*Official periodical of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, Inc.*
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# Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian

**Features & Articles**



# Pioneer Lifestyles in Guernsey circa 1919

## (with Photos You May Help to Identify)

by Several Contributors, including one - who prefers to remain anonymous.

Guernsey, Saskatchewan, is an organized hamlet under the jurisdiction of the rural municipality of Usborne.

It previously held village status but due to declining population it dissolved in 2005. It is approximately 115 kilometres east of Saskatoon and the latest population figures show that there are 88 people and 45 private dwellings in the hamlet.

According to GAMEO, here is the Mennonite history there:

The Mennonite community at Guernsey, Saskatchewan had its origin in the winter of 1903-1904 when a committee from Berlin (now Kitchener), Ontario inspected the Saskatchewan Mennonite Reserve at the encouragement of Peter and John Jansen of Nebraska, who were land agents for the Saskatchewan Valley and Manitoba Land Company. A delegation of five men travelled west in May 1904, but they were not impressed with the many sloughs full of spring run-off. In June of that year, a second group made the trip and they reserved a sizable *(cont'd page 4)*

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Editor: Ruth Marlene Friesen
Advisory Committee: Jake Buhler
Proofreaders: Verner Friesen, Susan Braun, Linda Unger. and Laura Hildebrand
Distribution: Susan Braun
Mailing List: Hilda Voth
Printer: ProPrint, Saskatoon, SK.
Readers are invited to submit news items, stories, articles, photographs, church histories, etc., to MHSS at the email or street address below.

**MHSS Office and Archives:**
110 La Ronge Road, Room 900
Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8
Email: mhss@sasktel.net
Archive Hours:
Monday, 1:30 - 4 p.m.
Wednesday, 1:30 - 4 p.m. 7 - 9 p.m.



# The Editor's Perspective

***Ruth Marlene Friesen***

Have you discovered the value of journaling?

On New Year's Day of 1985 I resolved to visit my beloved Gr'ma Elisabeth (Friesen) Kroeker more often and get her stories down for the sake of my cousins who didn't speak Plaut dietsche and might never know her stories and values. I explained to her that I wanted to get her godly life or inheritance down on paper, so we could all enjoy it for years to come.

Gr'ma was pleased with that for she wrote down every night what had happened during the day.

However, dementia crept into her life by February and on Easter Sunday she was in hospital for the first time in her 89 years.

By the end of the month, Gr'ma came from the hospital to our house in Hague, and the book project went to a back burner for nine months. I became her main caregiver as Mom and Dad had their own health issues.

One method of entertaining Gr'ma was to ask her to help me sort out how she wrote her Gothic script letters. She drew them large on a pad for me.

When there was, at last, an opening at Rosthern Nursing Home, I made time for the book project again. Instead of mourning Gr'ma's loss of memory I went to translating her journals! I told all the major events of her adult life in a narrative that would be easy for her grandchildren to understand.

When I got to the last stages with hospital stays and months in my care, I was able to switch to my own journals to continue the saga, and add my own observations of what a godly woman she was - even at that stage, which is now 33 years ago.

This winter I've transcribed that book so I can publish it in a digital format; I was amazed that I'd already forgotten some of those vivid scenes. I was moved to tears by some of them. A great gratitude washed over me that I had actually written those things down and even put them into that book. They did prove that Gr'ma left us a godly inheritance, and I may be the one blessed with the largest portion!

*RMF*

# PRESIDENT'S CORNER
## *John Reddekopp*

Greetings to all our MHSS members! I trust that as we advance through the summer months and many of the COVID restrictions are lifted we will all be able to renew activities and connections that have been on hold for the past year or so.

Some of you have inquired as to what the board's focus has been since the AGM in March. Our focus has been directed into two different projects. Both the New Horizons Grant and the Historical Interview Tapes from the Provincial Archives are described in this edition.

As our editor, Ruth Friesen, described in our last Annual Meeting Report Book, we tend to get our Historian articles and ideas for articles from various directions and usually in an abundance.

Unique this time, is what led us to featuring the community of Guernsey for this edition.

It simply took one person finding some old family photographs that connected with this community. I found them on Social Media, and inquired whether our Society could make use of these.

On our website we have much more information about the Sharon Mennonite Church which was part of the Northwest Mennonite Conference and located in Guernsey. A list of the files we have on the Sharon Mennonite Church at Guernesy is at: *mhss.sk.ca/A/fonds/org/Sharon-Church.shtml*

We are also glad to announce all restrictions have been lifted at the archives; you are welcome to come and go during our regular hours.

Our MHSS is for all of Saskatchewan but our Board has only Saskatoon area individuals most of the time. This shifts now with Ike Epp of Glenbush coming on the Board.

If you have an interest in the work of MHSS and are from another area of the province, do let us know; we'll do our best to make room for you on the Board.

Have a wonderful summer! *JR*

***The Editor's Apology to Hella Banman:***

Before the first Historian issue of this year a third party sent me some scans of letters that spanned over a wide number of years. I did not recognize that they were a sequence that told the history of three generations in a family. So I decided to use just one letter as a filler - for a gap at the bottom of a page.

After that first issue was published word came that this was not how it was intended to be used.

I called Hella and she explained it to me, and I promised to publish them all as one complete story in this issue. You will find it starting on page 10.

Hella is right. There are many lessons to be learned from the things our ancestors have endured, and how they persevered and grew stronger from what they suffered. *RMF*

## Introducing Janet (Sawatsky) Beaudin

A short bio has come in for a new contributor. To place it with her article involves a lot of rearranging of the layout, so we introduce her here.

***Janet Beaudin*** (Sawatzky) is the granddaughter of Jacob and Margaret (Toews) Sawatzky and the writer of the Jacob Sawatzky article.

Janet has had a passion for learning about family history stories and tracing genealogical lines for over two decades. She is a great granddaughter of Rev. David and Margarete Toews, and is also a descendant of Jacob and Sarah Hoeppner. Janet and her husband, Chris, are busy parents of two teenagers. She works as a Speech Language Pathologist in Edmonton, AB. The family loves to be outside and spends much of their spare time canoeing, hiking, and photographing nature.

Her article: ***Jacob Sawatzky: A Story of Love and Resilience*** -is on page 22. [Jacob Sawatzky's BK# in GRANDMA is #397889]

## Historical Interview Tapes... *cont'd from page 9*

I think as we listen to all of the tapes, we will say "Thank you" for the foresight people had back then to do such a project. We also want to thank all who have donated money to MHSS for this project and for the on-going work of preserving Mennonite history. We would like to share this treasure by sending you, our readers, a USB flash drive of an interview for $25.00. You can order this by emailing Susan Braun, at susan.3braun@gmail.com, or call her at 306-239-4201.

*DB*

(cont'd from page 1)
block of newly surveyed unbroken territory in what was known as the Quill Lake Mennonite Reserve. Homesteads of 160 acres could be acquired for an entry fee of $10 and a commitment to reside on the homestead for six months in each of the following three years.

In 1905 the first settlers left from Ontario, followed in 1906 by another group. On a Sunday morning in May 1905, about 30 Mennonites, newly arrived from Berlin, Ontario, gathered in a tent for their first worship service. The tent was erected on the homestead of their deacon, Aaron Biehn. They worshipped God, thanking him for safe travel and asking for his blessing on their endeavour to establish a new community in a new land. The first sermon in the community was preached by Eli S. Hallman. That day, Hallman was affirmed as their minister. A short time later, a Sunday School was organized under the leadership of Israel Cressman.

The congregation met each Sunday at the Biehn home. In July 1907, the Waterloo school was built on the southwest corner of the deacon's property. The next year, the Sharon congregation hosted the Alberta Mennonite summer conference in the Waterloo schoolhouse and became a member of the Alberta-Saskatchewan Mennonite Conference. The dream of a church building was realized in 1911, when a 30 ft. by 40 ft. building was erected at the crossroads, on land donated by the minister. Using volunteer labour, the cost of the building was $2,300.

Over the years the people faced many hardships, including raging prairie fires, early frosts, hailstorms, tornadoes, drought and blowing sand, swamp fever and other ailments. In spite of these difficulties, they established beautiful farms and the Sharon church community thrived.

Eventually, attendance at the church diminished. A potash company bought up several farms, forcing some families to relocate. When young people found employment elsewhere and when grain elevators, stores and schools closed, the congregation also suffered.

In 2003, the difficult decision was made to close the doors of Sharon Mennonite. The final service was held 27 June 2004. Some of the remaining members transferred to the North Star Mennonite Church at nearby Drake, Saskatchewan.

Ministers prior to 1960 included Eli S. Hallman, Moses H. Schmitt, Isaiah S. Rosenberger, Burton Weber, Daniel Schlabach, Stanley Shantz, Aaron S. Biehn and Edwin Bowman. The last minister was John Dueck.

In 1925 there were 100 members; in 1955, 136; in 1965, 156; in 1975, 112; in 1985, 78; in 1995, 112; in 2000, 112. The congregation was affiliated with the Northwest Mennonite Conference (1906-2004) and the Mennonite Church (1906-1999). The language of worship was English.

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Author(s): Doreen Snider
Samuel J. Steiner
Date Published: September 2005

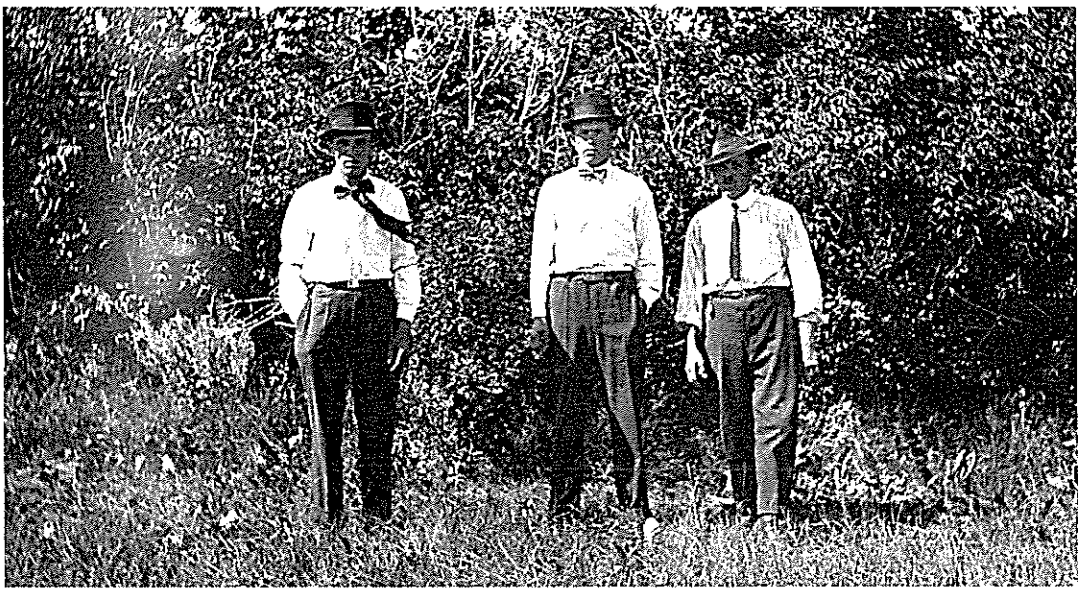
***Cite This Article***

Snider, Doreen and Samuel J. Steiner. "Sharon Mennonite Church (Guernsey, Saskatchewan, Canada)." Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. September 2005. Web. 15 May 2021. *https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Sharon_Mennonite_Church_(Guernsey,_Saskatchewan,_Canada)&oldid=165926.*

**Now, for the photo story! If you can identify details in any, let us know, as the owner of the photos would appreciate that information too.**

#2- photo of an informal hockey team - ready for fun.

