Official periodical of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, Inc.
Volume XXV No. 1, 2020

Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian

Features & Articles

During the 1950s, at 2-3 year intervals, the Sommerfeld Churches in Manitoba and the Bergthaler Church in Saskatchewan held joint ministerial conferences, which ended with a division in 1958. Among these in 1955 are the following, identified as from the Sommerfeld Churches in the Swift Current area: Rev. David Froese, Rev. Abraham Leiding, Rev. Peter Schlamp, Rev. Gerhard Klassen, Rev. Jacob Kroeker, Jacob Friesen, Rev. Isaac Dyck and Bishop David F. Wall.

The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church on the Swift Current Mennonite Reserve

by Henry A Friesen

In 1960 when I was a ten-year-old, boy our family lived on the northern edge of the Swift Current Mennonite Reserve, ¾ of a mile north of the village of Rosenhof, SK. At that time my classmates in the Rosenhof School and I attended four churches. I didn't question it then but now I'm curious: why would the twenty or so families that were represented in the village's two-room school be part of four different churches? Some families attended the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church (SMC, or Sommerfeld Church for short) that was located right in the village, while our family (Henry and Helena Friesen), together with all of my mother's siblings (the Rempels), and their families who lived in or near Rosenhof, joined the Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) in the village of Rhineland. A third group of families chose to worship at the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) Church in Chortitz located eight miles south of Rosenhof, and a few families decided on joining the Church (*cont'd on page 4*)

Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian

Volume XXV No. 1 2020 Cumulative number 65

(First issue of SMH published April 1996)

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

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Monday, 1:30 - 4 p.m.

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

The Editor's Perspective

Ruth Marlene Friesen

This editorial work is getting to be more fun all the time. How can it be anything else when people send in such a variety of articles and stories and fillers, and so willingly!

For this issue in particular, I've received such an abundance that I have to hold some over to the next issue, as we had made ourselves a rule not to go over 28 pages. (Postage goes up at that point).

In fact, I believe we have several articles that will stir up your memories and you will have stories come to mind - I sure hope you will share them with us.

One is the *Mennonite Seed Savers* piece by Dick Braun and Harold Loewen. My Gr'ma Kroeker and my Mom were seed savers and so it comes naturally to me to have several ice cream pails full of seeds I have saved myself.

Jake Buhler's detailed examination of a farm photo taken from the air, reminds me that many farm families bought such photos of their farms from enterprising pilots in past decades.

Jake is right; if those who remember what everything in that farm photo was or what it represents don't write those things down, future generations will have no clue and lose history.

So there's an assignment you can give yourself this summer. Study your farm photo and write down a complete description of it. Get it in print too. (I can't always discipher my own handwriting after a while either).

What about raising silkworms in the attic?! I read about that once, but wanted to know more. Bob Walde was able to fill us in on that. In fact, Bob has supplied me with a number of interesting pieces to use in the issues to come.

Do enjoy this issue and give us some feedback; what did you like best? What triggered memories for you?

RMF

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

John Reddekopp

I would like to extend a big thank you to all those who attended our Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Also, special thanks to all who contributed articles to this edition of our Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian.

The AGM and the Historian are two of the important ways by which we connect with each other as a society.

We are a part of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC), which facilitates us in making connections with other provincial societies as well as various Mennonite institutions. In January Jake Buhler and I attended this year's AGM of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada in Quebec.

We began with committee meetings in the MCC Quebec offices in Montreal and then travelled to Camp Paniel which is a Mennonite Church camp in the Laurentians. This is where the AGM itself took place.

After two days of meetings we were back in Montreal for a service in an MB church. The service was in French, although the message was presented in English by Roydon Loewen of Winnipeg. It was translated into French.

We were warmly hosted, especially through efforts of the two representatives from the Mennonite Historical Society of Quebec; Zacharie LeClair and Richard Lougheed.

The AGM of the Historical Society of Canada will be hosted by our society in January, 2022. I am sure that we will be excellent hosts!

JR

Upcoming Events in Our Mennonite Communities in Saskatchewan & Canada

Our MHSS Annual General Meeting with guest speakers, etc., happened on March 6 & 7th. There is a report at the end of this Historian.

Special Events to Anticipate & Plan to Attend

June 12 & 13 - MCC Relief Sale @ Prairieland Park, Saskatoon

July 19 - 2 to 5 p.m. - Swift Current Watermelon Festival

August - Spruce River Folk Festival

August - Hague Heritage Day

In **The Warman Story: The Refinery that Never Was**, by Gail McConnell, a Saskatoon writer, wrote a more than 200-page account of Eldorado Nuclear's attempt, from 1976 to 1981, to construct a massive Uranium Hexafluoride Refinery east of Warman, Saskatchewan near the South Saskatchewan River.

There was much resistance, and much of it came from local Mennonites and their connections elsewhere. An organized group led by Rev. Ernie Hildebrand, then pastor at Osler Mennonite Church, and other local participants led a 5-year resistance. They formed a large group called "*Warman and District Concerned Citizens Group*" that stood up in the face of a huge nuclear corporation.

A Federal Environmental Review Panel oversaw the final hearings, after which Eldorado withdrew.

The book was published by MCC Canada, which gave permission for its distribution.

The digital e-book version of The Warman Story is now up and searchable. You can see it at the link below.

https://archive.org/details/thewarmanstorytherefinerythatneverwasocr/

(cont'd from page 1) of God in Swift Current.

Having written about the latter three churches in earlier submissions to the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian, I now want to focus on the Sommerfeld Church. I want to examine how it was that they became the primary spiritual home for many on the Swift Current Mennonite Reserve (SCMR) in the 1920s and 1930s including the parents of most of those who attended school with me. This requires reviewing the various Mennonite Gemeinden in Manitoba before this period as they were central both to the formation and settlement of the reserve itself and the establishment of churches in the Swift Current area.

The Mennonites who immigrated to southern Manitoba from Russia in the 1870s identified themselves as Old Colony, Bergthal or Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites. Despite their different names they were quite similar in the sense that all three groups wanted to maintain a separation from the English-speaking world, conduct their own schools, and worship in their own churches. One difference though was that the Old Colony Gemeinde made a greater effort to have "their" people live in specific areas close to each other and in villages. To that end they negotiated an agreement with the Canadian government in the 1870s and were granted two large reserves of land in Manitoba: the East Reserve around Steinbach and the West Reserve along the USA border and west of the Red River. Despite the fact that these large areas of designated land were largely the result of Old Colony (OC) leadership, all three groups of Mennonites settled on or near them in the years following their arrival in the 1870s.

Twenty years later (1894), the OC leaders sought more prairie land for their members and were able to obtain access to a block of land northeast of Saskatoon which became known as the Hague-Osler Reserve. Then in 1904 they completed their negotiations with the Government of Canada for a large area of land southeast of Swift Current on which they would have exclusive rights to both odd and even numbered sections, some for homesteading and others for purchase.

On both of these Saskatchewan reserves, settlers, most of whom were OC people from Manitoba but also from a variety of other locations, soon took up homesteads and established typical, Old Colony-style, Mennonite villages complete with house-barns and yards or acreages on either side of a single road. Because the reserve near Swift Current was formed through the administrative work of the Old Colony Gemeinde, it was only "their" churches that were built in the villages in those early years. While OC ministers had church services in various homes or in village school buildings, the first villages to have an OC Church building and congregation were Schoenfeld (1907), Reinfeldt (approximately 1910), and Rhineland (approximately 1912).

These OC churches operated under the leadership of an Old Colony Aeltester or bishop, the first of whom was Johann Wiebe who lived in Manitoba. Bishop Wiebe gave general oversight before any of the churches were actually built on the SCMR; he died in 1905. His son Peter Wiebe succeeded him and travelled back and forth from his home in Manitoba to oversee and assist the churches near Swift Current up until 1910. That same year Abram, Peter's brother, was elected and took over the duties of oversight until his emigration to Mexico in 1924. These bishops ordained elected ministers and organized worship service in the villages, even in those that did not have church buildings but met in schools or in someone's home.

The OC adherents were not, however, the only Mennonites to take up homesteads and begin farming in Saskatchewan. Parallel to the OC expansion on the Saskatchewan reserves was a movement of other Mennonite settlers who settled nearby but off the reserves and formed their own churches. In the Swift Current area it was Mennonite Brethren and Sommerfeld Church members and ministers who settled in communities near the SCMR; the latter church group would later play an important role on the reserve itself. To understand this particular group of Mennonites we need to go back to Manitoba once again and examine the history of their formation and expansion.

After the initial challenges of breaking land and building homes had met with some success, the Mennonites in Manitoba - as early as the 1880s and 90s - were already thinking about what kind of people they wanted to be in this new country. How did they want and need to relate to the government of the day, especially in terms of schooling for their children? Some major church divisions occurred during these years and the one that later would have a great impact on the Mennonites near Swift Current involved the Bergthal Gemeinde. In 1893 this group split into two groups largely over their views on schooling and participation in Canadian society. The smaller group, the Chortitzer, was centered around Steinbach, while the larger group, the Sommerfelder lived primarily on the West Reserve near Altona and Gretna.

The majority of this "new" Sommerfeld Gemeinde continued to live in southern Manitoba after the split, but, at the same time, as Mennonites settled on the two Mennonite Reserves in Saskatchewan, other homestead land became available and a good number of Sommerfeld Mennonite families moved to the areas near the SCMR. Their pattern of settlement was different from that of the OC as they generally did not form villages. They did, however, farm near each other and established churches in the Swift Current area but not on the reserve. In 1905, for example, they formed a church in Herbert and six years later one in Dunelm (sometimes called Hochstadt or Neuhochstadt), a village just outside the northwestern edge of the SCMR. During these years the Mennonites on the SCMR certainly knew about the Sommerfeld Churches and were aware that they were in many ways similar to the Old Colony in terms of spirituality and worship practices. This would be important to them in the days ahead, days when their spiritual stability would be shaken to the core.

In the 1920s (and again in the 1950s for different reasons), the Mennonite villages and villagers on the SCMR experienced a major disruption to their lives, one that particularly affected their spiritual lives. Unable to come to terms with the provincial governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in regard to having control over the education of their children, the Old Colony leaders felt strongly that it was God's will that the community leave Canada and move to Mexico. Bishops and ministers in both provinces initiated and then organized an exodus to Mexico that resulted in over 1,200 (approximately one third) Old Colony Mennonites from the SCMR selling their property and leaving the Swift Current area between 1922-24.

