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Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian

Features & Articles

The Volunteer Choir singing at the 70th Anniversary of Superb Mennonite Church (Credit: Marg Olfert)

Memories of Superb Mennonite Church

by Linda (Wiebe) Unger

In west-central Saskatchewan, about 3 hours west of Saskatoon, was a small country church which, after 75 years, is empty and unused. I have been asked to share my memories of attending there in my childhood and as I was growing up.

First, some history. I was born in 1947, and grew up on a farm in west-central Saskatchewan, five miles from a little village called Superb. It was fifteen miles west of the town of Kerrobert, and about forty miles from the Alberta border. In the area was a small group of Mennonites, who settled there in the late 20s and the 30s, with a few more families arriving in 1940, 1953 and 1955. There were also a few families who lived and farmed at Luseland, about 15 miles to the northeast.

Rev. Peter J. Klassen, who arrived with his family in 1928, was the first pastor. The first church services were held at the Klassen's home until more houses were built; then others opened their homes for worship as well. Because of distance and weather, families also gathered in smaller groups to hold services. In 1934, when Rev. Peter A. Warkentin and his family moved to the Superb area from Luseland, (cont'd page 4)

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The Editor's Perspective

Ruth Marlene Friesen

I was wondering what to put into this issue for a hint of Christmas. Then, on Tuesday, when I was watching the first of a new series of Anabaptist Tours, similiar to what TourMagination did in spring. During the Q & A time after Conrad Stoesz' presentation, someone asked if, when people translated someone's old journals or diaries, they made a discovery they would have preferrred not knowing.

Conrad's answer indicated that he mostly only heard of positive discoveries in such situations.

Suddenly I recalled a major translation project I took on in the early 1990s, while still a live-in caregiver for my parents in Hague. I had feared I'd be on that project the rest of my life, but once I got a computer, I picked up considerable speed and was able to finish it in two years.

I did have an outstanding moment when I paused and blurted out loud, "Katharina, you are a woman after my own heart!"

Since I've just written it up as an article to fill the last empty page on page 27, I won't repeat it here. You'll get to it yet.

My life has been busy with many things and if you are interested in reading my chatter about my computer crisis in October, or the major help I got in the last few weeks, which I think will put an end to the mouse wars I had here last winter, I suggest you go check my RoseBouquet blog. *https://blogs.ruthes-secretroses.com*. I faithfully report there every Tuesday morning for the benefit of friends and relatives who are interested in what is going on in my life. If you want the same info to just show up in your email every week, do subscribe for free.

Otherwise, I'll keep this for MHSS & Historian news. Oh, but I do want to wish you a very ***Blessed Christmas and New Year***, even if it is under strange circumstances.

RMF

P.S. I know I have a photo of Katharina - but where?

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

John Reddekopp

Cemeteries as a Resource:

Historians and genealogists would generally agree that cemeteries are among the most valuable resources. If you go to our MHSS website, you will see *Cemeteries* listed under Research Resources. Our Index of Saskatchewan Cemeteries, although in need of updating, has PDF files of cemeteries where Mennonites are buried. There is a wide variety in the types of cemeteries on that list. Some are privately owned or on private land, some are owned by and on church property, and others are community owned.

It appears that in our era, at least in Europe, Mennonites often did not have access to community cemeteries. In all likelihood, they would have preferred having their own burial grounds anyway. That would be in keeping with being a separate people and that practice carried over into the early years of Mennonite settlement in Canada.

In 1940, new legislation was passed in Saskatchewan that all burials had to take place in registered cemeteries only.

Recently Leonard Doell and I went on a tour of cemeteries in the area around the town of Aberdeen. There were ten in total. All of these, of course, have their own stories.

For instance, in one, the land that was used for the cemetery is now just part of a farmer's field and you can only say that this is approximately where it was located.

In one of the church cemeteries many of the headstones had been vandalized; this created trauma for family who came to see where their family member was buried.

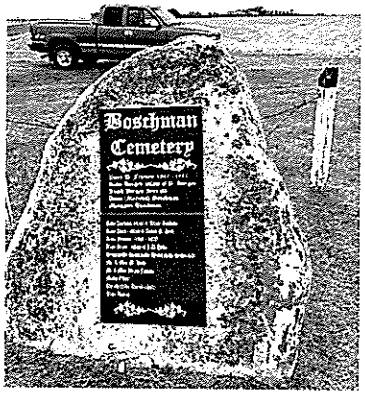
In the Old Colony church cemetery, the first person to be buried was someone whose body was found by the river but was never identified.

In 1944, my father-in-law, Jacob Friesen, and his older brother, John, were working at a lumber camp in the Carrot River area. John was killed when a tree fell on him. Jacob returned from that stint at the lumber camp together with the body of his brother.

In the Bergthal Cemetery near Aberdeen a very weathered wooden marker bears the inscription, JOHN FRIESEN, to indicate where he was laid to rest.

In earlier years I would have avoided the topic of cemeteries as much as possible, but now I do have to agree that they are an important resource in the study of genealogy and history.

Here are a few cemetery photos to prime your memories.



Boschman Cemetery
Memorial stone with sign

Aberdeen Mennonite Church
Cemetery sign

Clarkboro Cemetery sign

Belke tombstone between rough stone fences

The dates for our next Annual General meeting are March 5 and 6, 2021. At this time we don't know whether that will be virtual or in person.

Finally on behalf of the board of MHSS, I wish all of our members a blessed Christmas! May we all experience true joy and peace as we celebrate the coming of the Prince of Peace! JR

Pastor P. J. Klassen and wife, Liese, served 1928-1948. (credit: book)*

(cont'd from page 1)

the two pastors began sharing duties.

The Kintail school was used for special occasions. Rev. Warkentin, my maternal grandfather, built benches to be used in the school; they could be disassembled and stored in the basement when not in use. By 1944, the growth of families showed the necessity of a church building. Land for the church was donated by my paternal grandfather, Jacob H. Wiebe. The church board bought a building in Luseland and moved it to the site to be dismantled and the lumber used to build the church. Work began on the building on July 17, l944, with mostly volunteer labour, and was ready for use on Christmas Eve of the same year. On April 15, 1945, the Superb Mennonite Church was dedicated.

Pastor P. A. Warkentin and wife, Helen, Served 1934-1974 (Credit:book)*

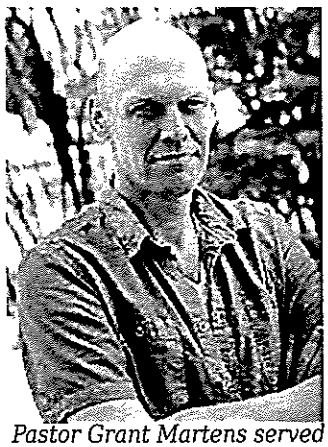
Rev. Klassen and his wife and younger children moved to BC in 1948, and Rev. Warkentin continued ministering to the congregation until 1974, when he retired. Then, Rev. Werner Zacharias from the Fiske Mennonite Church served the church in a part-time position from 1974 till 1986, with his wife, Elsie, playing the piano for services at times. The congregation then hired Dave Feick, the first salaried minister. When he resigned in 1994, Eileen Wiebe (now Klaassen), a member of the congregation, became the pastor, and served until 1999. For several years, the church members took turns presenting worship services, until 2001, when Grant Martens was hired. He served the church until 2006, when Lois Siemens came to serve the congregation. She resigned on Dec. 31, 2017. Since then, the regular attenders continued on without a pastor.

Pastor Dave Feick, wife, Joanne, children: Scott, Jason & Carissa. Served 1986-1994. (credit: book)*

Pastor Eileen (Wiebe) Klaassen served 1986-1994 (Credit: book)*

Now that building is gone. On May 31, 2020, the congregation, now a small group, held its final worship service. Due to dwindling numbers over the years, with young people and families leaving, and no one replacing them. Sadly, since then, the building has been demolished.

Pastor Werner Zacharias and wife, Elsie. Served 1974-1986. (credit: book)*



Pastor Grant Martens served 2001-2006 (credit: book)*

I have a variety of memories of attending the church as a child and teenager.

It was a tradition for the men and boys to sit on the left side of the church, and women and girls on the right side. When we were old enough, (the age decided by our parents), we were allowed to sit on the front bench. However, occasionally, when a child was misbehaving, a parent, usually the dad, would come up

Pastor Lois Siemens served 2006-2017 (credit: Lois Siemens)

to the front and remove the culprit. That was embarrassing!

Our grandfather preached in High German, and as it was our first language, we understood some of it, but some of the words in a message would be beyond our understanding. As a result, it would be hard to pay attention at times.

At first, Sunday School was held for the children upstairs in the balcony, but in 1955, due to the growing classes, a two-room building was moved onto the church yard to serve as a "Sunday School house." I remember singing several songs with the adults in the church first of all; then we children bundled up and went outside to our classrooms. In 1957, the church was set on a basement that had Sunday School classrooms and a kitchen. My Grandpa Warkentin built little tables and stools for the smaller Sunday School classes. They were painted in light pastel colours. My sister Erika is now the proud owner of one of the stools. The walls of the classrooms were built so they could be folded down to become tables for ocassions such as weddings and other events. In later years, there were fowl suppers held as fund-raisers for the church, as well as potlucks, so the church kitchen and basement were well-utilized.

When I was in one of the older Sunday School classes (likely as a young teen), I remember my teacher, Mrs. Elsbeth Bergen, getting us to memorize whole passages of Scripture. One was Isaiah 53. "*All we like sheep have gone astray....*" Another was Psalm 103. "*For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*" Those passages have come back to me throughout my life.

I remember the basement being used for the annual Ladies Aid sales. Not only the women took part in hand-crafting items for the sale. My grandfather, and other men built stools, plant stands and other articles to sell. The money raised went to MCC. One of the men of the church would act as the "auctioneer." Those were fun evenings for us as children.

As well as Sunday School every Sunday, Daily Vacation Bible School was held every summer for a week. Our teachers were often young women from the Mennonite churches at Herschel, Fiske or Glidden. I remember Eva Wichert, I believe from Fiske, being my teacher the year I turned 10. I remember sitting at a table in the basement kitchen and learning the song, "*Ye must be born again.*" We had been learning about Nicodemus. In those earlier years, we sang German hymns in church, so that was a song I had never heard before, but I remember how the words spoke to me. DVBS was an exciting time for me. Since we were at the church all day, we all brought our lunches and ate together. We played games outside during the noon break, probably tag and other games as well. At the end of the week (likely Friday evening), there would be a closing program for our parents and the rest of the congregation, where we sang songs we had learned, recited Bible verses and acted out little skits.

During the summer between grades 11 and 12, my sister, Marg, and I taught DVBS. That was a new experience! I also taught a class in DVBS in the summer of 1968. One of the stories the class I was teaching learned about was about the raising of Lazarus, so, for the closing program, the children acted out the story. I remember wrapping up the boy who was playing the part of Lazarus in a sheet, and I also remember trying to get the children who were the "onlookers" at the grave to act and look surprised when Lazarus came out of the grave. I don't know how that appeared to the audience, but I enjoyed it.