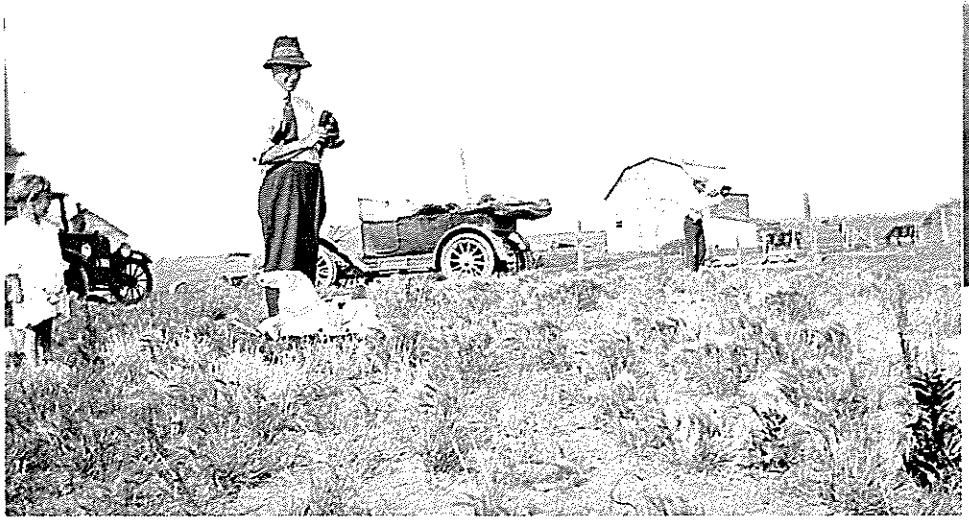
#10 - Do you recognize these Guernsey men in Sunday shirts and black hats?



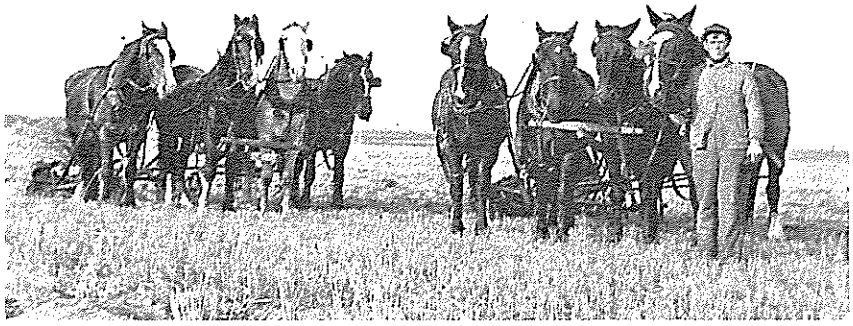
#34 - This woman is sweeping what may be her house. Do you know her? (Note some jugs in the lower left side).

#87 - farmer and girl on a plow. - Waving a flag?

#27 - Gurensey ball player.
Do you know him?

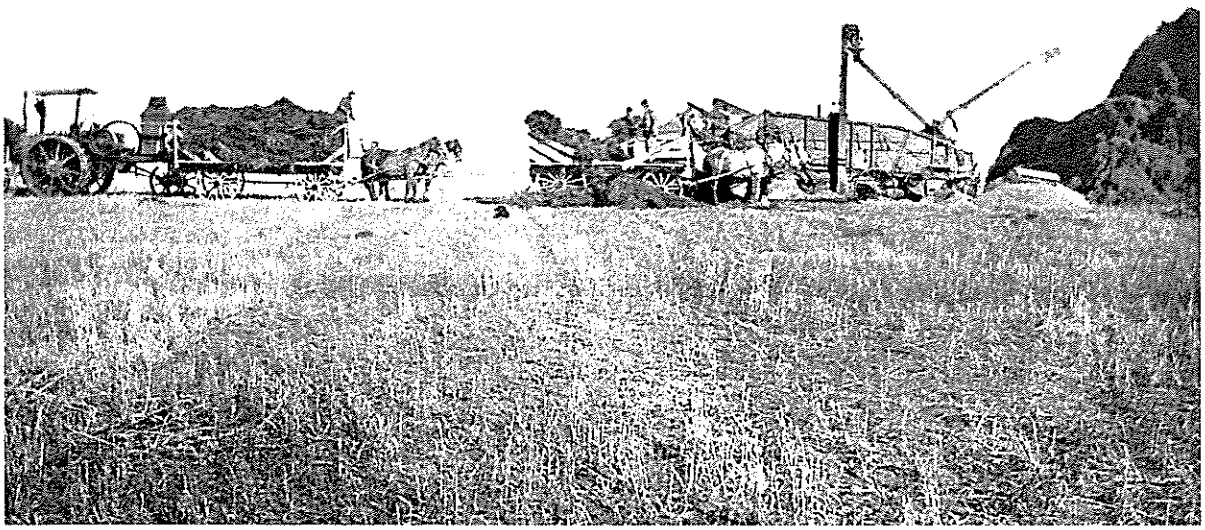


#27-1 - 2 men with ball gloves on a farm.
Taking time for a little practice?



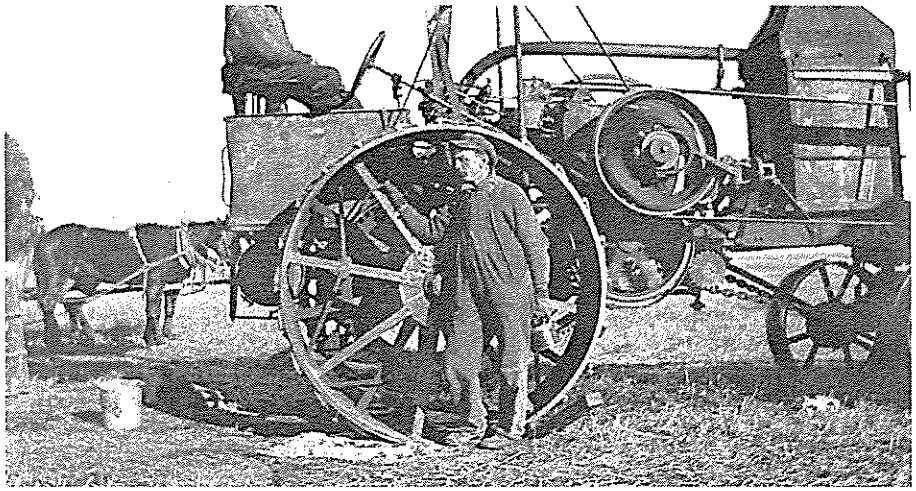
#11 - young farmer with two teams of 4 horses

#18 - Two men in front of the Tool & Supply shed that was taken to each threshing site. (Notice that it is on wheels).



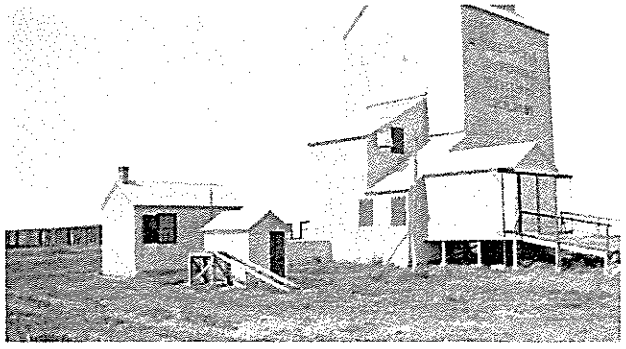
#79 Threshing scene in the field when neighbours came in to help get the crop in. They helped each neighbour in turn. They used an Oil Pull tractor for this work.

#85-man standing at the back of the Oil Pull steam engine tractor - perhaps waiting for more grain to be brought near.



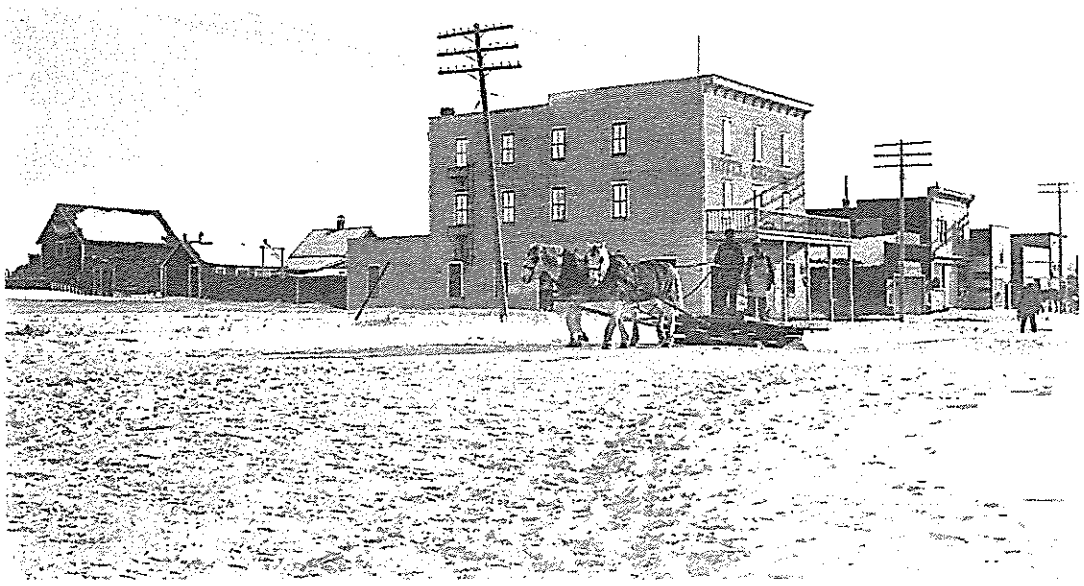
#86 - This farmer and his black and white team are hauling in a wagon full of hay or grain.

#57 - the grain elevator train cars in the background - where the grain for sale would end up.



#19 - Likely the Guernesy General Store. Notice the Union Jack in the window (long before our Maple Leaf flag).

#80- a man working a buzz saw to cut firewood



1919 -a team of horses pulling a sleigh on the main street of Guernsey. Note the telephone and telegraph lines.

# Historical Interview Tapes from the Provincial Archives

***by Dick Braun***

MHSS learned about some personal history interviews that were done about 40 years ago. We heard that they were done in the Saskatchewan Valley area. We discovered that Dr. Ted Regher and Bill Waiser from the U of S History Dept. had been involved.

Harris Ford, the summer student who worked with us doing the same kind of personal history conversations, found these audio tapes in the Provincial Archives that are now located in Regina.

We made contact with the archives and the tapes were found. Our plan was to just go there and duplicate them ourselves. This was not that easy as we could not bring our own equipment into the archives. Instead, we needed to use their equipment.