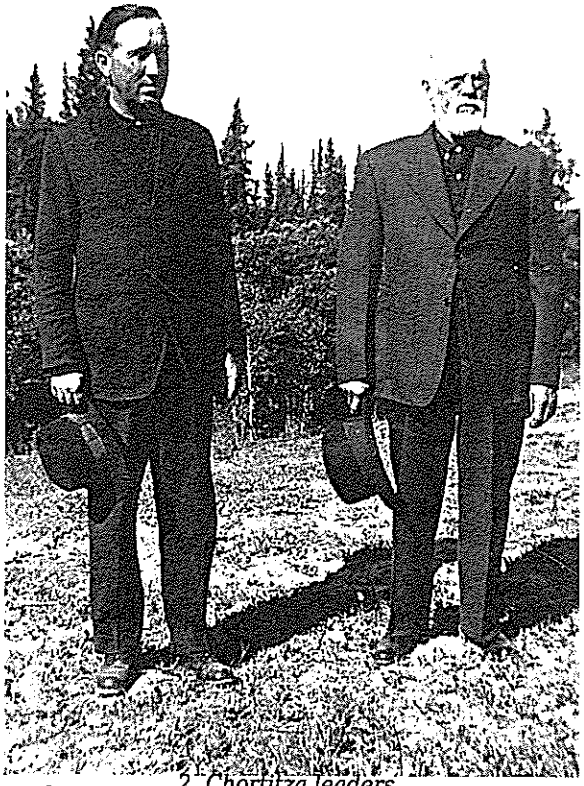
This large migration deeply impacted those villagers who remained, for as a consequence of this single decision they became bereft of community leaders, family members, and congregational friends. The villages were also left without church leaders; even church registers were taken away by the church officials when they migrated to Mexico. With the altesters, bishops and almost all the leaders of the OC churches promoting the exodus as "God's will," those who remained struggled with a sense of guilt and uncertainty as to matters of faith. The impact on the spiritual life of those who stayed was significant.

My own paternal grandparents' struggle with the loss of the Old Colony Church perhaps typifies the confusion and uncertainty experienced by those who felt their church had abandoned them and shamed them in the process. During those years when there was no church in Rosenhof (approximately 1924-29) my grandfather Jacob J. Friesen and his wife Justina (Wiebe) would on some Sundays gather their family together and lead them in a short service, sing some well-known hymns, and then most likely read a sermon. It wasn't until their oldest son Jacob W. Friesen was to be married to Eva Martens in 1929 that my grandparents joined the "new" Sommerfeld Mennonite Church.

Other villagers on the SCMR for whom regular worship in a church was important were in a similar quandary as that of the Friesens. They were at a loss: neighbours were gone, land nearby was changing hands, families were grieving the loss of their siblings or parents, and churches were no longer there to provide direction and stability. Gathering together as Old Colony congregants, without ministers, was not really an option. It was during these

years (the late 1920s) that those who wanted to worship God and receive the spiritual nurture that church services could provide, looked to the one other Gemeinde in the area that had church services similar in style and format to their own: the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church.

The few historical records that I have discovered in regard to the work and ministry of the Sommerfeld Church during this period of transition **do not** suggest that there was an over-all plan on the part of the Sommerfeld Church's ministers to take over the Old Colony Church buildings on the reserve and install their own ministers. The evidence suggests rather that this happened on an ad hoc basis.



2 Chortitza leaders

In *Patchwork of Memories**, a few of the village and family histories speak about the loss of their Old Colony Church and the formation of Sommerfelder congregations. Jacob and Susanna Knelsen, for example, lived in the village of Chortitz, SK, and in their family's story they state that "there were no church services for a number of years" after the Old Colony people left for Mexico. The Chortitz village's history states that "after the move to Mexico in 1922 the remaining people here asked the Sommerfelder Mennonite ministers, Reverend Peter Dyck and Reverend Abraham Peters of Dunelm, to come and serve them." In still another reference, *Patchwork* says that in the late 1920s the Chortitz congregation used the school building, and a few years later Abe and Helena (Leiding) Funk were married in "the Sommerfeld Church in Chortitz in 1934."

A slightly more comprehensive picture emerges in the Maharg (Schoenfeld) history section in *Patchwork of Memories* which includes a short article called "History of the Sommerfeld Church." This article confirms the early date of the SMC in Dunelm and suggests that there were also Sommerfeld Churches in Neville and Neuendorf at some point, although it does not make clear when these churches were first established nor how long they remained viable. The same article further states that a new SMC was built in Rosenhof in 1933-4 and that *"in the early 1950s a Sommerfeld church was built in Swift Current so the ministers preached at Rosenhof, Schoenfeld and Swift Current"*. In the Flora (Rhineland) history (also in *Patchwork*), it notes that the Rhineland Old Colony Church was purchased in 1937 by the Mennonite General Conference of Swift Current. The latter sale "left Rhineland without even a church building." These details confirm the tentative nature of church services in the various villages around Swift Current in the 1920s and 30s. Some communities appear to have had no church buildings and at least one used a school as a church; the only mention of a new Sommerfeld Mennonite Church building is in the village of Rosenhof.

Information found in the Mennonite Church archives in Winnipeg, compiled by Jacob Peters, concerning the Sommerfeld Churches around Swift Current, is incomplete, but suggests that 1914-15 was the high point for the Herbert and Swift Current Sommerfeld Churches as their combined totals included approximately 1,200 families. Although the few churches that were formed on the SCMR after 1924 augmented the Sommerfeld Church, it would not appear that they gained a large number of members by establishing them. The SMC numbers declined throughout the 1920s and 30s only to bounce back for at least two years: 1947-48. Other reliable statistics for the intervening and the latter years are not available.

On reflection, it can be said that the 1920s were a decade of upheaval for the Mennonites on the SCMR and particularly for those who sought spiritual nurture. They went from being a well-established and stable Old Colony Gemeinde to a scattered and leaderless group of congregants. There was some improvement in the 1930s and 1940s when the leadership and presence of the Sommerfeld Church on the reserve attracted a good number of those who had at one time been Old Colony members. During these years there were active Sommerfeld congregations that met in Rosenhof and Schoenfeld and one that met regularly in Swift Current.

The stability of the SMC Gemeinde itself continued into the 1950s. Evidence for this is indirectly noted in Peter Bergen's book, *The History of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church* (2001) when he says that "during the 1950s, at two or three year intervals, the Sommerfeld Churches in Manitoba and the Bergthaler Church in Saskatchewan held joint ministerial conferences, which ended with a division in 1958."

A photograph of Bergthaler, Chortitzer and Sommerfelder leaders in Saskatchewan who met at such a conference in 1955 includes over 30 men; some are deacons, some ministers and several are bishops (see photo on cover). Among these are the following who are identified as being from the Sommerfeld Churches in the Swift Current area: Rev. David Froese, Rev. Abraham Leiding, Rev. Peter Schlamp, Rev. Gerhard Klassen, Rev. Jacob Kroeker, Jacob Friesen, Rev. Isaac Dyck and Bishop David F. Wall. Leonard Doell, in his book *The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan 1882-1975*, also makes reference to these conferences and calls them "historic" in that they represented an attempt to "share concerns with each other and...discuss solutions to problems confronting them."

While the Swift Current and area Sommerfeld Churches were well represented at joint church conferences in the 1950s, it does not appear that they had a strong connection to their sister churches in Manitoba or even the ones around Saskatoon who had taken on the name "Bergthal" instead of "Sommerfeld." The Jacob Peters archival material referred to above lists Herbert, Schoenfeld, Rosenhof, and Swift Current as the only active Sommerfelder congregations in the Swift Current area and states that the ones which had ceased to function were those in the communities of Gouldtown, Stonehill (north of Morse), Lobethal (north of Main Centre), Blumenort, Dunelm and Chortitz. Perhaps this assessment was made in the 1960s or even later. I say this because when Henry Toews and Ben Reimer conducted the "revival" meetings in 1957-58 that led to the formation of the EMC Church in Chortitz, they indicated that they had spoken in five Sommerfeld Churches in the area. Those who remember these services recall that services were held in Rosenhof, Chortitz, Schoenfeld and Swift Current but are uncertain as to which was the fifth church; perhaps it was the one in Herbert.

The Sommerfeld Mennonite Churches in the Swift Current area, from their beginning in the early part of the 20th century, were guided and sustained through the faithful work of their bishops. The first of these was David Doerksen from Main Centre who became bishop in 1911 and served until 1948, when he moved to Paraguay. His early tenure began before there were any Sommerfeld Churches on the SCMR and his connection to the new congregations on the reserve may have been somewhat tenuous. If so it would make sense that another bishop, David Wall, who lived in the Rosenhof area was elected as bishop in 1935. Wall served the Sommerfelder Churches in the area until 1963 when he moved to La Crete, Alberta to serve as bishop there.

Abraham Buhler from the Warman area served as interim bishop for the Swift Current churches for approximately eight years (1963-1971), at which time, David Wiebe from Rosenhof became bishop. He served faithfully until his death in 2014.

Despite the relative strength of the Sommerfelder congregations in the 1950s, changes were on the horizon. While the Sommerfeld Churches in and around Swift Current continued to attract

some of the Mennonites who lived there, increasingly my classmates' families who lived in Rosenhof during this decade did not attend the Sommerfeld Church any more. As was discussed in my earlier articles, the winds of change and spiritual renewal were blowing across the country and the Mennonites in the Swift Current area were not exempt from this. They began to explore ways of worship that were different from what they had experienced as either OC or SMC attendees. As a result of these new spiritual movements, they began to attend a variety of churches in nearby villages and in Swift Current, including, but not limited to, the CFC in Rhineland, the EMC church in Chortitz and the Church of God in Swift Current. The SMC continued to have a place in a number of the villages on the Reserve in the 1960s but the days of it being the primary spiritual home for the Mennonites on the SCMR were largely over.

The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church in the Swift Current area, however, must be credited for filling the spiritual vacuum that was created when the Old Colony bishops, ministers and congregation members migrated to Mexico in the early 1920s. The SMC ministers who gave leadership in several villages on the reserve in the 1930s and 1940s provided continuity with the traditional German services which the Old Colony ministers had established when the SCMR began. In this way the Sommerfeld ministers were instrumental in nurturing the spiritual lives of many Mennonites in the villages during these decades, including that of my parents and the parents of my Rosenhof classmates.

In conclusion, then, we can say that, like the 1920s, the decade of the 1950s was spiritually turbulent in its own way. In the 1950s it was the older, more traditional Sommerfeld Church that remained in various villages but went into decline as newer, more evangelical ministries drew individuals and families to them through their emphasis on "personal salvation," children's Sunday School, and English services. The first of these new churches was the Christian Fellowship Church which began in Rhineland in the early 1940s. Later that decade several families began to attend the Church of God in Swift Current and then, following the Rosenhof Revival of 1957-8, a large contingent of Rosenhof families helped to establish the Evangelical Mennonite Church in the village of Chortitz.

