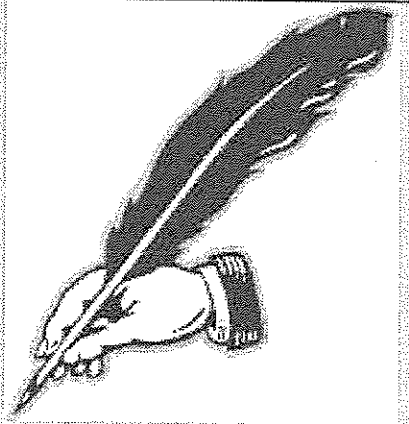


# SASKATCHEWAN MENNONITE HISTORIAN

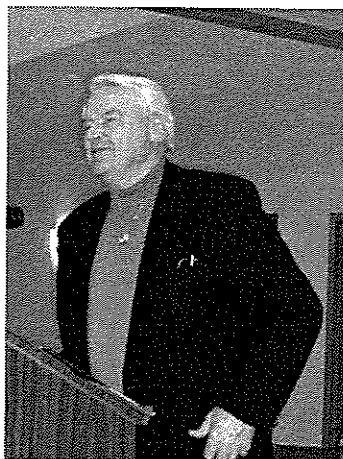
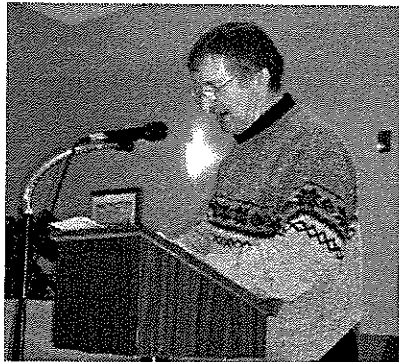
Official periodical of the  
Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, Inc.  
Volume XI No. 1, April 2005



## MHSS HOLDS ANNUAL MEETING

February 4th and 5th were the dates of the annual Heritage Night and General Meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. The sessions were again held in the spacious Fellowship Centre at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon.

There was a good attendance at Friday's Heritage Night. MHSS President Leonard Doell led the evening session and introduced the keynote speaker,



Menno Wiebe of Winnipeg. Menno has, for 37 years, worked under Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee Canada with Native people across Canada. Menno shared some of his accumulated wisdom gained from that wealth of experience in

a presentation entitled "The Intersection of Two Peoples". (A copy of Menno's presentation is available at the MHSS archives). Menno emphasized

that, rather than see our work with our aboriginal neighbours as a "mission to" or "service for" relationship, we should regard that relationship as an intersection of two peoples, with the cross of Christ being the intersecting point, even as it was for the Hebrew and non-Jewish people in New Testament times. A Penner sisters trio - Mary Ann, Linda and Laura - provided special music and Jake Buhler read some Low German poetry.

Saturday morning began with a fitting devotional by local pastor Vern Ratzlaff. Our annual business meeting followed. Two incumbents, Eileen Quiring and Ed Schmidt, were re-elected, and two new members, Abe Buhler of Warman, and Margaret Ewert of Drake, were added to the Board. From 11:00 to 12:00 noon we enjoyed a very interesting presentation by Menno Wiebe on "Mennonite Self-Understanding Portrayed in Poetry". Neoma Dirks and crew from Waldheim served a tasty noon meal. Then, after dinner, Wayne Dueck, Manager of McNally Robinson Booksellers in Saskatoon, shared his interest in family history and told delightful stories passed on from his kinfolk.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan has been experiencing significant growth. Our membership has been increasing (at present we have approximately 300 members and mail out close to 350 copies of our Historian) while our archives, under the able direction of Victor Wiebe, have been expanding, and in the past year have added several valuable collections of personal papers.

# SASKATCHEWAN MENNONITE HISTORIAN

2326 Cairns Avenue  
Saskatoon, SK. S7J 1V1

**Editor: Dick H. Epp**

**Book Editor: Victor G. Wiebe**

**Genealogy Page Editor:**

**Rosemary Slater**

**Production/Design: Betty**

**Banman, Diana Buhler,**

**Deanna Krahn, Rosemary Slater, Hilda Voth**

**Proof Readers: Ernie Baergen,**

**Betty Epp, Verner Friesen,**

**Advisory Committee:**

**Jake Buhler, Verner Friesen,**

**Esther Patkau**

The Editor invites readers to participate by sending news, articles, photos, church histories and other items to him by email at dhepp1@shaw.ca