With some discussion between the Board and the Provincial Archives it was decided that MHSS would try to secure funds from donors to make this project a reality.

By January, 2021, we had the $1,500 in place and we made a formal request to the Provincial Archives for a digital copy of these tapes. We now have a copy of the 48 tapes on a DVD.

Some interviews had two tapes while others had four and one had 10 tapes with each tape being a half hour long. It is very interesting to listen to the interviews that were done back then.

Mr. Ed Roth was also involved and my assumption is that he would have been the person who would have drawn up a list of possible people to interview. Ed Roth, being an auctioneer, knew most people between Prince Albert and Saskatoon.

Mr. Frank Martens was 93 years old when he was interviewed and what a treasure for us to have his interview and many others.

There is also a copy of the conversation with Judge Walter Tucker. Mr. Tucker does an excellent job of tracing his family roots. The Tucker family spent many years in Rosthern.

There is a copy of the conversation with Mr. Henry W. Friesen of Rosthern. Many people will remember Mr. Friesen's passion for the Church, the Mennonite Youth Farm with its Bible Camp and the homes for people with disabilities.

Peter Worobetz was the school superintendent for the Rosthern School Unit #49 and so many of us remember him coming into our schools.

Through Elizabeth Wheeler, daughter of Seager Wheeler, the Wheat King from Rosthern, we learned about his life. Benno Toews, the son of David Toews, gives us a glimpse into the Toews' family.

Here is a complete list of all the people who were interviewed:
Arthur R. Friesen, born 1922;
Auguste J. Pogu, born 1916;
Benno Toews, born 1903;
Carl Kalbfleisch, born 1905;
Carl Peterson, born 1902;
Chestley C. Adams, born 1904;
Dave Boldt, born 1918;
Ed Roth, born 1921;
Elizabeth Wheeler;
Frank Letkemann, born 1923;
Frank Martens, born 1888;
George Klassen, born 1903;
Gustav Klassen, born 1900;
Henry Dyck, born 1902;
Henry T. Klassen, born 1898;
Henry W. Friesen, born 1906;
Jacob C. Neufeld; born 1901;
Jacob John Epp, born 1896;
Jake Sawatzky, born 1902;
John J. Neudorf, born 1899;
Martha G. Driedger;
Toby Voth, born 1894;
Nick Kaminsky, born 1898;
Peter Fisher, born 1904;
Peter K. Epp, born 1910;
Peter Worobetz, born around 1910;
Philip Jean Pajot, born 1901;
Walter Tucker, born 1899; and,
Wilmar (Bill) Roth, born 1915.

The interviews are not all the same length but start with the same question: "When and where were you born?" Norm Bolen was the university student who did the interviewing and he also provided information about where and when the interviews took place.

To complete these files I would like to get photos of all the people that were interviewed and add them to their file. *(cont'd on page 3)*

# Life's Lessons From My Ancestors

**by Hella Banman**

*These are a collection of stories of my family, that I remember being told by my parents, of some of the hardships they endured, not only in Russia but also after coming to Canada. In conclusion, I wrote down my feelings and lessons learned from these experiences.*

**1919**

It was Christmas Eve...

A young man 20 years of age, the oldest in the family, and his siblings witnessed the death of their parents in the epidemic of Tyhoid Fever that spread quickly through the villages of Russia.

The children had all been sick as well, but they survived. The young man who had barely recovered, went to help other families who couldn't look after themselves. He swabbed the mouths to give relief, freshened the bedding, carried out and cleaned chamber pots. 151 people died – the grave diggers and coffin makers couldn't keep up.

For the family, life went on. With the unrest in the country, this young man and his wife decided to make the exodus to Canada. Leaving home, family and friends behind, it was 1923. It was hard for them, but they had a dream! They established a home in this new land for themselves and their two children. They worked hard, at times earning only 50 cents a day.

Seven years later this young man's wife, only 26 years old, and their four-year-old daughter died of tuberculosis. He was left alone with his little boy. This young man was my Father.

***John J. Neudorf***
Born Sept. 6, 1899
Died June 28, 1988

**1927**

A young couple with their little boy left home, family and friends in Russia and came to Canada. They were expecting their second child. They too had a dream...

Only six weeks after their arrival the husband took sick and died. He was 28 years old. The wife gave birth to a second son. She had to go to work leaving her children with her mother-in-law. She scrubbed floors, walls, and did laundry and sewed for other people. It was tough going – living in an abandoned store, with apple boxes for a table and chairs.

This young wife was my Mother.

***Maria Funk/Schultz – Neudorf***
Born Oct. 18 1905
Died June 28, 1970

**1931 – June: Homeward Trek took Oct to Dec.**

The bandits came again and again, vandalizing homes till only litter remained. Families were taken by trains at times, they walked, and sometimes travelled by horse and wagon till they reached their awful destination Siberia in Northern Russia. A husband and wife with their two sons were among them. The men served in these labour camps – it was winter.

They cut trees in waist deep snow, their shoes and clothing wore out. They fashioned shoes, cutting soles from old tires, wrapping them around with strips of cloth. The "dish water" soup and a hard piece of bread was their daily food. The men died of starvation and frozen limbs.

The wife was no use to the camp authorities, so she was released. She began her long trek back to her home in Southern Russia. She was 54 years old. She was hungry. She prayed for food. Walking only a bit farther there on the path lay two loaves of bread. She picked one up and left the other for someone else who would be hungry also. Through many hardships she reached her village and her daughter's house.

It was Christmas Eve. Answering the knock on the door, the daughter saw that it was her Mother! She was almost unrecognizable. She had matted, lice-infected hair, torn and dirty clothes, but was healthy and oh so thankful to be home.

This Mother was my Grandma.
***Helene Penner Funk Teichrob***
Born – 1879
Died – 1963

**1919**

A Father stood in line with the rest of his family beside their home. Bandits had ordered them to do so. They had invaded their village, destroying, stealing, molesting.

The Father was told to strip his clothes. He begged for his family to be able to go inside and not

have to witness the awfulness of it all. God intervened and brought out the little bit of humanness in them and they granted him his request.

The Father, along with two other gentlemen, were beaten, kicked, sneered and spit at. They were lined up with their backs to the firing squad and shot. The Father was my Great Grandpa.

***Anton Johann Funk Maria Jacob (Dyck) Peters***
Born July 19, 1850 Born January 1855
Married Oct 5, 1900

**1930**

Mother needing a job and Dad in need of a housekeeper, brought the two families together. They married. My brother and I made up the third set of children.

I remember one day my brother Henry was bugging me and I lashed out at him, "I don't have to listen to you, you're only my step-brother." I felt a strong hand on my shoulder and I was told never to say that again! My Father said, "We are all one family." I believed him. That was my lesson in obedience and equality.

My Mother showed me how to take an old garment and make it into something new to wear. *That was my lesson in recycling.*

We had our household and farm chores to do and to do them well and faithfully – without pay! *My lesson in responsibility and charity.*

To carry out chamber pots and scrub floors. *The lesson of humility, love and caring.*

Picking up one loaf of bread and leaving the other for someone else in need. *The lesson of sharing.*

To leave home, family, and friends to seek a better life in a new, strange land. *A lesson of courage and independence.*

Looking back to what these people all endured, they never lost their faith in God. Together they would join to sing the hymn, "***Now Thank We All Our God***." These recorded memories are my Heritage and I am proud of it.

***Hella (Neudorf) Banman***

HNB

## Canadian Justice, Indigenous Injustice: The Gerald Stanley and Colten Boushie Case by Kent Roach

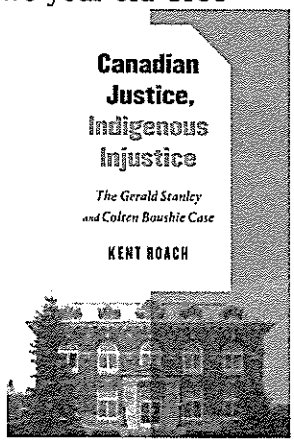
Montreal. (McGill – Queen's University Press, 2019). 309 pp.

### Reviewed by Jake Buhler

In early 2020, when Joel Bernbaum, Yvett Nolan and Lancelot Knight created *Reasonable Doubt*, a docudrama that ran in Saskatoon's Persephone Theatre, the audiences were thrown into a maelstrom of emotion. The play's theme was an explanation of Indigenous relations in Saskatchewan in the wake of the Stanley-Boushie trial. Viewers were left troubled and perplexed. The play left them with few answers but with a profound insight into the two sides of justice: one for Indigenous peoples and one for Settlers.

*Reasonable Doubt* is for the stage, what *Canadian Justice, Indigenous Injustice* is for the pen: an uncovering of the inequities in our midst. The author is Kent Roach, the Prichard-Wilson Chair in Law and Policy at the University of Toronto, a member of the Order of Canada, and author of seminal books on Canadian criminal justice. He does not pound out his message; instead, he tells us a story, whose words reveal and show that the Stanley-Boushie case is one hundred and fifty years in the making.

Will Brown has cleverly designed the cover jacket that shows the Battleford Courthouse divided down the middle - one side red, and one side white – an ominous indication of what the book might be all about.




In August of 2016 a twenty-two year old Cree man, Colten Boushie from the Red Pheasant Reserve, was shot dead by Gerald Stanley, a white farmer from nearby Biggar. In February of 2018, an all-white jury in Battleford, Saskatchewan, acquitted Stanley of murder and manslaughter charges. The trial left Canadians bitterly divided.

So, what is *Canadian Justice, Indigenous Injustice* all about? It is not a commentary or an opinion piece. It is instead a search, a huge effort to discover why the results of

the Stanley-Boushie trial turned out as they did. The audience Roach is writing for would include someone like me with not a lick of knowledge of law, but someone who wants to understand what Canadian justice is all about when it relates to Indigenous peoples. The 300-page search is done with utmost care that includes 800 footnotes and a full index that gives any critical reader confidence that the author is telling a valid story. Roach is a scholar, but his genius is that he understands how important it is to tell a story. He allows the dozens of cases he cites to be the links that chain one event to the next. And when the book is finished there is a solid chain. Indeed, the book's 10 chapters are arranged with events that begin with the signing of Treaty 6 and end with the aftermath of the 2018 trial.

Roach's first link establishes that Treaty 6, signed in 1876, was flawed with fundamental translation difficulties and cultural misunderstandings. Big Bear wanted a treaty that would make our hearts glad (p. 19), and Alexander Morris was absorbed with The Queen's Law that punishes murder with death (p. 19). The differences would soon become apparent. The Battleford court trial in 1885, just a kilometer from where the Boushie-Stanley trial was held, convicted eight Indigenous men of insurrection who were denied legal counsel and translation services. They were hanged and their bodies not returned to their families but buried in a secret place. The White Man Governs (p. 34) principle would soon become an established pattern. In both the Battleford 8 trial and the Regina Riel trial all jurors were white.