DVBS -drama of Lazarus rising from the dead - (Doug & Mike Warkentin in shock) (Credit: Linda Unger)

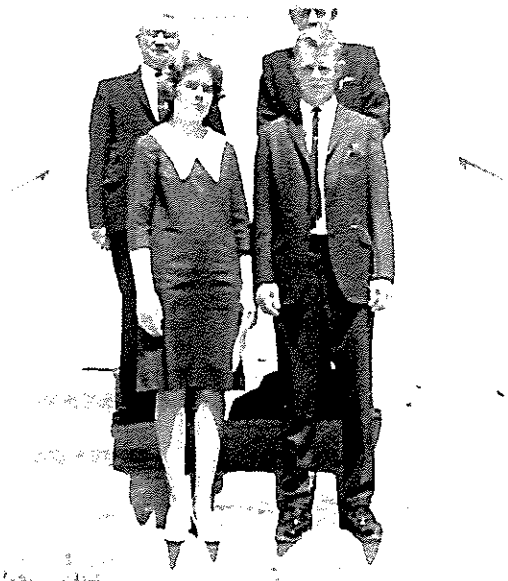
There were some sad times in my childhood. My great-grandmother, my Mom's grandmother, or "Alte Oma," as we children called her, had come to live with my grandparents after she emigrated from Germany in 1947. She died in 1954. I believe her funeral is the first one I remember. When the land for the church was donated by our Grandpa Wiebe, part of it was meant to serve as a cemetery, but no one was ever buried there. I remember the

procession to the graveyard near the village of Major, a few miles west of Superb. Since my Dad was one of the pallbearers, and rode with the others, my great-uncle, Peter Janzen from Vineland, Ontario, who had come for his mother's funeral, drove our car. My little brother, Rudy, was very upset by that. I think he thought only Dad should drive the car!

Another very sad event that occurred in our community was when Judy Bergen, who was about 8 years old, was hit and killed by a drunk driver when she got off the school bus, driven by her father, at her home. I remember all the Sunday School children sitting upstairs in the balcony during the funeral service, and standing to sing the beautiful song, "Lieber Vater, Hoch im Himmel."

For many years, an annual event was when Mr. Don Clark of the Leprosy Mission would come to report on the work of the Mission. He spoke with a delightful Irish accent, and his enthusiasm made it easy to listen to what he had to say. He introduced us as a church body to "Pete the Pig," and throughout the years, many pennies (and other coins) were put into the piggy bank when we celebrated birthdays. The money was sent away to aid the Mission.

Baptisms were an important event in the church. Rev. Cornelius Warkentin from Herschel, who was the "Aeltester" of our "Gemeinde," would officiate the baptism as at that time, the pastor was not allowed to do that. I remember the time leading up to my baptism, in the summer after I graduated from high school, as being a time of heart-searching, and resulting in peace and joy.



Linda (Wiebe) Unger & Peter Pergen baptized by Rev. Cornelius Warkentin & Rev. P. A. Warkentin (Credit: Linda Unger)

Every summer, the four churches that were a part of the "Ebenfeld Gemeinde," Superb, Herschel, Fiske and Glidden, had a joint "Gemeindefest." A Sunday was chosen, with a particular church hosting, and those who wanted to be part of a "mass choir" during the morning worship service, would travel to that church at least once during the week before for a practice. Albert Wiens from Herschel would be the director of the choir. For me, singing in that choir was the highlight of the gathering, and, I believe, was the beginning of my love of singing in choirs. When the day arrived, all the families would bring their own lunch, and after the service, we'd all gather in groups outside to eat. Then there would be games for the children, and a ball game for the adults and young people. Later in the afternoon, everyone, except the young people, would leave for home. I remember how excited I was when I was old enough to stay for the evening "Jugend party," which consisted of a wiener roast and singing, as far as I remember. I believe the Gemeindefest was in Herschel or Fiske that year, and I remember my older cousin, Walter Klassen, driving us home at the end of the evening.

The highlight of the year was always the Sunday School Christmas program. We children were given our parts quite a while ahead of time, and if my memory serves me correctly, we had several practices on the Sunday afternoons before Christmas Eve, which was always the evening for the program. In my younger years, before my parents had a car, we would travel the approximately three miles to church bundled up in a box sled, which was pulled by 2 horses. Often, on Christmas Eve, if the sky was clear, we'd see the stars sparkling overhead. On cold nights, we'd sometimes see "light pillars," shining straight up into the sky from a light. I remember being so excited about the program that I could hardly eat supper before we got ready to go. Part of the excitement was the fact that my sisters and I always had new dresses for Christmas, and my brothers likely had new shirts, all of which were sewn with love by our mother. There would always be a beautiful Christmas tree at the front of the church. Before the advent of electricity in our area, there were real candles on the tree, and, though I don't remember this, my Mom has told me that one of the men would

always sit in the front bench near the tree with a pail of water, in case of fire. The church always felt different on Christmas Eve, because black curtains had been strung on wires across the front of the "stage," as well as on either side, creating little cubicles where children who were involved with the different parts of the program would be for costume changes, or just to await their entrance. One of my sisters remembers how excited she was when she was old enough to be one of the children chosen to open and close the curtains, possibly at the age of 13 or 14. Another reason for excitement that evening was that we knew that at the end of the evening, each of us would receive a bag with peanuts, candy and a Christmas orange to take home, as well as a small gift from our Sunday School teacher. It was reason for excitement, as well, when we were old enough to be asked to help with handing out the gifts and cards.

Marg remembers being excited to be allowed to sit in the balcony, likely as teenagers, during weddings or funerals, when the church was full. And I believe my younger siblings sat up there on Sunday mornings fairly regularly as teenagers.

Marg also remembers that we took our turn as a family, doing the weekly church cleaning. She swept up lots of dead flies in the balcony and on the window sills!

Music and singing was always a big part of Superb Mennonite Church. Several men, including my Dad, Henry Wiebe, and his brother, Jake, had been elected to be "Vorsaenger," or song leaders. Before there was a musical instrument in the church, and even later, when there wasn't an available pianist, one of them, with the aid of a "tuning fork," would start the songs. My sister remembers the sound of the "diiing" of the tuning fork against our Dad's teeth. Somehow, from the note generated by that, he knew where a song should start.

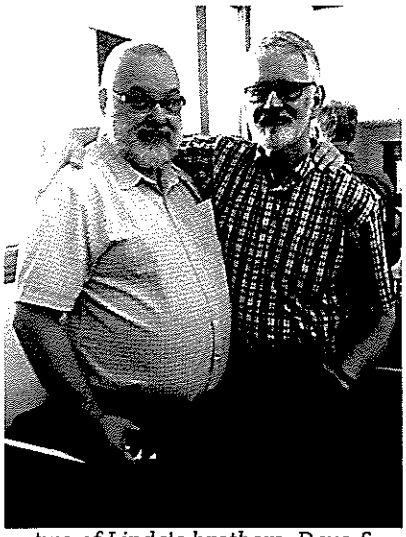
The singing in that church building always sounded amazing. My siblings and I all have memories of hearing our Aunt Katie Klassen's strong alto voice, as well as others singing "parts." As almost all of my brothers and sisters and I learned to harmonize, and now sing alto, tenor or bass/baritone, I think hearing the adults in church was an introduction to that. Singing in Sunday School was an important part of music in the church. We learned and sang many songs from the "Kinderliederbuch," many of which I still remember. One of my younger sisters remembers the loud Sunday School singing. In later years, the singing was always lead by instruments such as guitars, ukeleles and a banjo.

The church did not have a musical instrument at first, but eventually, there was a pump organ that was played occasionally. Then the congregation bought a piano. My older sister and I had started taking piano lessons when we were in Grade 9, so it wasn't long before we started playing for church services. I remember how nervous I was, but it was a good way of learning. I have a memory of how embarrassed I was one Sunday morning when, in the middle of playing a hymn, the hymnbook fell onto the keyboard with a loud crash! Since my sister and I went to RJC in Rosthern for Grades 11 and 12, we would only play in church sporadically. The following years, when I went to SCBI in Swift Current, and she went to CMBC in Winnipeg, we would only play when we were home in the summertime. For me, that likely continued to be the case for a few years after that, when I was at home for a while between jobs, or for weekends or Christmas.

After I was no longer part of the church, the congregation would have church picnics in summer on my aunt and uncle's land, on some hay land with several groves of trees, that was dubbed "The Brome." The origin of the name was because of the bromegrass growing there that was cut for hay. My memory of that spot was earlier, when we had family picnics there when families from elsewhere would come to visit. Church campout weekends were also part of the summer after I was no longer living in the area.

My parents moved out of the area to Saskatoon in 2000. One of the hardest parts of that move for them, especially for our mother, was leaving the church, which they had been a part of for so many years. The congregation held a farewell potluck for them before they left, and my sister, Erika, remembers how our Mom cried then.

A much more recent memory for those still



two of Linda's brothers, Dave & Bernie Wiebe. (Credit: Linda Unger)

attending the church, as well as many others who had formerly attended, was the 70th Anniversary celebration of the dedication of the church building. In the spring of 2015, the small group who were regulars planned a day-long time of celebrating, starting with a morning worship service. A volunteer choir that filled the front sang several numbers, and each of the former pastors in attendance spoke briefly. After the service, a delicious lunch was served, with much visiting, renewing of old acquaintances, and laughter happening throughout.

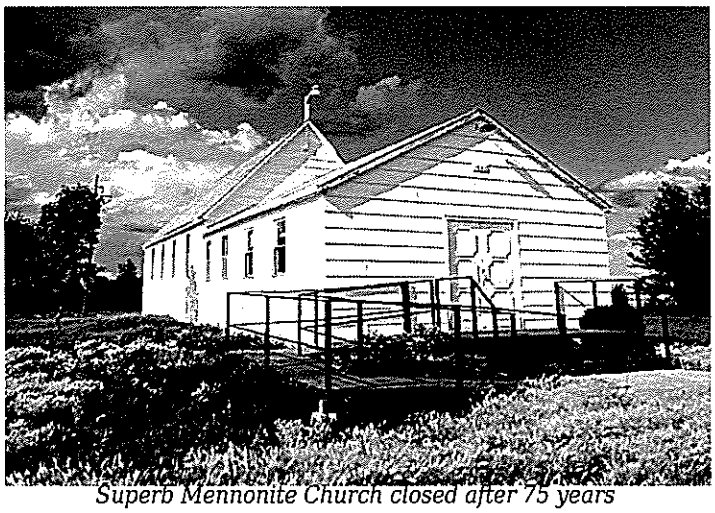
Some who attended the anniversary were not former attendees, but neighbours who lived in the area. It was good to see and visit with them.

L to R: Agatha (Warkentin) Wiebe; Sisters, Trudy Wiebe, Marie Ferguson, Linda Unger, Erika Wiebe, Marg Neufeld. (credit: Erika Wiebe).