There may be some truth to the suggestion that the Sommerfelder leaders were too concerned with remaining "separate from the world" and thus their numbers dwindled. Yet, it must be acknowledged that Sommerfelder bishops and ministers strived to maintain what they considered to be a thoroughly Biblical view of God and His holiness. They had a strong sense that more contact with the English world would lead to less holiness. Certain Sommerfelder ministers and other church leaders led Bible studies (at least in the 1950s) and encouraged participants to live Godly lives. It was important to them that they teach their young people the basic tenets of faith as found in their Church's Catechism and to baptize them upon their confession of faith. In addition, their bishops and ministers felt that for a preacher or an individual to "know" that they were saved was presumptuous; how could one know how a Holy God would judge? And did He not command everyone to love their neighbour as themselves and so demonstrate their faith? Because they placed less emphasis on personal experiences such as "being saved" or "converting to Christ" the Sommerfelder leaders were sometimes dismissed as being "less spiritual", but to do so would be to undervalue the weight they gave to a quiet, humble and honest life of faith. Their contribution to the spiritual life of my parents' generation during the years of the Great Depression and the war years was invaluable.

* * *

[As a postscript to this article: I have learned in a recent conversation (April 2019) with Rev. Abe Funk, the minister of the Swift Current Sommerfeld Church, that his church is again full and that he has a full contingent of deacons and Vorsänger. The increase in numbers is largely due to Mennonites who have moved to the area from Mexico or Ontario and have chosen to attend the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church.]

Sources:

- *Patchwork of Memories* – a collection of local histories and family histories from the School Districts and communities in and around Wymark, SK.
- *The History of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church* (2001) by Peter Bergen.
- *The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan 1882-1975* by Leonard Doell.
- *Treasured Memories* – Yellow Lake and District by Yellow Lake History Group, 1982. (Includes history of Dunelm which had a Sommerfeld Mennonite Church in 1907.)
- Sommerfeld Mennonite Church archival material gathered by Jacob Peters and found in the Mennonite Archives in Winnipeg, MB.
- Conversation with Rev. Abe Funk, minister of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church in Swift Current.
- Photos from Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID).

HAF

The Games Children Played in Our South Russian Homeland

by Robert Walde

As a young boy, living in our south Russian homeland, my life consisted of playing and dreaming of the future. There were a variety of games we played, developing skills and enjoying social activities as side benefits.

A Different Baseball

Baseball was played a little differently than we know here in Canada. The pitcher stood beside the batter and threw the ball straight up in the air. After hitting the ball, the batter would run to a home-plate which would be set by the players before the game began. Halfway between home-plate and batter plate was a second plate, a safe-place.

Girls and boys of any age played together since there were no teams. Each one kept track of his home-runs. Five points for halfway, 10 for all the way. Everyone played in the field until their turn, starting at the farthest point after batting and working your way forward. Rules could be changed on agreement. Adults would sometimes play.

The bats were found in the bush, and the ball was made of real rubber and could be hit as far as the cemetery. Having no referees caused a certain number of arguments. But this game could be played anywhere.

Tricks and Treats

Sometimes mischieveous boys would fill their mouths with kerosene, sneak along the lover's lane and wait for the next couple. Lighting a match and blowing like crazy, the flame would billow over the distracted couple, producing a wonderful panic.

On the other hand, some neighbours cared about the children's spiritual condition, and sometimes invited the kids into their homes for milk and cookies, and told Bible stories. This was a spontaneous event as kids were observed hanging around.

Choir Practice & Games After Church

There was a church in Orloff (Village #6), where Abe's Grandpa and Grandma Walde were from. Abe's mother's folks were in the same church. It was an Alliance church. Grandpa sang in the mixed choir.

Immediately after church on Sunday morning, our family went to either, the Walde, or Wiebe grandparents for dinner.

After lunch the kids found things to do – games like: Mensch, Aerger Dich Nicht, (Man/Fellow Don't Anger Yourself) or, The Blind Cow (blindfolded person in the circle must guess who hit them).

Or, they could go outside, walk behind the house, and along the orchard on the road. On the other side of the road oil berries grew in a hedge. The leaves were oily. After a frost the white fruit was very tasty.

Incidentally, young engaged couples were allowed to meet alone in the bedroom for privacy from the rest of the family.

RW

Mennonites on the Move Part 2
The Swiss Mennonite Story To Penn's Woods
- by Ken Bechtel

Thus far in this series, we have recounted the journeys of some early Swiss Anabaptists from Switzerland to southwest Germany, the so-called Palatinate. During the seven decades my ancestors spent in the Palatinate, (1648-1717 for the Bechtels), these Swiss Brethren adopted a new dialect (Palatine German rather than Schweitzer Deutsch), a new group name (Mennonite rather than Täufer or Anabaptist), and somewhat changed surnames (in my family's case, Bechtel rather than Bächtold). This article will recount some of their experiences during their next seven plus decades in Pennsylvania, before heading north to Canada.

Parallels in the Dutch Russian and Swiss Migration Stories

There are some parallels in the major relocations of Swiss and Dutch Russian Mennonites. In the 16th and 17th centuries (1530s through the 1600s), these Anabaptists fled persecution in Switzerland or the Spanish-ruled Lowlands to areas in southwest Germany or Poland. Each region offered them limited toleration and some economic opportunity. In both the German Palatinate and Poland, the conditions for this toleration included such strictures as forbidding proselytizing, limits on population numbers or land availability, church tithes (to the state recognized churches) and special taxes. In the Palatinate, this substantial tax was dubbed "Mennist Recognition Money," and could be doubled at the whim of any new Elector. Under these conditions, Anabaptists were welcomed in large part for their skills, including their ability to reclaim lands ravaged by wars or flooding.

Their later movements in the 18th through 20th centuries were to places like North America which offered actual religious freedoms as well as economic opportunities.

The Swiss Mennonite movements to North America from the 1690s through the mid 1700s, however, have no major parallel in the Dutch Russian story. Those in Poland did face some challenges during this period. Mennonites in the Vistula Delta experienced the devastating Swedish invasion in the 1650s. In 1724, Frederick Wilhelm I, the militaristic Prussian "soldier king," wanted tall Mennonites for his armies. When they refused, he ordered the expulsion of Mennonites from his territories, a foreshadowing of the military pressures Mennonites would increasingly face as Prussia took over Polish territories. But as the 1700s began, Mennonites in Poland had less reason to consider moving than did their faith cousins in the German Palatinate.

Leaving the Palatinate

As we noted in an earlier article, some Palatine Mennonites experienced further ravages of war later in the 17th century. In 1674 French troops retreating from Holland to Alsace did significant damage in the Palatinate. Then the Palatinate experienced further devastation as part of the Nine Years War (1688-1697) between France and a Holy Roman Empire coalition. Unable to maintain forces along the entire front, the French released troops into the German Palatinate for a sort of scorched earth approach, burning towns and villages, pillaging and destroying those supplies they couldn't carry off. They destroyed cities like Heidelberg and Worms. The wars were followed by marauding bands of German hussars (cavalry) and highwaymen. These invasions continued into the early 1700s. The War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) involved retreating French troops laying waste to countrysides and cities in the German Palatinate.

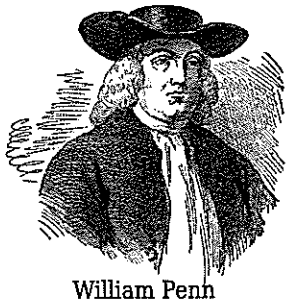
Mennonites leaving the Palatinate were but part of a larger movement. Thousands of Palatines of various faiths arrived in England in 1709 where the recently widowed Queen Anne herself rode out to assess the situation for these "poor Palatines." She authorized a collection on their behalf, but when the numbers swelled to 13,000 (including only 6 Mennonite families), she sent out a royal declaration translated into colloquial German urging

potential emigrants to cancel their plans; they would be "fruitless unless they are prepared to support themselves."[i]

In 1711, British parliamentarians discovered the reason for 1709s mass migration. In addition to the Crown's promise of free land in the American colonies, agents working on behalf of the Carolina colony had even promised free transportation to their plantations. News had also spread about the success experienced by the previous year's several dozen families.

Penn's Holy Experiment

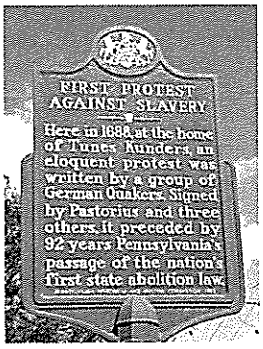
For Mennonites, there were further attractions to one specific colony. In 1681, King Charles II had deeded what we now know as Pennsylvania to the Quaker, William Penn, in settlement of an old family debt. It was the king who named this territory Pennsylvania, Penn's Woods, as the humble Quaker resisted attempts to glorify himself. One of Penn's major intentions for this land was that it be a refuge for oppressed English Quakers, as well as for other European religious groups denied the usual civil rights enjoyed by state church members. Religious liberty was thus a novel and important feature of this new land, Penn's "peaceable kingdom." In addition to available land, there was also this offer of religious freedom.


William Penn

Quaker missionaries had experienced some success among the Dutch and Rhineland Mennonites. Quakers and Mennonites shared many similar convictions such as opposing warfare and the swearing of oaths. Penn could offer these oppressed groups, whether still Mennonite or now Quaker, complete toleration, both civil and religious.

Early Quakers and Mennonites

The first continental responses came from a group of thirteen Krefeld weaver families in 1683. All but one of these former Mennonites had already converted to Quakerism. They founded Germantown, and soon Mennonites from further down the Rhine joined them. Germantown also has the distinction of being the source of the first formal objection to slavery; in 1688, the Germantown Mennonites turned Quaker signed a petition protesting slavery, the first of its kind in North America.



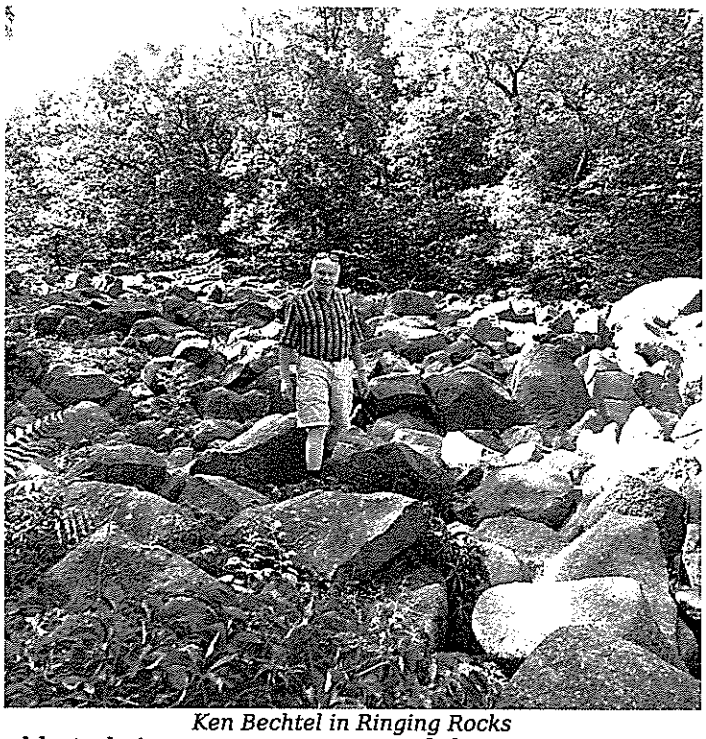
A Mennonite congregation was formed by 1690, and in 1702 a lot was set aside for the meetinghouse that was built in 1708. (The stone building erected there in 1770 remains.) The first preacher in this congregation was William Rittenhouse, a German born citizen of Amsterdam, who was made a preacher in 1690. In early 1708, when newly arrived (1707) Palatine Mennonites united with this Dutch speaking congregation, deacons and preachers were chosen from among these German speaking immigrants. From this point on, Mennonite immigrants to Penn-sylvania came primarily from the Palatinate and were mostly of Swiss origin.

