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Gordon A. Friesen (1909-1992) Humble Saskatchewan Roots to Internationally Renowned Hospital and Health Care Planner

by Verner Friesen

Gordon Friesen was born on January 21, 1909 in the Eigenheim Community west of Rosthern where his father, Abram J. Friesen, was a country school teacher at the time. Later the family moved to Laird. Gordon's mother was Elise (later called Eliza) Friesen, a sister to my Dad.

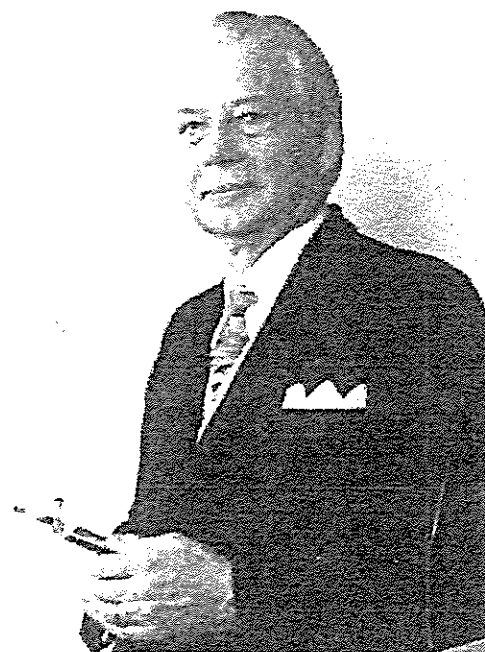
After graduating from the Laird High School in 1926, Gordon started work as a clerk in the Saskatoon Branch of the Bank of Nova Scotia. At age 20 he was offered a job as book-keeper in the Saskatoon City Hospital. Within a year he became Business Manager of the 300-bed hospital.

I was still a pre-schooler when my Dad took me along to visit Mom who was a patient in the City Hospital. Her nephew Gordon had been to visit her and brought her some bananas. Mom offered me a banana, but I had never tasted bananas before so I refused it.

Weeks later when Mom was home from the hospital, on a Saturday, Gordon came to visit her on our farm nine miles north of Laird – a much appreciated visit.

Most of Gordon's eight years at City Hospital were the depression years – the "Dirty 30s". One of his challenges will have been to collect the hospital fees when money was very scarce. In the case of our family, Dad's financial . . .

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The Editor's Perspective**Ruth Marlene Friesen**

These eight years as editor of the *Historian* have been a delightful adventure. I've learned so much, and truly enjoyed the detail work of layout and fine-tuning some articles.

Sometimes I've even had surprise feedback correspondence with people from my past. This happened this summer when I heard from my very first school teacher, Mr. Bill Janzen, who was teaching for his very first year at the Ebenfeld country school near Laird, where my dad had just got a job as a farm hand for a Mr. Henry Speiser.

We moved into a house that Mr. Speiser provided the first week of school, so I was eager and impatient to start school, especially as I was a few days late.

The year before we lived in Rosthern and I'd had an emergency appendectomy. The doctor told my parents that it was such a close call for me that I was to be kept back from school until the following year.

Mom had attended German school in Chortitz with her uncle David I. Friesen as her teacher. When English became mandatory she just got in two years of English school before she was taken out of school as she was needed at home. With her limited English she had prepared me to answer two questions when I started at Ebenfeld school.

If someone asked, "What is your name?" I should answer, "Ruth Marlene Friesen." If they asked, "How old are you?" I should say, "Seven years old." I KNEW I was going to learn to read, and that meant books! I would learn to read books!

I credit Mr. Bill Janzen for opening these wonders to me. He brought a fresh apple box of books from the Rosthern Library every few weeks and every evening he let me take one picture book home to practice my reading.

I sat in Mom's rocker with my brothers each standing on one of the curved rockers, and my baby sister on my lap. I read each book over and over until we all had them memorized.

If I got stuck on a word, Mom would remind me that she couldn't read English that well. I would have to sound it out, just as Mr. Janzen had taught me.

(cont'd on page 3)

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

John Reddekopp

In the past couple of years my family tree, at least my knowledge of it, has grown in some unexpected ways.

Previously in this publication, I described how I came to find out that this tree included members of an Alberta Hutterite colony. Shortly after I made that discovery I found that there are also branches of that tree in the United States.

I was at a hockey tournament in Minnesota where my 13-year-old (at that time) grandson was playing. In conversation the mother of one of his teammates mentioned that her grandmother was a Redekop and that the family had originally settled in Manitoba. She provided me with some information about her grandmother and I suggested that I could check it out in the Grandma program when I got back home but I also told her that there was likely not a connection because of the different spellings of the last name.

Well, I was wrong about that! We do have a common great-great-grandfather, Johann Redekop. My great grandfather was the oldest son, Johann G Redekop, who came from South Russia in 1875 and settled in the Gretna area. Her great-grandfather was Wilhelm Redekop, the youngest son who had been raised by another family after their mother passed away. Wilhelm came to Gretna from Russia in 1892 to live with his older brother. These brothers had not seen each other prior to this time.

Wilhelm's future wife, Aganeta, arrived in Manitoba later that same year. They farmed in the Gretna area until 1906, when they took up a homestead south of Swift Current.

After seven years they were on the move again. This time they took up a homestead near Chinook, Montana. Many of the descendants of Wilhelm Reddekop are still in Montana while some have moved to other parts of the United States, including Minnesota, where I had a great visit with my third cousin, Andrea, in August of this year.



Ruth Friesen has just finished her 8th year as the editor of our Historian. Our society has a contract with her to serve in this capacity as well as being the webmaster for the MHSS website.

Beginning with the next issue, we as a Board have decided that the duties of the editor will be filled by volunteers and we have the people in place for this. We greatly appreciate all that Ruth has done for the Society. She will remain as the webmaster. Thank you, Ruth!

JR

The Editor's Perspective - (Cont'd from pg 2)

Of course, Mr. Janzen also taught me to spell and write in English, and I am ever so grateful for this skill as well. When I put my left hand onto paper, or both hands onto my keyboard, I pour forth words just about as fast as I can think. I have boxes full of journals and have written some books. Not all have been published, but some have.

Over the last seven months I've updated, expanded and added photos to some family history and genealogy eBooks, which (sigh!) are at last for sale on my genealogy site, agodylinheritance.com

In 1996 a friend and I decided to challenge and remind each other every month to write at least one poem just so we might develop that skill. At the end of the year I decided to make up a small batch of our poetry booklets for each of us to give away as Christmas gifts.

The last poem in my booklet was addressed to Mr. Bill Janzen, and entitled, *I Owe You Gratitude*. (I did not know where or how to reach him, until he emailed me this summer. He also sent me photos of the school and all eight grades on the steps.)

Since it has only kind words about and to him, if there is a filler gap of the right size, I'll share that poem with you. Otherwise, - you will have to contact me to ask for a copy.

[See page 12 for school photos & the poem is on page 27 - "I owe You Gratitude"]

RMF

P.S. My Gratitude now includes MHSS for the great experiences in this editor role.

(cont'd from page 1)

records indicate that in 1937, he owed City Hospital an overdue amount of \$680.20.

During Gordon's years at City Hospital (1929-37) he took advantage of every opportunity to broaden his education. He first took a course in accounting at the University of Saskatchewan. For six summers he took a month's leave of absence to learn more about hospitals, by observation and study. Two summers he spent at the University of Chicago, attending programs and institutes on hospital administration. One summer he visited 20 of the best known hospitals in the United States and Canada, observing their methods, equipment and design. Already at this early stage in his life it looked like he might be heading for a career in hospital planning.

In 1937, when Gordon was 28 years old, he accepted a position as administrator of the hospital in Belleville, Ontario. Under his leadership, Belleville General Hospital underwent an extensive program of expansions, more than doubling its capacity.

During World War II, Gordon enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force and was appointed personal assistant to the Director of Medical Services for the RCAF. Within 18 months he became Senior Administrative Officer of the Medical Branch of the RCAF.

In 1943 he was posted overseas in the British zone of occupied Germany, and a year later was promoted to the post of Military Governor of Kreis Brilon in Westphalia.

This was a chaotic situation as the war came to a close and thousands of refugees needed to be resettled. However, upon leaving Germany in 1946, Gordon received this strong affirmation from the community he had served: "You came as an enemy. You dealt with us as human beings and parted as a friend. May Heaven bless your future way of life."

After returning to Canada, Gordon married Jane Helen Fuller. Jane had a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Western University in London, Ontario, and had also done some post-graduate studies. With her significant organizational and managerial talents she worked her way up to become Director of Nursing in the new Kitchener-

Waterloo Hospital. In that capacity, she worked with her husband on the nursing aspects of the Friesen concepts.

Throughout the 19 years of the existence of Friesen International Inc., Jane Friesen was one of the most knowledgeable and experienced staff, and travelled extensively on several continents visiting hospitals and health care organizations.

Gordon himself, back in Canada, returned to Belleville for a few months, not as administrator but as a consultant, and then accepted an invitation to become administrator of the Kitchener-Waterloo hospital, an old hospital about to be replaced. For eighteen months Gordon worked with planners and architects on plans for the new 340-bed hospital. This hospital featured the beginnings of what became known as the *Friesen Concepts* of hospital innovation.

Involvement with the American College of Hospital Administrators and the American Hospital Association led to Gordon being offered an appointment as Principal Consultant for a chain of hospitals being planned for the United Mine Workers in the mining area of Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia. From 1952 to 1954, he helped set up ten hospitals in the area. This work helped establish Gordon's reputation as a gifted hospital consultant. The unique and revolutionary concepts he introduced in these hospitals led to a demand for his services and the founding, in 1954, of his consulting firm in Washington, D.C., "Gordon A. Friesen and Associates."

At the same time, Gordon was lecturing at universities and medical schools to promote his innovative ideas on hospital reform.

Meanwhile, his ideas were becoming so remarkably popular that in 1965, to help take his system abroad, he established a new consulting firm, Gordon A. Friesen International. Eventually he was sending 35 people to different parts of the world to help promote setting up hospitals according to his plans. Friesen International built hospitals in Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, Mexico, and France, in addition to the United States and Canada. In 1971, a sister firm was set up in Canada, "Gordon A. Friesen Canada Ltd," to concentrate on Canadian projects.

The Union Hospital in Biggar is the only Saskatchewan hospital built according to the Friesen plan.

How did that come about? There was a need for a larger hospital in Biggar. The plan was to build a 32-bed hospital. A medical staff person made the critical comment that most hospitals built today have not improved a lot from the conventional way things have been done for the last 100 years.

Fortunately, the administrator at the time, N. R. Werezak, had been at a meeting where he heard Gordon Friesen sharing about his concepts for innovative hospital planning. Through Werezak's initiative, Gordon was invited to a planning meeting with the hospital board. Gordon said he would be pleased to be involved with the Biggar project because he was born in Saskatchewan. The result of the board meeting was that Gordon Friesen International was hired as consultant.

A small hospital would not lend itself to some of the features included in bigger hospitals, like the extensive use of automation. However, most of the significant features of the Friesen plan were incorporated as follows:

1.) A Y-shaped structure providing for centralized handling of material in a processing and distribution department (SPD). This innovation enhances efficiency and reduces the cost of supplying the needs of patients, nurses, and doctors. The SPD distributes throughout the hospital all needed items, from surgical instruments to the smaller items needed in patient rooms. The only exception is food which is processed and distributed by the dietary department.