## HONOUR LIST

Helen Bahnmann

Helen Dyck

Dick H. Epp

Margaret Epp

Peter K. Epp †

George K. Fehr †

Jake Fehr

Jacob E. Friesen

Jacob G. Guenter

Gerhard Hiebert †

Katherine Hooze †

Abram G. Janzen

John J. Janzen †

George Krahn †

Ingrid Janzen-Lamp

J.J. Neudorf †

J.C. Neufeld †

John P. Nickel

Esther Patkau

Dr. Ted Regehr

Ed Roth

Wilmer Roth †

Arnold Schroeder †

Katherine Thiessen †

Rev. J.J. Thiessen †

Dr. David Toews †

Toby Unruh †

George Zacharias †

## MHSS Board of Directors, 2005

President

Jake Buhler

836 Main Street

Saskatoon, SK S7H 0K3

Tel.: 244-1392

jakelouisebuhler@sasktel.net

Vice-President

Verner Friesen

1517 Adelaide St. E

Saskatoon, SK S7J 0J2

Tel: 373-8275

Secretary/Archivist, MCSask

Vera Falk

Box 251

Dundurn, SK S0K 1K0

Tel: 492-4731

Fax: 492-4731

r.v.of.thodeandshields@sasktel.net

Treasurer

Margaret Snider

Box 35

Guernsey, SK S0K 1W0

Tel: (306) 365-4274

sniderwm@sasktel.net

Archives

Kathy Boldt

Box 152, RR #4

Saskatoon, SK S7K 3J7

Tel: 239-4742

keboldt@sasktel.net

Abe Buhler

Box 1074

Warman, SK S0K 4S0

Tel: 931-2512

Margaret Ewert

Box 127

Drake, SK S0K 0H0

Tel: (306) 363-2077

mewert@canada.com

Eileen Quiring

Box 2

Waldheim, SK S0K 4R0

Tel: (306) 945-2165

Ed Schmidt

Box 28

Waldheim, SK S0K 4R0

Tel: (306) 945-2217

ewschmidt@sasktel.net

Victor G. Wiebe

Book Review Editor/Archivist

11 Kindrachuk Cres.

Saskatoon, SK S7K 6J1

Tel: 934-8125

victor.wiebe@usask.ca

## Board Committees

Photographer SMH

Susan Braun

Box 281

Osler, SK S0K 3A0

Tel: 239-4201

Cemeteries/Archives

Helen Fast

146 Columbia Drive

Saskatoon, SK S7K 1E9

Tel: 242-5448

Fax: 668-6844

rhfastlane@shaw.ca

Cemetery Project MHSS

John P. Nickel

General Delivery

Battleford, SK S0M 0C0

Tel: (306) 937-2134

johnpnickel@sasktel.net

Advisory Committee SMH

Esther Patkau

2206 Wiggling Avenue

Saskatoon, SK S7J 1W7

Tel: 343-8645

Genealogy Page Editor, SMH

Rosemary Slater

111 O'Neil Crescent

Saskatoon, SK S7N 1W9

Tel: 955-3759

r.slater@sasktel.net

## Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan (MHSS)

Room 900-110 La Ronge Road

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

S7K 7H8

(306) 242-6105

mhss@sasktel.net

### Archive Hours

Monday: 1:30-4:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 1:30-4:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Is your membership paid up?

To add a name to the Honour List, nominate a person in writing. Candidates must have made significant contributions to the preservation of Mennonite history, heritage or faith in our province.

## President's Message



Jake Buhler, President

"History," said the comedian Jose Jimenez, "iss de studee of old tings." In this, the 100<sup>th</sup> year of our province, the awareness of who we are and where we might have come from, is greatly heightened. And so as we go about studying the "old tings" of Mennonites and their rich culture and faith in Saskatchewan, we might want to remember a few things. First, long before our Mennonite ancestors arrived here in the early 1890s, our other human ancestors, the First Nations People, were already here. Our Society might, in the next 5 years, do more research on how we and the First Nations have co-existed in the last 115 years. Second, we might want to record how we have gotten along with our other neighbors, most of them also ethnic minorities, from a dozen or more diverse cultures. Saskatchewan is, after all, the only province in Canada where neither the English nor the British are the majority population group. Third, we must continue to document the

stories of our past: the pleasant and the ugly, the heroic and the shameful. After all, the Old Testament is full of stories of how God's people kept their faith and how they failed and faltered. Fourth, we must begin to write today's history today. Too often we grasp for straws of history. We have an incomplete picture of yesterday's events. We need to photograph today's Mennonites in their places of play, work and worship. We need to, in addition to preserving documents, describe the everyday feelings of our communities... what did we talk about... what were the things we quarreled about, what issues were really important to us. We need to document today's stories of how God is present in our lives.

As I take up my new position, I am stepping into some pretty big shoes that Leonard Doell has left behind. I will need the help of my very able fellow board members. And I look to you, our faithful readers, to help the Historical Society to do its work of telling the stories of our people. I thank outgoing president, Leonard Doell, for his vision of the past and how the past can instruct us in the future. I want to thank Gladys Christensen for her long tenure as a most able treasurer. We will miss you both. We welcome Margaret Snider into the position of treasurer. Joining the board are Margaret Ewert of Drake and Abe

Buhler, representing the Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Thanks to Ed Schmidt's genealogical skills, we have discovered that we are 4<sup>th</sup> cousins once removed! Finally, I want to thank Rosemary Slater and Verner Friesen who are doing so much work to ensure that the newsletter is getting published as Dick Epp takes a well-deserved break.

## TRIBUTE TO LEONARD DOELL

Verner Friesen

I have been told that a wise aboriginal elder once said, "If you need a leader, look for a reluctant leader". What would he have meant by that statement? Leonard accepted the role of President of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan rather reluctantly. Yet he has shown himself to be a leader who works well with others and respects the views of others. He has been a leader who serves, not a leader who thrusts his authority on others. In return he has gained the respect and appreciation of Board members and of our MHSS constituency as well.

Of course, Leonard's contribution to the work of the MHSS is not limited to the eight years he served as president; in total, he was a member of the Board for twelve years. And for years before that he was already involved in the work that has become very much a part of who Leonard is; that is, the work of preserving and sharing our heritage and our stories. We expect that he will continue to play a significant role in that work, though he no longer serves on the MHSS Board. On behalf of the MHSS Board, thank you, Leonard. We will miss you.

## Editorial—

**MHSS CHANGES**

As announced in the December issue of our Historian, our Editor, Dick Epp is currently on an eight month leave of absence to give him time to complete a family project. In the meantime, we have lined up a committee to work at getting the next two issues of the Historian prepared and printed. I have been soliciting articles, mainly following up on suggestions from Dick Epp, and Rosemary Slater has enlisted a few helpers to prepare the "layout". We sincerely hope that our product will be acceptable.