By the 1750s, between 3,000 and 4,000 Mennonites had settled in Pennsylvania. Beginning in 1736, some 400 Amish followed. Other German speaking nonresistant religious groups finding their way to this land of freedom were the Dunkards (German Baptist Brethren) and Moravians.

To Philadelphia and Then Beyond

In 1702, the son of one of these Germantown families, Matthias van Bebber, started a new Mennonite settlement about 25 kilometers to the northwest in what is now Montgomery County. This area became the Franconia District Mennonite Conference (including Bucks, Chester, Lehigh and Northampton Counties). The continuous migration of Palatinate and Swiss Mennonites and others that began in 1710 filled up the Franconia area and the area 100 kms west of Philadelphia along the Pequea and Conestoga valleys, which later became Lancaster County and Conference.

My ancestor Hans Jacob Bechtel (b. 1680) and his family arrived in Philadelphia presumably in 1717, and in 1720 travelled the 57 kilometers northwest to Pottstown. We assume that he was



Ken Bechtel in Ringing Rocks

able to bring some revenue with him to Pennsylvania in that he purchased his Ringing Rocks farm just three years later. The farm was named for its half acre boulder field, about a third of whose basaltic rocks are considered "live," meaning that when hit with a hammer they give out a clear ringing sound. The rockpile is now part of the Ringing Rocks Park.

Other Pennsylvania-bound immigrants with fewer resources had two options. The Dutch Mennonites' Commission for Foreign Needs was very generous in aiding the more destitute. It is interesting to note, however, that when the Dutch got word of the 300 heading to Rotterdam in 1717, they sent official word that they could not help them. Dutch and North German Mennonite businessmen did, however, come to the aid of the poor families among these 300. The other option was to become a "redemptioner," bargaining with the captain to sell their services for a number of years, services that were auctioned off upon arrival in Philadelphia.

Keeping the Faith

Whether my ancestor Hans Jacob Bechtel was ordained in Germany or in Pennsylvania is not documented. His American ministry was in the so called "Manatant" or "Manatawney" area as that eastern part of Berks County was then dubbed. He is claimed as the first preacher for three eastern Berks County churches - East Coventry (closed in 1914, in part because of their clinging to the German language), Vincent, and Hereford (split into the Bally and Butter Valley churches in the 1847 Oberholzer schism.) These congregations would have met about 4, 5 and 12 kilometers from Hans Jacob's home near Pottstown.

The Dordrecht Confession of 1632 was an eighteen-article statement adopted in Dordrecht, Holland, by 51 Flemish and Frisian preachers as a basis of union. The next several decades saw its adoption by Mennonites in Alsace, the Palatinate and North Germany. It was never accepted by the Mennonites in Switzerland because of its teaching on shunning (the key bone of contention between the Mennonites and Amish). Two articles of this "peace treaty" had actually helped inform the 1693 Amish schism, Jacob Ammann's quest for stricter discipline. Article 11 on Footwashing described an ordinance practiced by Dutch but not by Swiss Mennonites. Article 17 on Shunning taught that "any one, either through his wicked life or perverted doctrine" who required discipline should be "shunned, without distinction, by all the fellow members of the church, especially those to whom it is known, in eating, drinking, and other similar intercourse, and no company be had with him." These two practices, alongside other strictures, Ammann insisted, must have been part of the original Anabaptist faith.

In 1725, 17 Mennonite bishops and ministers met to endorse an English translation of the 1632 Dordrecht Confession. This "Confession of the Faith of the Harmless Christians... known by the name of Mennonites," would show the authorities in Philadelphia that they were Mennonites, not violent Muensterites. Asking these authorities to overlook their being "not exquisite in the English language," they wrote:

> *We the hereunder written Servants of the Word of God, and Elders in the Congregation of the People, called Mennonists, in the Province of Pennsylvania, do acknowledge, and herewith make known, that we do own the foregoing Confession, Appendix, and*

Menno's Excusation, to be according to our Opinion; and also, have took the same to be wholly ours. In Testimony whereof, and that we believe that same to be good, we have here unto Subscribed our Names.

Bishop Jacob Gaettschalk from Germantown was the first to sign. The surnames of most of the other 16 leaders were Swiss, though there is a Jansen and a Rittinghausen among them. The two representives from eastern Berks County, were Daniel Longenecker and Hans Jacob Bechtel (who signed his name "Jacob Beghtly".[ii] Hopefully some of his heirs do a bit better at spelling!)

Complications

These Mennonite immigrants were only a small part of the much larger German-speaking population. Mennonites shared their non-resistant values with the Quakers, Amish, Dunkards (now Church of the Brethren) and Moravians, but not with the more numerous German Reformed and Lutherans, and the later arriving Scottish and Irish Presbyterians. By the 1776 Revolution, Mennonites were perhaps 10% of the 100,000 German speaking settlers, and these Germans were about a third of Pennsylvania's total population.

In 1751 Benjamin Franklin had complained "Why should the Palatine Boors be suffered to swarm into our Settlements and, by herding together, establish their Language and Manners, to the Exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs any more than they can acquire our Complexion?"[iii] More recent populist agitators and politicians have no exclusive dibs on such sentiments!

Relations with First Nations

Life for Mennonites and other colonists became more complicated toward the middle of the century. While there is some question as to the details, William Penn had insisted on dealing fairly with the First Nations people he found within this territory. Though there is no paper record for historians to validate, the popular account is that he met with Tamanend and other Delaware chiefs of the Turtle Clan in 1682 or 1683. The Penn Treaty Museum in Philadelphia asserts that Penn stated that "We meet on the broad pathway of good faith and good-will; no advantage shall be taken on either side, but all shall be openness and love. We are the same as if one man's body was to be divided into two parts; we are of one flesh and one blood."

Tamanend replied, "We will live in love with William Penn and his children as long as the creeks and rivers run, and while the sun, moon, and stars endure." Voltaire is reported to have described this as "the only treaty never sworn to and never broken."[iv]

Penn's heirs who succeeded him shared neither his Quaker faith nor his ideals. Nor did the later arriving Presbyterian Scots and Irish immigrants, colonists living closer to the frontier.

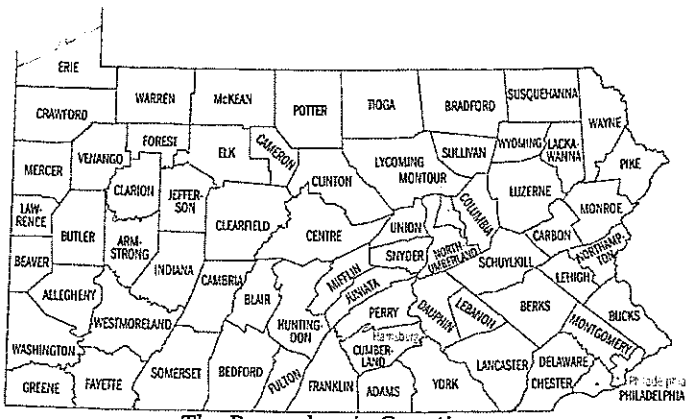
Furthermore, the British and French started to fight sort of a proxy war by aligning themselves with opposing native tribes, the so-called French and Indian War (1754–63). We could consider it the American theater of the worldwide Seven Years' War (1756–63). The growing tensions erupted in a bloodbath in 1755, with the Penn's Creek Massacre which killed 24 settlers. Over in Berks County, the Amish Hochstetler family were all massacred or taken hostage.

From the settler side, the most vicious of the Scots/Irish were the so-called Paxton Boys. Their "fighting parson," John Elder, kept his rifle in his pulpit and helped organize this vigilante militia. On December 14, 1763, fifty armed men stormed a small pacifist Moravian Indian village near Lancaster and murdered six Indians. Nearby Mennonite farmers overheard them talking about breaking into the workhouse where others had been placed in protective custody. They were not able to get the authorities to act before the Paxton Boys broke in and murdered 14 more. We do have stories of more positive relationships between Delawares and Mennonites, including children playing together, scouts helping them find more suitable land, and Mennonites helping hide them during these attacks.

The Revolution

The American Revolution proved especially troubling for Pennsylvania Mennonites. Some Mennonite communities closer to Philadelphia became battle grounds. Mennonites who were accustomed to selling their produce in Philadelphia, were now arrested enroute or after returning for aiding the enemy or spyings. The revolutionary forces instituted quotas for each region, numbers of soldiers to be enlisted; Mennonite areas always came up short both in bodies and in the fines they were assessed. There are many stories of recruiters attempting to bully or trick young Mennonite men into enlisting, though usually without success. Overzealous militants often had to be reminded by authorities of the historic rights of these conscientious objectors. Strange that that would happen in pacifist Penn's "peaceable kingdom!"

Mennonites had traditionally offered hospitality to anyone who needed it. In Chester County, Susannah Longacre was alone with her eight year old when several destitute men stopped by asking for a meal. When she set food and drink before them as had been her custom "for many years past," they said that they were British soldiers. They were actually American spies. Susannah was fined 150 pounds, or 117 lashes "on her bare back at the public whipping post."[v]



The Pennsylvania Counties

Two 1777 Congress actions posed serious issues for the Mennonite community. The first was a special war tax of two pounds, ten shillings, a tax for a government in rebellion! Then June's Test Act offered super patriots a new tool. This act required all citizens to swear allegiance to the new government, and "renounce and refuse all allegiance to the King, his heirs and successors." This was to be done by August. Mennonites and Quakers could, of course, affirm this rather than swearing, but that was not enough to salve their consciences. Mennonites had affirmed their loyalty to the crown when they were naturalized, and this would require their violating that affirmation. There are stories about overzealous magistrates and "citizens' arrests" of Mennonites simply going about their business; they were now accused of being spies because they had not taken the test oath. Just 40 some kilometers northeast of Pottstown, the entire male Mennonite population of the Saucon congregation was jailed for refusing to take the oath. Imprisonment, heavy fines and banishment were consequences for not being "able yet to get over their religious scruples."[vi]

This also precipitated the first formal breach in the Mennonite community. Bishop Christian Funk agreed with his fellow ministers that "as a defenseless people, the Mennonites could neither institute nor destroy any government." But when he read the new Pennsylvania Constitution, he noted its guarantees of freedom of conscience regarding bearing arms and oath taking, and expressed his conviction that Congress should not be denounced as rebellious. He was accused of allowing the payment of the war tax and taking no stand against taking the oath ("affirmation") of allegiance. In later meetings Funk persisted in his opinion that they should "render unto Congress what is Congress's and to God what is God's." When his fellow bishops decided to defrock Funk in 1778, they justified their action by his refusal to submit to the Council, his views and purported actions regarding the oath and tax, and rumours about his cheating in business deals. His followers became known as "Funkites," a small group that persisted until 1850.