As it was a beautiful day, many people gathered in groups outside to visit, while others took the time to view the items on display.

In the afternoon, there was a "Program of Celebrating and Remembering," which included much sharing, as well as Sunday School singing, accompanied by several talented musicians. Songs many of us sang in Sunday School were included, with actions! The birthday song was sung as well, while several people went forward to put money into the bank. Then more visiting took place, after which "Vaspa" was served. Members of my immediate family were well-represented; my Mom was there, as well as 7 of 9 siblings. It was a great day!

Now that the church is gone, we have our memories, and we cherish the relationships formed over the years. However, what's most important to me from my years there is the introduction I received to God's Word, and to my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.



Superb Mennonite Church closed after 75 years (credit: Lois Siemens)

With the disposal of the contents of the church building, I have been very fortunate to become the happy and proud owner of the piano that was used there for services for around 35 years. As I sit and play old hymns, both from the German Gesangbuch and the "Mennonite Hymnary," I remember a very precious part of my childhood, and hear the beautiful sound of singing in that house of worship, with the "diiing" of the tuning fork.

LU

(Note: photos credited to book* were scanned from the Church history book, "*Superb Mennonite Church: 70 Years of Faithfulness*," compiled by a committee).

The Beginnings of Mennonite Central Committee Honouring the 100th Anniversary of MCC

Compiled by Melita (Krahn) Penner

Ever since the first Mennonite pioneers came to South Russia from Prussia in 1789, the people had gradually prospered. They had been given privileges and freedoms; they could worship and teach in their own language, be exempted from military duty, build their own hospitals, run the affairs of their villages and farm without interference.

By the late 1800s, they had built flour mills, implement factories, prospered with purebred cattle and sheep, raised silkworms, grew the best winter wheat and some had built up large private estates.

By 1914, the 'Mennonite Commonwealth consisted of 59 colonies which included hundreds of villages and approximately 100,000 people. With each successive generation they became more Germanic, eventually forgetting their Dutch roots. Because of the threat of war with Germany, those speaking German were looked upon as enemy aliens.

By 1920, Russia had lived through 3 years of war and 3 years of revolution. Many times the White army and the Red (communist) army had crossed back and forth over the villages and fields. And when the armies were elsewhere, the notorious Machkno bandits would come to steal, kill and rape. The larger Mennonite villages of Chortitza and Molotschna suffered severely. The Red army took the well bred, well fed horses of the villagers and left their tired, starving horses behind, also seizing the farmer's stored grain. Soldiers and bandits demanded cooked meals as they passed through the villages, depleting the food supply in the private kitchens.

Throughout Russia a drought led to crop failure in 1921, so the cattle needed to be slaughtered. The bandits took everything that was movable including linens and clothing.

During this time, the typhus epidemic and cholera took many lives, and because many were too weak to dig graves, several persons would be buried in one grave. For example, in Rosenthal (my dad's village), 133 persons died, leaving 23 orphans.

The food shortage came gradually because they had always kept gardens but by 1921 hunger was the #1 killer; they were eating soup made from weeds & seeds, mushrooms, gophers, hedgehogs, crows, tree bark and some people noticed that their dogs & cats went missing. When an animal died, people swarmed around it until they got a part of the carcass.

Letters to relatives in North America told of their plight, and information came through the various denominational newspapers: *Der Herold*, *Vorwaerts* and the *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*. Relatives sent food parcels to individuals, if they had the address.

Because of the plight of the European people after World War I, many committees had been organized throughout North America to aid the destitute. Previously, the 'Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers,' led by Orie Miller from Pennsylvania, USA, had been sent with 23 men to Beirut, Lebanon, to work in the Mediterranean area, where there was a need.

While serving there, Orie Miller heard of the suffering in Russia, so he went to Basil, Switzerland to investigate. There he met four men representing the Mennonites of Russia. A Swiss organization gave these men clothing and money to make a trip to the USA to inform the churches of the needs of their fellow believers in Russia.

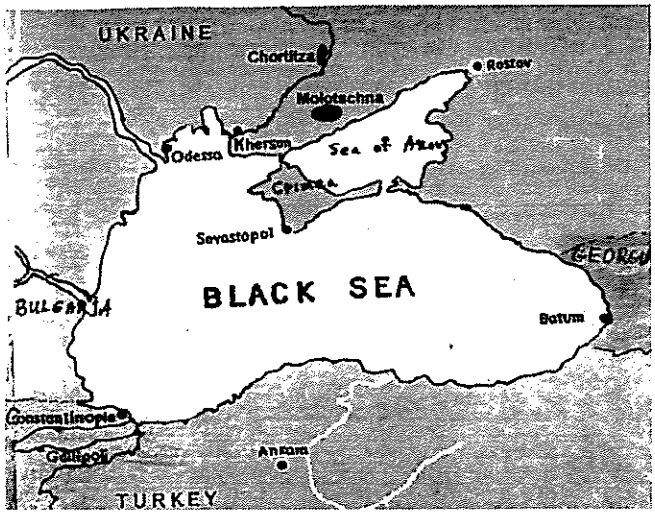
The delegates arrived in New York on June 13, 1920, with the first meeting being held in Scottdale, Pennsylvania, urging church leaders to make Russia a priority in their giving. These men made their way across the continent to the western churches, also visiting in Canada.

Orie Miller was asked to organize a relief venture but, because of their many problems, the committee that Orie Miller had worked with in Beirut was slow in acting.

Miller knew that something needed to be done soon in Russia. There were many mission & relief organizations, especially within the (Old) Mennonite

denomination. He wanted to be sent by a committee, but which one?

On July 27, 1920, thirteen representatives from five denominations met in Elkhart, Indiana, proposing an organization to make up The Mennonite Central Committee, even if not all agreed on certain principles. They were the Mennonite Brethren Church, the Relief Committee of the General Conference, two organizations of the (Old) Mennonite Church and the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren. It was ratified a month later, on Aug. 27 in Chicago. Elected as chairman was P. C. Hiebert, Levi Mumaw as secretary-treasurer and a third member, Maxwell H. Kratz.



In Canada a meeting was called of representatives from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to meet in Regina on Oct. 18, 1920. This Central Relief Committee sent funds to Mennonite Central Committee through the Save the Children Fund in England. Several carloads with sacks of flour and clothing were sent from Rosthern and Herbert, with transportation having been paid by the Canadian government. Later carloads were sent from Gretna and Winkler in Manitoba.

Because Orie Miller had worked overseas before, they asked him to be the leader to accompany the supplies to Russia; he had two other volunteers join him, Arthur Slagel and a college student, Clayton Kratz.

Throughout the summer, clothing and funds came together. The three volunteers left on Sept. 1, 1920, and by Sept. 25, tons of goods were shipped to Constantinople (now Istanbul), Turkey, which is situated across the Black Sea south of Crimea. The three arrived there on Sept 27th, 1920, and travelled to Sevastopol, Crimea, hoping to make plans on how to best organize the distribution of goods. O. Miller and C. Kratz travelled north by train and carriage to Halbstat in the Molotschna Colony. "Words cannot describe the suffering that I see," wrote Orie Miller.

They were told that the suffering was much greater in the Chortitza Colony further north. However they could not travel there because that territory was in Bolshevik hands.

"Uncle Miller is going to bring us food!" the children shouted, but little did anyone know that it would take more than a year to fulfill that promise.

Orie Miller went back to Constantinople to converse with A. Slagel and left C. Kratz in Halbstat to continue with the organizing of distribution plans in the Molotchna villages. That was the last time they saw each other.

C. Kratz was taken and became MCC's first martyr. As of Dec. 1, things weren't going very well: one of the cargo ships with A. Slagel on board was floating for a month on the Black Sea, trying to get to Crimea and the Bolsheviks had seized part of a cargo, containing 100 cases of soap plus other items.

When O. Miller got back to Constantinople, he found almost 200 Mennonite refugees from Crimea looking for help; 62 of them were ex-soldiers from the White Army, who, after being defeated, ran and hid to save their lives.

With the help of the MCC executive lobbying for them in Washington, these 'Famous 62' were eventually accepted into the USA. Other refugees were from the Molotchna and the Crimea, who had heard that they could make their way to America, first by taking a train to Batum, Georgia (on the eastern shore of the Black Sea), and there obtaining papers to leave for the USA.

So, for most of the next two years MCC concentrated on finding shelter for these refugees and helping them with their physical needs, and with emigration.

By this time other volunteers from the US had come to Constantinople to assist, and a total of 2 million dollars' worth had been collected in monies and supplies.

The refugee group had swelled to 300 by May, 1922, and eventually 1200; they lived in warehouses

or vacant buildings. The tropical climate led to outbreaks of malaria besides typhus and smallpox, and they had to deal with parasites. MCC arranged for each person to receive 20 lbs. of flour, 3 lbs. of rice, 6 lbs. of beans, 6 lbs. of grits and 4 cans of condensed milk for the month.

By now O. Miller was back in the USA where he eventually found sponsors for most of the refugees in Constantinople so that they could emigrate.

During this time Herbert Hoover's (who later became president) American Relief Administration helped MCC with the logistics of sending money and goods overseas.

There were other relief organizations that were assisted by the ARA, as well. Alvin J. Miller from Illinois, USA, set up the Menno Centre in Moscow thinking he could get supplies into Russia, via the north route, through Riga. He had others join him who came from the villages to work with the governments of Moscow (the capital of Russia) and Kharkov (the capital of Ukraine). They didn't like the changes in the new system of land distribution in the Mennonite villages. Among them were C. F. Klassen, and Peter Froese, who were seeking release of Mennonites who were held in prison. They expressed concerns about compulsory military service, the closing of churches and teachers being replaced by communists.

They were striving to make life in the colonies as it used to be, but soon realized that this was not to be, and began to contemplate emigration for the Mennonite people. However, they realized that their immediate job was to work with the Red Cross and try to alleviate the suffering that they saw in the villages. In the meantime, Alvin J. Miller was able to get food to the settlements in the Volga region.

After having worked in Moscow for many months, setting up one contract after another, he finally succeeded in late 1921 to get permission from the governments so that MCC could go ahead with relief activities in the Chortitza colony. They could do this, as long as they would include all people in the feeding programs, whether they were Jews, Russians, or German Lutherans, along with the Mennonites. So the ships were able to travel north to bring the food, clothing and medicines to the ports of Crimea, then transport it by rail.

They set up their headquarters in Alexandrovsk (now Zaporozhye), a village situated just across the Dnieper River from Chortitza. During this time about 12 boxcars of medical supplies, clothing and shoes were sent, which was very necessary because the people were clothed only in the rags that were on their backs.

It took two weeks for 25 persons to unpack and organize nine carloads of donated clothing.