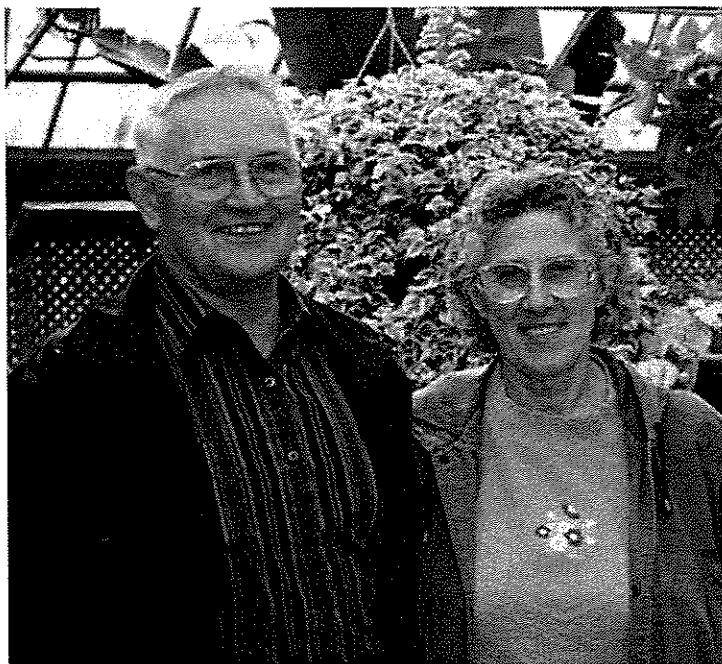
Another area of change is that, at our last annual general meeting in February, two new members were elected to our MHSS Board. They are Margaret Ewert from Drake and Abe Buhler from Warman. We welcome them and hope they enjoy the new challenge they have taken on. Two long-standing Board members, Leonard Doell and Gladys Christensen, have stepped down. We are very grateful for the excellent contribution they have made to the work of our Board over the last number of years. We will miss them.

Hope you enjoy reading this issue of the Historian. We welcome your comments.

Interim Co-Editor,  
Verner Friesen

**WELCOMING NEW BOARD MEMBERS****ABRAM BUHLER**

I was born in 1937, the fourth of eight children born to Abram J. and Aganeta Buhler. I received my elementary education in the Lilly School, eight miles north of Aberdeen, SK under the tutelage of Bernhard H. Fast. Mr. Fast was concerned that I would not be going to high school so he



advanced me a grade with the understanding that I would complete grade nine.

A voracious reader, I devoured every book I could lay my hands on, even German books. This self-taught education served me well later in life, especially in sermon research and preparation.

At the age of twenty three I married my heart's desire, Eva Schellenberg. To this union were born three daughters, who together with their husbands have blessed us with nine grandchildren.

I worked six years at Palm Dairies and then thirty years at Intercontinental Packers, retiring in 1997. I was called to the ministry and served seventeen years as a self supporting pastor in the Bergthaler Church of Saskatchewan.

I have read many books and articles pertaining to the reformation of the church, and especially the formation of the Mennonite faith and the history of the Bergthal Colony and its descendants.

I am looking forward to serving with and learning from the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan.

## WELCOMING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

## MARGARET EWERT



Born in Manitoba, grew up in B. C., married a Saskatchewan Farmer, and have spent the past 40 years in the Drake area. Schools: mostly in Vancouver, B. C., but graduated from Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna. Attended Vancouver Normal School, graduated from UBC, attended Vancouver Bible Institute one year, CMBC, Winnipeg one year, and obtained a Master of Librarianship degree from U of Washington, Seattle. Taught 8 years in elementary schools in B. C. Worked four years as librarian and instructor in English at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. Was baptized and became a member of First Mennonite Church in Vancouver, then transferred to Sargent Ave. Church in Winnipeg, and am now a member of North Star Mennonite in Drake.

Church involvement has always been important to me, and I have served on almost any committee or position available, including congregational chair. Have also been involved on the provincial (MCSask) level as member of the Education Committee and Program Committee. Served for a number of years on the executive of the Canadian Women in Mission, and as a result of that also was privileged to be part of the Commission on Overseas Mission for six years. I was also able to serve for a number of years on what was then the Congregational Resources Board of the Canadian Conference.

Currently, along with leading an adult Sunday School class from time to time, I am on the Advisory Board of the North Star church as a deacon. Since as a community we are planning special events to celebrate Saskatchewan's Centennial, I am also working on a project for this celebration.

My husband, Milton, who passed away in 1997, had four children when we married. They are all married, and we have eight grandchildren, two of whom are also married, and there is one very special great-granddaughter.

## TRIBUTE TO GLADYS CHRISTENSEN

Leonard Doell



Gladys has been an active and vital part of the MHSS board for the past six years. She was born and raised at Aberdeen, Saskatchewan. Gladys and her husband Al both worked with Federated Co-operatives and have moved a great deal throughout their working careers. Fortunately for our society, Gladys returned to Saskatchewan and made her home at Christopher Lake. She has a keen interest in genealogy and has been active both in our society and in the Saskatchewan Genealogy Society. Gladys has done a great job as treasurer for our society. It has been a pleasure working with Gladys; we enjoyed her warm and friendly personality, she was always willing to help where she was needed, and for the thorough and conscientious manner she worked as our treasurer and for the honesty and wisdom she brought to our organization. Thank you Gladys for sharing your time and talents with us!