One hundred thirty-three years later another all-white jury would acquit a white man of murder and manslaughter. Colten Boushie and his friends entered the Stanley farm on August 9, 2016 with the intent to steal a vehicle. In the bizarre events that followed, Gerald Stanley shot Colten Boushie in the head with a handgun, killing him. Eighteen months later when the trial would take place in Battleford, a number of key events had already occurred in Battleford. Roach carefully examines the method of jury selection, particularly the practice of peremptory challenge whereby the prosecutor and the defense can challenge jurors. Stanley's defense team objected to 13 jurors. The end result was that an all-white jury was selected that would determine whether a white farmer with a stash of guns in his possession would be found guilty of second-degree murder or manslaughter.

Roach shows us with repeated examples that peremptory challenges have been used that resulted in all-white juries. The results were that white defendants were acquitted. Roach suggests the results are not wrongfully convicted but rather wrongfully acquitted cases.

If jury selection was a controversial issue, then a second sticky issue was the hang-fire phenomenon that defense lawyer, Scott Spencer, would use. It is the argument that in rare cases, a gun does not fire immediately when the trigger is pulled. While there are cases where a gun has fired with a half-second delay, Stanley claimed his gun fired 30 seconds later, something he claimed resulted in the accidental killing of Boushie. The jury may have been convinced.

Chief Justice Martel Popescul who presided over the trial banned television coverage that might reduce tensions. But when he banned the presence of the visible eagle feather that the Boushie family brought to the court, there was doubt about bias. Belinda Jackson, Colten Boushie's friend, was the only witness to the actual shooting. When she could not recall if there was one shot or two shots fired, her testimony was suspect. Roach cites other trials where credibility of Indigenous persons are considered suspect.

Premier Wall made initial calls for anti-racial biases and his successor Premier Moe followed suit. But the mood of rural Saskatchewan farmers with their belief that guns are there to protect against theft and robbery, especially before the RCMP arrive, was strong. Roach calls it a phantom self defence argument (p.168) that might lead to a belief that a farmer's farm property trumps a thief's life (p. 168).

Following Gerald Stanley's acquittal, Roach asks, Can we do better? Prime Minister Trudeau introduced Bill C-75 that banned peremptory challenges. But fundamentally, Roach concludes that until justice is served and decisions like the Boushie-Colten are an aberration, and not a run-of-the-mill occurrence,

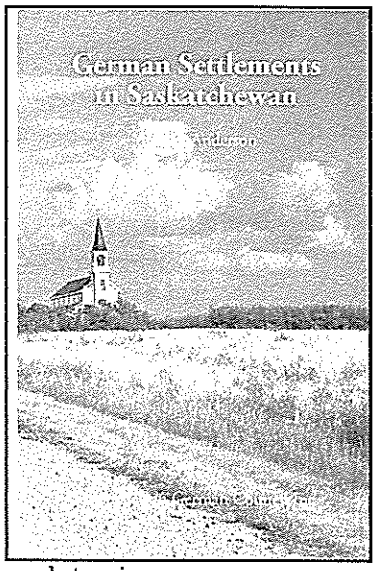
there will be Indigenous Injustice. I attended the lecture at the University of Saskatchewan in 2019 when author Kent Roach spoke about the complexities of law and politics. He argued that it takes good legal minds to do many things. But he said only courageous politicians can effect change that will result in the removal of systemic bias in the legal system. I went away wondering when those courageous messianic politicians will arrive. As a member in good standing at Osler Mennonite Church, I reflected that ordinary people like me can empower young politicians who will someday rise to become game changers. One of them will surely be the messiah I am waiting for. I hope, I pray, and I do a bit. The greatest of these three is doing.

The book can be borrowed by contacting info@commonword.ca. Amazon sells it for $34.95.

*JB*

# Hutterite Colonies

Historical Background
(reprinted from *German Settlements in Saskatchewan*)
by Alan B. Anderson/Saskatchewan German Council Inc.




Both the Mennonites and the Hutterites trace their origins to the Swiss Anabaptist movements of the sixteenth century; and both groups immigrated, directly or indirectly, to the Canadian Prairies from German colonies in South Russia, as had most of the German Catholics. But in the intervening period of over two centuries, their histories were quite distinct. While the Mennonite group was forming in the Netherlands, another communal Anabaptist group was developing in the South Tyrol (then in Austria, now in Italy), as well as later in southern Germany and Moravia (now within the Czech Republic).

In 1528 the first real Bruderhof (communal village or colony) was established in Moravia. Five years later they were joined by a South Tyrolean preacher, Jakob Hutter, from whom the sect acquired its name; raised in Moos in Passeiertal, he became a preacher in Pustertal.

Despite repeated persecution (Hutter was burned at the stake in 1536) by the end of the century there were as many as 70,000 Hutterites and over ninety Bruderhofe. Reduced in numbers by the Austro-Turkish and Thirty Years Wars, by 1622 they had all been driven from Moravia; some 20,000 had emigrated to Slovakia, Hungary, and Transylvania (now in Romania), where they had established over thirty new colonies.

However, persecution continued, particularly by Jesuits seeking to convert them in Slovakia, and they were further decimated. A small number were briefly re-established at Kreutz, Transylvania, in 1763-70; caught in the midst of the Russo-Turkish Wars, 123 of them trekked to South Russia (present day Ukraine) to found the colonies of Vishenka (1770-1802), Radichev (1802-1842), Huttertal (1842-74), Johannesruh (1852-1877), Hutterdorf/Kuchewa (1856-1874), Neu-Huttertal/Dabritscha (1857-1875), and Sheromet/Scherebez (1868-1874).

Finally their unsettled existence in Europe began to be terminated altogether in 1874 when almost all of them, numbering nearly 800 by then, moved to South Dakota, along with Mennonites and other Russian-German Protestant groups escaping the repeal of their military exemption by the Russian government. The Schmiedeleut, Dariusleut, and Lehrerleut sects separately founded three initial colonies from 1874-77.

But about half of the Hutterites decided to homestead individually rather than communally, thus becoming Prairieleut, merging eventually with the Mennonites who settled in the same areas (where some congregation names - Hutterthal, Neu Hutterthaler, and Hutterdorf - recalled their Hutterite origins). Six of these congregations in the Dakotas were Krimmer Mennonite Brethren; the rest were independent Prairieleut.

The First World War hastened the exodus of Dariusleut and Lehrerleut from the United States to Alberta and Schmiedeleut to Manitoba in 1918.

### Expansion in Saskatchewan

Two key factors pertain to the rapid spread of

Hutterite colonies in Saskatchewan. First, each self-contained Hutterite colony averages approximately only one hundred men, women and children.

Hutterites have tended to have a high (but recently declining) birth rate and large family size. So when a colony's population grows well beyond the average, new "daughter" colonies are founded, as often as every fifteen years. Thus the Hutterite population as a whole, and the number of colonies have grown quite rapidly.

Prior to 1949 there were no Hutterite colonies in Saskatchewan; however land restrictions in Alberta forced many colonies there to expand into neighbouring Saskatchewan (Manitoba Hutterites were less affected by such restrictions so did not move into Saskatchewan).

Since then until 2006 at least 62 colonies have been established in Saskatchewan, equally divided between the Dariusleut and Lehrerleut; however 91 colonies were counted in 2014, (at this rate of increase there may well be more than 100 now).

Recent data reveal that there are approximately thirty thousand Hutterites in Canada in 339 colonies.[131]

Hutterite colonies have tended to be concentrated in western regions of Saskatchewan, although they were becoming increasingly widespread by 2006: In the southwestern region, there were five colonies (three Dariusleut and two Lehrerleut) in the immediate vicinity of Maple Creek. (In the following list, L=Lehrerleut, D=Dariusleut): Cypress L (1952), Spring Creek D (1956), New Wolf Creek or Downey Lake D (1958), Box Elder D (1960), and more recently Dinsmore L (1978).

Farther east, in the southwest region, another nineteen colonies (nine Dariusleut and ten Lehrerleut) were found in the Cypress Hills and around Swift Current: Bench L (1949-52) west of Shaunavon was the very first colony in Saskatchewan and the initial Lehrerleut colony. During the fifties and sixties it was soon followed by Tompkins L (1952), West Bench D (1960) near Ravenscrag, Simmie D (1961), Waldeck/Friesen L (1963), Main Centre L (1963), Sand Lake L (1964) near Masefield, and Hodgeville D (1971); then during the seventies by Ponteix D (1971), Swift Current/Ruskin D (1976) and Vanguard L (1980); during the eighties by Carmichael L (1983), Spring Lake D (1988) near Neville, Bone Creek L (1988) south of Gull Lake, Webb D (1988), and Butte L (1989) near Bracken; and most recently New Spring Creek D (1993) northwest of Shaunavon, Earview D (1997) near Gull Lake, and Garden Plain L (2001) near Frontier.

Six colonies (three Dariusleut and three Lehrerleut) had been established in the Regina and Moose Jaw area: first Arm River D (1964) near Bethune, then Baildon L (1967), Huron L (1969) near Brownlee, Lajord D (1977), Belle Plaine D (1981), and Rose Valley L (1985) near Verwood.

In the Sand Hills area north of Maple Creek, five colonies (one Dariusleut and four Lehrerleut) had been founded: first Estuary D (1958), then Haven L (1967) near Fox Valley, Abbey L (1971), Wheatland L(1987) near Abbey, and Pennant L (2001).

Nineteen colonies (nine Dariusleut and ten Lehrerleut) were widely scattered through the west country further north: during the sixties, Hillsvale D (1961) near Baldwinton, Glidden L (1963), Smiley L (1968), Fort Pitt D (1969), and Sanctuary L (1970) near Kyle; during the seventies, Lakeview D (1970) near Scott, Rosetown L (1970), Willow Park D (1977) near Tessier, Beechy L (1978), Golden View L (1978) west of Biggar, and Springwater D (1979); during the eighties Big Rose D (1980) south of Biggar, Eagle Creek D (1981), Eatonia L (1985), Sunnydale D (1988) at Sonningdale, and Springfield L (1989) near Kindersley, Sovereign L (1995) east of Rosetown, and Scott D (1997) near Scott and Valley Centre L (2001) north of Rosetown.

Six other colonies (five Dariusleut and one Lehrerleut) had been developed to the north and south of Saskatoon: Leask D (1953) and Riverview D(1956) near Saskatoon were the earliest Dariusleut colonies in the province, followed by Hillcrest D(1969) near Dundurn and Clear Springs L (1971) near Kenaston, and most recently Riverbend D (1996) west of Waldheim, and Green Leaf D (2001) near Marcelin.

Finally, to the northeast a couple of Dariusleut colonies were established: Quill Lake D (1975) and Star City D (1978).