2.) The traditional nurse's station is replaced by an Administrative Control Centre (ACC). All

communications, oral and written, between departments and services within the hospital pass through the ACC. This communication system includes patient room paging, intercom and emergency

voice paging.

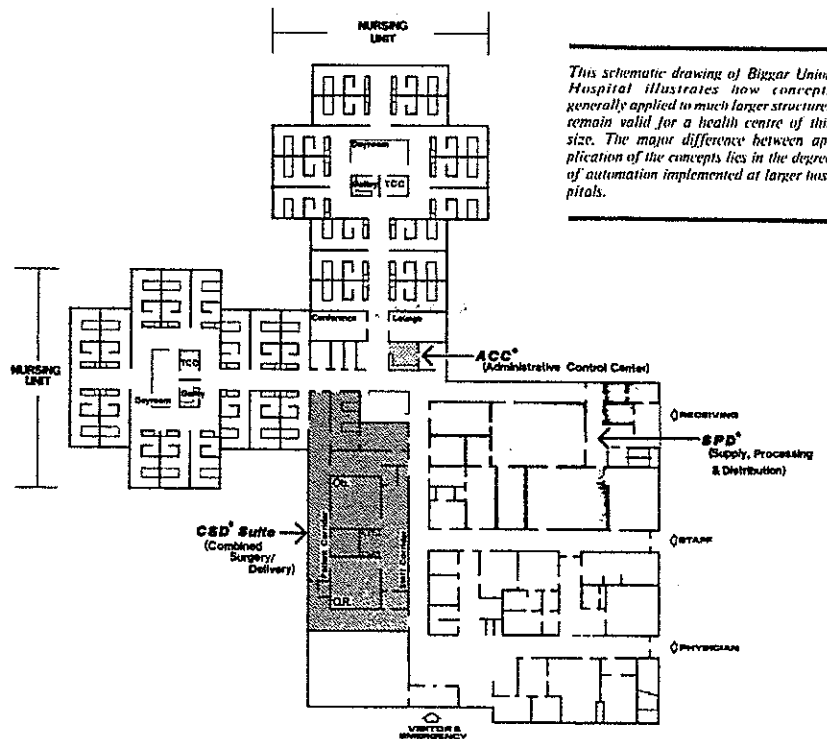
This innovation frees the nurses to move through patient rooms during the whole shift. Even supply needs and charting are handled near the patient's bedside. There is an admissions office on every floor staffed by a receptionist/hostess/coordinator.

3.) The Nursever, a supply cabinet built into the wall of each

patient room with access from both outside and inside of the room. The cabinet is divided into "clean" and "soiled" compartments. In the Nursever nurses and doctors have available all essential supplies needed for patient care and treatment. Supply technicians separately stock clean items and remove soiled and used items without having to enter the patient's room. The nurses are also provided with pagers to give quick access to the various departments as needed.

4.) Mostly private rooms. Private rooms provide for more patient rest and more privacy between patients and their doctors and reduce the need to move patients for medical and nursing needs. They also make possible a maximum occupancy rate. The typical private room includes a service alcove which houses a shower, toilet and washroom out of sight of the patient and also provides a private work area for the nurse.

5.) Combining the surgery and obstetrics rooms to do away with costly duplication of staff, space and equipment by making use of two similarly equipped



Biggar Union Hospital Plans

rooms for both functions.

The innovations above reduce hospital costs and make it possible for nurses to do their work more efficiently, cutting down on their "travel time."

Larger hospitals added to the above five features an automatic car transportation system (ACT). This is an automatic conveyor system to make distribution of supplies more efficient.

The idea was inspired by collaboration with a Scandinavian Engineering Corporation. Everything from medical supplies and drugs to linens and meals is moved quickly to any point in the hospital. The carts move both horizontally and vertically employing an overhead monorail to deliver supplies from the distribution centre, and also return contaminated and used items for disposal and reprocessing. For efficient distribution of smaller items, the pneumatic tube system is used. This pneumatic tube system has stations in every patient room and on every floor.

Gordon's concepts are patient-centered, designed to render complete and humane patient care with a maximum of efficiency. Gordon believed that equipment and techniques alone are not enough. Not only the rational and physical person, but also the spiritual person must be cared for. A hospital must be "a house of mercy."

Admittedly, some of Gordon's innovative ideas were seen as impractical and made him highly unpopular in some circles. Gordon's reply to this was: "If there is no dedication and discipline, a hospital built around Nurservers, SPD centres, ready food programs, good mechanical distribution systems, is not going to work." Only the hospitals that had efficient and dedicated management could make the Friesen system function as intended.

Gordon Friesen's business continued to prosper into the 1970s. However, in 1973 he sold his firm to American Medical International. He and his wife moved to Arva, Ontario, near London, where they built a large house, and he continued some consulting on an independent basis for a time.

Eventually, he retired completely, capping 50 years dedicated to the advancement of improved hospital design and health care.

Gordon can be credited as a pioneer in the

hospital consulting industry, one of the first to challenge previously unquestioned health care philosophies. Few people in the 20th century have equaled his impact upon hospital design and healthcare.

In 1970, near the end of his career, Gordon received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from George Washington University, just one of many honours bestowed on him in recognition of his contribution toward improving the quality of health care in North America and beyond. Among the many honours, was the establishing of a "Friesen Chair" at the George Washington University.

Gordon Friesen died on January 24th, 1992, just a few days after his 83rd birthday. At his memorial service, Richard F. Southby, Professor of Health Services at Washington University, gave this tribute:

"In so many ways throughout his professional career, Gordon Friesen made countless contributions towards improving the quality of healthcare enjoyed by people throughout the world. Gordon Friesen's revolutionary ideas challenged the status quo, and soon became known as the Friesen Concepts. The advantages of integrating supply processing and distribution systems in hospitals were based on his philosophy that "form should follow function."

Friesen hospitals have been built in many countries throughout the world, and where Gordon's prescriptions have been followed faithfully, they have been outstanding successes. Gordon's outstanding contributions to the healthcare field were recognized by two universities awarding him honorary doctorates and many professional associations presenting him with awards.

Quite naturally, we feel distressed and lost at this time. It is hard to accept the loss of a friend who has been so kind, generous, thoughtful and decent to all who came in contact with him throughout his long life. But we must not let those feelings overcome our rejoicing and gratitude for the countless benefits of Gordon Friesen's life. Our faith assures us that it is wrong to despair. We believe in the power of God's love and his assurance of eternal life in his spiritual kingdom. We know this is not the end but another beginning.

Sources:

1. Personal memories and records.
2. Articles about Gordon and his work received from Gordon's brother Doug in Ontario.
3. Information received from Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa:
 - (a) **Friesen, G. A. Biographical Sketches**
Reference Number MG31 B 51 Vol. 1 File:3
 - (b) **Friesen, G. A. "The Spiritual Aspect" Article**
Reference Number MG31 B 51 Vol. File: 15
 - (c) **Friesen, Jane Biographical Sketch**
Reference Number MG31 B 51 Vol.1 File: 31
 - (d) **Biggar Union Hospital, Biggar, Sask. Article**
Reference Number MG31 51 Vol.4 File: 13

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More Articles on our Website:

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

by Ruth Marlene Friesen

Unfortunately, there is not always room enough in the Historian for everything that comes to our attention. Especially, when an article has plenty of photos or images - it is a good idea to put them on our website where there is plenty of room, and we can use the images in full-colour!

Hague's River Valley Museum had a Mennonite Cultural Day on their compound on September 25th. They had a full day of activities, including an old-fashioned pig butchering day, and bread baked in an outdoor clay oven.

I, (Ruth Friesen), took a number of photos. See my photo story at mhss.sk.ca/reports/Hague-Cultural-Day-2021.shtml

We also have a section on the website for church histories. So far we have very few, but Ernie Hartz, who looks after the Haultain Lutheran church cemetery told me stories on the phone of that church's history. He was happy to comply when I asked if he would write up a history of that little church near Dundurn and with many Mennonite neighbours around them. He did a good job and sent in a batch of photos.

This too, works best on the website; see it here: mhss.sk.ca/CH/Haultain-Trinity-Lutheran-Church.shtml

RMF

**Margaret (Toews) Sawatzky:
Life of Loving, Dreaming, and Learning**

by Janet (Sawatzky) Beaudin

My grandmother, Margaret Toews, was born on May 4, 1906 in the town of Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Her parents were David Toews (1870-1947) and Margarete Friesen (1881-1941). Margaret was one of nine children; eight of them girls. The children were: Marie (1901-1964), Benno (1903-1986), Margaret (1906-1985), Elsie (1908-2000), Dorothy ('Dora' 1910-1974), Louise (1912-2010), Elma (1915-1994), Anna (1918-2011), and Irene (1921-1926).



In the July 1906 Census of the Northwest Provinces, baby Margaret was with her parents in Rosthern in the District of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan. Also in the home were Margaret's older sister Marie, age five, and three-year-old brother Benno.

Margaret's maternal grandfather, Abraham Friesen (1849-1901), had immigrated from Prussia to Canada in 1894 with his wife and family. He had settled in nearby Tiefengrund, Saskatchewan, but passed away before Margaret was born. Margaret and her older siblings likely had some early memories of his wife, their maternal grandmother, Margarete (Regier) Friesen (1859-1912), but she passed away when Margaret was only six years old. Margaret's maternal grandparents had seventeen children, fifteen of whom reached adulthood, so the Toews children had many doting aunts and uncles as they grew up in Saskatchewan. In an article written about the Friesen side of the family, Margaret's sister, Elsie, remembered that, "We loved to visit our aunts, uncles, and cousins in Tiefengrund. They were always so jolly, and the food they served was always so delicious." (Friesen, V, p.73)

Margaret's paternal grandparents were Jacob Toews (1838-1922) and Maria Wiebe (1838-1924). Following a difficult trek across Central Asia, they

had emigrated to the USA in 1884. They first settled in Newton, Kansas, and then relocated to Aberdeen, Idaho, in 1917. I wonder how much time Margaret and her siblings were able to spend with their faraway grandparents?

At the time of the 1911 Census of Canada, five-year-old Margaret was living with her family in Rosthern, in what was at that time, the District of Saskatoon. By all accounts, growing up in the Toews' household offered rich experiences, an abundance of love, and a calm and gentle upbringing. Margaret's father, a teacher and a minister, was often away from home for work, but her mother rose to the challenge and raised the children with kindness, engagement and interest, and each day, she modelled generosity and caring for others (Arnold, M., p.19). Margaret's sister, Louise, recalled that the family was very poor, but happy.