# Nota bona: mark well and observe

## Our Reader's Page: Announcements and Questions

### CELEBRATING SASKATCHEWAN'S CENTENNIAL

#### Rosthern Junior College Celebration Weekend Events

**July 29 – 31, 2005**

Friday, July 29

6 – 8 p.m. Registration

7:30 p.m. A Centennial Celebration

Saturday, July 30

7:30 – 9:30 a.m. – Breakfast

9:30 a.m. Keynote Speaker, Roger Epp

12 – 1:30 p.m. – Lunch

1:30 p.m. Unveiling of Centennial Projects

2:15 p.m. Keynote Speaker, Peter Peters

3:30 – 5:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal

5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Dinner

7:30 p.m. Choir Performance

Sunday, July 31

7:30 – 9:30 a.m. Breakfast

9:30 a.m. Worship service, communion

Keynote speaker, John Rempel

12 – 1:30 p.m. Lunch

For full details of the weekend contact:

Rosthern Junior College

Roots and Wings

410 6<sup>th</sup>. Avenue

Rosthern, SK S0K 3R0

Phone 1-306-232-4222 or see

[www.rjc.sk.ca/centennial](http://www.rjc.sk.ca/centennial)

#### Nutana Park Church 40<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary May 14 – 15, 2005

Friday, May 13

7:30 p.m. Registration and welcome

Saturday, May 14

1 p.m. Choir practice

2 p.m. Reminiscing and coffee

3:30 p.m. Intergenerational activity

6 p.m. Supper

7:30 Music program and powerpoint presentation

#### Pembroke School Reunion

**August 5 – 6, 2005 at Neuanlage, SK**

Friday, August 5

7p.m. Registration, visiting, coffee, music

Saturday, August 6

9:30 a.m. Registration

10:30 a.m. Cairn dedication - former school site

11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Lunch

1:15 p.m. Historical presentation, Bill Janzen

Open mike, video, music

5:30 p.m. Supper

For more information contact:

Henry Janzen

Pembroke School Planning Committee

13-130 LaRonge Rd.

Saskatoon, SK S7K 8E5

e-mail [hajanzen@shaw.ca](mailto:hajanzen@shaw.ca)

**The Town of Drake** is hosting a Homecoming Celebration July 29-31, 2005. See the Drake website at [www.drake.ca/](http://www.drake.ca/) for more information and to register.

#### Grace Mennonite Church of Regina is hosting a Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration July 23&24, 2005

Saturday, July 23- 2—5 p.m. Registration

5:30 p.m.— Supper, 7 p.m. Coffee House

Sunday, July 24— 10 a.m.—Worship, 2 p.m. Video

#### Membership Fees and Gift Subscriptions

When your membership expiration date on your address label is underlined you know that it has expired. Send your membership fee to Treasurer, Room 900-110 La Ronge Road, Saskatoon, SK S7K 7H8 so that you will not miss the next issue. Single memberships are \$25.00, families \$40.00. Gift subscriptions are available for friends, children, and grandchildren. We include a gift card with the first subscription. All subscriptions and donations to the society are eligible for tax deduction receipts.

### Buhlers Honoured For Service

The Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation (SCIC) announced Jake and Louise Buhler as 2005 Global Citizens Awards winners for Saskatoon.

The Buhlers worked in Southeast Asia for several years, developing community projects and working closely with the local people. "I can say I didn't have one single boring day in 21 years," said Jake in an interview Saturday. Initially Mennonite Central Committee volunteers, Jake began his work with Indochinese refugees in Thailand while Louise was based in Vietnam, helping rebuild the isolated nation's relationships with other parts of the world.

"Our work was intense, it was engaging, it was interesting, we met a variety of people and yet we never felt far away from home in a sense," said Louise.

Some of her fondest memories, she said, were working with ethnic minority women in remote areas that took a day's walk to reach.

"Just sitting around the fire, listening to their stories, laughing, eating their boiled chicken, those were times I'd almost have to pinch myself and say, 'Is this real?'"

Throughout their years with both government agencies and non-governmental organizations, the couple said they've always been guided by the simple philosophy of sharing what they have with others. In turn, they said, their lives have been enriched by the experiences and relationships built over the years.

"Absolutely, categorically, unequivocally, we would do it again in a moment's notice," said Louise Buhler.

From a Star Phoenix article by Jamie Komarnicki



### Warman Mennonite Brethren Church Closes

by Christopher Kirkland – From Country Press  
February 9, 2005

For well over a half-century, the Warman Mennonite Brethren Church has been a fixture of religious service in the town of Warman. Now, after 62 years, the church has closed its doors ending its tenure in the community with a celebration on Sunday, Feb. 6. Still, while it is the end of an era, church officials are confident that another chapter in the history of Mennonite Brethren service in Warman may yet be written.

According to Ralph Gliege, the decision to close the church was an extremely difficult one, both on the part of church officials and attendees. "There are various reasons behind it, certainly, but the ultimate reason was dwindling attendance. There's sadness about the situation, and some discouragement—having been a part of the community's history for so long, it's obvious that it will be a sad day to see the church close. In part, I guess I would compare it to an elderly person that passes away—in a sense the Warman church had served its purpose well."

Gliege noted that the church has been a very influential part of the community successfully providing religious fulfillment to generations of parishioners. "It's been a very large part of Warman for a long time, and certainly, there will be a lot of memories left behind for everyone who attended over the years. I would hope that the presence of the church has brought joy and peace to the community of Warman, and a message of hope, just as a general summary. I think it certainly has done those things."

For these reasons, Gliege is hopeful that a new incarnation of the Mennonite Brethren church may some day return to Warman to continue on this mission. "We certainly don't rule out the possibility that our presence will be there again—I would expect that down the road another Mennonite Brethren church could be started in Warman. I'm not saying for sure that it will be, but I do think it could be done in the future—the option is always open, and we hope that eventually a new church can be born to take its place."