## Hutterite Lifestyle[132]

All Hutterites continue to live in their own colonies which despite being small in population often

control quite extensive farmland. Although they sell their produce (grain, livestock, poultry, vegetable crops) on the public market, they live within sequestered colonies where strict conformity is ensured in unique dress (similar to 'peasant' dress in remote valleys of South Tyrol), religious education (together with limited "public education" from an outside teacher at the colony school), language (they converse in an archaic German dialect), authority (each colony is ultimately headed by a male boss), occupational specificity (male and female jobs are assigned even before adulthood), holding property in common, and an orderly lifestyle (for example, preparing meals and dining together, the regimented daily routine and even colony buildings arranged in rectangular order). Because Hutterite colonies (rather than individuals) own their farmland and machinery in common, their farming is usually a profitable venture. However, the rapid expansion of Hutterites' territorial acquisitions has resulted in contested legislation restricting concentration and expansion of Hutterite colonies, initially in Alberta then later to a lesser extent in Saskatchewan, where rather than comprehensive legislation occasional disputes have arisen over legislation enacted by particular rural municipalities. Problems in Hutterite relations with neighboring local communities have been exacerbated because Hutterites have traditionally tended to be non-political, to buy farm machinery on a wholesale rather than localized basis, and to claim tax exemptions as a religious organization; yet Hutterites are rightly respected as law abiding, prosperous farmers and a most interesting addition to the diverse rural population of Saskatchewan.

### Endnotes

130 The history of Hutterite migrations has been described in: *J.A. Hostetler, Hutterite Society* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

131 Reimer, 2008; A.B. Anderson, *"Hutterite colonies"*, and P. Laverdure, *"Hutterites"*, in Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, 2005; L. Driedger, *"Hutterites"*, in P.R. Magocsi (ed.), Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples (University of Toronto Press, 1999: 672-681).

132 Details of Hutterite lifestyle are found in such sources as: Hostetler, 1974; J.A. Hostetler and G.E. Huntington, *The Hutterites in North America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967); J.W. Bennett, Hutterian Brethren: *The Agricultural Economy and Social Organization of a Communal People* (Stanford University Press, 1967); W.M. Kephart, Extraordinary Groups: The Sociology of Unconventional Lifestyles (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976); K.A. Peter, Dynamics of Hutterite Society (University of Alberta Press, 1987); M. Holzach, *Das Vergessene Volk/The Forgotten People* (Sioux Falls, SD: Ex Machina Publishing, 1993); L.C. Masuk, *The Hutterite Brethren, Hutterite Women, and the Transition to Modernity*, MA thesis in sociology, University of Saskatchewan, 1998.

Personalized descriptions of life in Hutterite colonies include: S. Hofer, *Born Hutterite* (Saskatoon: Hofer Publishing, 1991); S. Hofer, *The Hutterites: Lives and Images of a Communal People* (Saskatoon: Hofer Publishers, 1998); M-A Kirby, *I am Hutterite* (Prince Albert: Polka Dot Press, 2007).

*ABA*

## Volunteers Needed in the Archives

Volunteers are the life blood of our Archives and we have had a wonderful group of these volunteers. They receive, process, describe and file all material donations. Then they help visitors and researchers to use our archival resources and together they find answers and very useful information.

If you have any interest in Mennonite history or genealogy give thought to volunteering in your archive!

Volunteer archival work is done carefully and methodically.

For the past year or so with COVID our Archive has had restrictions on visitor access and work by volunteers. The Bethany Manor building has been closed to non-residents. Soon, we hope, with COVID restrictions ended; we can get back to Archival work.

Actually, several volunteers have continued working in the archives this past year so that we continue to function like a wonderfully effective archive.

Please be a volunteer! We have some projects that need volunteers to complete and some ongoing tasks that would benefit from careful volunteer work. See our website at: *https://mhss.sk.ca*

Please contact me Victor G. Wiebe: 306-934-8125

Victor G. Wiebe
11 Kindrachuk Cres.
Saskatoon, SK S7K 6J1

*VGW*

# My Teichroeb Ancestors

***by Barry Teichroeb***

*Barry is a retired financial industry executive who began searching for his Mennonite roots more than 30 years ago. He has been digging ever since. Originally from Saskatoon, SK, he now lives in Whitby, Ontario.*

My interest in genealogy began many years ago when an old, worn notebook arrived in the mail. It belonged to my grandfather, Dan Teichroeb. He had asked my father, Peter, to send it along to me.

I recognized it immediately because I had seen it often as a youngster. My grandmother referred to it repeatedly when talking about ancient uncles and aunts, but back then I did not appreciate its importance. My great-grandfather Peter Teichroeb (1857-1944), and his father, Daniel (1835-1918) had kept careful family records for decades and they had a tale to tell.

The notebook was frail. The records were written in German; the faded ink barely legible. I wrestled with the language, the unfamiliar cursive style of writing, the unusual script, and made some headway.

My progress accelerated when Ben Fast, the uncle of my mother, Marjorie (Fast) Teichroeb, agreed to translate it. What I had were names and dates of marriages, spouses, children, grandchildren, in-laws, a few financial records, and an occasional medicinal remedy. There was enough concrete information here to begin the framing of the Teichroeb ancestry, and a comprehensive picture began to emerge once I added data from church and secular records.

The name 'Teichroeb' is said to originate in the northern provinces of the Netherlands. The root of the name relates to dikes and the oversight of dikes, not a surprising occupation in the lowland countries.

Daniel was born in 1835 in Schoenhorst, Chortitza Colony, South Russia. In his records he does not mention any siblings and only references a parent once, late in the volume, where he records his father's death in 1857. His father's name was also Daniel.

His father, the elder Daniel, was born in the district of Stuhm, Prussia in 1789. The family records gave me the birth and death dates but no other details. It was necessary to crawl through old church records and census records to fill in the history.

The elder Daniel (1789) arrived in Molotschna in 1803 at the age of 14 with his mother Aganetha and his six siblings. Aganetha was the widow of Michael Teichroeb who was born around 1730-1740 and had lived in the vicinity of Marienburg, Prussia.

We do not know when Michael died, nor do we know whether he was with the family during the migration from Prussia to Russia or whether Aganetha chose to move after his death.

Whatever the situation, the courage and fortitude of this woman, to bring a family, single handedly, to a new, unsettled country, is astonishing. Clearly Aganetha was the driving force of this family, even though her eldest son, Johann, was recorded as the head of the household in the census lists of 1803.

Shortly after arriving in Molotschna Aganetha married Abraham Neudorf who was twenty years her junior. This marriage created the stable family unit crucial for survival in a new land on a new, unbroken homestead.

Not much is known about Aganetha's background. She was born around 1760 and she was the third wife of Michael, who had children with both of his previous wives.

Michael had a son named Peter, baptized in 1781, and a daughter named Anna, baptized in 1790. His first wife must have died not long after Anna's birth because he was married again in 1774 to Helena Dyck. In 1778 twins named Gertruda and Kornelius were born to Helena and Michael but, tragically, the children and Helena died almost immediately afterward.

Michael and Aganetha were married in 1779 and had eight children, many of whom survived into adulthood. While their firstborn died in 1785 at the age of two, records show the remaining children all accompanied Aganetha to Molotschna. There are good birth records for some, but not all, of the children who were with Aganetha in Russia.

A census of the Mennonites living in West Prussia was taken in 1776. While there were complex political reasons for the census at that time, the

benefit in modern times is the documentary evidence of the names of ancestors available to us today. Michael Teichroeb was listed in that census as a tailor. It is intriguing that there were two other Teichroebs mentioned, Johann and Abraham. From this census data there is no way to know if these men were related. Other church and secular records provide no additional insight.

The family of Michael Teichroeb was one of many Mennonite families that journeyed to Russia in the late 19th century. I imagine Michael died on the way, but I have found no documents to confirm this.

The migration of Mennonites from Prussia to Russia took place over a period of many years. There were many reasons for the migration. The expansion of the pacifist Mennonite population in Prussia created concerns about the potential displacement of citizens available to the military. Further, the Lutheran Church felt threatened economically by the growing Mennonite land ownership.

In response to these pressures the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II, enacted the Edict of 1789. This edict severely restricted Mennonite land acquisitions and required those with land to pay fees to the Lutheran church. Concurrently there was a major economic enterprise driven by Russia to attract Mennonites from Prussia through the offer of free land in the southern regions of what is now modern Ukraine. The quest for arable farmland was a strong motivator.

The migrant settlers often traveled by ship from Danzig through Riga and then overland by wagon to collecting camps from which they were allotted land, money, food, equipment, and lumber to establish homesteads.

Some settlers had sufficient resources to transport their property themselves from the ships. Many others had to hire commercial agents of questionable integrity to transport their goods and frequently these families saw little or nothing of their possessions after setting off on the overland portion of the trip. The early years were challenging.

The first major wave of Mennonite migration occurred primarily between 1789 and 1795 to the Chortitza region southwest of the Dneiper River. The original group of settlers migrated in the period of 1789-1790 when the first 228 households moved from Prussia.

There followed a second group of settlers in the period of 1793-1795 when about 57 households migrated. There was sporadic migration thereafter and fourteen towns were established in Chortitza in total.

The second major wave of migration began principally in the 1803-1805 period when the 19 towns in Molotschna, to the southeast of Chortitza, were established.

Once again, the people came in pursuit of land, reinforced by further tightening of freedoms in Prussia.

A third major wave began around 1818 and continued for some time afterward on a gradual basis.

Daniel (1789), the son of Michael and Aganetha, left Molotschna in 1813 at the age of 24 and headed to Chortitza Colony where he married Maria, the widow of Bernhard Krahn. There is no record of children from this relationship. Maria died and Daniel remarried, sometime before 1835. His new wife was Anna Wolf.

Anna Wolf was born around 1806 in Chortitza Colony to Johann Wolf and Anna Peters. Her grandparents, Jacob Wolf and Justina Harder, were among the earliest settlers in Chortitza Colony, joining the original group of 228 families who participated in the first migration in 1789-1790. Jacob died around 1790, leaving his eldest son Johann as the 17-year-old head of the household.

Fortunately, Justina was able to keep the family on an even keel just as Aganetha Teichroeb had after Michael's death. She remarried soon after Jacob's death to David Giesbrecht. Within another eight or nine years, David died, and Justina married once more in 1801.

Anna Wolf and Daniel Teichroeb lived in Shoenhorst after their marriage. In 1835 she gave birth to my great-great-grandfather Daniel (1835), the first author of the family notebook in my possession. There is no record of any siblings and Daniel was probably an only child. Anna died when he was very young, and his father remarried in 1840. There is no indication that this third marriage produced any

children.

Daniel (1835) lived in Shoenhorst and married Maria Abrams in 1856. Maria was the daughter of Peter Abrams and Margaretha Krahn. Margaretha Krahn's parents and grandparents lived originally in the vicinity of Elbing, Prussia in the 18th century.

It is a striking coincidence that Margaretha was the stepdaughter of the elder Daniel Teichroeb (1789) who had married Maria, the widow of Bernhard Krahn, in 1813. Peter Abrams arrived in Molotschna Colony around 1819, about a year after his parents Abraham Abrams and Anna Doerksen had settled there. Peter later moved to Schoenhorst to marry Margaretha.

Daniel (1835) and Maria had ten children, the eldest of whom was my great-grandfather Peter, the second author of the family notebook. Daniel (1835) wrote that in 1877 his family had saved 3,500 rubles and in 1879 they moved to the village of Georgstal in the Fuerstenland Mennonite Settlement. He says that he bought a farm in the vicinity for 2,150 rubles.

Fuerstenland was situated on a 19,000-acre plot of land rented at about 0.5 rubles per acre and subdivided into 154 small farms. Daniel provides no information about the terms of the acquisition or how much land he received.