Our major source for the history of this controversy is Christian Funk's own self-published account, his 1814 polemic justifying his position. Interestingly, Jacob Dettweiler, (the stone Dettweiler Meetinghouse near Roseville is named for him), was ordained originally as a Funkite yet served in the

Ontario conference. Hints of Canada ahead!

Arriving and Leaving

Deteriorating conditions in the Palatinate from recent wars and less tolerant Electors had made the Pennsylvania promise of land and religious freedom especially enticing.

By the end of the 1700s, two major factors encouraged some Mennonites to consider the Upper Canada option. The Revolution had featured erratic responses to Mennonite scruples. Mennonites remembered that the British Crown had always respected those; Upper Canada was ruled by the British Crown. Available land in Pennsylvania was expensive and in short supply. Word about the fertile and cheap land in Upper Canada (Ontario) was surely welcome news.

Endnotes:

i John L. Ruth, Maintaining the Right Fellowship, p.96.
ii John L. Ruth, Maintaining the Right Fellowship, pp.102-103
iii Benjamin Franklin, "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc." Cited in Catherine Rampell, "Founding Fathers, trashing immigrants," The Washington Post, August 28, 2015.
iv www.penntreatymuseum.org/history-2/peace-treaty
v John L. Ruth, 'Twas Seeding Time (Herald Press, 1976) pp.190-191
vi Ibid, p.168

KB

Silkworms & Mulberry leaves
Image by Pixabay

Raising Silkworms in the Attic

by Robert Walde

For about six weeks in the spring, it was the boys' chore to cut mulberry leaves for the tiny silkworms that were kept on the attic floor of the house. This was usually the granary for the farm. As time progressed and the worms grew, branches were cut and laid crosswise over the pile of worms which were growing, and did not leave their food source.

The worms grew to the size of your small finger. Then they stopped eating, became drowsy, and produced some cords that fastened to the branches. Then began the spinning of the cocoon, enclosing themselves until the cocoon was about the size of a large-sized peanut.

The wife had to be very alert to catch the threads from the cocoons as they were put in the boiling water to kill the worms, about 2 dozen at a time. She would get the spinning wheel going and spun the threads right from the water onto a spool. This would provide a huge amount of silk thread. It did not take long to dry and was used for stockings. If thicker thread was needed, two threads would be wound together. This was an unbreakable thread; it was used for the heavier needs.

Dad's mother made him a very special white Sash (belt) that he treasured. One of the stockings made by his grandmother is on display in Clearbrook at the Mennonite Museum.

To propagate the worms, some were left in the cocoons. These developed a strong scissors snout, and cut their way out of the cocoon, emerging as a butterfly. Mating would occur, and the eggs were laid on a special piece of brown paper set out for them.

Grandma would then roll up the paper and store it in a dark place to bring out for the spring hatch for the new growth of mulberry bushes.

Each family kept their own worms and most had a mulberry hedge that grew around their properties. There was a matter of skill in judging the timing, and of course, in the making of the clothing items, great skill would be displayed.

RW

Origins of Portzelkje or Niejoaschkuaken

by Jake Buhler

When Mennonites fled from Holland or the Netherlands to Poland/Prussia to escape persecution before 1600, they took with them their customs, language and culture. In Holland they had spoken Dutch in their homes and their hidden churches. In Poland/Prussia, they completely changed their language over more than 200 years. They took on the local West Prussian dialect and turned it into Mennonite Plautdietsch or Mennonite Low German.

Their formal language became High German which was used in the church and for formal purposes. The Mennonite Low German language continued to evolve after 1789 when Mennonites moved to Russia. Two forms developed: Chortitza and Molotschna. Chortitza was the first colony established, so Mennonites there spoke Chortitza Plautdietsch. It also became known as the Old Colony because it was settled first. A generation later the Molotschna Colony was established and Mennonites there spoke Molotschna Plautdietsch.

In Holland, the Mennonites made a fritter known as Oliebollen. When they moved to Poland/Prussia, the word was changed to Portzelkje, after Dutch was no longer used. And because Portzelkje were made during the New Year's season, the same food is also called a Niejoahsckuak, or when pluralized they are called Niejoahschkuaken.

The following poem was often recited as the Niejoahschkuaken were being made or eaten:

Ekj sach Juen Schornsteen ruakjren,
Ekj wist uk wot Jie moaken:
Scheene Niejoaschkoaken!
Jeffst mie eenen,
Dann bliew ekj stohnen.
Jeffst mie twee,
Dann fang ekj aun too gohnen.
Jeffst mie dree enn vea tookjlikjch,
Dann wensch ekj Juent daut Himmelrikjch.

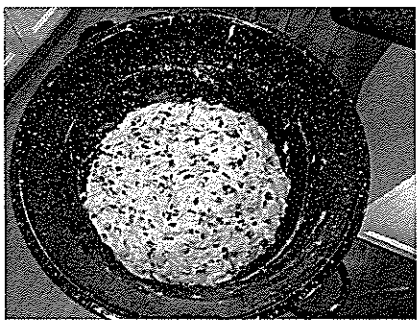
Translation:
I saw your chimney smoking,
And I knew what you were making:
Delicious New Year's fritters.
Give me one,
And I will stand still.
Give me two,
And I will begin to walk away.
But give me three and four at the same time,
Then I will wish for you Heaven's riches.

A standard recipe from the recipe book, ***Vonn Onjafaa***, by Elizabeth Wiebe, yields very fine Portzelkje:

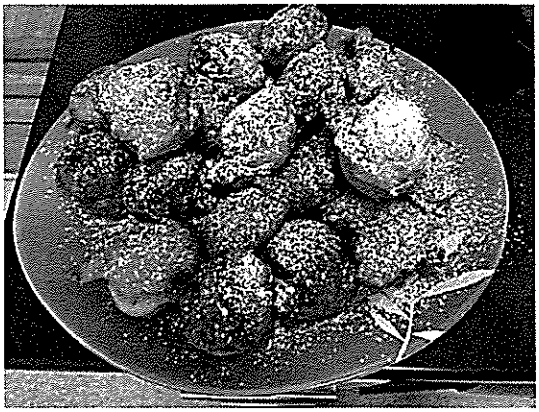
- 2 tablespoons instant yeast
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups warm milk
- 1 cup warm water
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 6 well-beaten eggs
- 2 pounds raisins
- 6 cups flour

deep-fried Portzelkje cooling

Mix and set in a warm place to rise for about one hour until mixture is nearly twice the original size. Then drop tablespoons of the dough into hot deep fat and fry until browned. Serve with granulated sugar or icing sugar or honey for dipping.



Portzelkje dough rising



sugared Portzelkje all ready to eat!

JB

Autobiography of David Julius Loewen (1885-1977)

(*Written in Early 1956 in Hague, Saskatchewan*)

(Words in parentheses inserted by Larry Loewen-Rudgers – submitted by Harold Loewen)

I, David Loewen, was born on the 7th of June in 1885, in the village of Burwalde (about seven km SE of Chortitza village), in The Old Colony in the Province of Ekaterinoslav (now Province of Zaporishzhya), (Chortitza was 850 km SSW of Moscow, close to the present day city of Zaporishzhya in the Ukraine, but then Imperial Russia).

My parents were Julius and Katharina (nee Redekop) Loewen. I spent my pre-school and eight school years as well as the rest of my youth in Burwalde. My first teacher was Dietrich (Dick) Pauls, whose assistant was Abraham Wiebe. Then for a year my teachers were Heinrich (Henry) Foth and Heinrich Spenst. In the next four years the head teacher was Heinrich Epp and his assistant for one year was Gregory Ansenkomietsh Morgun, followed by Alexey Sumakonenka for three years.

After eight years in the village school came the more enjoyable days of my youth. *O days of my youth, how wonderful you were!* Yet, many beautiful dreams are carried to the grave. How amazing it was going on field trips with our teachers. Later in my youth, how lovely it was, even at Easter, to have green fields with flowers blooming. *O, how grand, O, how beautiful!* All the way from the village to the Dnieper River there was a deep valley in which the spring waters stretched high even up to the edge of the village, enjoyed by both young and old. How beautiful was God's amazing nature in the spring! And how many beautiful songs we sang!

At 21 years of age came the time of drawing lots for serving in the Forsteidienst (Forestry Service at the Ratzyn Camp near Kherson on the Dnieper River, close to the NW shore of the Black Sea and NW of Crimea. This was alternative service in place of serving in the Russian Army) and I had to serve for three years. Also, that was a wonderful time in God's amazing nature in the beautiful large forest and tree nursery on the small Potomnick River. (The Ratzyn Forestry Camp was one of about 12 camps that provided forest and fruit trees to Mennonites as well as non-Mennonites in the steppes of southern Imperial Russia).

Maria Guenther, 1911 before they married.

David Julius Loewen ca.1911 before he married

Here, I was supposed to spend four years, while my father was left on the home farm to carry out the very difficult fieldwork alone. Luckily, after some time he was able to find someone else to do farm work in my place. Many of my fellow servicemen had completed Zentralschule (prepared for teaching in Mennonite schools and two more years at a Russian Gymnasium qualified graduates to attend universities in Russia and elsewhere) and were obligated to serve only three years in the Forestry Service. Unfortunately, I had not attended a Zentralshule and should have stayed four years in the Forestry Service. But, after being in the Forestry Service for only three years, the rules changed and I was very happy to be going home after serving from March 1, 1907 until November 1, 1909. *Thanks be to God! And, the years in the Forestry Service were really good!*

In 1910, the Chortitza Colony purchased land at Arkadak in Saratovskaya Province, Russia (now the Russian Federation near the Volga River, 750 km NE of Zaporizhzhya and 550 km SE of Moscow). This land was purchased so that many of the landless in Chortitza Colony would have a chance at obtaining land in the new Arkadak Colony. I drew lots and luckily was able to obtain a farm (50 desjatien or 135 acres) in Arkakak., Already in 1910, I moved with my parents to the new colony. My brothers and sisters (five living in 1910) with the exception of the oldest, Abraham, who was no farmer but rather a businessman, were

also fortunate enough to obtain land at Arkadak.