**An appreciation tea** for retired pastoral workers under the title 'Life in the Pew Beyond the Pulpit' sponsored by the Pastoral Leadership Commission of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan was held November 16, 2004 in Saskatoon. 34 pastors, spouses and missionar-

ies responded to share their experiences. In total, they represented more than 800 years of ministry in congregations throughout Saskatchewan, in India, and Japan, Aberdeen, Drake, Hague, Herschel, Langham, Meadow Lake, North Battleford, Osler, Prince Albert, Rabbit Lake, Regina, Rosthern, Saskatoon, Waldheim, Warman, Watrous, Wymark.



Standing from left - Jake Nickel, Bill Kruger, Verna Nickel, Verner Friesen, Rudy Froese, Esther Patkau, Anne Friesen, Fred Heese, Arthur Wiens, Margaret Heese, Dave Neufeld, Leila Wiens, Susan Neufeld, Kay Andres, Justine Funk, Orville Andres, Anna Dyck, Peter Funk, Justina Peters, Frances Klassen, Helen Kornelsen, Herbert Peters, Benno Klassen, Norman Bergen, Jake Loewen, John Janzen  
Seated in front- Menno and Elsie Epp, Henry and Katherine Funk, Marie and Abram Regier, Teresa Loewen, Nettie Janzen. (Nine days later Nettie and John Janzen were killed in an auto accident.)

### **MHSS**

is sponsoring

### **AN ARTISAN DAY**

in the Fellowship Hall

**at Bethany Manor**

110 LaRonge Rd., Saskatoon

**On Saturday, May 7, 2005**

9:30 a.m to 3 p.m.

Displays include painting, quilting,  
woodwork, and a table of Saskatchewan  
memorabilia

Small Admission Charge

Lunch available

For more information contact  
Eileen Quiring (306)945-2165

### **Warman MB Church Closes (Cont. from p.7)**

In the midst of this combination of sadness at the church's closing and hope for a new incarnation in the future, members of the Mennonite Brethren congregation gathered on Sunday to share in a celebration of the church's history and accomplishments. Gliege described the event as taking joy in all that the church has meant during its existence. "It was a true celebration, of all the church has meant and accomplished in its time. One of the former pastors of the church, Frank Froese is his name, came back to give a sermon. He's either 95 or 96 years old, and he served the congregation from 1957 to 1968, which I believe in fact makes him the longest-serving pastor there, and he's got a lot of fire in his hearth yet. As well, many people came back to share stories of testimony and song, and it was a great event, celebrating God's faithfulness through these years of ministry."

**Anna Willms -  
A Woman Ahead of Her Time.**  
By Hilda Nickel

At the age of 107 her hair may be thinning, her body becoming frail, yet her keen interest in people has not diminished. Each staff member who enters her room at Sunset Nursing Home, where she now resides, is greeted by name. Very soon she has discovered details, or background information.

Anna Rempel was born to Sara [nee Dyck] and David H. Rempel in 1897 in Pawlowka, [Osterwick] South Russia. Her father, a teacher and minister, valued education and encouraged all his children, including girls, to continue studies beyond grade school. Anna became a teacher, her first post being on an estate and later in Schoenwiese. In 1920 she joined her sister Sara teaching Kindergarten in Osterwick. At the time of the 1904 war she witnessed the fiery red skies caused by exploding ammunition. She remembers the sinking of the Titanic in 1912.

For a period of time, life for Mennonites in Russia was almost idyllic. There was freedom of worship, access to education - there were friends and there were fruit orchards, and storks nested on roofs, a good omen. In 1917 the revolution, resulting in anarchy, changed all this. Fear, disease and privations prevailed. Anna remembers that to ease the tension her family gathered around the kerosene lamp, her mother at the spinning wheel, while someone would read from the humorous writings of Fritz Reuter.

In 1923 the Rempel family was able to immigrate to Canada for which Anna is most grateful. The Atlantic crossing on the rickety old ship Bruton took three weeks. Not one to miss an opportunity for learning, she and her sisters explored some of Quebec City during a seven-hour stopover on their journey west.

Many young immigrant women, Anna and her sisters among them, arrived in Saskatoon where they worked as domestics. She claims children



Anna Willms on her 107th. birthday with granddaughters Joanne Paulson, Margo Hordern, and Barb Hordern

with their openness were the best English teachers. She still took English classes at Princess Alexandra School and remembers the trepidation and fear of crossing the bridge in the darkness. In 1926 she entered St. Pauls School of Nursing, graduating in 1929 with distinction, and becoming the head nurse on the paediatrics ward.

Following her marriage in 1930 to Peter Willms, another immigrant, she devoted herself to being a wife and mother. The Willms were charter members of First Mennonite Church where Anna taught many years of Sunday School. Even though at that time, women were not invited to be part of the decision-making brotherhood, she seemed to be aware of which direction the church was going. She was unafraid of controversy. The Willms enjoyed a close circle of friends; music, piano and recordings were important in their house. Since they lived within walking distance of the University many students found a home with them - to room and board and thrive on friendship.

When Anna's two girls were small she felt a need for a Kindergarten so she organized one and named it "Sonnenstrahlen" (Sunbeams). Later she taught Deutsche Schule. Agnes Peters remembers what a great mentor Mrs. Willms was to her when she taught German school. To this day there are adults who remember with pleasure the stories and rhymes they learned as children there.

Anna Willms is no stranger to hardship and tragedy, uprooted from her homeland where hunger, fear and

**Anna Willms** (continued from page 9) disease reigned, then abruptly thrust into the reality of life in Canada. She has experienced the loss of her husband, both daughters, parents and the majority of her siblings. Friends have died, but the most difficult to deal with is the loss of one's child, she says. All these deep sorrows and losses have been faced with strength and courage. Following her husband's death she updated her nursing credentials and volunteered at the Sunset Nursing home. Soon she was nursing people in their homes. Any donations she received were used to support needy children overseas. At one point she had eleven adoptees. She became a member of the Alzheimer Society and the health association. While a member of the "Neighbour to Neighbour" program she delighted in reading to a blind lady. Up to the age of eighty-seven she was still caring for "old people". Her interest in her alma mater is ongoing and she still enjoys contact with her "nursing sisters"- all much younger, of course.