Fuerstenland was established principally by inhabitants of Chortitza in the latter half of the 19th century. A proportionately large number came from Schoenhorst. This settlement, like the earlier daughter colony of Bergthal, was motivated somewhat by more conservative Mennonites trying to minimize societal integration. Economics were also a major factor; land was available and with it the opportunity to improve economic prospects.

Maria Abrams died in 1891 and Daniel (1835) remarried. His second wife died in 1914 and Daniel lived until shortly before his 83rd birthday in 1918.

Peter Teichroeb married Agatha Dyck in 1879 after which they moved from Georgstal to Olgafeld to establish a farm of their own. There they had twelve children, the youngest one born in 1904. His name was Daniel, and he was my grandfather. He was always called Dan.

Russian history is generally turbulent, but Peter and Agatha were determined farmers who maintained their land and raised a family during a period of uncommon upheaval. During the last decades of the 19th century there was strong competition for land where the Mennonites lived, extreme inflation in land prices, crop failures, and general social and economic turmoil.

Many Mennonite families pulled up stakes in the 1870s and again in the 1890s, selling their land and possessions for whatever prices they could get and moving away from Russia, often settling in Canada.

Peter and Agatha remained behind, part of a defiant Mennonite population. They amassed considerable wealth. My grandfather recalled that his family farm was considerably larger than most farms in the area and his father employed many Ukrainian laborers to work the land.

The 20th Century brought greater challenges. Russia faced defeat in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War, causing dissatisfaction with the prevailing administration and leading to a drive for social reform that precipitated the First Russian Revolution.

This uprising was defeated, but the underlying social and economic unrest that triggered it was unabated. World War I devastated and weakened Russia creating conditions conducive to the Russian Civil War in 1917. Concurrently the Ukrainian War of Independence brought additional violence and anarchy to the Ukrainian countryside and the Mennonites living there.

Survival was tenuous in those years. Bolshevik armed forces attempted to occupy and subdue the land. Dan told of the time that Bolshevik soldiers rounded up local young farming men and attempted to impress them into the Bolshevik army by force. Fortunately, the soldiers were outnumbered and overcome.

Meanwhile, in the governmental vacuum created by the revolution, Nestor Makhno assembled an army seeking to establish an independent state and eradicate the widespread poverty and subsistence lifestyle of Ukrainian peasants. Makhno's bands of raiders roamed the countryside in southern Ukraine, sometimes fighting against the Bolsheviks and sometimes allied with them, preying on the wealthiest landowners and farming communities, and always warring with the White Movement that sprang up to

preserve the old order.

Armed self-defense forces were established by many Mennonite estate owners to protect their lives and property from raiders. Dan and his brothers participated in these defensive actions and armed skirmishes. He told stories about the times they would arm themselves and take up strategic positions overlooking approaches to the village and then fire at invading horsemen. They managed to win the skirmishes and avoid the devastating outcomes recorded by families that were unprepared.

In the latter stages of the conflict, around 1921, Dan joined the White Army opposed to the Bolsheviks. He was too young to fight, not withstanding his earlier experiences, and instead served as a military supply wagon driver.

In one escapade, he was overtaken by bandits while he was hauling a load of supplies on a wagon with a team of horses. They took his horses and all the supplies they could carry, and left him alive, alone on the road with his wagon. He had to wait for passers-by to help him get his wagon home.

In 1921 the conflict ended with a Bolshevik victory. Then began the economic rationalization and restructuring that featured prominently for many years in what would become the Soviet Union. Land appropriation and redistribution were fundamental elements of the new governmental program.

Dan's family lost everything; all their land, and even their animals, were taken. His sister and her husband lost their flour mill but were permitted to stay on as laborers.

Peter Teichroeb, like so many Russian Mennonites before him, began planning a move to Canada. In the past Canada had welcomed Mennonite immigration most generously. The earlier waves of migration in the previous century brought thousands to settle in Manitoba and eventually homesteads further west. However, attitudes had changed.

By 1919 the doors to further migration were barred by Robert Borden's governing Unionist Party through an Order In Council, which banned Mennonites and others from entry to Canada. The Unionist MP John Wesley Edwards, caught up in the emotional bigotry that followed World War I, gave a speech supporting the ban and said "... whether they be called Mennonites, Hutterites or any other kind of "ites," we do not want them to come to Canada... We certainly do not want that kind of cattle in this country. Indeed not only do we not want that kind of cattle, but I would go further and support the view that we should deport from Canada others of the same class who were allowed to come in by mistake."

Fortunately, this Order was rescinded after the federal election of 1921-22, won by Mackenzie King's Liberal Party. The next great wave of immigration began in 1923. By 1929 20,000 Mennonites had migrated to Canada.

Peter's wife Agatha died in 1922 and Peter married her widowed sister Maria the following year. Shortly after that he finalized arrangements and moved to Canada. Maria made the fateful decision to stay behind in Fuerstenland.

Dan was also left behind in Russia. It took some time for him to obtain a transit visa, possibly due to his service in the White Army. According to family lore he was eventually able to get his hands on a transit visa first possessed by a family friend who died before he could use it. Dan came to Canada in 1925. His route took him by train to a coastal city in Latvia where he boarded a ship for London. After a mandatory quarantine period he boarded the SS Minnedosa, a former Canadian troop ship operated by the Canadian Pacific Shipping Line during World War I, and headed for Quebec City.

While at sea a popular way to spend the time was at the poker table. Dan learned to gamble well enough. He earned a few dollars by playing against the heavy drinkers he spotted after their card memory and judgment had lapsed.

After debarking at Quebec, the journey was overland to Saskatchewan where he rejoined his family.

Imagine a young man of 21 years, alone, fleeing a hostile country, crossing a continent, an ocean, and the vastness of Canada to start a new life. His journey parallels the trek made 120 years earlier by his widowed great-great-grandmother Aganetha, crossing a continent alone with seven children to establish her family in a new country.

Dan met a young Canadian-born woman named

Maggie Schapansky after his arrival on the Prairies and they soon were married.

My father Peter was their first son. Peter married my mother, Marjorie Fast. The story might end there except for one remarkable twist.

As it happens, Marjorie's fifth great-grandfather was a man named Johann Teichroeb, born in 1744. He was one of the Teichroebs appearing in the 1776 Census, along with Michael Teichroeb.

Following a detailed statistical analysis of Y-DNA samples contributed to the Mennonite DNA Project by descendants of Michael and Johann, I have concluded, with a high level of statistical confidence, that these two men were likely brothers.

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## Harold Johnson. The Cast Stone

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Thistledown Press. 2011. 301 pages. Also published in a Kindle format. Winner of the 2011 Saskatchewan Book Award for Fiction. $19.95. Sold in most bookstores.

***Reviewed by Victor G. Wiebe***

Readers in Saskatchewan may be pleasantly surprised to recognize many familiar places in *The Cast Stone* for it is a novel set in Saskatchewan. It is a well written and interesting read but not a happy story. The novel is set around the Cree Elder, Ben Robe, a political science professor, who in retirement has returned to his Indigenous roots in the fictional Moccasin Lake Reserve, northeast of the Prince Albert National Park. He wants to live a simple Indigenous life in retirement carrying out the basic non-technical Indigenous activities found in a reserve community with wilderness surroundings.

Readers of this novel will get a good immersion into the thinking, behaviour, beliefs, hopes and culture of Saskatchewan Indigenous people and their surroundings. In those surroundings are a broader set of Saskatchewan people and culture, some of whom are Mennonites.

This novel, *The Cast Stone*, was published a decade ago in 2011 before the turmoil in the USA from Donald Trump and is set at a slightly future time when the United States has annexed Canada and many in Canada are resisting with some very violently confronting the occupying Americans. In format it is called a dystopian novel.

The reasons and methods for the annexation are only briefly mentioned in passing. However, they bring to mind two interesting ideas. One, in reality for Canada, the only country which could invade us is the USA. Then after being invaded and occupied by foreigners there is the idea that Indigenous people get the satisfaction in thinking that we "New Canadians" are now painfully learning the life lesson that impacted their lives and cultures as they endured us Europeans who annexed their land.

After the early death of his Swedish immigrant father, the author, Harold Johnson, lived on a reserve with his Cree mother in northern Saskatchewan. He identifies as Cree, mastered a number of trades and now practices law in La Ronge, Saskatchewan. Here

he also operates his family's traditional trap line using a dog team.

Johnson has written five works of fiction and five nonfiction works. All have received acclaim and he is both a popular and sought-after Saskatchewan writer. Johnson's published works all passionately advocate for Indigenous people.

In the novel *The Cast Stone*, retired professor Ben Robe is drawn out of his peaceful isolated life on the reserve when his former student, Monica, wants him to become involved in the resistance to the Americans now in control after their annexation of Canada.

Next, he learns that his brief affair with her many years ago resulted in a son, Benji, who at birth was adopted out. Benji, now age 30 has recently found Monica, and she has sent him to the Moccasin Lake Reserve to learn about Ben and his aboriginal roots.

The Reserve people have trouble with pollution, illness and alcohol but concentrate on basic tasks of hunting, fishing, gathering fire wood and balance troubles with joys of social interactions, storytelling and spirituality.

The non-Indigenous characters in *The Cast Stone* centre their actions on the resistance. They have meetings for planning how to resist, some then act violently; one betrays the others, and from the Americans they receive much more deadly violence in return.

On the reserve Benji received acceptance, then friendship from Ben's childhood friend Rosie and love from her granddaughter Elsie.

I was surprised to read some Mennonite related connections in *The Cast Stone*. An anonymous bishop is mentioned officiating at a funeral but the only Christian denomination mentioned in the work is the Mennonite Central Committee.

At a secret Resistance planning meeting described on page 43 is this: "'The food at the back is courtesy of Mennonite Central Committee." Who would have thought that MCC would make the list."' The list are people or organizations on the USA enemies list and thus are invited to the secret planning meeting of the Resistance.

Then on page 46 Mary Wiens is introduced as co-chair of MCC. Mary makes a speech and advocates for peace against violence and also for Mennonites to have their longstanding control over the education of their own schools. This request for school control brings MCC into conflict with the Americans.

There are three other characters in *The Cast Stone* with "Mennonite type" names though none are identified as being Mennonite or with any denomination.

The resistance meeting where Mary Wiens of MCC brought food and gave a speech was on Abe Isaac Friesen's farm located south of Aberdeen, Saskatchewan.

In the novel he is a secondary character though mentioned throughout most of the book.

Then only on page 64 Abe is noted to have a neighbour: Ruben Wiebe (in the book spelled "Weebe").

Finally there is an American psychologist from California named John Penner who interrogates Ben Robe very violently and who spouts violent propaganda about the USA being the Promised Land of the Bible and the new Zion.

*The Cast Stone* can be read as a warning for Canadians about using violence or invasion against another country. First think about what would happen if we in Canada were invaded.

It's also about the nature of conflict, ways of dealing with it in your family and community. In many ways when reacting violently to an aggressive opponent you are actually strengthening him and reinforcing that opposition and its views.

Finally when someone is hurt it deeply affects not only that person but also his family, friends and community. Peace and forgiveness are difficult yet needed in times of resistance and violence.