Then on March 16th, 1922, the first food kitchen was opened in the village of Chortitza. This took place in the residence of J.M. Dyck (the adopted parents of George Krahn, FMC) who at one time had built a huge house for their family, but now lived in a smaller house on the same yard. He was also the main organizer, and tried to make things run efficiently. Food was prepared in the basement where large brick ovens had been built to do all the baking. Large cauldrons were set up to cook the meals, which were served on the main floor where large rooms could accommodate several hundred people.

It took many volunteers to make this all happen; the volunteers were given a double portion at a meal, so that their energy could be built up to sustain the hours of work. Those who were in greatest need lined up with their bowl, cup and spoon and each day they were marked off on a list. The menu was on a three-day rotation of 778 calories: one day it was rice, then beans and on the third day cocoa, always with some bread.

The numbers swelled to 500 a day and then to 1,200 a day. At first only women and children were listed but eventually the men could partake as well. They came from the surrounding area, including the neighbouring village of Rosenthal.

Melita's mother, Elizabeth Krahn, telling her grandchildren about standing in line for MCC food in Russia when she was 7.

Eventually, there were 140 food kitchens set up amongst

the villages of the Mennonite people, feeding 43,000 a day.

(My mother tells how she, at age seven, stood in line in her village of Einlage, and received a 'cup of cocoa and a very white bun'). Many lives were saved.

On June 26th, 1922, MCC purchased 25 Fordson tractors from a factory in Detroit, Michigan; they were crated, needing some assembly, in wooden boxes. Along with the shipment were spare tractor parts and Oliver gang plows, all being shipped from the New York harbour on July 24th, 1922. They arrived in Odessa, South Russia, in late August, and were transported to the villages by train. Another shipment of 25 tractors and a Fordson car left on Dec. 23rd, 1922.

(My Grandpa Krahn, being the reeve of Rosenthal at the time, helped in organizing the rotation of use, six per implement.) The Moscow government paid for fuel for the first year. Except when fuel was not readily available and when breakdowns occurred, there were few interruptions. They plowed the hard soil where only weeds had grown for a few years.

Also, 200 horses, which were not of the quality they had had previously, were purchased by the American Relief Administration to help with the reconstruction of the Mennonite colonies. But living as they formerly had was not going to happen; soon the tractors and other belongings had to be turned over to the new government. Farmers could not afford to pay for the horses.

My grandfather, Jacob Peter Krahn was a Red Cross volunteer in 1914-16 in Russia.

MCC's operations closed in the Ukraine in 1924, but continued in the Siberia area until 1926. The farmers harvested a fairly good crop in 1923. However, by then the people realized that they would never be able to live as they had before because of the Communist government.

Soon the efforts of those having lived in the Menno Centre in Moscow worked with government, including B. B. Janz, in helping Mennonites emigrate to other countries where they could have freedom of religion and again operate their own businesses.

At this time the Mennonite Central Committee wondered if their work was finished or whether they should continue this organization.

After the Second World War broke out, Mennonites in Western Canada were again drawn to help with relief work; committees were organized in the four western Canadian provinces in early 1940, with a coming together in Winnipeg in May, 1940. They connected quite closely with MCC in the Akron headquarters. The American Relief Administration became uninterested in carrying on.

My grandparents, Helene (Dyck) and Gerhard Neufeld, and my mother Elizabeth, at the age of 1 1/2 while still living in Rosenthal in Russia.

Then MCC saw other needs, locally and abroad. They sponsored a program called 'Pax' where young men helped in countries such as Greece and England after WW II. In the following years they conducted *'The Teachers Abroad'* program where teachers taught in many different countries as outreach. Out of MCC's many works came their daughter organization: *Mennonite Voluntary Services* (working in North America with the needs of low income people), *Menno Travel Service* (because of so many volunteers needing to find their way to their assignments), *Mennonite Disaster Service* (assisting homeowners after fire, floods, tornados and other natural disasters) and Canadian Foodgrains Bank (where farmers could deliver their grain to local elevators when they were unable to sell it and it would be shipped overseas).

Meanwhile, MCC Canada had come into being in 1963 and MCC Saskatchewan was organized in 1964. Fred Peters became the first Executive Director of MCC SK., working out of his own home in Saskatoon. An office became available in 1969, and

it was also a collection depot for clothing and material aid.

It has become a large organization which has assisted in many countries and is well known to many, even in non-Mennonite circles. Hundreds, probably thousands, have volunteered, all "In The Name of Christ."

(My observation; after reading over a dozen books, scanning through a pile of old 'Mennonite Life' magazines and searching on the Internet, I have written only a fraction of the beginning of MCC. Many other people and organizations were part of this story; not all could be mentioned. Also, it seems that the work that MCC carried on in Constantinople was their first humanitarian practice, but we never hear of it. -Melita)

Sources:

- ***The Diary of Anna Baerg*** - Gerald Peters
- ***The Constantinoplers*** - Edited by Irma Epp
- ***Ambassadors To His People (CF Klassen)*** - Herbert & Maureen Klassen
- ***Miracles of Grace & Judgment*** - Gerhard Schroeder
- ***Nettie's Journey*** - Adele Dueck
- ***Orie O. Miller (The Story of a Man & an Era)*** - Paul Erb
- ***Lost Fatherland*** - John B. Toews
- ***My Calling to Fulfill (The Orie Miller Story)*** - John E. Sharp
- ***Building on the Past*** - Rudy P. Friesen
- ***Feeding the Hungry: Russian Famine, 1919-1925*** - P.C. Hiebert & Orie Miller
- ***Mennonite Exodus*** - Frank H. Epp
- ***First Mennonite Villages in Russia -1789-1913*** - N.J. Kroeker
- ***The Russian Mennonite Story: Heritage Cruise Lectures*** - Paul Toews

What was the most exciting find, was a video on the internet (comments in the Russian language), where the crates of Fordson tractors were unloaded and after assembling them, they were driven out.

MKP

A Tribute to Mary (Hein) Loewen 1927-2020

Mary Loewen was a respected volunteer at the Archives at the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. Her death on July 16, 2020, marked the end of years of volunteerism.

Elizabeth Guenther, a member of the Archives Committee, described Mary as a kind, gentle, and punctual person. Among other tasks, Mary worked at organizing obituaries from newspapers like Der Bote. She was a joy to be around, Elizabeth said.

Mary Hein Loewen was born to Peter and Katharina Hein on September 19, 1927. Mary grew up west of Osler in the Altona School District. Her parents were small dairy farmers who provided work opportunities for their 9 children. Mary attended Altona School and was baptized at Osler Mennonite Church.

Mary began her working life at the Osler Post Office and Telephone Exchange at the age of 18.

She went on to obtain a Nursing Assistant Certificate and attended Saskatoon Business College. Over the years, she held various church positions.

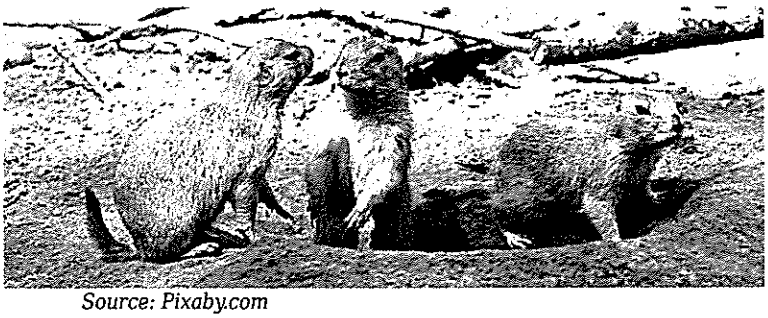
In 1979 Mary married Cornelius Loewen. Together they spent much time together enjoying fishing trips throughout Saskatchewan and beyond.

Mary survived her husband by 13 years. She was buried in the Neuhorst Cemetery.

(compiled by MHSS Archives staff)

The Young Gang at Rosthern (1945-1950)

by Dr. Heinz B. Heese



Source: Pixaby.com

In these unusual days of the COVID 19 virus there is minimal family visiting, no seniors' activities, no church, and so we have time. I have been rereading some of my Saskatchewan Mennonite Historians.

In particular I have re-read Volume #3 2019, which featured Eric Paetkau's account of growing up in Rosthern. I found it very interesting, since he makes reference to my brother John and me (Heinz) as part of their gang. Unfortunately, not all of the gang Paetkau refers to are around any more.

Albert Rempel has already passed away, so we cannot know what his response to Eric's reminiscing would be.

I have many happy memories of being part of this gang. Vic and Abe Suderman lived on a farm about half a mile southwest of Rosthern and the gang got together there many times to play cops and robbers. Time was spent hiding around in the barn, the sheds, granaries, and even in the cemetery in the southwest corner of the yard.

I found Eric's gopher story very interesting, but I have additional and different memories. I do not know when the rural municipalities started to pay money for gophers because they were a problem for farmers trying to grow grain. But I know the rural municipality office in Rosthern did pay us for gopher tails.

The RM office was located next to the printing office which my family operated in Rosthern. We Heese brothers brought gopher tails into the municipal office and received two cents for each tail.

There was one occasion when we checked the ashes of the bonfires behind the municipal office and found we could retrieve some tails to receive extra cash. That helped us buy an ice cream cone for five cents.

But our real gopher story is one in which the whole gang went southwest of Rosthern to the Hamm farm close to the creek. All seven us us went with our pails and snares and some empty apple boxes.

The banks of the creek had many gopher holes/mounds. We could see the gophers running and playing. When we got closer to them they would run down into their holes.

One of us would put a string snare around the hole, wait for the gopher to come back to peek out of the hole and quickly snare it.

If this took too long we would get a pail of water from the creek and pour it down the hole.

The gophers did not drown, but they came out of the hole. Then we would snare them and go on to the next hole.

That day we had a very good day! We put over 100 gophers into the apple boxes we had brought along. We took the boxes full of gophers to our place.

Our plan was that we would set up a gopher farm and then would be able to keep selling their tails. So we put the apple boxes full of gophers into the barn on our yard and closed the doors.

I guess our calculations were not quite sophisticated enough at that age, as next morning there were no gophers in the barn. Instead, they were running all around in town.

Our father heard enough of that story!

Another enjoyable adventure we engaged in was playing tag at the lumber yard located next to the Paetkau home. The lumber was stacked in big piles on which we would jump up and down chasing each other.

Understandably, the manager at the lumber yard was not amused with our activity, so that game was not long lived.

A bit more about the Paetkau place which was located across the back alley behind Main Street in Rosthern. There was a Chinese restaurant on Main Street that had a room attached at the back. It was in this room that some of the business men would get together to play cards, etc. The older boys built a

contraption which would catapult a heavy object onto the roof of the back room of the cafe. This scared the occupants out of the room.

This only happened once.

I enjoyed Eric's description and picture of getting some young birds and raising them. They raised some owls, and we got some crows and magpies to raise at our place. These birds stayed on our yard until fall when it got too cold.

One crow flew around in our neighbourhood and flew into a car with an open window. It sat on the front seat to spend the night.

When our neighbour, Dr. Ed Friesen, was called to the hospital in the night, it was a bit scary with a squawking crow beside him, trying to get out of the car.