Mrs. Willms' love of learning has not ceased. Already in her nineties she took advantage of seniors classes offered at the University of Saskatchewan, auditing topics such as pharmacy, Russian language, anthropology, sociology, contemporary history, power of politics, the place of women in western civilization. She also took writing classes and several of her stories are published in an anthology. The added advantage of attending classes was the stimulation of meeting and conversing with other people. She has casually taught Russian or German to a number of people and still finds it a gratifying experience to help someone with languages.

In the year 2000, a tea was held in her honor to welcome her into the "three-century club." Anna Willms was not a typical housewife. As someone aptly put it, she is the "original liberated woman" A poster with this quip: "Boring women are immaculate housekeepers" hangs on the wall in her room. She was also an environmentalist, perhaps even before the word was invented, always saving scraps here and stretching there, and recycling everything possible. Precious to Anna are her grandchildren and great

grandchildren with whom she dearly loves to keep in touch. Also important to her is the pastoral care of Esther Patkau. Her unwavering faith is expressed more in action than in word. She says "Gottes Wege sind nicht unsere Wege" (God's ways are not our ways.)

Thanks to Esther Patkau, Ag. Peters, Irma Gerbrandt, and Helen Derksen for much of the above information.

## HAGUE—1903

In 1903 the village of Hague was incorporated. It must have been a year of much activity for the village. A mere decade of phenomenal growth had taken place. In 1895 when the first Old Colony Mennonite homesteaders came to this area [Neuanlage], there were three homes in what is Hague today. [Rosthern settlers arrived a few years earlier.] According to the records of Mr. J.E. Friesen, the following were living there at the time: a bachelor, George Lovell, the Klaus D. Dycks and the George Bergens. Only eight years later, in 1903, the records show there were 30 dwellings and a population of 175 people. The four grain elevators lined up alongside the railway track and a four-story flour mill stood at the north end. Hague already had two lumber yards at the time. This was a good business since people came from some distance to buy their lumber in Hague. There were two general stores: John Kehler and J.D. Friesen, and a hardware owned by I.P. Friesen, living in Rosthern. Hague also had a hotel which burned down the next year, and a Massey implement dealership. Mr. Peter Hiebert built a livery barn that year, and Hans Eder had a butcher shop. Mention is also made of a machine shop. Mr. Herman Jacoby worked as postmaster.

There was a real need for a school. However in order to build a school it required money. So that business could be done in an orderly fashion, the village applied for incorporation. A one-room school was built under the supervision of Frank Grabinsky, ready for the fall term. The first teacher was Miss Emily Jacoby, a sister to the postmaster. She came down with scarlet fever by the middle of December and had to terminate her position. Mr. Henry Gloeckner was the teacher in the new year.

Let us follow the history of the school building in the years to come. As stated, it was built in 1903. On the peak of the roof there was fancy scroll woodwork at least 12 inches high and about 3 inches wide. It read, "North-West Territories - 1903". The school served until 1910 and it was during these years that Mr. John Diefenbaker attended as a Grade 1 student, with his father the teacher. By 1910 the school was too small for the enrolment and a new two-room, two-story building was erected. The plans were to add another two rooms similar to the first two, as the need arose. Later when this addition was added, the whole building was finished in brick. The building was demolished in 2002. In 1910 when the first school building became available, the local Mennonite congregation purchased it and it served as their church until 1929. At that time a large influx of Mennonites from Russia came to this area after World War 1. Now the building was too small and once more it became available in 1930. The Lutherans purchased it and used it as their church for 15 years. Until that time the Lutherans had worshipped in homes or in Rosthern. In 1946 they built a new larger church and once again this building was up for sale. This time the Neuanlage fellowship purchased it, moved it into the village of Neuanlage and added an entry and a full basement. The building served the group well until Christmas of 1978 and after that it was dismantled.

1903 also saw some tragedies in and near Hague. In February of that year, Mr. Edward Woodcock was killed by a train while driving across the railway tracks in Hague. It is interesting to read that this Mr. Woodcock had been captured by Louis Riel's men during the time of the rebellion. He spent 40 days a prisoner in a cellar at Batoche, then was released by Middleton at the capture of Batoche. He was married to Mathilda Kusch.

It was on a Sunday afternoon of that year that Ben Penner, 13-year old son of Bernard Penner's, and a friend went boating on Fisher's

