group. The later ones were referred to as the Russländers.

Ted talked also, of the facilitators, such as Jack Y. Shantz, an Ontario business man with Mennonite roots, who helped the first waves of Mennonites get to Manitoba. There was Gerhard Ens, of Rosthern, who helped those coming to Saskatchewan. Peter Janzen was an agent in Russia, who influenced many there to choose to come to Canada. He helped some settle in Kansas in the USA, as well.

Of course, David Toews was known for his work with the migrants of the 1920s, and his negotiations for their travel loans from the CPR railway.

Most of these turning point events will come up for major anniversaries in the next ten years. We can expect to hear more as big events are likely to be planned.

A Question & Answer period showed that the audience was paying close attention.

This was followed by coffee and refreshments, which allowed for visiting.

On Saturday morning at 9:30 am. the Annual Business meeting took place with reports from all the departments. (If you wish to read those in detail, you may ask for a copy).

Board elections resulted in some being re-elected, Dick Braun returning after a year off, and Harold Loewen, as a new Board member.

Generally the reports were positive and very encouraging! Those under the impression that an Annual Meeting is boring would be quite surprised.

After a coffee break we returned to our seats at 11 am. Leonard Doell introduced Victor Wiebe, who is well-known in our circle for his storytelling ability. He did not disappoint!

Victor told us the true story - though with many twists and turns - of Henry P. Friesen and Isaac Braun. This was in the newspapers as the Friesen - Braun Trials. It was odd as Mennonites do not normally take each other to court.

Thus it embarrassed many and caused some to take sides.

(cont'd pg 26)



Dr. Ted Regehr

Honour List

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

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

Helen Bahnmann († 2016)
Abram J. Buhler († 1982)
Helen Dyck († 2007)
Dick H. Epp († 2009)
Jacob H. Epp († 1993)
Margaret Epp († 2008)
Peter K. Epp († 1985)
George K. Fehr († 2000)
Jake Fehr
Jacob E. Friesen († 2007)
John D. Friesen († 2004)
Jacob G. Guenter († 2013)

Katharine Hooze († 2001)
Abraham G. Janzen († 2015)
John J. Janzen († 2004)
George Krahn († 1999)
Ingrid Janzen-Lamp
Abram M. Neudorf († 1988)
Johan J. Neudorf († 1988)
Jacob C. Neufeld († 1994)
John P. Nickel († 2018)
David Paetkau († 1972)
Esther Patkau († 2017)
John D. Reddekopp († 2011)
Ted Regehr

John G. Rempel († 1963)
Ed Roth († 2008)
Wilmer Roth († 1982)
Arnold Schroeder († 2000)
Jacob Schroeder († 1993)
Katherine Thiessen († 1984)
Jacob J. Thiessen († 1977)
David Toews († 1947)
Toby Unruh († 1997)
Albert Wiens († 2002)
George Zacharias († 2000)
Gerhard J. Hiebert († 1959)

Websites

Our official MHSS site: <https://mhss.sk.ca>

Cemeteries: <https://mhss.sk.ca/cemeteries/>

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

E-Updates Ezine (announcements by email)
Subscribe by entering your email on our website
page: <https://mhss.sk.ca/E-Updates.shtml>
(Be sure to let us know when you change email addresses)

MHSS Membership

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

The Treasurer, MHSS
110 LaRonge Road, Room 900
Saskatoon, SK. S7K 7H8

Make cheque payable to MHSS
Memberships: \$35 for one year; \$70 for two years; \$65 - and \$90 for three years. Gift subscriptions are available. Membership fees and donations to the Society are eligible for tax receipts. Extra copies are available at the Archives for \$3/copy.

You are cordially invited to send in feedback, news items, stories, articles, photographs, church histories, etc., to be considered for publication. The editor is willing to help polish it up so it looks professional. See contact info to the right. -->

MHSS Office and Archives, & SMH Editor

110 LaRonge Road, Room 900
Saskatoon, SK. S7K 7H8 306-242-6105

Archives: mhss@sasktel.net
or submit directly to SMH-Ruth@mhss.sk.ca