Fishing at the South Saskatchewan River was a great sport.

One day K. G. Toews, principal at Rosthern Junior College, took a group of us guys out to the river. His son, David, was part of our gang.

The lines with the hooks and bait were thrown into the river. Ingeniously, the lines were tied to a willow stick equipped with a bell and then stuck into the sand on the shore.

The other members of the group were all involved in doing something else, and I, as the youngest, was told to stay and watch the lines. If a bell started to ring I should call the others.

This was fine until one bell rang. I grabbed the fish line and started to pull it with all my might. It was hard!

I hollered for the others to come. Mr. Toews came and pulled in a big fish. He said it was a sturgeon. We took it home and it was big enough for all of us to have a fish supper.

Fishing in the river wasn't the only time when we looked for water. We found natural swimming holes in a number of locations.

Besides the spot near the creek, there was a brick yard that had been used to dig out clay for making bricks to build the Rosthern school, the Rosthern Town Hall, German English Academy, the Hodson house, and other houses in Rosthern.

After the demand for clay bricks of this type was gone (1915), the big dugout was just left and was good for swimming.

Another spot we gathered to swim in was on the creek southeast of Rosthern, which was called the Funk's Swimming Hole. This place had a nice gradual sandy slope. Since this was a gang of boys, swimming gear and towels were optional.

Looking back at the members of this group of boys, I was surprised when I checked the genealogical information that is available now. I am actually related to more of them than just my brother John.

Eric Paetkau is in the Heese genealogy and is about a third cousin. Albert Rempel's grandfather was married to my grandfather's sister!

David Toews, son of Principal K. G. Toews, is also related to me.

I haven't found the connection to the Sudermans yet.

Rosthern was different in those days. There was the Orpheum Movie theatre, located on the southwest corner of Main Street, with the Queens Hotel on the northwest side, Fleury's drugstore at the northeast corner, where Friesen's Department store was located later.

The Orpheum Theatre was operated by Mrs. Joundry.

One day our Grade One class was going to go to the theatre. I remember running to the printing office to ask my great uncle/grandfather, Mr. D. H. Epp, for some money to see the movie. He found a big one cent copper coin in a drawer and gave it to me. It was enough to admit me to the show.

How things have changed!

HBH

Did you find people you recognized in the *Venice School photo* on the back cover of the previous issue of the Historian?

Someone enlarged that photo, numbered all the children & provided names for quite a few students. I would have had to condense that photo too small to read the names in the Historian, so I've put it on the website so you can even print it out. If you find names for any students still unnamed, you may provide them via the form under the photo. When we have as many names as possible I'll publish it there again, so you can download that copy for yourself. ***https://mhss.sk.ca/to3/Venice-School-Photo-Naming-Puzzle.shtml***

History of Mennonite Low German

by Jack Thiessen

Jack Thiessen in his office

There is little doubt that Mennonite Low German is at the heart of the Prussian-Russian Mennonite experience and culture in a way that High German never was and English can never be. Thus, what is central to an understanding of Mennonite Low German is that it is more than a means of communication: it evokes a way of life.

Mennonite Low German has loanwords from Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, Old Prussian, Swedish, and most recently English. The base of the dialect, however, is in a German dialect-geographical sense, Lower Prussian.

The loanwords in Mennonite Low German have been almost exclusively introduced through technological changes brought about by far-reaching migrations; that is, Mennonites frequently came to new countries where they adopted new foods and technology together with the corresponding terms in the respective languages. Examples are **arbüs** and **kukerus** in Russia, **papaya** and **mango** in Latin America and **hot dogs**, **hamburgers** and **talk shows** and **soap operas**, in North America.

It has never been determined exactly when Mennonites made the transition from Dutch to Low German as the language of communication in their Prussian home. What is known is that the Mennonites of Dutch provenance spoke varying Netherlandic dialects in addition to "High" Dutch when they arrived in West Prussia. Mennonite Low German soon became the Ausgleichssprache (compromise language), the everyday language of oral communication, and soon this language became characteristic of nearly all Mennonites in Prussia.

The transition from Dutch to High German as the church language, however, did not occur until the latter half of the eighteenth century.

The fact that Mennonites have always had a strong sense of tradition in linguistic and social terms is proved by the fact that they retained Dutch as their language of worship for more than two hundred years in West Prussia as well as the fact that Mennonite Low German retains a larger number of vocabulary of Dutch provenance than previously assumed.

Another reason for the long retention of Dutch was that Holland was a world power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, making Dutch the language of international maritime commerce. So it is not surprising that Dutch remained the "high" language of the Mennonites while the Lower Prussian dialect of the Vistula home landscape became the vernacular. The exact year, or decade for that matter, of the transition from Dutch to the Lower Prussian dialect has not yet been established and probably never will be.

The linguistic roots of Mennonite Low German can be traced to the dialects spoken by the peoples of Europe and parts of Asia many centuries before Christ.

These dialects are referred to collectively as Indo-European. The original language of the Indo-Europeans is older than the written historical record; it can only be reconstructed through comparative analysis of the languages, both ancient and modern, that have descended from it.

On the basis of primarily extralinguistic evidence, scholars posit that a common Indo-European proto-language existed about 6,000 years ago, and was probably spoken somewhere between Europe and Central Asia (Asia Minor, for example). Over time, as the Indo-Europeans migrated away from their ancestral homeland, different Indo-European-descended languages and cultures emerged. At some point, perhaps during the third millenium B.C., a group which became known as the Germanic

people inhabited an area likely located in southern Scandinavia. One of the most distinctive aspects of their Indo-European dialect is the series of consonantal changes resulting from what is known as the First or Germanic Sound Shift. An example of this is the shift from Indo-European initial **p** to Proto-Germanic **f**, yielding such sets of cognates as Latin **pater**, modern French **père**, modern Spanish **padre**, etc., versus modern German **Vater** and Mennonite Low German **Voda** (where the "**v**" sound is pronounced as an "**f**").

Around 300 B.C., the Germanic peoples began to disperse throughout Europe, a trend that abated somewhat during the seventh century A.D. with the reign of Charlemagne. Long before that time, though, three distinct branches of the Germanic language family developed: *East*, represented mainly by Gothic; *North*, which included the ancestral dialect(s) of modern Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish; and West, from which modern Afrikaans, Dutch, English, Frisian, German and Yiddish are descended.

The earliest evidence of Germanic languages is yielded by runic inscriptions dating from the second century A.D.; however, the oldest substantial text is a translation of the Bible into Gothic by the bishop Wulfila, who was born around 311 and died in approximately 383.

The oldest attested direct linguistic ancestor of Mennonite Low German is the language of the West Germanic tribe known as the Saxons, who occupied a large part of what is modern northern Germany. Literature from this Old Saxon period (800-1150 A. D.) is scant, but it includes a very significant work, the **Heliand**, an epic poem of some six thousand lines depicting the life of Jesus.

During the twelfth through sixteenth centuries, the period of the economically powerful Hanseatic league across northern Europe, descendents of the Old Saxons spoke what is known as Middle Low German, the "low" being derived from the topography of the area; hence the names Nieder- or **Plattdeutsch** (compare the cognate words "nether" and "flat" in English). The prestige of the Hanseatic League is reflected in a considerable number of Middle Low German loanwords in Scandinavian languages.

The Low German dialects were differentiated from their High German cousins in the south most famously through a series of consonantal changes collectively referred to as the *Second* or *High German Sound Shift* (which began around the sixth century A.D.). Scholars assume this sound shift started in the German-speaking area of Switzerland for the fact that it is most complete there. As speakers spread the consonant changes to the north and east, the sound shift was less complete, eventually stopping at a linguistic borderline (**isogloss**) known as the *Benrath Line* (so named for the village of Benrath in northern Germany). The dialects spoken to the north of this line are the Low German dialects. The term "High German" is applied not only to the dialects below the *Benrath Line*, but also today to Standard German for the fact that this written dialect developed mainly from the dialects of the central and southern German-speaking areas. Standard ("High") German shows nearly all the effects of the *Second Sound Shift.*

Mennonite Low German, on the basis of its sound and grammatical structures, belongs to the Lower Prussian subgroup of (eastern) Low German dialects. The following sound correspondences between Mennonite Low German and Standard German illustrate how the High German dialects became different from their Low German cousins, which generally preserve the original West Germanic consonantism.

West Germanic p > High German pf, ff; e.g.,
p ≈ pf, ff Pead–Pferd (horse); Aupel–Apfel (apple); Päpa–Pfeffer (pepper); schlope–schlafen (to sleep).

West Germanic t > High German z (= ts), ss: e.g.
t ≈ z, ss Tün–Zaun (town, also fence); äte–essen (to eat); Holt–Holz (wood).

West Germanic k > High German ch: e.g.
k ≈ ch moake–machen (to make).
Other regular correspondences between Mennonite Low German and High German include the following:

Consonants

Menn.LG **d** ≈ HG **t**
Menn.LG **tj** ≈ HG **k**, **ch**: Tjleed–Kleid (dress); Tjoatj–

Kirche (church, kirk); Maltj–Milch (milk); etj–ich (I).
Menn.LG **w, f** ≈ HG **b**: Lewe–Leben (life); Korf–Korb (basket; bliew–bleibe (remain).
Menn.LG **j, ch** ≈ HG **g**: fluach–flog (flew); Wajch–Weg.
Menn.LG **ng, nj** ≈ HG **nd, ng**: brinje–bringen (to bring); veschwunge–verschwunden (to disappear); Enj–Ende (end); finje–finden (to find), Tjinja–Kinder (children).

Vowels
Menn.LG long **o** (**u**) ≈ HG long **a**, long **o**: schlope–schlafen (to sleep); root–red. (The **oo** in Mennonite Low German is pronounced **ou**, as in gout).
Menn.LG long **i** and **ü** ≈ HG **ei** and **au**: Wien–Wein (wine); Hüs–Haus (house) aus (house)
Menn.LG **au** ≈ HG **a**: Maun–Mann (man); Haund–Hand (hand); aus–als (as); Aupel–Apfel (apple).
Menn.LG short **e** ≈ HG short **i**: Schrett–Schritt (pace, step); Fesch–Fisch (fish).
Menn.LG LG short **a** ≈ HG short **e**: Fast–Fest (festival); halpe–helfen (to help); Bad–Bett (bed); Tjnajcht–Knecht (male servant, actually knight).
Menn.LG LG short **o** ≈ HG short **u**: Loft–Luft (air); Brost–Brust (breast).

JT

YEAR-END HOUSEKEEPING NOTES

Upcoming Events:

The dates for our next Annual General Meeting are March 5 and 6, 2021. At this time we don't know whether that will be virtual or in person.

A Word from our Treasurer:

Thank you for your past and present donations. They help to keep the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan's work going on.

REMINDER:

To receive a 2020 Tax Receipt, your donation and/or membership must be received in 2020. The cheques must be dated on or before December 31, 2020.
Susan Braun, MHSS Treasurer.