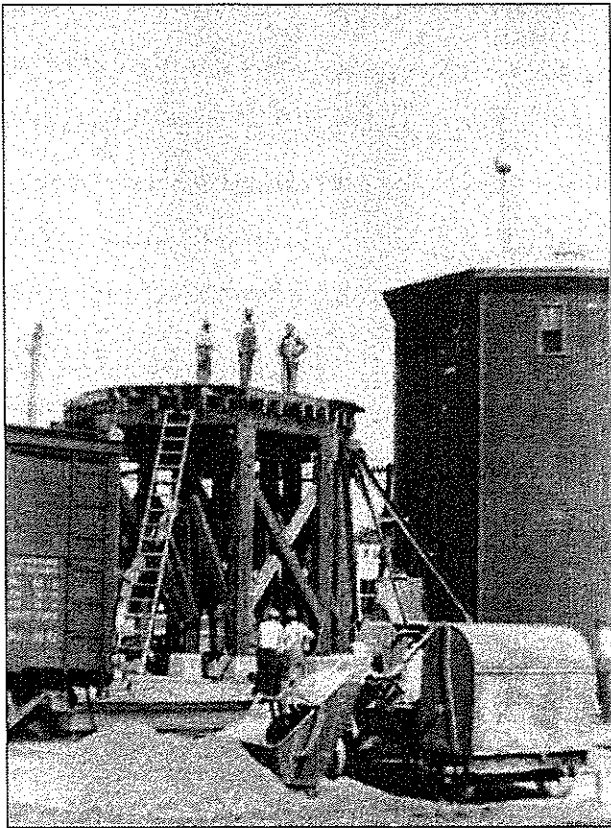
Lake. This friend was the son of John Wiebes, who lived near the lake. The boys were using a watering trough, but had no oars or poles. They pulled themselves along the shore by holding on to the brush growing at the edge in the water. A strong wind was blowing and somehow it caused the trough to go off shore. The boys panicked and leaned to one side and it overturned. Had the boys remained calm, they would have safely drifted across the lake. Both boys drowned at about 1:30 that Sunday afternoon. It was witnessed by some girls who were helpless to give aid, but they told the story as people gathered. Ben Penner lies buried in the Blumenthal cemetery.

Also in 1903, Susie, 20-year old daughter of the Frank Grabinskys, was suffering with tuberculosis. Early in the year, on January 4, she died and was the first person to be buried in the Hague cemetery.

There were no cars in Hague in 1903, but it is interesting to note that when the province of Saskatchewan was formed in 1905, those owning automobiles had to register the vehicle and display a home-made plate [licence] on the rear of the auto. The Motor Vehicles Act of the time set a speed limit of 10 miles per hour within any city, town or incorporated village, and no more than 20 miles per hour outside of these communities. Did horses have a speed limit too?

To finish the year 1903, a treat was offered to the community. A committee in Rosthern of which Henry Fisher was the Hague representative, engaged a drama group from the east. They put on a six-act drama called "Quo Vadis". This play had at least 16 actors plus stage help. When the announcements were mailed to Mr. Fisher on December 5, 1903, a note was enclosed which read, "I hope you will bring up a good crowd.". We cannot find a record telling of the success. That was a major undertaking. Quo Vadis is a religious play depicting the pomp of Rome in 64 A.D. under the mad Emperor Nero. It tells of the plight of the Christians in the Empire, especially after Nero burnt down a large portion of the city, blaming the Christians for it. The story is still a classic today.

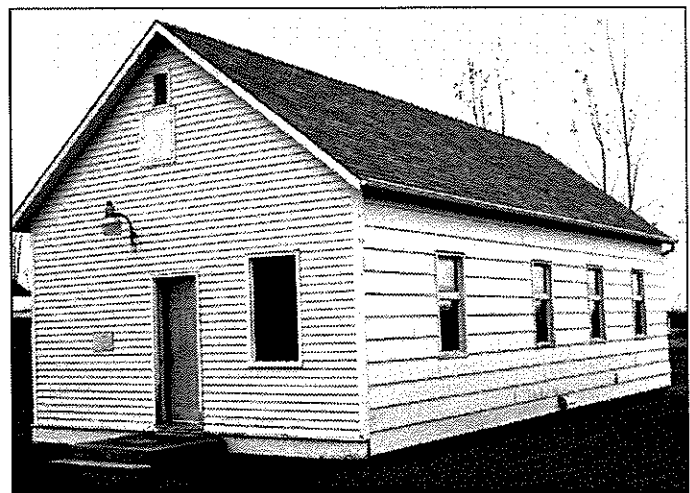
# MEMORIES OF HAGUE IN PICTURES



The Old Hague Water Tower



Mrs. Margaret (Toews) Sawatzky, long time resident of Hague, is shown above holding a plaque presented to her father, David Toews, in recognition of the work he had done for the Mennonite Immigration movement. Mrs. Sawatzky is telling a Sunday School class in Nutana Park Mennonite Church about Toews Lake named for her father by the Saskatchewan Government.



Former Hague Church—Picture taken in 1981

The Hague Robin Hood Flour Mill burns in 1945. Seen on the picture are Mr. Abe Friesen, Mr. Fenner, Sr. and Mr. Rudy Penner.

# Our Readers Write

I was recently loaned an issue of the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian by a friend, Mrs. Evelyn Friesen, who is a regular subscriber of your publication. She is aware that my first 17 years were spent in Hepburn and noted the article by Victor Peters on the Restoration of the Pool elevator in Hepburn and brought it to my attention. After reading this and other interesting submissions, I found Dennis Fisher's story of the Ens' and the Osler Monarch softball team and did it bring back a memory!

We played a lot of softball in Hepburn as well, which is located about 10-12 kms west of Hague where in the 50's frequent tournaments were staged inviting teams from around the area. The Osler Monarchs were well known and highly respected, even feared by their competitors. They normally played in a senior league in Saskatoon but often participated in the weekend tournaments in the area around Hague and Rosthern.

We probably learned of the big weekend in Hague from posters pinned to telephone poles that the famous Monarchs were the highlight of the upcoming tournament - so the plan was for 3 to 4 Hepburnites to take in the event. We arrived early Saturday morning to witness the schedule draw with the ultimate objective of enjoying the final spectacle involving the beloved Monarchs and the unfortunate winners of the "B" side.

Mr. Fisher mentions in his article the existence of a number of small Mennonite communities in the Hague area which included tiny villages as well as the little rural schools housing grades 1 to 8. My memory fails me as to which one it was, however, the morning draw ironically pitted the mighty Monarchs against one of these communities.