This book by Harold Johnson is popular but it is 10 years old. so it is in the public libraries and in used bookstores and new copies are from book stores.

If you like Kindle link for reading e-books, this link might be useful:
*https://www.amazon.ca/Cast-Stone-Harold-Johnson-ebook/dp/B00CF2X5JO?asin=B00CF2X5JO&revisionId=&format=2&depth=1*

*OG W*

# Jacob Sawatzky: A Story of Love and Resilience

by Janet (Sawatzky) Beaudin

My grandfather, Jacob Sawatzky, was born on November 20, 1902 in Nieder Chortitza, South Russia. He was the second son of Abraham Jacob Sawatzky (1874-1918) and Helene Guenther (1878-circa 1926). According to the Chortitza Family Register, there were nine children in the family: Abram (born 1901), Jacob (born 1902), Johann (born 1904), Maria (born 1906), Helena (born 1910), Anna (1911-1916), Susanna (born 1912), and twins Sara and Katharina (born 1915; Sara died at about 2 months of age).

Jacob's father was an accountant in Nieder Chortitza, working for a big business. When Jacob was very young, his parents purchased a flour mill. Jacob never mentioned the location of the mill, saying simply that the family moved to another place[1] and that the family "lived there for many years." Documents such as the Chortitza Family Register reveal that the family lived near Michailovka, Memrik, Bachmut District, South Russia.

Despite having moved away, the family connection to Nieder Chortitza remained strong. At six years of age, Jacob returned to Nieder Chortitza to live with his paternal grandparents, Jacob Sawatzky (1850-1922) and Maria Hamm (1851-1916), as he began school. He stayed with his grandparents for two years. Jacob recalled that it was an idyllic time, and that he and his friends enjoyed playing out of doors, swimming in the Dnieper River, and climbing into the attic of the house to eat dried fruit. Jacob had strong memories of his grandpa up on stilts picking cherries, and then later, drying fruit between large screens. From eight to ten years of age, Jacob attended a different school in an unknown location. When he was about 11 years old, Jacob returned to his parents' home and continued his studies with a live-in tutor. Jacob learned to speak many languages including German, Plautdietsch, Ukrainian, and Russian.

As a young teen (about 12 to 15 years old), Jacob studied at a private high school approximately two hundred miles away from his family. Jacob noted that he attended schools in three or four different Mennonite colonies over the years. One day in 1917, during the time that the Russian Revolution was sweeping across his country, Jacob was summoned home from high school. His father had returned home from a business trip and had become very ill due to exposure and freezing temperatures. The windows on the train he was travelling on had been smashed, and he ended up dying of pneumonia on January 20, 1918 in Michailovka. Shortly thereafter, Jacob, his mother, and the rest of the children moved from their home near the flour mill to the relative safety of the closest village, about a mile away (probably Michailovka).

Jacob sometimes spoke of his parents' flour mill and that his family was considered to be well to do. He shared that his parents employed about thirty or forty people, and that the mill was running day and night except for two weeks a year when everything stopped for overhaul. Family information is that Jacob's older brother, Abram, had interest in the business and began to manage the flour mill after the death of their father. In about 1918, Makhno's anarchist bandits came and there was a massacre at the mill. Everyone there was killed. Jacob recalled that "not a shot was fired, they were all killed with a heavy bar in the back of their head." According to family, Abram had been home sick that day and was unharmed. Jacob's son, Don Sawatzky, remembers hearing that around that time, bandits also broke into the family home. They picked Jacob up by the neck and held him against the wall as they ransacked the house. They were looking for guns, but Jacob's mother told them that they had no guns and that all she had to give them was soup. The bandits found nothing and eventually left.

Jacob revealed that his family left everything and packed "what we could carry with us in our suitcases and went to a more secure place." This was likely back with extended family in Nieder Chortitza as many of Jacob's recollections from that time period were about that village.

Jacob was very sad that he had to leave his dog, Sirquah, behind. Sirquah was a huge dog, a protector of family and property. The Sawatzkys attempted to bring their dog onto the train with them as they

left, and Sirquah wanted to follow, but he was not allowed. The dog sat on the platform at the train station and cried for as long as Jacob was able to see him; Jacob never knew what became of him. The story of Sirquah was one of the few memories of the difficult times in Russia that Jacob later freely shared with his children and grandchildren. It seemed Jacob was able to use that story metaphorically to provide some insight into his own feelings, distress, and fear during that terrible time.

When he was about seventeen or eighteen years old in Nieder Chortitza, Jacob contracted typhus, a louse-borne illness spread by the roving bandits and soldiers. He observed that the anarchists who were invading their homes "were all loaded with lice, and they were just dying right and left." In his village, one-tenth of the population died within eight months, all infected with these lice. Jacob could remember his mother baking clothes in the oven to kill the eggs and everything. Typhus left Jacob unconscious for two weeks, but fortunately, he was young and healthy and was able to overcome the disease, although he was left with a residual hearing loss in his right ear. He had memories of transporting bodies and digging graves and hundreds of people in their village were all down, flat down, with typhus. They had one minister in town. Whenever somebody died, if at all possible, he was carried down to the cemetery. The land was sandy, and very often two people were buried in the same grave to save labour. There was no such a thing as having funerals because they were all sick. Also it was forbidden to have funerals. I mean, that's where you meet again and gather and carry on to spread the disease.

During parts of the Russian Civil War Nieder Chortitza was near one of the fronts and was in an area where the fighting was intense. Jacob shared that, during the Revolution it was very bad, thousands, and hundreds of thousands of people were killed. He said, "the Dnieper is the best front that can be. On one side there's one army, on the other side the other, shooting at each other. Finally one managed to get across somehow. They had pontoon bridges made out of barrels. Lots of barrels and on top of them, heavy four-inch planks. They were put out by the army, and over these they drove with horses and cannons. The cannons were pulled with horses. They didn't have motor vehicles then. The cannons they used, fired three-inch bullets... probably a range of five, six, seven miles, that's all." He went on to say that he remembered that, "as kids when the front was on, we used to climb up big trees and watch across the river, about a mile and a half, and whenever they shot we would see the smoke and in a minute or two we could hear the sound, and we sat and watched them shoot."

As Jacob recalled the atrocities of these times, he observed that, "the curious thing was, when you lived through this period, you got so hardened, used to the fact of dying, and people got married and everything kept on going."

In the 1920 Chortitza Census, Jacob and his siblings were living with their widowed mother in Nieder Chortitza, and on June 6, 1922, Jacob was baptized in Burwalde, Chortitza Colony, South Russia. In 1923, at twenty-one years of age, Jacob left Russia for Canada. Apparently, his family had decided that he should go ahead to Canada to continue his studies. The rest of the family intended to follow as soon as possible. There was some difficulty, however, obtaining medical clearance from the Canadian government for one of Jacob's sisters who had tested positive for tuberculosis.

During the interview with his grandson, Brad, Jacob spoke at length of his journey to Canada. He was clearly impressed with the organization and coordination of trains and ships, and was so thankful for the food that was provided to the immigrants. Jacob arrived in Quebec, Canada aboard the SS Montrose, and from there was taken by train to the town of Herbert in southern Saskatchewan.

Once in Canada, Jacob began to learn English, and he worked diligently at a variety of odd jobs in various towns in Saskatchewan to pay his way and to save money for high school. In the summers, he helped farmers 'stook' grain after harvest (bundling and standing it to dry in a triangular shape). He was employed as an assistant to carpenters, and as a railroad worker for the Canadian Pacific Railway. One of his more unusual jobs involved spying for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Jacob divulged that he rode freight trains listening for conversations about illegal activities. His son Don notes that since

Jacob spoke Russian, he was able to understand, and report back on discussions between members of Russian-speaking Doukhobor extremist groups (Sons of Freedom) who were causing trouble in Saskatchewan at that time. Jacob also once posed as an inmate to help the RCMP monitor their prisoners. He told a writer from the Mennonite Reporter, "I spent seventeen days in the Prince Albert jail; only the warden knew I wasn't a criminal." Many years later, Jacob took his sons to both Prince Albert and Regina to show them the RCMP barracks and training centres. Don recalls his Dad pointing out a high diving board, saying that recruits who were too frightened to jump into the pool far below were pushed.

After two years of hard work, Jacob moved to Langham and began taking high school classes. He boarded with an elderly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Johann Thiessen, and helped them with jobs on the property (e.g. chopping wood). The Thiessens took Jacob in as a part of their family, even including him in their will when they passed. In the 1926 Census of Prairie Provinces (Canada), twenty-three year old Jacob was listed as a boarder in the Thiessen home. Jacob felt that his education in Russia had been quite good, and in some of the subject areas (particularly algebra and geometry) he felt that he was ahead. Jacob was motivated and academic and was able to complete four years of schooling, grades nine to twelve, in just two and a half years.

Following his graduation from high school, Jacob began a program at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon.

After two years at the U of S, Jacob's formal education was interrupted by the Great Depression of the 1930s. Out of financial necessity, Jacob left the University and accepted a job at a hardware store in the town of Hague, Saskatchewan. It was in Hague that Jacob met the love of his life. Jacob and Margaret were both renters in a boarding house run by Mrs. Koehler Dyck. They were immediately drawn to one another, they dated, and were married on August 21,1936 in Hague by Margaret's father, Rev. David Toews.

Jacob and Margaret built a house in Hague across the street from the boarding house in which they had met, and Jacob spent his days working at the hardware store. Margaret wanted to continue in her teaching career, but as was customary in those days, she left her job as the couple began a family. Jacob and Margaret had five children between 1938 and 1949.

Jacob had been with the hardware store for a total of fourteen years when he and Margaret decided to purchase their own small grocery shop. Within a year, they were able to sell the small shop and buy a much bigger grocery store in Hague. Jacob was an astute businessman with a reputation for honesty and integrity, and his ventures were a great success. Those were busy, and very happy times.

The family was involved with the local Mennonite church, and often Jacob preached sermons and fulfilled the responsibilities of a lay minister. Visiting ministers and their families periodically came to town, and invariably dined and then spent the night in the Sawatzky home.

In the 1950s Jacob was also very involved with the Rosthern Junior College, an initiative of his late father-in-law. Jacob was the Chairman of the Board when the decision about where to rebuild the school was being made, and he participated in the ground-breaking ceremony in Rosthern.

Since his arrival in Canada, Jacob had tried to maintain contact with his family in Russia. He must have missed them desperately. Although he never spoke of it, he was likely aware that his mother passed away in approximately 1926. His brothers both died young (Johann in about 1931 and Abram in 1939) and his youngest sister, Katharina, reportedly died of tuberculosis in about 1939 at the age of twenty-three.