MOVING?

Regarding your subscriptions to the Historian: Please let Susan know, so she can change your address for coming issues of the Historian. Susan looks after the mailings, so please email or send your old and your new address to: *mhss@sasktel.net* or to *susan.3braun@gmail.com*.

A Word from our Editor:

I (Ruth) look after the email list, ***E-Updates***, when we have events to announce. If you have left your old email address behind and got a new one, would you please send both to me. I can delete your old email, but you need to subscribe your new email to keep you on the list. Use the little form at ***https://mhss.sk.ca/E-Updates.shtml*** Check the bottom of the back cover for my email address if you have problems.

Anabaptist Tours (FREE)

Join Anabaptist heritage experts and archivists from Canada and the US on Tuesday nights at 8 PM EST/7 PM CT/5 PM PT for a 20-30 minute Zoom presentation followed by Q & A afterward. Presenters will show unique artifacts, photos, and documents as they share part of the Anabaptist story.

YOU CAN REGISTER ON ZOOM ONCE - for all 5
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_oOyLpwkfQBiaY_NLRoT2qQ
and select all the presentations you want to attend.

All who register will receive a recording after the presentation. SIGN UP even if you can't attend live, (or in case something comes up), because then you will be sent the Replay link.

You may be reading this too late for the November Tours on Tuesday evenings. However, they are planning to do another series in January.

Check them out
at: ***https://www.tourmagination.com/vtour-2/***

Kookoom Mariah and the Mennonite Mrs.

by Maria Campbell (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College)

This is the story of two wonderful old women who were an important part of my early life. One of them was my Kookoom Mariah, the other was her friend "the Mrs.," an old woman who lived across the big meadow from her.

The Mrs. was Mennonite, although I didn't know that at the time and if I did, it meant nothing. She was just one of the grandmothers who worked with Kookoom Mariah, who was a midwife and healer.

But before I tell you their story, I would like to tell you about Kookoom Mariah's homeland, which was the community where I spent my childhood and the place my family still calls home.

Today it is called Park Valley, but prior to 1925 it was known as Nukeewin, which means "the stopping place" in the Cree language.

Kookoom Mariah's people used to camp here on the way to their hunting and trapping territory, which was across Puktahaw Sipi (Net-throwing River), where her mother-in-law, my great grandmother, lived with several other families.

"Hiee, akee katowasik oma aski kiyas." (Oh my, this land used to be so beautiful), Kookoom Mariah would tell us as we drove by wagon through the countryside.

To my young eyes it was still beautiful, but Kookoom remembered it when it was still old growth forest and the trees were so big that three men together couldn't put their arms around one. She would point out the different landmarks and make us say the Cree names: *Kisyinew Isputinawah* (Old Man Hills), where our father and uncles hunted deer; *Omisimaw Pusqua* (Oldest Sister Prairie), the place where we picked the medicine she used for midwifery; and *Notikew Sahkikun* (Old Woman's Lake), the place of ceremony.

Around 1915, the Federal government decided to turn the territory around Notikew Sahkikun into a national park, and the families who lived there (had lived there for as long as they could remember), were told they had to get out.

They moved to Nugeewin, where they were joined by other displaced non-status Indian and Metis families. They built homes, planted gardens and continued to live as trappers and hunters until the 1920s, at which time Nugeewin and the land around it was opened for homesteading.

Among the homesteaders to come were the Mennonite people.

A few Metis families also took homestead but the majority of them didn't; moving instead onto the road allowances and becoming "road allowance" people.

Within a short time the land was cleared, a post office and store were built and place names were changed. Nugeewin became Park Valley, Puktahaw Sipi became Sturgeon River, Kiseyinew Isputinawah - Ladder Hills, Omisimaw Pusqui – Bergan's Meadow, and Notikew Sahikun became Mariah Lake. Kookoom's homeland and history were erased.

We never knew the Mennonites who came to our territory. They were not friendly people and they kept to themselves, and so my early memories of the Mennonite people are not good. As a child I was afraid of them. They always seemed so angry and disapproving.

In those years if I had been asked to think Mennonite and pick a colour, I would have chosen gray. The people just seemed so gray and gloomy.

You can imagine my surprise when years later I met Isaac Glick and Rudy Wiebe, Mennonites with a sense of humour! And then the biggest surprise of all, I found out that maybe I was a Mennonite.

My late father, after listening to me one night go on about the Catholic Church for the umpteenth time, calmly said, "I don't know why you're so mad about them, you're not even a Catholic."

"Not a Catholic, what am I then?"

"You're either a Mennonite or a Lutheran. We were on the trap line when you were born and you got sick. Your mom was scared you'd die and wanted to bring you out to be baptized, but then this horseback preacher came and we asked him if he would do it, and he did. Well you got better and we came home and your mom never told anybody because she was scared the priest would get mad. She prayed for a long time to be forgiven for making you one of them."

My father didn't know what religion the preacher

was for sure, but he did know that he came from the little log church at Lake Four. A Mennonite church.

When I told my friend Leonard this story he said, "Mennonites do not baptize babies."

Well, according to my dad, this man... "poured water on your head and said a big long prayer, so you're one of them."

Now let me tell you about these two old women. This is written as a story, and I would like to dedicate it to our children, yours and mine.

It was a clear sunny day, almost hot. The kind of day you remember when you start to become an old woman and you search for role models to help you make the transition. The kind of lazy day when you can smell wild roses, brown-eyed Susans, the rich black earth, and *amo may*, bee poop in Cree, or honey as it is called today.

A soft breeze touched the willows where I, an eight year old girl, sat with my Kookoom Mariah and her friend, "the Mrs." They were making medicine; sitting on a blanket spread on the ground, grinding roots between two stones. I was their helper, running errands, snaring a partridge for our lunch, hauling wood for the little fire where a tea pail hung from a tripod. I was as full of self-importance as a little girl can be when she is chosen, of all the girl cousins, "*Ka weechihaht notikwewah*" (to be the "helper of the old ladies.")

I was hot and puffed out, taking a breather after making a one-mile run to the store for tea and black licorice candy.

Do you know that even today I think of black licorice as old lady candy, and no, I haven't started to eat it yet... but pretty soon.

Anyway, there I was taking a break, leaning back against the old canvas bags that contained the dried and ground medicines. I listened to Kookoom Mariah sing as she ground the roots and watched as fine red powder fell onto a clean sugar bag. Without thinking, because I certainly knew better, I reached out, touched the powder with my finger tips bringing it to my face, rubbing it round and round on my cheek bones like I had seen my Aunty Mary do with a box of rouge.

"Hey hey awa!" Kookoom Mariah reached out and smacked my hand. "Muskee kee anima!" (That's medicine!)

The Mrs. laughed, her body shaking like an old bear's. Still laughing, she dug into the old blue apron she always wore and pulled out, not a black old-lady licorice, but a red one. Patting my shoulder gently she handed me the candy, then went back to grinding the medicine. Kookoom Mariah pretended not to see.

I can still see those two old women: Kookoom Mariah, as tiny and skinny as a burnt willow, "The Mrs." big and round like a brown bear. Both in long, much-mended dresses and old sweaters. One in moccasins, the other in laced-up felt boots.

Sometimes I see them on a hot day, bent over digging sticks in wet meadows or picking berries along the road. I see them in the garden exchanging wild ginger and dill. In the summer kitchens making headcheese, cooking moose nose. I see them helping my mother deliver my baby brother. I walk with the two of them to the place where the old women bury meeko, the afterbirth.

I hear them talking, one in Cree, the other in Low German, although I didn't know then that's what is was called. Nor did I know that they did not speak each other's language. All I knew as a child was the love and respect they had for each other; their laughter, their sharing.

Many years later when my father and I were walking around Kookoom Mariah's home place, we came to the willows where these two old women often sat. The willows are gone, cut down for another bushel of wheat, the farmer oblivious to the history of this place.

Dad and I laugh as we remember the things we learned about life as we sat with the two of them. "Dah Mrs. was a strong woman." Dad said, remembering the time our horse got stuck in the muskeg. "Me and Alec we just can't pull him out. Den dat ole lady he come along and he talk to dat horse so he stop jumping and being scared, den he pull himself out. Boy, we shore feel stupid us two big mans."

I remembered the time I went blueberry picking with them and we ran into a mamma bear and her babies. I was scared and they were too.

The mamma bear was not going away. She was pacing back and forth sniffing the air. Quickly the

two old women opened their grub sacks and out came our lunch, headcheese and bannock. Then slowly we backed away until we were out of sight, at which time they grabbed my hands and ran as fast as they could, dragging me between them.

"Why did we call her the Mrs.?" I asked Dad.

"I don't know what his name he was," Dad said. "Dat's what his old man he always call him."

Many years after that conversation I decided to go to university to get a Master's degree. I went so stories like this one would have some authority. We all know that the oral tradition does not have much power in the academic or white world unless you have some letters behind your name.

Then, as my Uncle Robert said, "You can slick them up with high language and footnotes and everyone will think they are sacred."

So off to university I went to learn high language and footnoting, and for my first major research paper I asked the question: "How do a people retain their identity when they have lost their homeland?"

I wanted to prove that for my people, who had been displaced and dispossessed for over 150 years, identity has been preserved, maintained and nurtured through music and storytelling. I wanted to tell the world that the music and stories born on the homelands had been, metaphorically-speaking, wrapped in the finest fabric the people had and carried from camp to camp; from one hastily built long shack to another, where each night the bundle was lovingly opened and the music and stories shared with the people, most especially the children.

In my family the homeland stories are not about a place called Park Valley, rather they are about *Nugeewin*. Not about the Ladder Hills, but about *Kisaynew Sputinawah*. Not about Bergan's Meadow, but about *Omisimow Pasqua*. Not about Alamire's wheat field, but about *Notekew Nipissah*, Willow Place of Two Old Women. And among those stories is the story of Kookoom Mariah's friend the Mrs., an old Mennonite woman who understood what is was like to be erased and made invisible.

[reprinted with permission from Maria Campbell, and the Journal of Mennonite Studies, Vol. 19, 2001.]

MC

A Woman After My Own Heart!

(continued from page 27)

She was also an organized household manager, who taught her daughters to do all the duties of the kitchen, the wardrobe work, and in most cases also the barn. Baking seemed to be a daily thing, and at certain points, they had to take out the overcoats and give them a brisk brushing before Sunday morning.

But that Katharina knew how to relax with reading was what impressed me most.

For the benefit of readers who might wonder if she tied into their own family trees, I can explain that my Gr'ma Kroeker informed me that this Katharina, who was a stepmother to Gr'ma's mother, Anna Neudorf Friesen – had grown up in Chortitiza, South Russia, and was a seamstress who made fur coats for the wealthy when she met and married the widower, Jakob Neudorf, there.

He had nine children by his first wife, Anna Peters, though three had died in infancy.