On the 22nd October, 1911, I entered into Holy Matrimony with Maria Guenther from Kronsfeld (about nine km SW of our village of Burwalde) in Chortitza Colony. On October 27, 1911, I went with my beloved wife to our new home in Village Four, Marianovka, Arkadak Colony. Also here was God's amazing nature not far from our house, the Arkadak Creek, that was not very wide but deep and full of fish, a beautiful oak forest just behind the creek and on our side of the creek an ideal livestock pasture. The area was magnificent with good grain yields. There were seven villages in the Colony of Arkadak and very good gardens, each having the best fruit trees. Also, our Gemeinde (church) was well organized. All seven villages had one Gemeinde building in Village Five (Vyazemskoye) that we visited every Sunday morning. *O how grand, O how beautiful and everyone looked full of hope into the future!* O woe unto us, in the beginning of August, 1914, the First World War broke out and many younger men were drafted into the Sanitaetsdienst (Medical Service as medics) or into the Forestry Service. On the 1st September we older men who were still in the reserves for Chortitza Colony had to report to the city of Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk) where many were sent off to various postings. But, I, with a few others, had the great fortune to return home. Thanks be to God, we were very happy. But, many farms were virtually paralyzed because so many men were in the Forestry Service or Medical Service and they continued to go off.

The David Julius & Maria (Guenther) Loewen family before leaving Russia. Children: Maria (1914), Tiena (Kay) (1912), Luise (1916) and David (1921).

In January of 1917, I was drafted into the Medical Service but served only until October, 1917, at a hospital in Balashov in the Province of Saratovskaya (a few kilometers from Arkadak). I and many others were allowed to go home because the Czar had been overthrown. There was supposed to be freedom in Imperial Russia, but this freedom changed into a terrible revolution and difficult times. Already in the spring of 1918 all unseeded land was taken away from us, although we were allowed to keep land sown to winter wheat and rye. But, in 1919 all land was nationalized. We were allowed to use two Desjatien per person just behind our farm-stead, which amounted to ten Desjatien (27 acres was 135 acres) for our family of five.

Things continued to become worse; whether at seeding time or at harvest time, we had to transport materials (perhaps procuring or delivering food and feed) for long distances even in stormy winter weather, and it took quite some time before we returned home. We never knew what was coming next. The harvest was smaller and smaller, the horses became thin, but we could do little about it because we had to keep transporting although we could only go very slowly. In all of this destitution one seeks after freedom, but where was freedom? Not in Russia. Although then in Russia freedom was much lauded, it was only for those who were the most brutal. So, there remained nothing other than traveling across the ocean to Canada. But Canada's borders were closed to us at that time.

In 1925, about 400 (out of a total population of 1500) in Arkadak Colony organized themselves as a group and sent a delegation to Moscow to see if emigration was possible, since in 1923 two groups had left Chortitza Colony. The delegation was so effective that already in July of 1925 a Canadian ophthalmologist came to our colony to examine for eye diseases, those seeking emigration. Those free of eye disease could then prepare to emigrate.

There should have been many auctions but that did not happen because the government did not allow them since it considered itself in a state of war. Therefore, many possessions as well as houses and barns were left just as they were and off it was to Canada.

Already on the 7th of August, 1925, we loaded

what we could into freight cars at the train station in Arkadak, and our trip to Canada soon began. Many, many friends from the seven villages gathered at the train station the morning of 8th of August to see 156 of us off. (More followed later). We left Arkadak at 7:00 am, and arrived in Moscow on August 10, 1925, where it took two days for everything to be organized. We left Moscow on the 12th of August, and came to the last town in Imperial Russia, Sebezh, on the 13th of August where fortunately our things were only superficially searched, and we were soon on our way and out of Russia in Rezekn, Latvia! After a short time we were on our way again and arrived in Riga, Latvia (on the Gulf of Riga on the Baltic Sea). Here we were in quarantine for three days because of an outbreak of measles amongst us.

The David & Maria Loewen family in Canada in the summer of 1939;L-R children: John/Mary Sawatsky with Adeline, David/Kay Loewen, John/Luise Thiessen with baby Menno.

We left Riga on the 17th of August and soon arrived in the port city of Liebau (Liepaja, Latvia, 1000 km straight west of Moscow) on the Baltic Sea. We boarded the ship, Baltara, right away and the trip began on the wide open seas. The Baltic Sea was terribly rough but we arrived safely in England on August 22, 1925. Here we were loaded into busses and taken to an immigration encampment where we had to wait three days until the ship, Mellita, was made ready.

On August 27, 1925, we were allowed to board that large ship and came after nine days, on the night of the 4th of September to Quebec, after having seen huge icebergs on the 3rd of September at 2:00 pm. At noon on September 5, 1925, we boarded the Canadian train, left very soon and came on the 8th September with the evening train to the station here in Hague.

At Hague Station we were greeted by my cousin Abram Schellenberg, who took my four children and me first to his house, and then to my uncle Jacob Loewen's, in Neuanlage. We were warmly greeted and were put up for the night.

The next day Peter Guenthers from Reinland came to greet us since Mrs. Peter Guenther is my cousin. The Guenthers took my children and me to their farm. My beloved wife had to stay back in Quebec because of illness and arrived in Hague a week later.

It was threshing time here in Canada but also it was raining and everyone waited eagerly for drier weather. Meantime, my brother-in-law's family, the Johann Paetkaus, and my family rented a house together in Blumenthal. Our families lived there for more than a month while Johann and I looked for work, since we really needed money.

Fortunately, we soon found work with the threshing crew of Herman Harms. In a week it was dry enough to thresh, and Peter Harms came to take us to the first threshing site. On the way, he explained to us some of the more common Canadian customs and practices since they were still very strange to us.

After a few days of hard threshing work, mostly as field pitchers (picking up sheaves in the field, loading them onto wagons and unloading at the threshing machine), our hands really hurt, because they were so full of blisters; our hands were very soft after several months of traveling on the ocean water. We thought about the work gloves we had left in Russia since we didn't need them in the summer. But, the heavens took pity on us after three days of threshing and it rained, putting an end to threshing for a while and our hands could heal. When the threshing began again we had gloves! I earned $110 from 22 days of threshing.

After a month, also when it was again raining, Johann and I picked up our families from Blumenthal, and we all moved to Hochfeld, where we Loewens stayed for a year in the summer kitchen of the Johann Harms. The Paetkaus stayed that year in the summer kitchen of the Bartsch family.

During the year, Johann Paetkau and I worked at various farms in the area. In late 1926, we moved to our farm southeast of Hague that we purchased on time from the Intercontinental Company.

It was a bitterly difficult beginning - so many land and travel debts (Reiseschuld). From 1930 until 1939 it was so dry that we could not even pay the interest on our debts. The debts gradually became even larger as the result of many total crop failures.

But, gradually things got better and after 20 years we had paid back all of our land debt and the Reiseschuld.

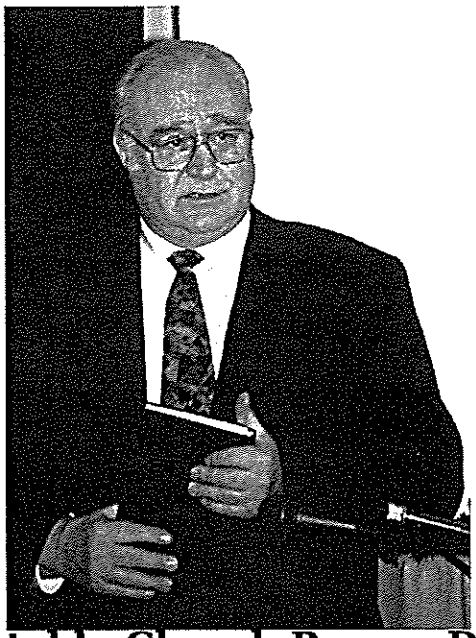
In the meantime I had my appendix removed. In 1944, my wife had (breast cancer) surgery from which she also gradually healed. Unfortunately, after several years it (the cancer) broke out again, leading to her death on the 16th of February, 1950.

Since that time I have lived alone in my house in Hague. I worked* a few years in Hague until the 10th of January, 1956, when I had a second operation.

Our loving God has again allowed me to enjoy life and to look after myself. To the Lord our God be the glory!

(*Every morning at 10:00 am he picked up the Hague-area mail bag from the train station and delivered it to the Hague post office.)

DJLLR



Notable Church Person Dies

William (Bill) Kruger died January 7, 2020, in Saskatoon, leaving behind his wife, Helen, and three children. He was 88.

Bill graduated from RJC, CMBC, and Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. He pastored churches in Winnipeg, Calgary, Osler, Swift Current and Saskatoon.

He served as Principal at Rosthern Junior College, Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, and Rockway Mennonite Collegiate. Bill will be remembered for all things Mennonite, for his love of the Church, and his untiring optimism that the Jesus of the Gospels was where everyone should go for enduring sustenance. Bill was a devoted friend of MHSS and will be dearly missed.

MHSS

You Can Help Us With Some Research

At our planning meetings for the Historian it has come up several times that we should write about Mennonites who - though they didn't seek the honour - have had places in our province named after them. Perhaps a lake, park, or even a stretch of road.

At the last meeting we agreed that although we can think of a few names, we are probably missing a lot. We would like to ask you, our faithful readers to let us know of any Mennonites you know who have had places named after them.

Please write up a brief biography of them, and the place that was named after them. Also include your contact information in case we want to ask you for more details. Then we'll assign someone to write up an article ... Well, if we get lots of info, we may do them in groups.

Use my email adddress at the bottom of the back cover to send this in to the Editor.

RMF

What Can We Learn From Old Aerial Farm Photographs?

- Jake Buhler

Hundreds, if not thousands, of Saskatchewan homes have aerial photographs hanging on their walls. If these are not dated and described, they will be unrecognized photographs in another generation. Here is an attempt to describe one farm photograph for posterity.

• ***Date of photo***: 1957. Original is black and white.

• ***Owners of farm in 1957***: John and Elizabeth Guenther Wiebe

• ***Legal description***: SE-34-38-4-W3. Location is 3.5 miles east and a half mile south of Warman, SK.

• ***Historical Description***: John G. and Elizabeth Wiebe purchased the quarter section in 1941. It was registered in the name of John G. Wiebe. Temporary residency was in a none-too-comfortable granary that Elizabeth Wiebe made into a dwelling.

• An old dilapidated house, described by Elizabeth Wiebe as "full of bedbugs and such things," was torn down upon moving to the farm. A new house was built in two stages: first the main frame house followed several years later by an annex. The *"Summer Kitchen"* was added later. Note the downspout and rain barrel on the SW corner of the house.

• ***The vehicles on the yard include***: a green 1953 Chevrolet car; a small 1953 GMC ton truck located in front of the barn; a 2 ton 1947 or 1948 Ford truck parked next to the 500 gallon gas tank.