Around the time of WWII (1939-1945), Russia effectively isolated itself from the rest of the world, and the remaining members of Jacob's family were

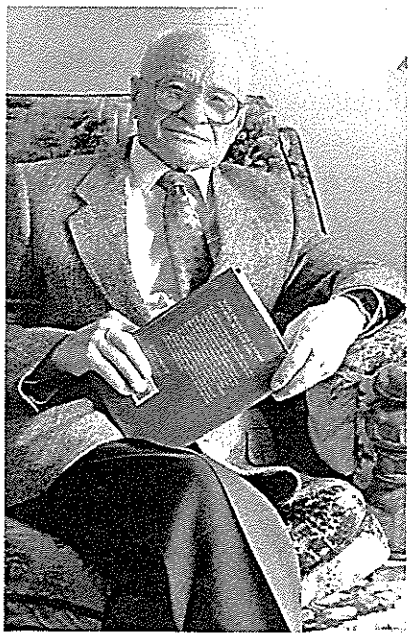
'lost' behind the Iron Curtain. Jacob actively searched for them for many years before he was able to locate them in the late 1950s. Through the Red Cross, Jacob learned that his remaining three sisters (Maria, Lena and Susie) and their families had been exiled to Siberia in 1941, about eighteen years after he left Russia. He finally located them, living in a village near the city of Novosibirsk.

Jacob wanted to see his sisters in Russia, but Margaret was terrified that something would happen and that he would be unable to return to Canada.

Jacob's children recall the gathering of fabrics, eyeglasses, mosquito screens for windows, and other goods that were regularly packaged and sent to his family.

Jacob became seriously ill during the late 1950s and required hospitalization. In light of that, as well as the fact that their children were approaching university age, the couple decided to sell their business in Hague and they moved to Saskatoon in 1960.

In the city, Jacob capitalized upon his natural talent for salesmanship and began selling real estate. He had several highly productive years prior to his retirement. In Saskatoon, Jake and Margaret were very involved with the First Mennonite Church, and later with Nutana Park Mennonite Church.



Through the years, Jacob and Margaret enjoyed traveling, and their journeys took them to Europe, the United States and all over Canada. One of their favourite places was the town of Banff, Alberta in the Rocky Mountains. They also spent a great deal of time visiting with their children and grandchildren. Jacob loved to tease and joke with his grandchildren. He frequently advised them to eat their vegetables so that they would grow to be big and strong like he was. But Jacob was a short man, five feet and three inches at best, and his grandchildren thought that this was very funny!

Margaret passed away on December 13, 1985. She was seventy-nine years old, and for the rest of his life, Jacob often talked about what a great, great lady she was.

In 1987, at eighty-five years of age, Jacob flew to the USSR with his daughters Marge and Eileen and son-in-law Blaine. He had hoped to visit his last living sister, Maria, and family in the small town of Lukovka where they still lived, approximately 60 km out of the city of Novosibirsk. Although Novosibirsk was on the original itinerary for the tour, plans were suddenly and unexpectedly changed, and that leg of the trip was cancelled by the Russian-based tour operator, Intourist. Always resourceful and adaptable, Jacob was able to make alternate plans which entailed flying his sister and her daughter, Sonya, to Moscow. After sixty-four years apart, the siblings were joyfully reunited!

In 1991, Jacob's son, Don, flew to Siberia to meet his Tante Maria and the rest of the family. He began to gather more information about their experiences and initiated a family tree. He wrote about this journey in the *Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan Journal* published in January 1996 (Volume 4-1). Since that time, the relationship between the Russian and the Canadian branches of our shared tree has continued to grow and flourish.

In the *Mennonite Reporter*, Jacob was quoted as saying, "Life has treated me royally. Whatever I touched succeeded." Jacob was a positive force and a highly resilient person. He chose to engage life fully and he remained active, inquisitive, outgoing

and grateful until the end. Jacob passed away in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on December 18, 1996 at ninety-four years of age. He and Margaret were beloved parents and grandparents and they continue to be missed dearly to this day.

When news of Jacob's passing reached our family in Russia, his great nephew, Viktor, wrote a beautiful tribute. Excerpts from the translated letter included that, "Uncle Jascha (Jacob) had a long and extraordinary life. Old age did not break him, he did not allow his illnesses to take over. Uncle Jascha did not feel old even when he was ninety-four, and Grandma Maria feels the same way. Members of Zavadsky family do not become old, their souls are always young." Viktor continued on to write that, of the many people who emigrate from the motherland, "only a few of them will be able to build in a new country a truly strong family with a prosperous future, the type that Uncle Jascha managed to build. He was right when he was choosing his fate, his destiny. If Uncle Jascha were to have stayed in the Soviet Union, then the history of his life would probably have been shorter. Because God decided to have it differently, now we are branches of the same tree, only divided by the ocean, but the roots are on our side."

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*JSB*

## MHSS Receives a Grant from New Horizons for Seniors Program

***by Harold Loewen***

As mentioned at our AGM last year, MHSS has been involved with getting life stories from elders in our communities in the past two years. Mainly gathered by one of our board members, Dick Braun, and a student hired for the summer from the University of Saskatchewan. We have learned many things from these interviews. The interviews have been a way for seniors to impart their experiences to the next generation. The interviews are a record of a different time, life lived with lessons for us now and the future.

Building on these interviews, MHSS planned on expanding these interviews into virtual tours of various communities. As we began planning for the virtual tour interviews we realized that the New Horizon for Seniors program gives out grants that assist in funding certain things to purchase equipment for the virtual tours: a video camera, laptop, software, provide money for editing and for mileage and hotel acommodation if needed.

We applied and received funds to assist us in doing the virtual tours and gathering this information. The plans are to have volunteer seniors inter-

view three to four people in each community. In addition, pictures that people have of buildings and streets in the community and of people can be scanned, or a video can be made of present-day community members and of existing buildings.

The initial editing will be completed in a timely manner due to the assistance of a professional to help with the editing. The later editing will be done by the volunteer seniors that may also be doing some of the interviews. Therefore the editing for the later interview/virtual tours will be completed in May/June 2022.

Presently we are a bit behind schedule due to the restrictions of COVID, however we are hoping to make up this time in the near future.

The project is setting up virtual tours in rural Saskatchewan. The virtual tours will be of sites in the community (listed below) with life stories being attached to the various locations. Seniors and their nieghbours will be interviewed including males, females, new Canadians, and First Nations.

Communities are: Glenbush, Carrot River, Meadow Lake, Swift Current, Herschel, Woodrow, Sonningdale, Cutknife, Nielburg, Watrous, Ponteix, Drake, Swan Plain, Big River, Leask, Swanson.

Interviewing "senior" Mennonite people and their neighbours will create a record of history that is presently being lost; many of the Saskatchewan pioneers are passing away. The vitual tours will retain a record/life experience of our history for the young and old. Due to the depopulation of the rural areas, many of our rural communities are disappearing. This project gives seniors a chance to tell stories about the communties, and by making videos of local buildings and locations to make the stories real.

On completion of a virtual tour of a community, the rural communities will have a record in the Archives and the information will be available online.

Some of the interviews and pictures will be used in future publications of the Historian. In addition, a presentation will be made at the yearly AGM.

Also a presentation will be available in seniors homes for people not able to travel. We hope this will help in retaining the history of the mentioned rural communities.

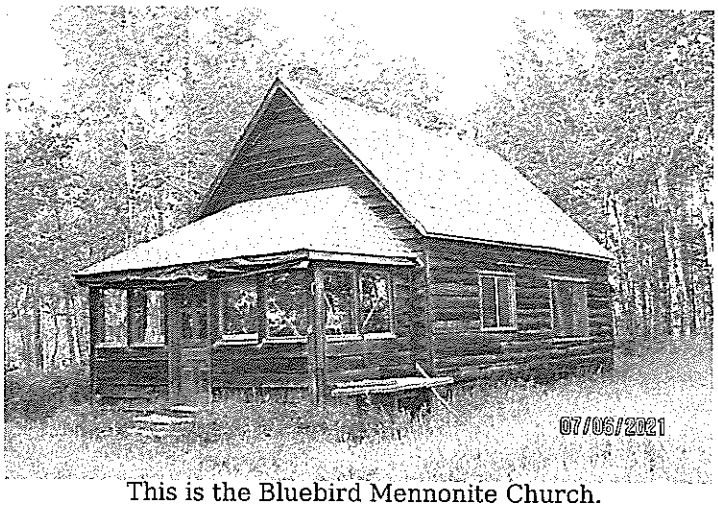
The videos will also be available for the education programs in the province for the future. Teachers will be able to use the videos as a tool for education on local Saskatchewan areas. if you are or were from one of the mentioned areas and would want to be interviewed or know of someone that would want to be interviewed please call either:

Dick Braun - 306-239-4765
Harold Loewen - 306-242-7084
Leonard Doell - 306-978-7831

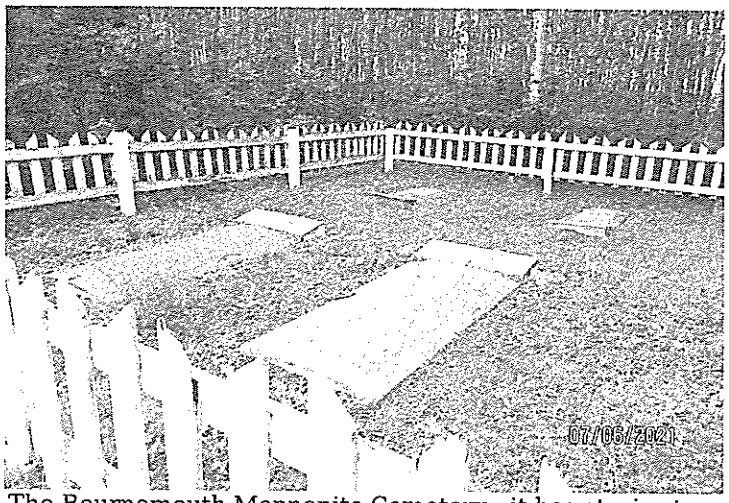
*HL*

**Ike Epp of Glenbush/Rabbit Lake District took 5 MHSS Board Members on a tour of Churches & Cemeteries in His Area**

(some teasers...)




This is the Bluebird Mennonite Church.




The Bournemouth Mennonite Cemetery - it has stories to tell. These will likely be ready for our next issue of the Historian.


On July 6, 2021 Five MHSS Board members, Susan Braun, Elmer Regier, John Reddekopp, Jake Buhler and Dick Braun, went on a special tour with our newest board member, Ike Epp, who showed them various small Mennonite churches and cemeteries that many of us have probably never heard of. Here they are in front of the Hoffnungsfelder (Fields of Hope) Church in Glenbush. They had a wonderful day, and are brimming with stories to tell. Watch for them next time!

**Websites**

**MHSS**: *mhss.sk.ca*

**Cemeteries**: *https://mhss.sk.ca/cemeteries/*

**Mennonite Encyclopedia Online: (GAMEO)**
*gameo.org/news/mennonite-encylopedia-online*

**E-Updates Ezine** (announcements email):
Subscribe by entering your email on our website page: *mhss.sk.ca/E-Updates.shtml*
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**Saskatoon, SK. S7K 7H8**

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Memberships: $35 for one year; $65 for two years; $90 for three years.
Gift subscriptions are available.
Membership fees and donations to the Society are elibible for tax receipts. Extra copies are available at the Archives for $3/copy.

**Send in Feedback & Stories**

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

**MHSS Office and Archives, & SMH Editor**
110 LaRonge Road, Room 900
Saskatoon, SK. S7K 7H8
306-242-6105
Archives: *mhss@sasktel.net*
or submit directly to: *SMH-Ruth@mhss.sk.ca*