Katharina and Jakob had another nine children, two of which died in infancy. They had immigrated to Canada, arriving at Rosthern in 1891 with the first six and Katherina's first three.

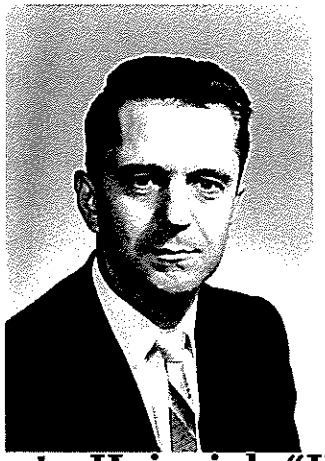
Her husband, Jakob, died on November 1, 1908, and on November 3, 1910, she married another widower, Isaac F. Dyck.

Isaac's family was all grown up. However, when his sister, Helena, (married to Peter Peters), passed away, they helped out her family by taking in the two youngest girls, Lena and Tena, raising them in their own home.

It comes to me now, that I know enough about Katharina to write a book about her. I'm not sure when I'll work that into my rather full agendas, but to honour her like that would show that we have many other very talented and capable women in our family histories. Perhaps each of us could tell of noble mothers and grandmothers who did amazing things - especially at Christmas - when they often had to go above and beyond the normal daily miracles they performed as a matter of course.

RMF

Footnote: Falaffniss* (engagement party) -in the original Katharina wrote: "heute ist verlobung fest". In good German that is '*verlobun fest*'. In Plautdietsch it is *Felaffniss*.'



Tribute to Heinrich "Heinz" Bergen 1927 - 2020

Heinz Bergen was a committed member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan (MHSS) where he attended events and contributed to the discussion of major subjects.

Heinz was editor of the Mennonite Historian in its formative period for several years. He was also a board member of the MHSS.

In his working years he was a high school teacher. His gentle personality and soft speech were his hallmarks.

He died in Regina on September 22, 2020 at the age of 93. He was buried at the Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite Church Cemetery at Rabbit Lake on October 2, 2020.

Heinz approached heritage projects with passion and tenacity, according to Conrad Stoesz, archivist at the Heritage Center in Winnipeg.

"He gave generously of his time and resources," says Leonard Doell. Heinz was interested in genealogy and spent time connecting his Bergen ancestry with that of Leonard's relations.

Heinz grew up in Paraguay and developed a keen interest in MCC's Low German Mennonite Project.

Alf Redekopp notes that Heinz drove from Regina to Winnipeg regularly to conduct research on any one of his projects. He often related to Lawrence Klippenstein on various subjects.

Otto and Florence Driedger report that he was a much-appreciated person at Grace Mennonite Church.

In a major interview that Dick Braun and Harris Ford did with Heinz on his summer property near Pike Lake, they reported how he expressed a profound reliance on God's leading in his life.

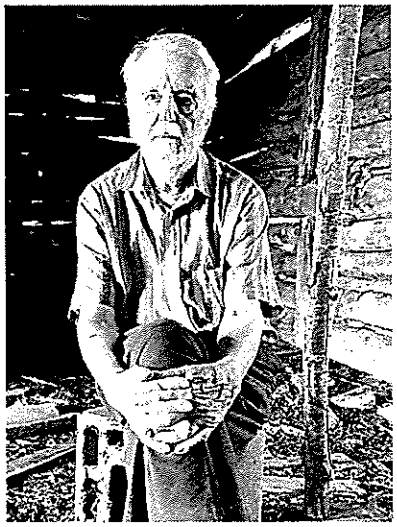
The Mennonite Heritage Archives has written the following about Heinz, in MAID (Mennonite Archival Information Database):

Heinrich "Heinz" Bergen was born on 6 April 1927 in Kronsgarten, Chortitza, South Russia to Jakob Bergen (1895-1974) and Maria Wiens (1904-1952). In 1931 the family moved to Einlage. His father was arrested in 1935 and sentenced for 20 years, eventually coming to Karaganda in 1953 and to Canada in 1963. Heinrich and his mother moved to Germany with the retreating German forces in 1942 and eventually to Paraguay where his mother died in 1952. Heinrich moved to Canada later and was living in Regina when his father joined him in 1963.

In his retirement years, Heinz Bergen pursued research into the history of Kronsgarten, Kronsweide, and Einlage. His efforts resulted in the publications of at least four books. They are: ***Chortitza Colony Atlas, Altklonie, Mennonite Old Colony*** *(2004);* ***Verbannung: Unschuldig nach 'Sibirien' ins Verderben, 1935-1955*** *(2006);* ***Einlage Kitschkas 1789-1943: ein Denkmal***

Condolences to his wife, Marie, and his family.

[*Compiled by: Jake Buhler, with assistance from Alf Redekopp, Dick Braun, Harris Ford, Leonard Doell, Conrad Stoesz, and, Otto and Florence Driedger.*]



Heinz Bergen at his Pike Lake property when interviewed by Harris Ford & Dick Braun, 2019.

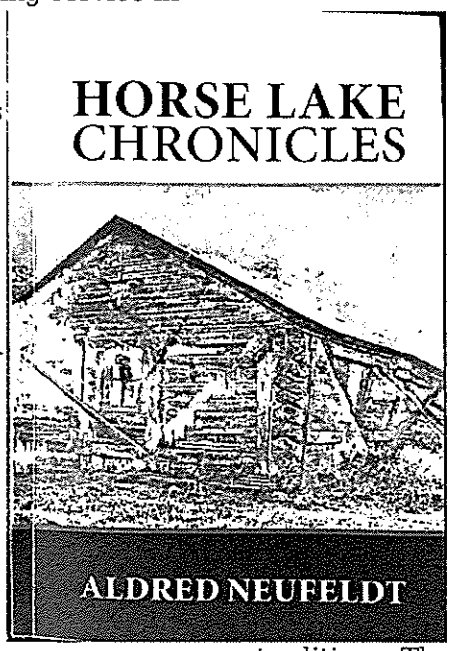
Horse Lake Chronicles

By Aldred Neufeldt

Published by Your Nickel's Worth Publishing, August 2020. 182 pages.

Reviewed by Ken Bechtel

In the 1920s, Mennonites began homesteading in the Horse Lake area near Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. For their first years, visiting pastors from the Rosenorter Gemeinde provided occasional services in their homes. In 1938, they formally organized, and built their first building in 1941. With the retirement of their pastoral couple, Walter and Esther Janzen, they held their closing service in June 2016.



In 1941, Henry and Agatha Neufeldt with baby Aldred in arms moved to Horse Lake and farmed there until severe crop failure forced their departure in 1951.

Aldred Neufeldt's *Horse Lake Chronicles* is an account of growing up in the Horse Lake community and Lac Cheval school. As the three or four-year-old boy Aldred figured out, "*Lac Cheval* and *Horse Lake* were the same word in different languages." It would take longer to learn the legendary history of the label for an area which had no lake formally dubbed by that name.

The Preface states clearly the author's purpose and hopes for this account. "Although this book is intended mainly for my children and grandchildren, I hope it will not be shunned by others on that account, for part of my intent is to pleasantly remind readers of their own origins and how they came to discover meaning in the various facets of life as they grew into adulthood; to open the door for conversation on life's richness and how it's experienced, whatever one's origins."

I would suggest that, for those with an interest in history and values, this book is much more than a reminder "of (our) own origins" and "how (we) came to discover meaning." The book is an intriguing blend of childhood experience and perspective informed by later research and conversations with older relatives and friends. There are vivid descriptions of the challenges of breaking land, worship and funeral services, church dynamics, the one-room eight-grade schoolhouse, and life in the bush. Most are told from the standpoint of a young boy, alongside the things he learned later about those same issues and events by talking with Aunt Marie or others.

When Aldred was asked to write the 150 year history of his home congregation, he agreed on the condition that he would "write the history, not launder it."

This writer is refreshingly honest, humorous and compassionate as he writes rather than launders the community stories. We meet many characters from the community and the Neufeldt and Olfert Freinschafts, fondly described including their wonders and warts. Of special interest for the family, Aldred includes family lore back to their early days in Manitoba and Minnesota, complete even with some family skeletons. He also reports that "By silent consensus, no one talked about it, the skeleton was put into a closet and locked, and Jake dropped from view."

Henry and Agatha came from families steeped in either the General Conference or Old Colony Mennonite traditions. The book describes some of their different expectations regarding, for example, dress. When it comes to the Horse Lake Mennonite Church, Aldred's family continued to visit occasionally with the family of a former pastor who had been ousted presumably for "ignoring the sinful behaviour of his children who'd been seen dancing in Laird or Waldheim." He shares descriptions of the regular German services with their unaccompanied four part harmony, and the monthly Jugendverein, the English programs led by younger people, singing sometimes with guitars or accordions. The funeral for his soldier uncle who had enlisted but died in an auto accident near Halifax raised questions for both the congregation and family.

His family was among those pondering the effects of newer theologies expressed in certain

radio broadcasts and a Daily Vacation Bible School altar call.

The author expresses his gratitude that "the purposefulness and hard work of my mother's Olfert family rubbed off on me, as did the Gelassenheit and problem-solving spirit of my father's Neufeldt family – both sets of influences merging with broader cultural awakenings and learnings leading to fulfilling work and life's adventures."

For many of us, the writer succeeds in reminding "readers of their own origins" especially with his accounts of being "a child of the forest" and a student in a one room multi-grade schoolhouse. He is puzzled by city cousins who saw the forest as "dark, mysterious and potentially dangerous," as he loved running the cow and deer paths, checking the hawk fledglings learning to fly, and picking wild strawberries in his favourite patch. One chapter is framed by lyrical descriptions of coming within a stone's throw of a doe and her tiny fawn.

The Lac Cheval school is one venue where the Mennonite and other communities met. Whether you were a Plautdietsch-preferring Neufeldt, French-speaking Vermette, Swabish dialect Doering or English Reid, the one room schoolhouse "bound all parts of our community together." Christmas programs, field days, and box socials, (including the year poor Charlie lost the bid for sweet Irene's lunch) were "the glue connecting neighbours from different backgrounds."

His experiences at Lac Cheval school evoked parallel memories of my Ontario one room schoolhouse experiences. He recounts that first day of school, some older student shenanigans, and learning by listening to the lessons for older classes.

Lac Cheval, like many such one room schoolhouses (some 5,000 rural schools in Saskatchewan at the time), had challenges in attracting and keeping teachers. The near annual turnover included the hapless "tall, attractive, intelligent and gentle – perhaps too gentle" fine young woman just a few years older than the oldest students. The "band of otherwise good kids ... took it upon themselves to test the limits of rules."

She was followed by Mrs L. C. P. Steinberg, and despite her small size and limp, "it took no more than thirty seconds after meeting her for it to become clear that she was no lamb to be trifled with... The lion-tamer had arrived, and in short order had us all purring at her side."