• ***The farm-powered machines include:*** a Massey Harris #55 tractor parked next to the Haksel Schnieda on the south end of the barn; #44 Massey Harris tractor hitched to a hayrack; a Massey Harris #90 SP combine with a straight header attachment.

• Two power poles are shown in the photo. ***Electricity was brought in in 1954***. Before that, for several years, a motor-powered electric plant supplied energy mainly for lights.

• A single pole next to the SE corner of the house shows where telephone services entered the house.

• ***The photo was taken from an airplane*** in September. All leaves have fallen. The corn and vegetables have been harvested. It is possible the potatoes have yet to be harvested. The lilacs are on the west side of garden #2. The first garden cannot be seen and is located on the north side of the driveway.

• ***The smokehouse*** is located next to the gas-tank and truck. A very small grain auger is just east of the large barn-machine shed.

• ***The garage*** located next to the power pole has its door open. It would later be moved to where the 2

ton truck is located. In its place a new garage with two bays would be built. During that time the smoke-house was moved behind the barn with the light coloured roof. Note the outdoor toilet next to the garage. Also a small burning barrel.

• ***The main dairy barn was built in 1949*** by John S Driedger. In the winter before construction, the lumber was shipped from Saskatoon to Warman. Jake and John G Wiebe hauled the lumber to the farm by horses and sleigh.

• ***The large machine shed*** was moved from the Baliski yard in 1947 (where Tena and Dick Friesen lived). There it served as a barn. Note the extended peak on the west end. An auger is sitting just east of it.

• ***The chicken barn*** was used by Elizabeth Wiebe for chicken raising. Later a large white machine shed was built on the south side of the chicken barn by John G Wiebe. Two small outbuildings north of the chicken barn were removed. The skating rink was west of the dairy barn.

• ***Trees:*** The perimeter contains mainly Manitoba Maples and caragana. The driveway has caragana on both sides. There are some volunteer poplars in the perimeter.

• ***The large black field*** north of the tree-line is in summerfallow, part of the 3 year crop rotation system used then: Summerfallow in year one; wheat in year two; oats or barley in year three. West of the summerfallow is the large pasture, some of which would be broken shortly after 1957.

• ***The bale-stack*** in the lower left part of the photo was put up in 1956 when the Wiebes purchased their first baler. The new stack is not visible. ***A one-person swing and 3 pole wash-line*** are located next to the lilacs. Later a backstop for playing ball, would be built in that corner.

• ***The barn shown remains*** to this day (2019). The yard site has been sold out of the family. However, the 129 acres of land around the yard belong to Jake and Louise Buhler.

• Written with earlier assistance from Elizabeth Wiebe, Tina Friesen, Jake Wiebe, and Louise Buhler. Last known owner of the photos's negative had no objection to its use. Updated in 2019.

JB

Connecting With Hutterite Relatives

by John Reddekopp

My father's aunt Helena Reddekopp was born in Blumenort, West Reserve, Manitoba in 1884.

In 1906 she married Jacob Teichroeb who had taken a homestead a year earlier in the Swift Current area. They had eight children.

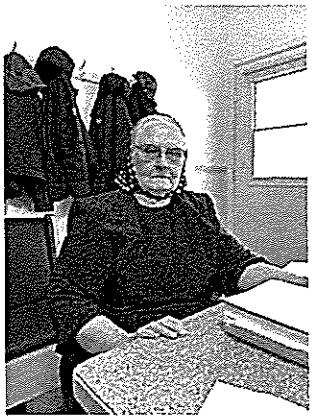
In 1924 their Old Colony neighbours were moving to Mexico. Anna had suffered some type of stroke prior to this and exhibited some symptoms similar to dementia even though she was not yet 40 years old when this occurred. Jacob did not want to take her to Mexico and didn't want to place her in an institution. Therefore he made the decision to join a Hutterite colony. They joined the Big Bend Colony near Woolford, Alberta that same year.

Helena passed away in 1934 and Jacob lived until 1967. I remember when I was perhaps ten, that a Teichroeb relative who was a Hutterite came to visit at our place.

Currently there are quite a few descendants of Jacob and Helena Teichroeb scattered on a number of Hutterite colonies in Alberta.

In November of 2019, my brother Joe and I travelled from Saskatchewan to join two brothers from Alberta, Jack and Don, at the Acadia Valley Colony near Oyen, Alberta. Here we had lunch with John Mandel who is the Minister and leader of the Acadia Valley Colony. After lunch, John's mother, wife and two sisters joined us as well.

John's mother, Anna (Teichroeb) Mandel is the granddaughter of Jacob and Helena Teichroeb. They



were very gracious hosts and excited to make that connection and learn more about the Reddekopp side of the family, as they don't have a lot of information since Helena died at a relatively young age.

Meantime we heard that some of the relatives residing on other colonies are disappointed that they didn't get to meet us. I suspect that there will be further contacts.

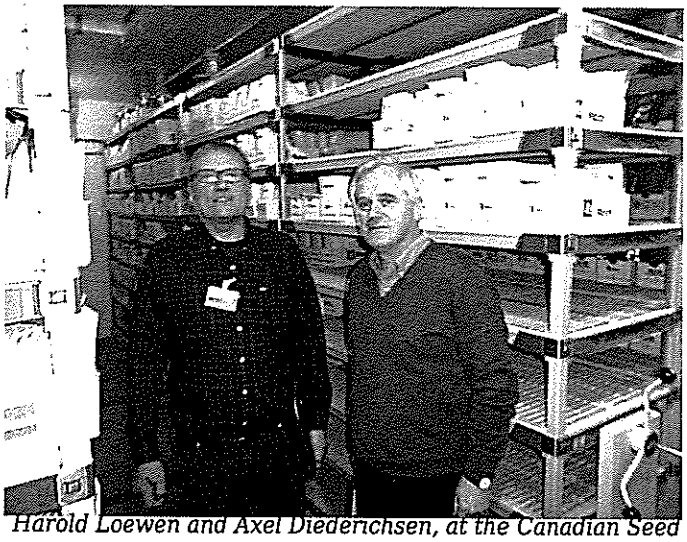
JR

Mennonite Seed Savers

by Harold Loewen & Dick Braun

Many seeds were brought by our ancestors when they came to Canada from Russia. We are an agricultural people, and there are many stories of how Mennonites brought seeds to Canada.

Susie Fisher recorded some in her PhD dissertation on Mennonites and their gardens. ". . .Stories of cuttings from a yellow rosebush brought over from Russia and confiscated by immigration officials, of seeds sewn into the hems of dresses and hidden in corsets, of dolls stuffed with beans or wheat."



Harold Loewen and Axel Diederichsen, at the Canadian Seed Vault at the U of S, Saskatoon.

People have shown Susie acorns believed to be descended from an 800-year-old oak in Ukraine known as the Chortitza Oak, as well as the seeds of melons, plums, marigolds, zinnias and many other plants that once grew in Russian gardens.

There is a Chortitza Oak tree at the Osler Mennonite church which is a descendant of the famous oak tree in Chortitza, South Russia. The acorns were brought home by Hella and Jenny Banman and sprouted by Lake Shore Tree Farms. In 1998 when the tree was about 3 years old it was planted at the church as a symbol of our connection to the famous oak tree. Fisher has yet to find an official archival record of seeds or plants brought over from Russia. In fact, botanical records from Neubergthal suggest the storied cottonwoods were likely transplanted from nearby riverbanks. But for Fisher's purposes, the stories themselves matter more than the facts. "These stories speak to the efforts of trying to transplant a life and peoplehood into a new place."[1]

examining old seed corn in the Seed Vault.

My Mother, Helen (Sawatzky) Loewen, displayed this close connection to seeds and to the land. She had a very large garden with many different fruits and vegetables. One of her favorite seeds were beans. She planted many rows of beans every year, from seed she initially got from her mother Marie (Funk) Sawatzky. Every year Dad and Mom selected the best seeds that matured the earliest and these beans were kept for seed the next year. She continued gardening until the age of 93. My mother had bean seeds available for all her children.

Shelling beans was a summer evening social activity that our family was a part of.

These beans were enjoyed by everyone in the family. Every Friday my mother cooked beans overnight for lunch on Saturday. She served them with homemade ketchup and smoked ham and some canned pickles. This was a favorite meal in the family.

In November Dick Braun and I went to meet with Dr. Axel Diederichsen, Research Scientist and Curator at Plant Gene Resources of Canada (the Canadian Seed Vault) in Saskatoon. We spent several hours dicussing the importance of seeds and also explored whether Mennonite seeds were in the Vault.

We toured the vault holding some 144,000 seed packages of ancient seeds. Axel stated that the seeds are saved to keep a wide range of seeds available. Axel

talked about checking out old yards; by the plants that were left there you should be able to tell about the culture of the former residents, and what they liked to eat.

Axel stated that one package of seeds is put in the vault in Saskatoon and one package is sent to Svalbard, Norway (a global seed vault deep in the inside of a mountain). He also explained that the seeds need to be replanted every so often to keep the seeds fresh.

The seed is an unbelievable way of storing life. The Mennonites are no different than most people in the world, as they have worked at growing plants for a long time.

The poplar trees that line the street in Neuhorst were seeds that came along from South Russia. In conversation with Dieter Marten, owner of a tree nursery and greenhouse at Langham Sk., who was trained in Germany, and has a good knowledge of plants in the world, we were told that the poplar trees in the villages of Neuhorst and Neuanlage were Burwalde poplar from south Russia, and that they live a lot longer then the North American poplar.

I (Dick), know that the poplar trees on the yard where I grew up in Neuhorst were planted by Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Bergen in about 1898 and they are still alive and growing today.

Mrs. Herman Peters, who lived in the village of Neuhorst, was also a seed collector. There is proof of that, because when the old house that Mr. and Mrs. Herman Peters had built in about 1925, was to be torn down. After the 1990s there were still packages of seeds in the attic. The packages were clearly marked and dated. It seems that Mrs. Peters had done this work in 1929.

Aron and Anna Bueckert helped Herman (Jr) clean out the house. When Anna and Aron went up into the attic, that is where they found the treasure. Anna planted a number of the different seeds and they all grew.

I remember my grandma's garden where there were a variety of fruit trees and many different flowers. This is where I got my love for pansies and their many different color configurations.

There were always a lot of poppies growing in a number of places in the garden. There was also a hedge of hollyhocks.

Seed pictures inside trunk lid of Mrs. Herman Peters, seen in home of Peter Doell.

Mennonites also found that rhubarb was somewhat easy to grow and very nutritious. Records show that rhubarb was planted along the Silk Road long before our people moved to this country.

Recently, we were visiting with Peter Doell of Warman, and he showed us a chest that his grandmother had decorated on the inside with seed packages and the covers of seed catalogues, just another evidence that Mennonites tend to have a great appreciation for seeds.

You probably have such stories and proofs, too.