Along with many blessings, there were also challenges within the Toews' home. For instance, Louise shared that the Mennonites' faith-based activism for peace triggered some of the local people during World War I, and that their father, in his role as a church leader, was the target of hatred and disdain for those individuals (Arnold, M., p. 19). Margaret later recalled with her son, Don, that during WWI, she and her siblings had to be careful when they walked home from school because, at times, other children threw stones at them. They had to hide behind buildings and trees for safety as they walked; this was a very frightening time for the Toews children. Likely the non-Mennonite children in the town had acquired some ideas from their own parents about peace activism and conscientious objectors in the face of war. The idea of 'pacifism' angered many during WWI, despite many Mennonites identifying alternative ways that they could contribute to their country. At one point during the war, angry soldiers banged on the door of the Toews' home, demanding to speak to Margaret's father. Her little sister, Louise, recalled that the children hid behind their mother as she addressed the group of men and informed them that her husband was away on

business. That must have been a traumatizing experience for all, including young Margaret. Although the mob left the Toews' home, they subsequently went to the church and caused some damage there (Harder, H., p. 99). After the war ended, there was a flu epidemic, and the Toews family, like so many others, became ill (Arnold, M., pp. 19-20).

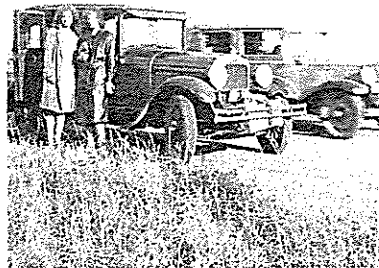
In the June 1921 Census, fifteen-year-old Margaret was at home in Rosthern with her family. She was noted to be a student, and according to her son, Don, she was a very good student. Margaret attended Rosthern Public School, and later, the German English Academy (now called Rosthern Junior College). In 1923, upon completing Grade Eleven at the age of seventeen, she took her first teaching job in Saskatchewan. She shared this information with her children decades later, and they believe those early positions to have been in the Laird and Hague areas.

Margaret was baptized by her father, Reverend David Toews, on June 8, 1924. Like her mother, Margaret grew into a beautiful young woman, willowy with blue eyes and sandy brown hair. She did not like that her hair was curly, and often put a drop of olive oil in it in an attempt to tame her locks. Margaret was a smart, independent young woman with a gentle nature and a soft voice.

As a young woman, Margaret loved to drive cars. She obtained a driver's license, and drove her siblings around the countryside and on several lengthy trips. One particularly memorable journey for her was to the distant mountain resort town of Banff, Alberta, in 1925. Margaret loved the Rocky Mountains in Alberta. Whether in the mountains or at home on the prairies of Saskatchewan, she was attuned to nature, watching woodpeckers and delighting in the return of robins and other songbirds each spring. She appreciated the beauty of flowers and sunsets, and she recited memorized poetry verses for her children about the marvels of the natural world all



Margaret as a teen



around them. Some of her favourite varieties of flowers were irises and peonies, and even today, seeing them brings back beautiful memories of her for her family.

In the June 1926 Census of the Prairie Provinces, twenty-year-old Margaret was recorded as being in Rosthern Town in the District of Prince Albert with her parents and eight siblings. German was noted to be the mother tongue of everyone in the household. Interestingly, Margaret seems to have been recorded twice in the 1926 Census, as she also shows up as a boarder in the Bergen residence in the village of Laird, Saskatchewan along with her brother, Benno. That she was with her big brother, also an educator, makes me wonder if she was honing her skills as a young teacher and may have been learning from him.

In December, 1926, tragedy struck the Toews' household in Rosthern. Margaret was living and working in the Hague area at the time (Harder, H., p. 160), but the events of that horrible night profoundly impacted the whole Toews family. On an extremely cold night, a fire broke out and burned the Toews' home to the ground. Somehow, everyone made it out of the house but all had burns, injuries, and frostbite (Arnold, M., p. 20). The last person to be rescued was Margaret's youngest sister, Irene.

Decades later, Margaret shared with her daughters that her brother-in-law, Herman Riesen (who was at that time a boarder in the Toews' home), had heroically reentered the burning structure and was able to find and retrieve the unconscious little girl. Tragically, Irene was badly burned and she died one day after the fire. (Arnold, M., p. 20). She was only five years old. Her coffin was brought into the hospital before being taken to the church so that the family could have time with Irene. Because of "injuries and trauma, the Toews parents were not able to attend the funeral service in the church" (Harder, H., pp. 160-162). The community was supportive, but the grief that the family must have felt is unimaginable to me.

Margaret completed Grade Twelve after working as a teacher for several years, and she went on to earn a Teaching Certificate from 'Normal School' (Teachers' College) in Saskatoon.

Margaret was hired as the first teacher at the brand new public school at Sheldon Farms (Hanley).



Margaret, the first teacher at Sheldon School.

She taught at Sheldon School for at least two years, from 1930 to 1932, before accepting a position at a school in the town of Hague. Daughter, Eileen, obtained an article written by Margaret in 1975 in which she reminisced about her time at Sheldon School (Editorial Committee of Hanley, pp. 43-44), and Anita Froese kindly shared a 1931 photo of Margaret with her students.

In Hague, while boarding at Mrs. Koehler Dyck's house, Margaret met a dapper young man from Russia, Jacob Sawatzky. The two dated, fell in love, and were married on August 21, 1936, by Margaret's father, Rev. David Toews. As they began their life together, Jacob had some traditional beliefs about gender roles, and felt that he should be the primary provider for the family. Margaret left her teaching position, and the couple had five children between 1938 and 1949. According to their daughters, Jacob's thoughts on Margaret continuing her career softened over the years and he came to fully support his wife in her choices. Daughter, Eileen, recalled that, in the 1950s, Margaret was involved in establishing a Kindergarten program in Hague, and that she was periodically called in as a substitute teacher in the Hague School when her own children were still attending there.

Margaret was a loving and gentle mother. In 2001, each of her children shared written memories of their childhood experiences and feeling surrounded by love as they grew up. Youngest daughter, Dorothy, worded it beautifully by saying, "Mom and Dad both put so much value into family. Mom, loving and generous of spirit, always had time for us, and our long talks would often go into the night. Dad ensured we had every opportunity to learn and grow as individuals. I feel blessed to have been raised in such a loving home and to have had such wonderful

parents."

Margaret's creativity and gentle spirit was found in her parenting style as reflected in a story shared by son, Don, about a time when he and his brother, Bob, were arguing. Margaret, their Mom, had them wash opposite sides of the same window. Both boys discovered that it's difficult to stay angry when you have to look right at your opponent.

Themes of childhood experiences shared by the five siblings are a testament to their parents; the family was very musical, with some of the children going on to become accomplished pianists and singers. They were active, and sports were also given priority in the home. As were gardening, climbing trees, rafting in Eder's ditch, outdoor games in the summer, and skating on Fisher's Lake, sledding, and hockey and 'crack the whip' on the outdoor town rink in winter. It sounds as though the Sawatzky household was a busy hub of joyful activity, both work and play, year round. One son was later inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame. Daughter, Eileen, provided a quote that Margaret was fond of sharing with her children; *'Viele Hände machen der Arbeit ein schnelles Ende'* (in English, 'Many hands make light work'), and daughter, Marge, recalled how much she valued feeling like part of a team when they did chores. Margaret, although often quiet, was very articulate when she spoke and according to her son, Don, was a stickler for proper grammar, both



in English and in German. She was also very good with math, and was able to explain key concepts to her children through their high school years to support them as they completed their homework.

Both Margaret and Jake loved to travel and shared that passion with their children. The



family took car trips to Emma Lake, Batoche, Manitou Beach, and even piled all seven of them into their 1941 Dodge and drove to Banff, Alberta. Son, Bob, commented that, "Mom must have been a magician to keep us all content and happy," and that, "Mom's enthusiasm for the beauty of nature rubbed off on all of us. She would be in awe of the beauty of the mountains, or the deep valleys (frequent family versions of "Down in the Valley, the Valley so Low," were sung as our car wended its way down), or the trees or the animals."

There were many visits with extended family in Rosthern and Tiefengrund. Margaret was very close to her siblings, and daughter, Dorothy, recalled that, "when they got together, there would be so much laughter; the tears would run down Mom's face."

Margaret was very involved in the Hague Mennonite Church and frequently taught Sunday School classes. She was part of the Ladies Aid, and assumed the role of president for a number of years. Margaret was also president of the Rosenorter Women's Conference for six years, and of the Saskatchewan Women's Conference for another six.

Because Jacob was also heavily involved with the church, visiting ministers and their families periodically came to town, and invariably dined, and then spent the night in the Sawatzky home. Margaret was an amazing cook and baker, and graciously accommodated all visitors. Brown breads, borscht, klups soup, verenicke and farmer sausage. And the pies! Don remembered that, "Mom's pies were always a special treat - apple, cherry, rhubarb, flapper, or lemon."

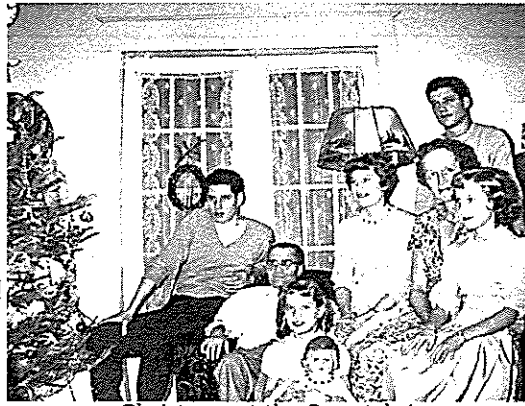
Both Margaret and Jake cared deeply for their community. For instance, daughter, Eileen, saw that they were "concerned about those who were less fortunate than we were and a clear memory for me in this regard is that of unemployed strangers sitting at our picnic table enjoying one of Mom's delicious meals before they traveled farther on the train in search of employment." Daughter, Marge, further observed that her mom regularly brought food to families in crisis, and that Margaret also provided consistent care and support to an unfortunate child in the town whose mother had passed away.

Christmas was a magical time in the Sawatzky household. All five Sawatzky children mentioned it in their written memories of growing up in Hague, and the grandchildren also have beautiful memories of Christmases together! Daughter, Marge, recalled the baking, the pfefferneusen, ammonia cookies, coconut macaroons, and thimble cookies.

The children would all thumb through the Sears Christmas Catalogue and make wishes. As Christmas approached, Marge remembered "the smell of the Christmas tree, practicing songs and plays at school and Sunday School; the anticipation built until finally Christmas Eve arrived – night of all nights! Dressed in our Christmas dresses (often sewn by Mom), hair in ringlets, feeling like princesses, we were off to the Christmas Eve service at church to perform the pageant and sing carols. Two favourites of mine were, *Stille Nacht*, and, *Oh Du Fröhliche*. The Christmas bags – brown paper bags with an orange, some candies and peanuts for every child.

Daughter, Eileen, shared that, "On Christmas Eve, after returning from the Sunday School concert, we would hustle to bed where we would listen for the Christmas elves in the dining room filling our bowls with nuts and candy, and placing our unwrapped gifts alongside our bowls. The anticipation and excitement were overwhelming! In the morning, Dad would always read the Christmas story from the book of Luke and we would sing two carols; we were then allowed to dash to the table and inspect our gifts. We were never disappointed!" A day full of wonder!