I highly commend this book. For those wanting some history of the Horse Lake Mennonite community and church, it offers both childhood glimpses and some informed adult perspective. For those interested in pioneer life, their farm was an abandoned quarter with only ten acres cleared as required of the original owner under the Homestead Act. Footnotes and commentary explain that Act, and many another legal or cultural feature. Those interested in the rhythms of life in what some deemed "the boonies" will find rich descriptions.

The many colourful family members described in the book can best be kept straight by accessing p.124's List of Family Members, preferably soon after opening the book.

As Emeritus Professor for Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies at the University of Calgary, Aldred Neufeldt admits that "it's the psychologist in me that dictated it."

The author is sending some copies to MHSS so you may obtain a copy directly from our Archives, for $20, or by ordering it online from our website, and then it will be mailed to you.

The book can also be purchased online from the publisher, ***Your Nickel's Worth Publishing*** in Regina, from ***Indigo Books***, or from the author Aldred Neufeldt (*neufeldte@yahoo.com* or 2703 St Clair Ave E., Suite 359, East York, ON M4B 1M5).

The author has informed us that his book is already available at the McNally Robinson bookstore in Saskatoon.

KB

An image from the book: Boyce and Aldred ready for church on Sunday morning.

The Story of Anna (Janzen) Friesen

Transcribed by John Reddekopp from the Harris Ford Interview with Anna, 2019

Introduction:

An important part of our Collaboratorium project was the collection of stories of older Mennonites in our province. The stories came from interviews conducted and recorded by Harris Ford. On August 20, 2019, he interviewed Anna Friesen in Warman. She was 95 years old at the time.

Harris writes; "Anna explained a life that on the surface may seem mundane, but one to which she brought immense life. Her humour, self-awareness, and wit made for one of the more enjoyable conversations I've embarked on."

Dick Braun and John Reddekopp from MHSS were also present at this interview, as well as Anna's granddaughter, Mattea Doell. John has rewritten information provided by the transcription of the interview for this story. It should be noted that John is the son-in-law of Anna.

Anna's Story

"I was born in the village of Hochfeld in 1924. My parents were Johan and Maria (Hildebrandt) Janzen. This village was about seven miles northwest of Hague. There was a German school in the village but it was closed by the time I was to start school.

There was an English school called Passchendaele about a mile and a half from our village. The Old Colony leader told parents not to send their kids to the English school. My parents sold land and cattle to help pay the fines for keeping us out of school. Because of this, I only had a few years of school.

I remember the first day of school. I was nine years old and went with my brother and sister. I was so scared that I was just shaking. I didn't know any English and we were not allowed to practice it at home because my mom and dad were so against it.

In later years my mom did ask us to help her so that she could understand it.

In the village we had Peters on one side of us and Letkemans on the other. Both of these families were called *Russländer*. They moved in after our other neighbours moved to Mexico.

When I was eleven years old we moved to a farm. This was between Blumental and Neuanlage. We were excited; it meant we had land and there were bushes on the land that we could explore. Also, we were only a mile from the river and we went there to play sometimes.

My brother Henry was crippled but he could go to the river on crutches and fish there. He had come down with infantile paralysis just after he learned to walk. He was very strong in his arms and could lift himself up by his arms.

I helped with baking at an early age. In the summer we used a clay oven which was outside. When we heated it at first the walls were smoky black. Then they turned white, and it was time to push the buns in. In one hour they were done.

We didn't have yeast but we had hops, which my mom called *Trauben*, growing along our fence in the garden. In the evening she would mix the flour, water, and the hops in a pail. In the morning the pail would be full. Then we had to punch it down two times before we made the buns.

Sometimes we made buns two or three times a week because we got a lot of company on Sundays. We counted up to thirty people that we had over at one time. My parents were poor. We didn't have cake, just bread and butter, and sometimes rhubarb jam.

When I was about seven years of age, my father was elected as a minister in the Old Colony Church. He had to go and preach in the different churches. Some of these were quite far away. He travelled with horses and sometimes had to stay overnight.

For us, being the children of a minister was often very hard. We were supposed to dress old fashioned and our relatives wore stylish dresses. In those days they looked down on us. We were supposed to be an example. If we went somewhere and the parents weren't home, sometimes the young people would dance. We didn't dance but maybe we watched them.

Monday morning dad would go to Hague and people would stop him and tell him that the young

people had been at a dance the night before and his girls had been there, too. We were watched very closely.

One time my sister was laughing and joking with some other girls and another girl came up and told her that she shouldn't be joking like that because she was a preacher's girl.

We had some friends that lived right by the river. My brother and sister would go there to visit those kids. We were all teenagers. They had friends who lived across the river and we started to go across the river with them to meet up with other young people. In winter there was no problem crossing the river but it was difficult in summer. My brother-in-law built us a boat and we used that to get across.

That is how I met my husband Jake Friesen. He lived across the river at Edinburgh. He played the guitar, and could sing and yodel. He learned from hearing Wilf Carter on the radio. We had not heard such music and singing. We fell in love! We got married in 1944.

My boyfriend was Bergthal but if he wanted to marry me, he had to join the Old Colony Church. We were married during the church service. It was a double wedding. There was my sister and I; our husbands were cousins.

After we got married we worked for a Fisher family who farmed near Laird. I had worked there the year before. I did cooking, housekeeping and helped with milking. My husband did farm work. He had always worked around Aberdeen where the farm houses were a lot smaller. Here we came to this big yard with a beautiful three story house. That was different for him.

We worked there for two or three years; then we worked for some Friesens at Waldheim. When we were first married we were always scared that Jake would get called to war but he never was. He had poor eyesight and they didn't want him. Oh, and he also had flat feet.

In the wintertime the Fishers didn't need us, and we worked for a Mr. Lawrence at Colonsay just for the winter months.

Jake got a job with the railway after we finished working at the Friesens at Waldheim. We lived in Dalmeny then. Our oldest children started school there.

We moved to Warman, I think in 1952. By this time my husband was working in construction. When we moved my sister was so funny, and said in German, "When you can't pay your debts you move to Warman." There were a lot of poor people living there.

We had six children, two boys and four girls. We taught them to speak English first. My parents didn't like that, but our first born was a sickly child. We thought she might have to go to the hospital and how hard it would be for her if she couldn't understand. Later on they did learn Low German.

Harvey passed away suddenly a few years ago and Deanna passed away this summer. It is hard when children pass away before you do.

The first time I went to Saskatoon was when I worked at Fishers. They took me along and we went to Eaton's. I bought a stylish dress there in the basement where they had things on sale. It was a pink one and I think it cost around nineteen dollars. My wages were thirty-five dollars a month. I got to wear the kind of dress that I couldn't wear when I was growing up. At that time most of our dresses were made from flour bags.

How would I like to be remembered? "I was a decent person and I loved the Lord!"

Here is a picture of Anna with her husband Jacob. He passed away in 2006. She is a resident at the Mennonite Haven in Warman.

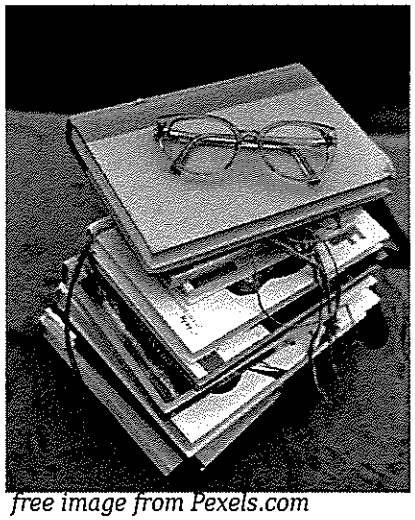
JR

A Woman After My Own Heart!

by Ruth Marlene Friesen

Karin and I were like the Bobbsy twins when doing family genealogy research together.

A year before, I had given her a lead to a common Neudorf relative who had visited our home and told me that he had an apple box full of scribblers that his grandmother had written. They were all in German, but he could tell they began in the 1800s in Russia.



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When Karin came to visit, I told her about this lead in Wilkie, SK. On her way home, she stopped to visit this Neudorf cousin and sweet-talked him into letting her take that whole apple box full of scribblers to Edmonton. She worked in an office and had someone photocopy all those scribblers, enlarging the handwritten pages so they'd be easier to decipher.

She had tried for a year to find anyone willing to translate all those journals. She tried to hire retired German-speaking ministers and professors at the university, but no one would take it on.

So when Karin offered to pay my bus fare if I came to visit her, she placed two large volumes bound by 2 inch cerlox combs – the photocopies of all those scribblers - into my lap and asked, "How about if you translate all this, Ruth?"

My jaw fell away in shock. I so much wanted to know the clues to our Neudorf history that would be in there. But this would take me the rest of my life!! Finally I told Karin that I would TRY, but I wasn't sure I would finish it in my lifetime.

Grasping at straws, I thought, "Mom can read German. I'll get her to help."

When I got home and proudly laid these giant photocopy books in Mom's lap, telling her what they were – all Mom said, was, *"Mejal, waut hast du aunjenomen*?" (Girl, what have you taken on?)

I went down to my room, had a good cry, prayed, begging for help, and went to work.

I had promised Karin that each month I would send her whatever I got translated. The first month it was just two pages.

Then, my old Underwood typerwriter died. I soon got tired of borrowing others' small portable typewriters. (I could not write in my usual prolific style because their disposible ribbon cartridges were finished in just a few pages).

This translation job looked bleak.

In 1991 I got my first computer; just a small DOS computer with a black monitor and amber text. But it was my glorified typewriter. I even had an old model dot matrix printer given to me. As I plodded away at the translation work... I began to send Karin more and more pages each month, until it was 36 at a time!

Guess what! It took just two years, and my own personal print-out of the whole job was 470 pages. Plus an index. The computer speeded me along and the overwhelming translation job was done!

Although Katharina (Reimer) Neudorf Dyck was not my blood relative, as I was tranlating her daily journal (starting January 1, 1917, and going to December 31, 1935), I began to like her more and more.

In fact, near the beginning, when there had been no end of busyness in the Dyck home as they had prepared the *Falaffniss** (engagement party) for her daughter Neta who was to marry Bernhard Neufeld on January 3. They had done the deep housecleaning in preparation for Christmas, and had the house full of overnight guests, and many table-settings of people at their table. I saw that, when a few days after Christmas the guests left, and Aganetha and Bernhard left for their new home, Katharina sat down with the books and the newspapers that had come in the mail, and settled down for some quiet reading.

"Katharina, you are a woman after my own heart!" I exclaimed. For, through the years, my favourite Christmases have been when, caught up with kitchen duties, I could finally slip away with my stash of fresh reading materials!

Katharina had subscribed to the Rundshau and the Nordwestern, and she faithfully wrote letters to these papers and relatives and friends far and wide.

(....*continue to conclusion on page 21*)

The Superb Mennonite Church congregation and guests at their 70th Anniversary

Websites

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Do you recall the Venice School photo of the previous issue? Perhaps you can help identify students in that photo on our website:
https://mhss.sk.ca/to3/Venice-School-Photo-Naming-Puzzle.shtml

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