[1].Recorded in the *Canadian Mennonite* issue, May 20th 2015

HL&DB

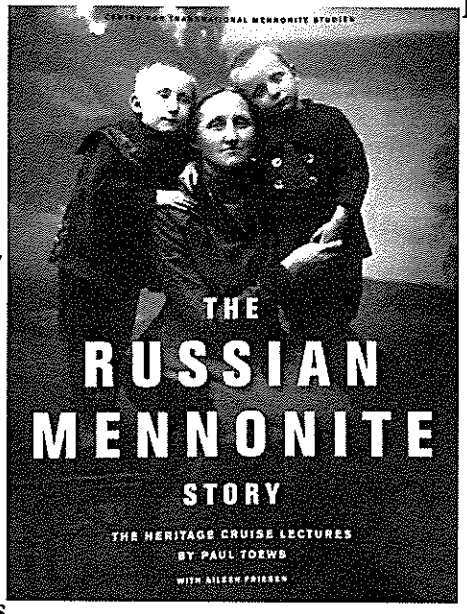
2020 Global Citizen Awards

cont'd bottom of page 25

The Russian Mennonite Story - by Paul Toews with Aileen Friesen

Reviewed by Jake Buhler

Paul Toews, with Aileen Friesen. *The Russian Mennonite Story*: (Winnipeg: Center for Transactional Mennonite Studies, 2018). 106 pages. Soft cover (9" x 12") non-fiction.



When Paul Toews died in 2015, he left behind three lectures that he had given to several thousand Mennonite Heritage Cruise passengers over many years. These lectures detailed the story of Mennonites from 1789 and going forward for more than two centuries. His evocative lectures were named, *Power and Promise, Pathos and Tragedy,* and *Paradox and Irony.*

These lectures might have faded into the archives, if it had not been for a brilliant historian at the University of Winnipeg who shook off a lot of Molotschna and Chortitza dust from the texts, and transformed them into a history-story-picture book, that is a must-read for anyone who cares a twit about Mennonite history.

I have read many books on Russian Mennonites where 90% of the stories and photographs were of men who were portrayed as the movers and shakers of the Russian Mennonite story. Aileen Friesen has instead, in the book's 110 pages, inserted a hundred photographs where almost half are of women and children. This upside-down portrayal of Mennonites is refreshing as it reveals an honest demography of who the real villagers were. The cover photo appears to show two affectionate sons endearing themselves to their mother.

It is important to appreciate what the book is not. It is not a comprehensive Mennonite history of 200 years. It was never meant to be that.

Instead it is the essence left after Paul Toews has sifted through 200 years of history. Toews and Friesen have presented us with the Kern Geschichten mit Bilder (essential stories with pictures).

There is a healthy juxtapositioning of the idyllic and the bewildering sorrow of the Mennonite narrative in Russia or the Soviet Union. On one page, Friesen depicts a prosperous village scene painted by Henry B. Pauls where women are making watermelon syrup; on another page are the graphic images of men and women killed by Nestor Makhnov.

The book is 50% narrative and 50% photography. Toews and Friesen did a masterful job of telling the Russian Mennonite Story.

The Russian Mennonite Story can be purchased from McNally Robinson for $39.00.

JB

Global Citizen Awards *cont'd from pg. 24*

Photo: *Left to right: Karen Farmer who has worked with USC, Open Door Society and The Seed Saving Project; Carol Reimer Wiebe whose work at Ten Thousand Villages is memorable; Kathy and Dick Braun who have worked with MCC's Thrift Stores, and in Bolivia with MCC to promote Appropriate Technology, and; Ray Funk, who has worked with First Nations and international connections. Photo credit: SCIC*

Every year the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation, known as SCIC, gives out Global Citizen Awards to deserving nominees who have demonstrated a strong connection between their Saskatchewan base and international development.

In a ceremony in Saskatoon in February, five Global Citizens were honoured, four of whom are Mennonites.

Global Citizens have been honoured since 1991. Previous Mennonite awardees include Mark Bigland-Pritchard, Jake and Louise Buhler, Otto and Florence Driedger, and Nettie Wiebe. MCC and Ten Thousand Villages have been honoured in the institutional category.

JB

Connecting Mennonites - MHSS AGM March 6-7

- by Ruth Marlene Friesen

No public mention was made of the corona virus which is cancelling many public meetings these days. On Friday, March 6, a special MHSS evening, the guest speaker was Abe Janzen, a son of Abram G. Janzen, Blumenheim, SK., and a long-time former Director of the Alberta MCC. The Fellowship Centre at Bethany Manor was almost full. People drove in from surrounding communities.

President John Reddekopp opened the meeting with announcements and an invocational prayer.

Dick Braun introduced the Jake Quiring Singing Group, consisting of two Old Colony families with young children, and several single women. They sang several accapella songs in Low German and then one in High German.

It was interesting to observe that some of the young girls were able to read Plautdietsch from their song sheets. It was later confirmed that these children are homeschooled; no wonder.

Leonard Doell introduced Abe Janzen. A storyteller like his father, Abe swept us along in his stories of the people in various Mennonite colonies in Bolivia. He called this, *Connecting with the Low German Speaking Mennonites of Bolivia*. His 48 slides helped to illustrate his experiences and conversations.

As a young man, Abe had gone to Bolivia to work for MCC. There he met Kathy, an MCC worker from the USA, who came as a teacher. They were married.

This time he went as a representative of *Die Mennonitische Post*, and *Das Blatt für Kinder,* two publications that are read in Mennonite communities all around the world, but are especially prized in Bolivia for all the letters in each issue from Mennonites around the globe.

Das Blatt is used in the colony schools as reading material for the children. Not many families can afford to subscribe to *Die Post*, but these are offered as reading materials in the small libraries that exist in most MCC centres, so when they come into the larger towns and cities, about every two weeks - the Mennonites always make a stop at the MCC Centre to read *Die Mennonitishe Post*.

Die Post is well aware of this affection for their paper, and has an annual budget of $100,000 just to meet the need in Bolivia.

Abe informed us that there are about 150,000 Low German Mennonites in Canada, and almost that many in Bolivia also. They are located in 82 Colonies there, plus there are four colonies in Peru now, and some in Argentina. (This is not counting the ones in Paraguay and Brazil).

He told us of the Amish Mennonites from Belize, who had "stared life down" with no motors. They cut hardwood with a carousel of horses turning a wheel. They don't allow photos, but some young boys allowed Abe to take a picture of them.

Half an hour away is the opposite kind of colony with fancy modern farm machinery.

He told of several quiet people making a difference by how they served their people. One, a nurse, delivered 44 babies in 3 weeks.

One man leads a committee that brings in water for an irrigation system, using brick cisterns.

Another man is a schoolteacher, veterinarian and doctor. He's run off his feet, but he teaches himself what he needs to know by firing up a generator and turning on his laptop after everyone else is in bed, so he can watch how-to Youtube videos!

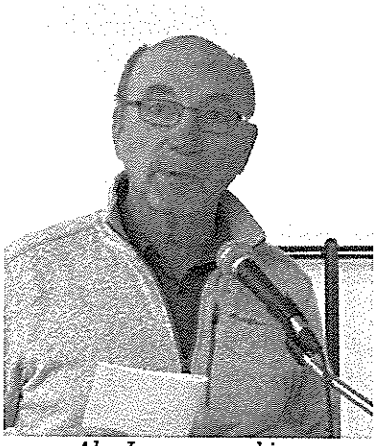
Many farmers ship milk and cheese and make about $70/day. This keeps them from getting rich, but brings enough to meet their needs.

Anna Driedger, who has 11 siblings, set up a small library, so that they would have reading materials.

A 60 year old woman is teaching 15 women Spanish on Monday mornings, so they can shop

more intelligently in Santa Cruz.

Another man set up a payphone in a locked fridge on his farm located between the Reinlander and the Swiss colonies. People come from both colonies to use his telephone.



Abe Janzen speaking

But then Abe also told how he had mentioned to someone going back to Bolivia before he was going to arrive that he planned to visit his cousin on a certain colony. By the time Abe got there, he had already met half a dozen people who knew via the grapevine that he was coming, and they informed Abe that his cousin's family was expecting him for lunch on Tuesday.

Coffee and refreshments were enjoyed after this meeting.

Saturday was blustery and windy; the numbers that arrived for the 9:30 Annual Business Meeting of MHSS were considerably down.

David Neufeld presented an interesting perspective on creating history, rather than interpreting it. (Look for the text as an article on the website).

President, John Reddekopp, again chaired this meeting, and we heard financial reports as well as reports from various areas of the organization.

Harold Loewen, Board member, conducted a quick re-election of two Board members whose terms were up. Elizabeth Friesen and Susan Braun were promptly returned to the Board.

Jake Buhler, Secretary of the Board, observed that there are about 100 Mennonite pastors in Saskatchewan, and we should try to get more of them involved in this organization.

Other suggestions were also noted as things to work on this year.

After a coffee break, and the arrival of more people, we were ready for another session of Abe Janzen's stories. This time he focused on *Connecting with Low German Mennonites in Canada.* He urged that we be careful about stereotyping our Mennonite people. There are many kinds, and when we hear of some doing something shameful, we need to ask ourselves what that says about us. There are many groups, even Mennonite colonies beside each other, that don't like one another at all. Some get along well with other ethnic groups. Some are totally self-reliant, needing no one else.

An outside observer commented that Mennonites don't love their land; they are always ready to pick up and move on. Is that from our history of migrations?

This talk raised a lot of issues and questions, to consider. The Question & Answer session raised even more questions until time to break for lunch.

This lunch was served by a different caterer than we've had for a number of years, Abe and Marge Peters, who did a fine job.

After lunch, Dick introduced Harris Ford again.

Harris will be moving on, but reported on last summer's interviews and expressed gratitude for all he learned and the warm welcome he received at each interview. Dick traveled with him to Swift Current where they met more storytellers, and in all he collected 12 '*conversations,*' which he transcribed and which are also video-taped. Our archives has a complete set of these.

Efforts are being made to get copies of the interviews that were done 40 years ago, and are now in a Regina library.

Dick Braun told of his and Kathy's trip to Brazil to be present for the 100th Anniversary of the arrival of Aeltester John P. Wall, who spoke five languages.

Dick is also a storyteller, so we got the background on the migration of many Old Colony Mennonites from our area, to Mexico and some on to Paraguay. John P. Wall became sick, but would not allow an operation and died in Brazil, where he was buried.

A number of the Wall descendants showed up but some said that if they had heard about it sooner, there would have been another 100 descendants there!

[Note; an expanded version of this report is on the website with more photos. Look under Reports.]

RMF

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. *http://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)
Gerhard J. Hiebert († 1959)
Katharine Hooge († 2001)
Abram 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)

Websites
Our official MHSS site: *mhss.sk.ca*

Cemeteries: *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: *mhss.sk.ca/E-Updates.shtml*
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Memberships: $35 for one year; $65 for two years; $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.

Send in Feedback and Stories

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. -->

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