In 1960, after 25 years in Hague, the Sawatzky family sold their grocery store and moved to the City of Saskatoon. Son, Don, noted that Margaret was "a lifelong learner and, after moving to Saskatoon, wanted to go to University." The two took a course together, both earning university credit, and Margaret enrolled in additional classes. Daughter, Eileen, recalled that, in the mid-1960s, Margaret took a position as a tutor at Kilburn



Christmas at the Sawatzky's

Hall, a shelter for neglected children and a custody facility for young offenders. By the late-1960s, Margaret was employed as house-mother at the nurses' residence at the University Hospital. Son, Don, shared that "she would have been the empathic listener students would look forward to talking with and confiding in."

In Saskatoon, Margaret and Jacob lived in a beautiful bungalow, which eventually, was filled with their children, the spouses, and all the grandchildren each Christmas and frequently throughout the year! Somehow – impossibly – there was always enough room for everyone! A crabapple tree in the yard was perfect for climbing, and there were sweet-peas, beds of colourful flowers, and light pink peonies! Margaret and Jake were involved with the First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, and were subsequently a part of establishing the Nutana Park Church. They were generous with their time and with their resources.

During their later years, Margaret and Jacob continued travelling, and their journeys took them to Europe, the United States and all over Canada. They also spent a great deal of time visiting with their children and grandchildren. Margaret became ill in the early 1980s and Jacob provided her with support and round-the-clock care until her death on December 13, 1985. She was 79 years old. Jacob died on December 18, 1996 at 94 years of age. Both Margaret and Jacob died in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and both of them will be missed forever. They were loved so very dearly and memories of them will continue to be shared with their great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren. Her son, Don, reflected that Margaret "was a dreamer, a listener, had strong views, and was above all a loving mother, grandmother, and friend." When my Grandma



died, her sister, Elsie, gave us a card with the story of *The Rose Beyond the Wall*. Given Grandma's love of flowers and nature, it was such a touching gesture and felt so special. A quote that resonates with me when I remember my beautiful Grandma Margaret is "A garden of love grows in a Grandmother's heart." ~ author unknown.

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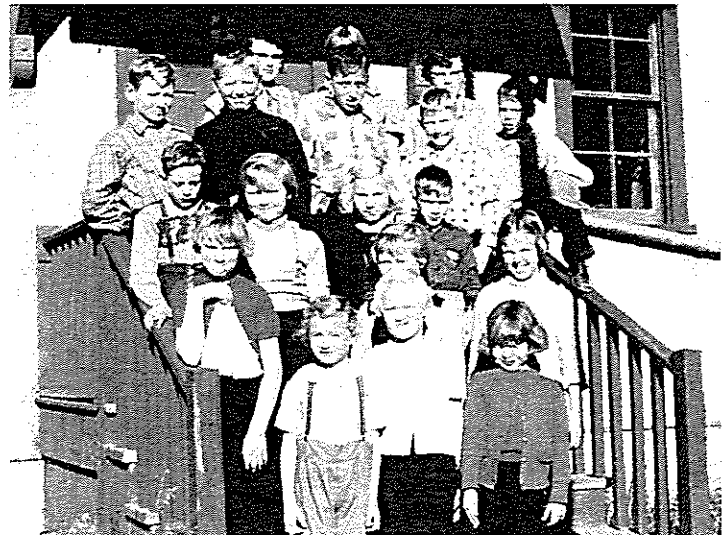
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Ebenfeld School Photos credit: Bill Janzen



The students of the Ebenfeld School in 1955-56. I'm the little girl with suspenders front left.



The Ebenfeld School with Mr. Bill Janzen, the teacher.

The Lehn Diaries in Historical Context

by Barry Teichroeb

The Lehn Diaries are a series of journals maintained by Christoph Lehn and several generations of his descendants over the course of more than two centuries. I obtained a copy of the transcribed, translated diaries from Helen (Lane) Fast. The diaries are a valuable source of Lehn family genealogical information. In addition, they are much more than that, containing firsthand insights related to major political events that shaped the destiny of the Mennonite community as well as perspectives about social standards and discipline, Mennonite Church administrative events, practical challenges facing the community and interesting observations about some of my ancestors. I have taken excerpts from the diaries, in chronological sequence, paraphrased them and recast them in a political, social, and genealogical (as they relate to my own genealogy) context for the period spanning the Mennonite time in Danzig through to the migrations to Russia.

1679. Christoph Lehn is born in Danzig.

Christoph authored the original diary, upon which succeeding generations built.

1709. There is a great plague in Danzig and the surrounding territory. Hundreds of Mennonites die and in total about 24,000 people in and around Danzig die.

This refers to the Great Northern War plague outbreak that spread through Europe during the period 1700 - 1721, with the most severe period falling between 1708 and 1712. It reached Danzig in 1709. The city officials were keen to preserve the reputation of Danzig as a vital international trading hub and did their best initially to downplay the impact of the plague. However, their slow response permitted the disease to spread and nearly half the population was taken before the plague receded. The Great Northern War was a struggle over control of the Baltic region in northern Europe. Sweden controlled much of the Baltic by the end of the 17th century. In 1697 Charles XII was not yet fifteen years of age when he ascended to the throne of Sweden on the death of his father. To steal con-

trol of the Baltic from the young, inexperienced king, Russia, Poland, and Denmark combined to plot a strategy to strengthen themselves at the expense of Sweden. Charles XII, not waiting to be attacked, invaded Denmark in 1700, bringing about the two-decade war. Hostilities ended in 1718 with the death of Charles XII by musket ball, but the peace was formalized in 1721 by treaty.

In the end Swedish influence in the Baltic region declined. Constant war along with internal political squabbling weakened the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, creating an unstable situation that Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia, used to advantage. He was instrumental in facilitating and backing a new constitution enabling the Commonwealth to stabilize its military and financial base and permitting Russian hegemony to flourish. This political situation would have repercussions for Danzig a few years later in the War of the Polish Succession.

1712. Christoph Lehn is baptized in Amsterdam.

Linda Dyck-Tiessen, in her essay "*Mennonites in Danzig: Dutch Origin and Ties*," says that it was common in the 17th and 18th centuries for wealthier members of the Danzig Mennonite community to send their children to Amsterdam for education and religious instruction, following which they would be baptized there before returning to Danzig. Christoph might have been in such a position but there are some unique aspects to his situation. The diary indicates he was married in 1700 and then remarried in 1706. Neither marriage is recorded in the Danzig Church Book. Perhaps he was married in Amsterdam both times. His baptism is not recorded in the Danzig records either, even though Amsterdam baptisms are often noted in these records.

24 June 1725. Dirk Janssen is elected elder of the Danzig Church in Amsterdam, and he departs for the Netherlands the following September. Nanne van der Zipp published an article in 1955 that can be found today in the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online where he explains that the Old Flemish congregation in Amsterdam had close ties

with what had become essentially the mother church in Danzig and confirms that Janssen had been sent to Amsterdam where he served as elder for eight years.

4 November 1725. A Danzig Church delegation meets with Konigsberg Church deacon Jan Spronk in Konigsberg to reprimand him for wearing a Japanese style dressing gown and an otter muff, along with a powdered wig.

27 December 1725. Hans Claassen is banned from the congregation for the sin of homosexuality.

February 1728. A delegation of church officials visits Konigsberg. Among them is Hans Sawatzky, a minister from the Marienburg Werder congregation. Their purpose is to conduct an election for new church leaders in Konigsberg. However, they also make a point of meeting once more with deacon Jan Spronk who has found himself in trouble again. The faults this time are many. He is accused of using excessive silverware at the feast table of his daughter's wedding. Further, he has allowed congregants to attend church services at the neighboring Lutheran Church, he uses laces and ties in place of buckles on his shoes, he uses only fancy walking sticks with silver buttons and, finally, he permits men's coats to sport pockets on the outside.



Helena Giesbrecht (1855-1946), fourth great granddaughter of Hans Sawatzky, with her husband Johann Striemer and some of their children and grandchildren

Hans Sawatzky is my eighth great-grandfather. Although this is Christoph Lehn's diary, Jacob Nehm is also contributing to the entries. Nehm was one of the delegates in the trip described

above and this appears to be a firsthand account of the meeting with Spronk written by Nehm.

1730. Hendrick Wilke complains that having been forced to serve as a preacher, he cannot make ends meet at his bakery because of church related time commitments. It is agreed that the church treasury will provide him with a stipend to pay his son to work at the bakery. This arrangement is settled reluctantly by the church officials who are not particularly sympathetic to Wilke's complaint. Preachers are generally unpaid for their time and effort.

14 May 1733. Clarity is given regarding the Church's rules for corporeal punishment. The case in point is the confusion between hired hands and apprentices. It seems that a master is entitled to strike his apprentice, but a farmer is not permitted to strike his hired hand. The clarification handed down is that in the case of a farmhand holding a three-year contract with the farmer, this being like an apprenticeship arrangement, the farmer can indeed strike the farmhand, provided the punishment occurs within the period of the contract. On the other hand, if the farmhand is also a member of the Mennonite Church, then the farmer cannot strike him under any circumstance.

5 June 1733. Dirk Jansen comes to visit from Amsterdam. Among the reasons for his trip is his desire to return to Danzig. On 5 July, a decision is made to formally request that Dirk be permitted to return home to Danzig, on the basis that the Amsterdam church is gradually declining as members of the congregation migrate to Danzig. Thereafter Dirk returns to Amsterdam. On 6 October Dirk moves back to Danzig permanently.

1734. Danzig is heavily bombarded by Russian military forces in a siege. Eventually the Russians withdraw.

For centuries Danzig was a center for international commerce, and it was a privileged city in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth established in 1569. While the Commonwealth was nominally a sovereign state, it had become a protectorate of Russia following the Great Northern War. When the King of

Poland, Augustus II, a Saxon, died of alcohol poisoning in 1733, Russia quickly rallied to support the succession of his son Frederick Augustus to the throne, aiming to maintain political control over the Commonwealth. However, in Warsaw the Polish Parliament supported the election of a Pole, Stanislaus, to the throne. Stanislaus and the parliament aspired for a more independent Commonwealth, and they were supported by France, which had its own geopolitical reasons for reducing Russia's hold over Poland.

Russia immediately sent an army to Warsaw to resolve this dispute by force. Stanislaus and key members of the parliamentary assembly fled to Danzig with Russian troops in pursuit. In February 1734 Danzig was encircled by Russian forces and the city fell at the end of June. Mere days earlier Stanislaus escaped the city in the guise of a peasant. The Russian army suffered 8,000 casualties during the siege and Danzig was forced to make reparations, after which the Russians withdrew. Frederick Augustus took the throne as Augustus III.

8 September 1752. Christoph Lehn's son Simeon has now become the diarist. On this day Jacob Wiens is expelled from the congregation for molesting Elske H.

27 January 1754. Jacob Epp, being so drunk that he fell from his wagon, is expelled from the congregation.

20 October 1754. Simeon Lehn's brother Friedrich is expelled from the congregation due to his disorderly lifestyle.

16 November 1755. Simeon lists a series of rather mundane expulsions and readmittances in the diary. There were a few more interesting entries among these. On this day Jacob Mehl is reprimanded for permitting dancing at his daughter's wedding. This foreshadows a more severe dancing situation a few years later.

1756. Around Easter the Russians once again invade Danzig. Citizens living outside the walls of

the city flee to the city. The city defenses hold, and the Russians depart, but for a ten-year period they return every winter. During the constant invasions, inflation runs rampant, and prices rise severely. Fortunately trade and commerce boom at the same time and people survive the price pressures. By 1768 the economy has slowed but prices have not fallen, and many people become impoverished.

In 1756 the Seven Years War began in Europe with a Prussian-British alliance facing a French-Russian-Austrian-Saxon alliance. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was not a protagonist, but as a vast territory within the geographic scope of the war it was not immune to military occupation. In particular, because of the Commonwealth's fealty to Russia, the Russian military stalked the lands of the Commonwealth throughout the war. Danzig was a major population center and obviously a frequent host of Russian troops. No doubt the economic phenomena witnessed by the diarist were caused by the war.

17 May 1756. Johann Niedorf is expelled from the congregation for having sex with Anna Dijk. There is no indication of Anna's fate.

27 July 1756. Jacob Janzen is expelled from the congregation for striking an unnamed individual. On 12 September he is readmitted.

30 January 1763. Simeon Lehn's son Jacob has now taken the role of diarist. On this day Lennert Janssen and Hendrich Wieb are brought before the church officials because they have been to a tavern with Hendrich's wife, daughter and one of the daughter's female friends, whereupon Lennert has convinced the two younger women to dance with him. Prior to the hearing the women have all apologized for being led astray and no further action is taken against them or Hendrich. Lennert, however, is expelled from the congregation because of his immoral life and behavior.

10 February 1763. The wife of Anton Kouwenhoven is expelled from the congregation for having sex with a Russian officer. On 6 March she is readmitted.

27 February 1763. The wife of Daniel Spenz is expelled from the congregation for drunkenness.

20 March 1763. Kornelius Janzen is expelled from the congregation for drunkenness.

Apparently, he is even drunk at his hearing with the church officials.

1 May 1763. Hans Ludwig is expelled from the congregation for beating his wife.

15 March 1770. A passionate dispute arises because Heinrich Focking applies to the Danzig governing officials to marry his wife's sister. Permission is granted. Church officials disagree with this practice and challenge the decision. The mayor of Danzig eventually rules in favour of the marriage and instructs church officials to respect the decision.

29 June 1770. A Prussian Colonel with a Light Cavalry force arrives and demands money from the inhabitants of the area. It appears his main objective is the conscription of Prussian citizens, which he proceeds to do.

In the years following the Seven Years War, Russia tightened its grip on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, after the malleable Saxon King Augustus III died in 1763, his successor leaned toward more independence. Of additional concern was the Polish nobility's struggle for greater influence and control over the governance of the Commonwealth. The constant unrest initiated a civil war. For Russia, the Commonwealth was a costly distraction when there were more important international challenges to deal with, including conflict with the Ottoman Empire. In 1770 Frederick II, the Emperor of Prussia, proposed a partitioning of the Commonwealth with the twin objectives of reducing the anarchy there and calming the contentious relationships of the Russian, Austrian and Prussian empires through strategic territorial expansion. The proposal was enacted in 1772 but as early as 1770 the emboldened Frederick II was comfortable sending his armies to traverse the Commonwealth at leisure. W.O. Henderson reports that in 1770 five thousand Prussian troops entered

the Danzig territory and camped in the outskirts, claiming to be in search of army deserters.

14 October 1770. The Danzig city council declares this day a universal day of prayer and repentance. Peter Epp is recognized for the wonderful sermon he delivers today.

Peter Epp is my seventh great-grandfather.

1772. The King of Prussia takes control of Polish Prussia including Danzig and environs.

The registration of all inhabitants follows. Billeting of Prussian soldiers comes next and excise taxes are levied on staples such as salt and tobacco.

The first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth happened in 1772. However, Danzig remained outside the Prussian partition, although it was a small independent island in the Prussian Empire.

1773. By royal edict new rules and protocols are established. Fire precautions are enacted, salt taxes levied, law courts set up and feast days are declared with rules pertaining to duration. Thanksgiving and certain other holidays are prohibited. The diarist notes that Thanksgiving had been established in 1660 following the liberation of Danzig after the seven-year Swedish siege.

The liberation of Danzig followed the Swedish defeat in the Second Northern War, one of many Baltic wars through the centuries. In this war Sweden attempted to control Danzig over a period of many years beginning around 1655. There was sporadic fighting, and the Swedish army invested the countryside around Danzig with troops, temporarily closing the Port of Danzig, although early in the conflict the Dutch, allied with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, freed the port and re-opened trade with the Netherlands.

30 March 1777. On the first holiday of Easter the Dutch hymnals are set aside in Ladekop and High German is adopted for singing hymns.

This was the beginning of the end for the use of Dutch in church services and the demise of a key cultural element of the Dutch Mennonite people. High German was the primary language in Prussia

and, particularly after the first Partition of Poland in 1772, this had a growing influence on the language spoken by Mennonites. The old customs and old language had been forcefully championed and preserved by Elders such as Hans von Steen. Von Steen lost influence as his health deteriorated and, sadly, vital cultural elements were lost as well.

26 September 1777. Elder Hans Wall dies, and Peter Epp is elected Elder to replace him.

13 March 1780. Shifting ice on the Nogat River is causing flooding in Halbstadt, Gross Mausdorf and other areas. Winter grain is destroyed, mills are wrecked, and houses are swept away. It takes until autumn for the breakout to be contained and repaired.

Horst Gerlach mentions this devastating flood in an article written in 1994. He says the date was 13 March 1781. The Mennonite congregations took up a collection to provide financial relief to the many Mennonites who lost their homes, crops, and livelihood in this disaster.

24 February 1782. Cornelius Claassen is elected Deacon in Ladekop, whereupon he admits to beating a servant. Church officials consider whether he is qualified to serve and decide in his favor. It later turns out to be a poor decision.

13 March 1782. Shifting ice once again causes serious flooding, this time in Krebsfeld. The breakout is repaired by the summer.

22 January 1783. Once more shifting ice causes flooding, this time on the Vistula River. Rosenort is affected. Lehn reports that where he lives in Neuenhuben there is a foot of water in the building.

5 March 1783. The Nogat River floods causing a breakout in the Elbing region near Krebsfeld. This time Lehn has sixteen inches of water in his house.

24 March 1783. There is a general thaw and flooding becomes even worse. Houses are swept

away. By May the flood is contained, and the dikes are repaired. Unfortunately, many acres of crops are destroyed in the spring growing season.

Horst Gerlach also mentions this dike breach in 1783 and the ensuing devastation. Once again donations of money and grain were collected to aid the people coping with this flood. Lehn goes on to describe winter weather patterns from 1784 through 1792.

1787. Catherine the Great of Russia invites Mennonites in the Danzig region to take up land in Russia. Two delegates are selected from the Mennonite community to travel to Russia and inspect the land on offer. These are Johann Bartsch, my sixth great-grandfather, and Jacob Hoepfner. They select land along the Dnieper River not far north of the Crimean Peninsula. They negotiate key rights such as religious freedom, exemption from military service, land grants, cash advances and food and travel allowances.

Catherine's initial invitation dated back to 1763 when she first invited industrious foreigners to settle in her expanding empire. In the 1780s she sought settlers for the Steppes north of the Black Sea. As her search relates to Mennonite populations, she had to be cautious because, pursuant to the first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, most of the western lands occupied by Mennonites were under the control of Prussia. Only the Danzig region was within her sphere of influence. Targeting Prussian citizens could lead to political tension.



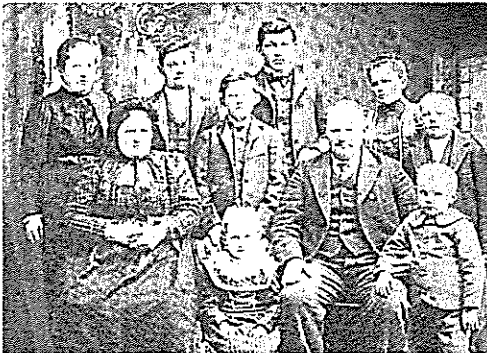
Maria Loewen (1876-1939), third great granddaughter of Johann Bartsch, with husband David Schapansky

1788. As many as 1,800 Mennonites move to Russia. The original group of settlers, totaling 228 families, took up homesteads in the first eight villages of Chortitza. These people arrived in 1789 - 1790. This group was joined by another smaller wave of migration in 1793 - 1795 amounting to 57

families.

28 June 1788. Cornelius Claassen, Deacon of Ladekop, has given in to drunkenness and immorality. Following great deliberation, the church officials relieve him of his responsibilities as deacon.

5 July 1789. Elder Peter Epp dies. In May of the next year Jacob de Veer is elected to replace him. Peter Epp had planned to make the trek to Russia but in the days leading up to his departure he fell critically ill and was unable to continue.



Heinrich Epp (1855-1906), third great grandson of Elder Peter Epp, with wife Margaretha Rempel and their children

28 March 1793. Danzig surrenders following a siege by Prussian infantry and capitulates to the Prussian crown. There is a brief rebellion by unorganized townspeople who gather on the city walls and fire down upon the Prussian troops entering the city. After six hours the city council finally puts a stop to the uprising.

The second partition of Poland occurred in January 1793 following a period in which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth continued to struggle for independence, leading to further armed conflict. Danzig was ceded to Prussia. Final vestiges of the struggle in Danzig led to a brief siege by the Prussian military, claiming their new territory.

1793. Two deputies from the Mennonite settlement in Russia, Wiebe and von Barga, arrive in Danzig with complaints of mismanagement by Bartsch and Hoepfner and a request for an Elder or Minister to return with them to Russia to help restore calm and confidence among the congregation. Cornelius Reeger and Cornelius Warkentin are appointed to return with the delegates to Russia.

The complaint about Bartsch and Hoepfner, as understood by the diarist in Danzig, is much different from the view of an eyewitness in Russia at the time. The memoir written by Peter Hildebrand explains that the people in the new settlement were tired, frustrated, and disappointed. The land they had agreed to accept was not available due to the risk of hostilities there with armies of the Ottoman Empire, and they were forced to accept rough, rocky land far north of their anticipated destination and further from trading ports. Most of the settlers were poor and for many, the few possessions they had shipped to Russia were stolen or ruined in transit. Cash advances promised by the Russian government were late, sporadic, and less than agreed to. Even building materials were late, of poor quality and of lower quantity than promised. The final straw was the discovery that Bartsch and Hoepfner had received land bonuses for arranging the settlement agreement and orchestrating the migration. Bartsch and Hoepfner were blamed for much of the misfortune and not acknowledged for their roles in establishing the Mennonite community until many years later when monuments were erected in Russia to recognize their achievements. These monuments now stand in Steinbach, Manitoba.

18 April 1793. Reeger and Warkentin arrive in Russia and restore order. Reeger dies while there. Warkentin installs Johann Wiebe and David Epp as Elders for the settlement and then returns to Danzig, arriving on 19 September 1794.

1796. Jacob Lehn, the diarist at this point, moves to Russia. In total 86 families move this year.

In 1796 - 1797 there was a wave of 118 settler families. 86 families settled in the original eight villages of Chortitza, and the remaining 32 families settled in two new villages established in the Chortitza settlement. Jacob's family was among the group of 86 and they settled in the village of Neuenburg.

15 February 1797. The Flemish Mennonite congregation is established in Russia. Heinrich and Peter Epp, sons of Elder Peter Epp, are elected Ministers of this congregation. Heinrich officiates at the marriage of Jacob Lehn's son Isaac in 1797.

Heinrich is my sixth great-grandfather.

17 November 1797. Catherine the Great dies and her son Paul ascends to the throne of Russia.

1798. David Epp and Gerhard Willms are permitted to travel to St. Petersburg to seek confirmation from Tsar Paul of the Mennonite privileges granted by the crown. The Russian summer is hot and dry, and the crops are poor. An early winter follows with unusually cold temperatures and a large amount of snow. Cattle feed is in short supply and many cattle die over the winter. Lehn goes on to describe the winters through 1815.

27 October 1800. Epp and Willms return from St. Petersburg with the confirmation of privileges they were after.

12 March 1801. Tsar Paul is assassinated, and his son Alexander assumes the throne.

1803. Nearly 200 Mennonite families arrive in Russia, fleeing Prussia because the government has mandated military service. In 1804 another 200 Mennonite families arrive in Russia.

In the period 1803 - 1806 a wave of 365 families moved to the new settlement of Molotschna.

1818. Isaac Lehn has become the diarist at this point. In the week before Pentecost the Tsar, Alexander I, visits the Mennonite settlement at Molotschna.

September 1825. Tsar Alexander I returns to Molotschna for another visit.

The entries that follow outline successive generations of family genealogy. Isaac's great-grandson notes that his father died of typhus in 1919 and mentions the "reign of terror" conducted by Nester Machno in the early 20th century. The remainder of the diary recounts family history from the last years they lived in Russia through the early years of settlement in Canada.

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BT

Apology:

We received a phone call from Oscar Epp of Rosthern re: an omission in the previous Historian. The picture on page 20 of the third church building, omitted Gerhard Epp in listing the ministers. He was listed on the photo from MAID but was omitted on the second picture.

Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian 2021 No. 3

A Tribute to Hella Banman (nee Neudorf) 1934-2021

by Dick Braun

Hella Banman (nee Neudorf) born 1934 grew up in the village of Schlorrendarp west of the village of Neuhorst. Her parents were Johann and Maria Neudorf. Hella received her education at the Embury school in the village of Gruenfeldt.

Hella married Henry Banman and had three children. Henry and Hella lived at a few places but mostly in Osler.



Hella with the Osler oak from the acorn she brought from Chortitz Oak, South Russia.

She was involved with many things in the community. She was very involved in the 1980 Homecoming Celebration that was held in Osler.

Hella also helped to organize events such as an entertaining evening of Low German with a play and other skits. She spent a lot of time making sure

that the play was performed at a level of excellence.

There were other parts of the weekend celebrations that she was involved in. She was the main force for the publishing of the book *"Osler and Area Bits and Pieces."*

She was also on the book committee of *"Osler, the Early Years,"* and *"One Room School #1238."*

The book *"Schlorrendarp"* was an inspiration of her father, Mr. John J. Neudorf, but before it was

finished, he passed away; Hella and family finished it. She was very adamant about preserving history.

Hella never backed away from work and her yard showed it. Last year there was some hard hand work that needed to be done on her yard in Osler; she went to work and did it herself.

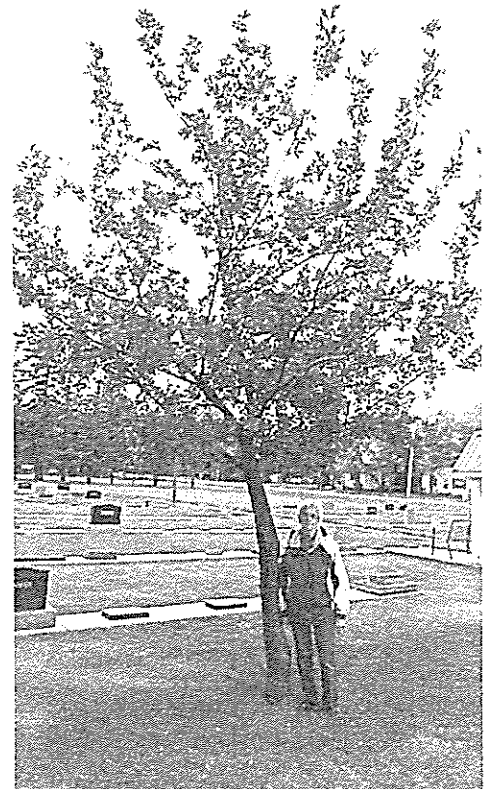
Furthermore, Hella was instrumental in setting up a museum in Osler on the yard that her parents last lived on.

Hella and her daughter went to visit the village in Ukraine where her father had lived. On that trip she also brought back some acorns from the famous Oak Tree in Chortitza. The acorns were sprouted and grew into seedlings and one was planted on the Osler Mennonite Church yard. That tree now casts a shadow on Hella's and Henry's graves in the late afternoon.

Hella was able to stay in her own home until the last week of her life. Hella Banman (nee Neudorf) passed away on Sept 19, 2021.

We would like to credit and commend her daughter Jenny for helping Hella in the last months of her life, so that she was able to stay at her home in Osler.

It is worth noting that in this year's second issue there was an article in the Mennonite Historian written by Hella Banman herself.



DB

Collecting Stuff

by Leonard Doell and Jake Buhler

Collecting Stuff: My Passion in Life - Leonard Doell

I have spent a lifetime collecting stuff, which in hindsight has been both a blessing and a curse. It all began very innocently as a boy at home collecting hockey cards. I turned the money that I had accumulated from cashing in pop and beer bottles that I had found, as well as money from delivering the Star-Phoenix newspaper in Warman, into buying hockey cards. I then traded them with my friends, so that we could get cards with our heroes or from our favourite team - in my case - the Montreal Canadiens. When I left home, most of these cards disappeared and came into the hands of my six younger brothers. The challenge that I had was that there was very limited cash to buy things, plus very little room to even store my few worldly possessions in the bedroom that I shared with three younger brothers.

For nearly six years I delivered the Star-Phoenix in the Town of Warman. I started when I was 11 and ended at the age of 17, just shy of six years. During that time, I also collected stories and historical information from the residents to whom I delivered the newspaper. What should have taken perhaps one hour after school to deliver them, often took a few hours, so that I could visit with my customers. I still have the notebooks, where I wrote anecdotes and stories that were shared with me. The people that shared them are long gone but memories of them and their stories are still part of me. So as a young boy, I was able to buy a few things with my income as a newspaper boy but also had the rich experience of meeting people and collecting stories.

In Grade 12, I wrote a paper for a social studies class on Mennonite History. This got me introduced to a number of people in our community who taught me much about our past. When I attended Swift Current Bible Institute and Canadian Mennonite Bible College, I was fortunate to take more Mennonite history classes which were really fascinating for me.

I also had the opportunity to live in Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba and to be exposed to their worldviews and beliefs and to develop relationships with them. So, I began to gather books on Mennonite and Indigenous people, which soon included artifacts which helped to tell their stories. Many of the artifacts have a story of some

relationship to a person or a life experience. They are no longer just things but things that have a memory or story attached to them.

Over the years I was introduced to auction sales and garage sales. I had the good fortune of finding some wonderful things that helped to tell my own family's story and that of our community. I discovered old books, photographs, letters and newspapers that shed light on our own history and were valuable in helping me to write stories for the local newspaper or in books I have written. I also found similar resources about Indigenous people that piqued my interest and I collected them as well. I was always thankful to be part of the MHSS and after we set up the Archives in 2003, I was able to deposit many books and resources there.

But now there is still much that remains to be done, to sort and catalogue the material that I have collected. Throughout the years that I had a full-time job, I had no time to organize much of the material that I had accumulated and so it got tucked away in boxes, in sheds or in our basement. Most of it survived well because it was kept away from mice, bugs or water damage. Some did get lost due to these elements.

One of the curses of collecting stuff is finding a safe place to store it or figuring out ways of displaying it so that it can actually be useful and tell a story. I needed a sympathetic partner, who shared my interest and passion or at least tolerated the purchases and storage of my boxes. As I get older there are also other things that come into play. My energy level to go through the boxes, to sort and to catalogue is not as high as it was when I bought the stuff. Plus, I may have forgotten where I got the stuff and some of the details of the place or people involved.

The journey of collecting stuff was enriched by the wonderful people I met along the way. Throughout the years, I have purchased and traded things that interested me from auction sales and garage sales and from individuals who were either collectors or pickers. Most collectors or pickers are people who enjoy finding things and have an appreciation for history. Some are driven only by making a quick dollar but they are few in number.

Pickers also learn what others are interested in, so that they can either sell or trade items with them. If they find items, they will contact that person and make a deal. Other sources of finding items include landfills, which in the past was much easier than it is

today. Now the rural landfills are monitored by a Sanitation Engineer, who makes sure that the garbage is disposed of in a proper container and the weight is calculated and loads are scrutinized and you pay accordingly. In the past this was not the case, which made access to someone else's disposed treasures easier for pickers.

Collecting Stuff: How I got the Jacob and Sara Braun Box - Leonard Doell

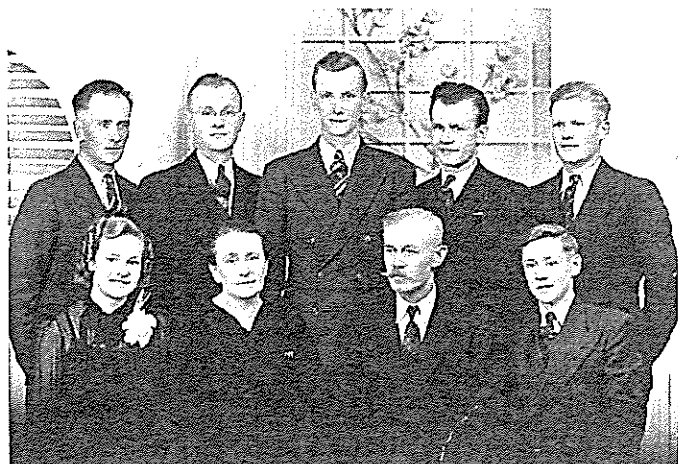
It was approximately 20 plus years ago that I got a call from Ben Hamm of Hepburn, a person who collects, trades and sells antiques. He told me that he had found a box of papers at the Hepburn landfill that he thought would interest me. I got the box from him and discovered that they were from the Jacob P. and Sara Braun family, formerly of Schlorrendarp. I took the box home and it became a collection of boxes of material that I wanted to eventually study more when I had the time.

This winter I ran across that box while sorting through other material and found that it contained many treasures of Mennonite historical value. I loaned the box to Jake Buhler, who has since organized the material, so it can be used by researchers.

I know that there are many more boxes waiting to be gone through that may contain more treasures and I hope to continue to enjoy uncovering them as long as the good Lord grants me health and strength.

Collecting Stuff: What is in that Braun Box? - Jake Buhler

I went through the hundreds of items in the box that had rested there for more than 70 years. The oldest items are 98 years old. I organized them into 47 files and described each file. I will highlight some precious items that I found in the box.



Seated: Sadie, Sara, Jacob P., Bill. Standing: Peter, Jake, George, Ike, John (photo circa 1938)

Who were Jacob and Sara Braun?

Jacob P (b. 1887) and Sara (b. 1888) Braun with sons Peter, Jake, George, Ike and John, arrived in Canada in 1923 from the Soviet Union. They came from Osterwick Village in the Chortitza Colony in South Russia. Sadie and Bill were born in Canada. They bought a farm at Schlorrendarp (two miles west of Neuhorst SK) in 1924, that had been vacated by an Old Colony Mennonite family leaving for Mexico. They lived and farmed there until 1946 when the youngest son, Bill, took over. Jacob died in 1950; Sara died in 1978.

What can we learn from items in the box?

The collection is not a diary so we cannot learn about the daily life of Jacob and Sara and their children. We learn almost nothing about Sara who outlived her husband by 28 years. But we can learn a great deal about Jacob Braun (1887-1950). Even then we do not have a comprehensive description of him.

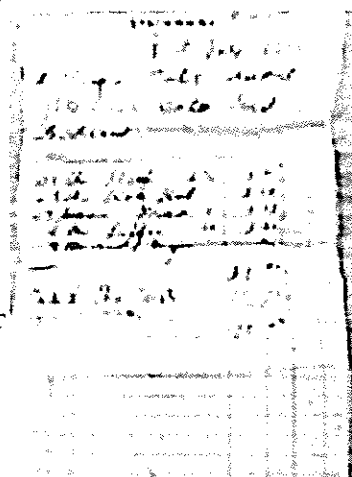
But from the hundreds of items in the box we can observe that he was always a leader. He kept meticulous farming records in small booklets he carried with him. He belonged to several cultural organizations. He (and Sara) cared much about sponsoring family members who had fled to Germany from South Russia in 1949. They were founding members of the Osler Mennonite Church in 1928. Jacob was chair of the building committee. He had a deep spiritual disposition and the box contains notes of a speech he gave to youth.

Sampling of Items in the Box

On July 2, 1937, Jacob and Sara celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary at Osler Mennonite Church. The entire food bill was \$21.40. (Note: The cost of 113 pounds of beef was \$7.35). We do not know the number of people who attended but there appears to have been enough food for over 200 persons. This event took place in the midst of the Great Depression.

On March 29, 1936, Jacob spoke to the youth on "Walking in the Light" based on Romans 13:11-14. Shown on page 23 is only page 1 of his notes.

In 1947 Jacob belonged to the Echo Book Club based in Rosthern.



receipt for anniversary food

Nov. 29, 1916.

formafung zum Handel in
Licht. Nö. 13. 11-14.

Im Reg. halt. Lichteinrichtung
einrichtung zu neuen Handel
in Licht.

1/ In Handel in Frischwasser
abzulegen.

2/ In Handel in Lichteinrichtung

3/ Licht in Handel in Lichteinrichtung
nicht in Handel in Lichteinrichtung.

4/ In Handel in Lichteinrichtung
nicht in Handel in Lichteinrichtung.

Jacob Braun in 1924 agrees to pay a Reise-
schuld (debt) of \$500.00 at 6% per annum for the
transport of his family of seven persons.

For Value Received, I, Jacob Braun, after date I, we, or either of us promise to pay
to the order of
Mennonite Colonization Board, Newton, Kansas
AT THE KANSAS STATE BANK
— Five hundred — DOLLARS
with interest at the rate of 6 per cent per annum from date. Interest payable annually.
No. 1
P. O. Address Osler, Sask. Jacob P. Braun

In 1940, Jacob made a declaration of his non-
resistance conviction, signed by 25 year-old Rev.
Jacob H. Pauls of Osler Mennonite Church.

Certificate

THIS IS TO CERTIFY:

1. That one of the integral and fundamental tenets of the Mennonite
religion is its precept to entirely and absolutely abstain from bearing arms
or rendering personal military service.

2. That Jacob P. Braun, Osler
whose specific signature appears below, has, on the date hereof, acknow-
ledged and declared to me that he firmly believes in, and unconditionally
subscribes to, the aforesaid doctrine.

3. That said Jacob P. Braun owing to the aforesaid
 dictates of his religion, faith, belief, conscience and conviction, claims
exemption from liability to serve in the militia, pursuant to the provisions
of the Militia Act in that behalf.

Dated at Osler the 14 day of Aug A.D. 1940.

Jacob P. Braun Jacob H. Pauls
Specimen Signature Minister of the Rosenorter
Mennonite Church.

OPERATOR'S LICENSE
1940-41
EXPIRES FEB. 28, 1941
PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN
Provincial Tax Commission—Highway Traffic Board
ACCT. NUMBER DATE ISSUED FEE PAID
March 19 \$1.00

Jacob Braun,

Osler, Sask.

Jacob Braun
SIGNATURE OF OPERATOR
THIS CERTIFICATE MUST BE PRESENTED FOR 1941-42 RENEWAL
ML108

Jacob was in possession of this driving license in
1941 at a cost of \$1.00.

C.P.O.S. to CANADA
MEMBER OF MENNONITE PARTY.

Give this card to
passenger to show
at embarkation

This is the embarkation card given to Sarah
Braun in Southampton, England, where Canadian
doctors performed health checks. Each of the seven
family members received a card like this. The ship
landed in Quebec City.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF APPLICATION
(Do not detach from above)
The undersigned Victory Loan Salesman, Bank, Trust or Loan Company, has received a duly executed application
for bonds of the Second Victory Loan, the essential details of which are as follows:
NAME AND ADDRESS OF SUBSCRIBER Jacob P. Braun
Osler, Sask.
ACCOUNT AND MATURITY SUBSCRIBED \$ 50.00 of 3% BONDS \$ 50.00 of 3% BONDS \$ 50.00 of 3% BONDS
PAYMENT AND INTEREST Imperial Bank of Canada
Hepburn, Sask.
Date 18 1942.

In 1942 Jacob purchased a Victory Bond at 3%
per annum from the Imperial Bank in Hepburn.

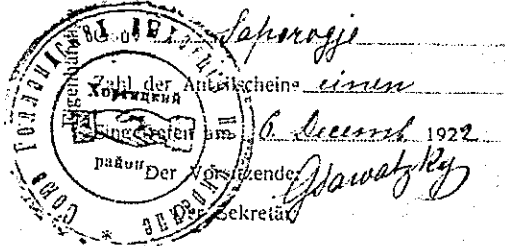
These cards (top of next page), show Sara and
Jacob's citizenship status at the time they were
registering to leave. They were members in Neu
Osterwick Village, Chortitza Colony, Saporagje,
Ukraine, in South Russia. Date of issue is December
6, 1922.

VERBAND

der Bürger holl. Herkunft in der
UKRAINE.

Vorm. Verb. der Mennoniten Süd. Russl.

Mitgliedskarte Nr 302

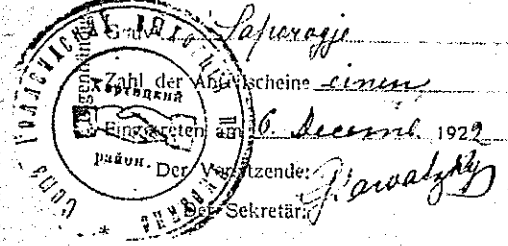
Rayon *Charlita*Name *Braun Jacob Peter*Beruf *Landmann 35 Jahre alt*Dorf *Neu-Belarsick*

VERBAND

der Bürger holl. Herkunft in der
UKRAINE.

Vorm. Verb. der Mennoniten Süd. Russl.

Mitgliedskarte Nr 303

Rayon *Charlita*Name *Braun Sarah Isak*Beruf *34 Jahre alt*Dorf *Neu-Belarsick*

This 1919 photo is of Raymond Rufus Friesen and his brother Earl. It is a studio picture located in California. Who are these boys and why

Jacob Braun chaired this Reiseschuld organization called Assembly of Newly Arrived Mennonites to Osler and Hague. It served to collect funds from those who owed money for travel from South Russia to Canada in 1923 and onwards.

U :

Protokoll
der jährlichen Versammlung der Jungmannen
dort zu Hague u. Osler abgehalten im
Hause am 12. Sept. 1935.

The image above shows only the heading, *Protokoll*, which means minutes. The Braun box contains detailed records of dozens of people owing money and the Committee's attempt to collect these funds over 10 years.

Die siebente provinziale Jahresversammlung

der

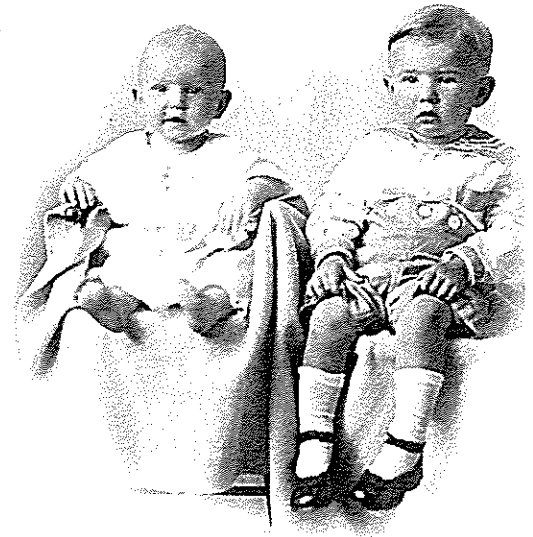
Mennoniten von Saskatchewan

am 12. und 13. Juli 1935

in Waldheim, Sask.

are they in the Braun box? There are 10 other lovely photos which need to be identified.

In 1946 Jacob and Sara sold their farm to their son Bill and moved to Hague. They then spent time supporting relatives in Germany who had just arrived there in 1945 from South Russia.



CO-OPERATIVE FOR AMERICAN REFUGEE RELIEF		D102032	
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION 20 BROAD STREET - NEW YORK 4, N. Y.			
DATE	2/1/47	TO	Germany B/Ha
AMOUNT	\$10.00	BY	11192
DELIVER TO	Willie Feiste Erichshagen 142 Krs. Wienburg Germany		
DONOR	J P Braun Hague Sask., Canada		
SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS ON BACK		REMITTANCE RECEIPT	

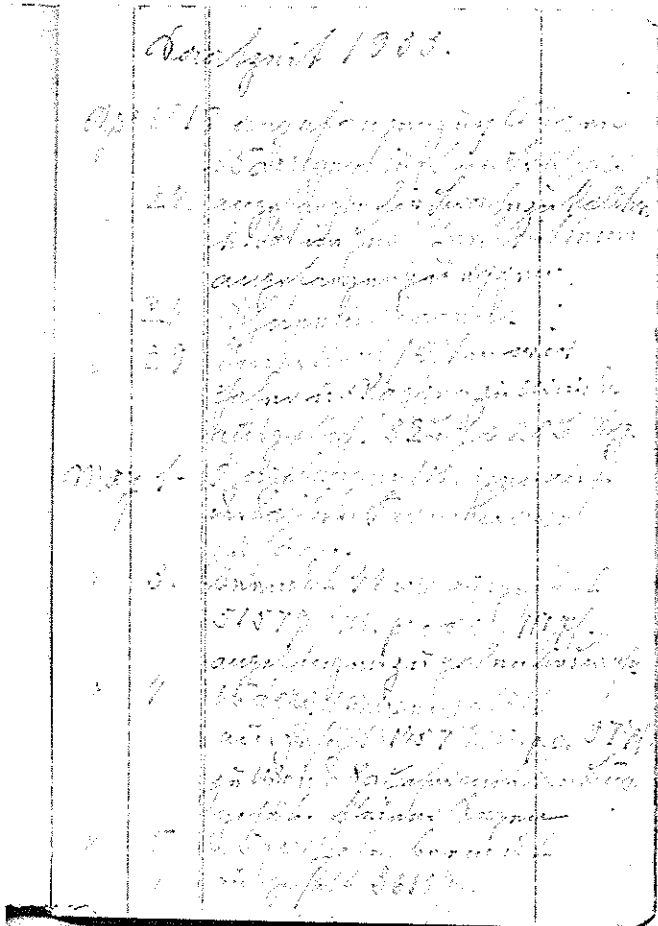
THIS WILL ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF AMOUNT TO BE APPLIED TO THE DELIVERY OF C.A.R.E. 10-IN-1 FOOD PACKAGE INDICATED ABOVE.

NOT NEGOTIABLE

Jacob kept annual reports of the Conference of Mennonites assembly. This was the seventh such assembly held in 1935 in Waldheim.

This receipt of \$10 was for a C.A.R.E. package sent to Jacob's sister and niece. The niece had married Willie Feiste.

Jacob kept meticulous records of daily seeding and harvest details from 1924 to 1946 in seven small booklets. This single page from 1933 begins with an entry on April 18 to say he had plowed 15 acres.



In 1946 Jacob and Sara had a public auction attended by 31 buying units. The clip below shows 12 of the buyers. Total receipts were \$1,648.02. The notebook provides details of every transaction.

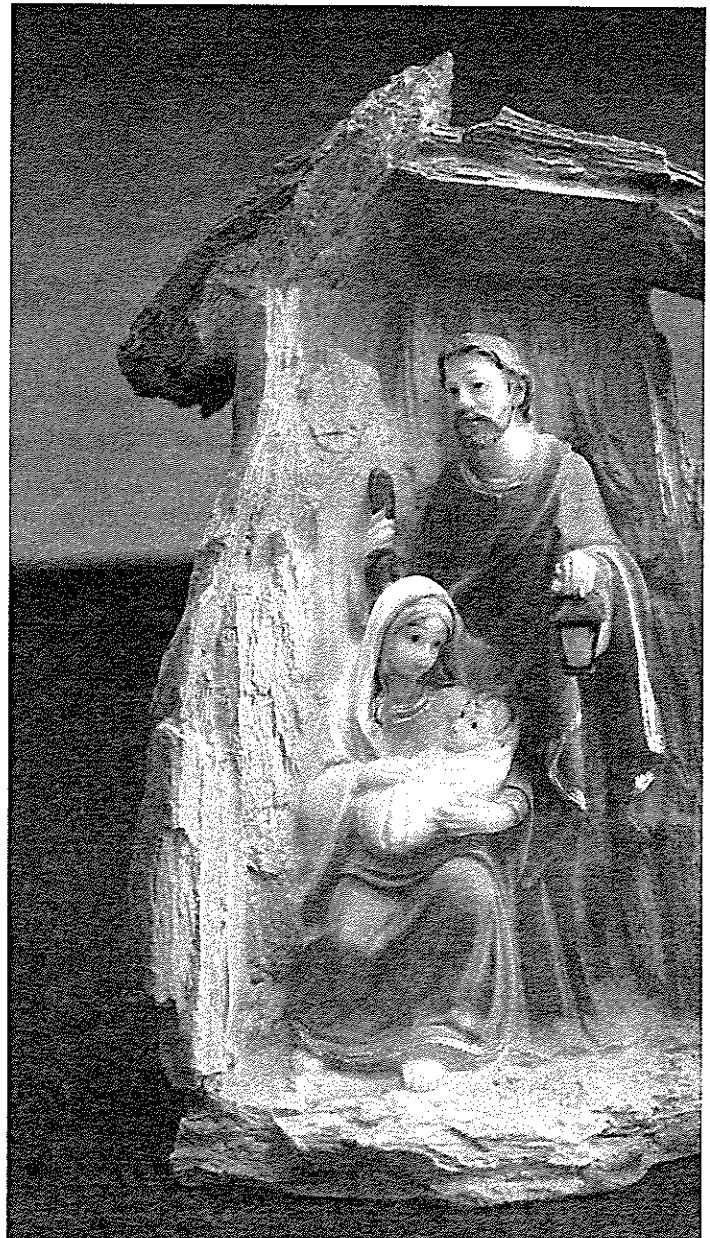
Reed, John H.	2	Reed, J. W.	15
Kasner, John	2	Martin, H. P.	16
Fries, P. S.	3	Spiegel, Bill	16
Jaeger, David	3	Reed, J. M.	17
Harvill, E.	4	Peter, A. S.	17
Widmer, J. J.	4	Looper, P. L. K.	18

You are welcome to visit the archives at Bethany Manor to see the Braun box. Imagine what we might have lost if Ben Hamm had not scavenged the Braun box at the garbage dump. And imagine if Leonard Doell had not bought this box!

We would be culturally poorer.

LD/JB

Merry Christmas



A Tribute to Isaac Harder

by Colleen Eliason



In the early 40s Dad met a stocky man walking down the road near our home. This man was Isaac Harder, who was looking for work. Dad hired him and he stayed on, working for us at least 11 years.

Isaac's father had died during the flu epidemic. Isaac had been very ill as well, and it had affected him. He was slow in every way, mentally and physically.

His step-father was not a compassionate man and treated Isaac badly, so Isaac left home. Isaac was a very kind gentleman who loved a good joke. We called him *Ickey Spikey Dikey* and he would laugh his hearty laugh and call us funny names.

He appreciated what was done for him and was grateful for what he had. At Christmas he gave us gifts. Mom would get a nice serving plate or the like; one year he gave the boys what he thought were cufflinks or tieclips, but turned out to be girls' hair barretts. No one said a word.

Isaac enjoyed visiting people. Sunday afternoons he would often walk or ride his bike to visit his relatives and friends near Gouldtown or the Main Centre area. The farthest he went was 45 km one way. In the late 40s he was able to buy a car for himself.

Isaac loved good food. He made a deal with Mom that he would clean the pig feet after butchering and she would pickle them for his treat. He also liked raw turnips and would ask to go pick one from the garden and then sit on the step, using his

jackknife to peel, cut and eat it.

During the war sugar was rationed, so how to divide it among everyone was a concern. Isaac would have eaten it all if that was an option, so Mom came up with a solution. She got one peanut butter jar for each person in the family, put our names on them, and divided the sugar equally. Then each of us could use our sugar however we pleased, and if you ran out before new sugar came you were out of luck.

Our family went to the opening of the new Sask Landing Bridge in 1951. Isaac took about all of his savings along even tho' Dad had warned him not to take any money with him. A pretty young sales lady convinced Isaac to spend his \$600 savings on subscriptions for glossy magazines like *Boston Fisherman's Gazette*, and *Atlantic Fruit Growers* magazine, plus some other more down-to-earth ones. It was an abominable and abusive deception of a naive man who had very limited reading skills. We were so sad and Dad was livid.

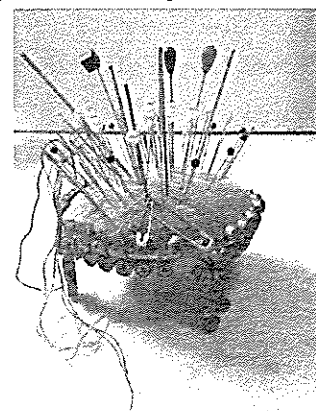
When Isaac left our farm he went to work for Elvinus Hermanson where he said he had such good times and to other places that did not always turn out to be to his benefit. He spent his last years in the Herbert Nursing home, where he said life was good. He enjoyed making tiny furniture and such from tin cans.

Isaac was a tenacious, hard worker. One time he was helping us break our 4-H Club calves. The calf bolted and started running with Isaac still holding onto the rope. He refused to let go and got dragged around the yard for quite a way before finally letting go.

Another time he decided that instead of stopping, he would continue doing the seeding through the



Isaac Harder



A pincushion is an example of Isaac's crafts.

night, only to realize the next morning that he had completely forgotten to refill the seed box during the whole night.

In the late 70s we went to get Isaac for a visit on our farm. He enjoyed sitting in the shop, talking and having a good time.

When Brent was having difficulty getting something done Isaac noticed and came with his jackknife to assist Brent.

When he was done he sat down again with a satisfied smile and said in his slow way: "Yet I am a good farmer." He was a fine man.

CE

I Owe You Gratitude

Dear Mr. Bill Janzen, I owe you lots of gratitude long unexpressed, enormously - way overdue! You taught me to read when I was seven; a skill that blesses me all the way to heaven.

I haven't been to any college or university, but I can read, and do it all day, constantly. Reading has given me a very personal education, tailored to my unique interests and inclination.

Truly; I read when I stumble into the bathroom, at the table as and after we eat, in my own room, for quiet time; and of course, I read what I write. I read for rest breaks, and to relax for the night.

I range from my ever-open Bible, to often a deep tome on spiritual, Christian thought; whatever is at home, to world mission magazines, and all the vast resources of the inter-library system's marvelous references.

By reading I've taught myself to type and compute, to translate German, and with a camera to shoot, discovered crafts, and made things out of my head, written books and poems - because my brain I've fed.

Dear Mr. Bill Janzen, I owe you lots of gratitude! long unexpressed, enormously - way overdue! You taught me to read when I was seven; a skill that blesses me all the way to heaven!

- by Ruth Marlene Friesen (1996)

(in honour of my first grade teacher, Bill Janzen)

Once in Royal David's City

Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her Baby,
In a manger for His bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little Child.

He came down to earth from heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle was a stall.
With the poor, and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

And through all His wondrous childhood
He would honour and obey,
Love and watch the lowly mother,
In whose gentle arms He lay.
Christian children, all must be mild,
obedient, good as He.

For He is our childhood's Pattern,
Day by day like us He grew;
He was little, weak and helpless,
Tears and smiles like us He knew;
And He feeleth for our sadness,
And He shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see Him
Through His own redeeming love,
For that Christ so dear and gentle
Is our Lord in Heaven above;
and He leads His children on
to the place where He is gone.

Not in that poor lowly stable,
With the oxen standing by,
We shall see Him - but in Heaven,
Set at God's right hand on high;
When like stars His children crowned,
All in white shall wait around.

(Words: Cecil F. Alexander, Music: Dr. Gauntlett.
1848 (c) public domain)



Hague's Cultural Day on September 25th, celebrated old-fashioned Mennonite traditions through demonstrations of pig butchering, blacksmithing, and baking bread in a clay oven. Later in the afternoon, ribs, smoked sausages, cracklings, lard and fresh bread were offered for sale. People could explore displays in the various buildings on the compound too, or sit and visit. You can find a full photo story on the website at <https://mhss.sk.ca/reports/Hague-Cultural-Day-2021.shtml>.

Websites

MHSS: mhss.sk.ca

Cemeteries: <https://mhss.sk.ca/cemeteries/>
Mennonite Encyclopedia Online : (GAMEO)
gameo.org/news/mennonite-encyclopedia-online

E-Updates Ezine (announcements email):
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