This "team" was made up of the most unique and unusual players I have ever seen. They, boys and girls, piled out of an old grain truck, ages approximated 12 to 17 years. They had no uniforms, some had gloves, some did not. They had one, maybe two bats. The Monarchs! What a contrast! Fresh from winning City and Provincial championships, were a sight to behold. Multi-colored uniforms with crests and individual numbers. Caps and shoes that even had cleats! It was very apparent to the small Hepburn contingent that what was forthcoming would not be pretty.

The plot thickens! The little team from the village only had 8 players!

Tournament officials gathered in a circle, small circle, and discussed the situation. The Monarchs agreed without protest to allow an outsider to fill the roster and the search for the unsuspecting victim began. The "Hepburnites" were spotted hiding behind the bleacher and, sure enough, through a selection process involving more duress than democracy, guess who got the backcatcher job!?

Well the game began. As I recall we had first bats. Their pitcher, certainly not the "ringer" they were saving for the final, was reasonable and sportsmanlike and thankfully refrained from using the overpowering "windmill" pitch and more or less lobbed the ball, at least to our smaller, younger batters. Well surprise, surprise, as a result of playful antics of the infield bobbling grounders and intentionally over or underthrowing to 1st base, we scored a few runs.

Their bats. The same sort of light antics were displayed. They bunted, right handers hit left (visa versa), allowing us a better opportunity to throw them out. It was, however, becoming somewhat evident to me that this assortment of players that I had been "invited" to participate with was demon-

strating a level of determination and skill that was totally unexpected. It was also apparent that, at about the same moment, our opponent was drawing the same observation and a considerable "bearing down" was taking place.

The mood was changing. The fearful "windmill" was now employed. Those of you who have experienced this pitching technique are aware, as Mr. Fisher recalls, that the ball travels at 1000 miles (not kms) per hour. But, when your pitching to a batter well less than adult size, and who is not the least bit intimidated by this hard to control style, and has been expertly coached to "stand in there" and "wait for a good one", base on balls often result. By mid-game we had a considerable lead.

Now things were getting serious. At bats they felt the urgency to score runs, they swung hard, trying to grand slam the ball to Rosthern. They popped up, grounded out, hit long liners out to our gloveless outfielders who made remarkable catches. At bats we blooped over short and 2nd bunted grounders which were overplayed

and overthrown. There was concern, frustration and even a hint of panic.

Our preoccupation with on field excitement drew our attention away from goings on off the field. Spectators who had abandoned us for games that offered far more doubt as to their outcome, began to line 1st and 3rd base lines having heard the word that something strange was happening on diamond "C".

That Saturday way back in 1956 or 57 was a day I had almost forgotten. It's great to have your memory nudged every now and again. The Osler Monarchs were a highly respected, extremely talented ball team that provided enjoyable entertainment to a lot of people north of Saskatoon. That day, however, they were not destined to appear in the final. Mind you neither were we, but this game bunch of ragtag ballplayers from somewhere near Hague, Saskatchewan eliminated the mighty Monarchs from Osler in the first game of the tournament.

Robert J. Schmor  
Steinbach, MB



Back Row—Left to Right—Dave Loewen, John Braun, Bill Ens, George Braun, Carl Ens, George Guenther, George Braun, Frank Berg, George Miller

Front Row—Left to Right—Henry Ens, Steve Evancio, Don Regier, Aron Braun, Bill Braun, Alfred Driedger

Note: Bill Braun's grandsons carry on tradition by playing on the current Osler Monarchs team.

**Memories - Rosental, Chortiza -  
South Russia to Osler, SK.**  
by Edna (Froese) Guenter

I wrote from "memories", stories told by our parents, events from their journals and a re-awakening of these accounts through a Heritage Tour in 1995 to Poland, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Zaporozhye, Chortiza, Rosental hosted by Dick and Betty Epp. Many of the original sites are now renamed.

My parents, Maria (Penner) Froese (1901-1985), daughter of Johann Penner and Helena (Berg) Penner, and Peter David Froese, (1896-1959), son of David Aron Froese and Sara (Rempel) Froese were born and grew up in Rosental as neighbours. Mother's journals fondly describe the Dnieper River. Her grandfather loved fishing and did so from its banks - seated on a stool. Swimming, skating, and summer picnics on this idyllic river were frequent events. The Dnieper was central to their youth.

Maria's father was a banker, brick factory owner, landowner, furniture maker and a flutist. Music played an important role in their lives... her sister a soloist. Her nostalgic descriptions were poignant. I remember her words "Watermelon in Canada could never compare with theirs - so sweet and juicy". She describes her mother as "so loving and patient". She died of pneumonia in 1914.. "war was threatening".

**1916** my father married Maria (Epp) Janzen... had 4 children, and since my older siblings were married we had a family at home again. Along came a half-brother Dietrich, and "there was great happiness." During the growing up time the girls attended the Chortiza Maedchenschule (Girls' School). Mother's ambition was to be a nurse. The Revolution ended all these dreams. "By this time there were signs of war everywhere. "

**1918** "One village after another was destroyed. Father (Penner) was badly beaten,

forced to give up the keys to the bank and everything we had. Tina, Maria, Helen and I (Marichen), were forced to flee from the bandits through the back door while Mother, fluent in Russian, kept them occupied. Thus we were protected from murder and unmentionable atrocities, as many were not. Thank God. "

**1919** Typhus- "My sister Susannah had died of TB and now my sister Liese died of the fever. My parents and stepsister Helena were spared but Tina, Maria and I lay unconscious. There were many ill and deceased lying in our home."

"When permission came to emigrate, our whole family of eight were listed. On July 17, 1923, we were the second party to leave Chortiza on a freight train to Libau. How thankful we were to leave the Land of Horror. After a four-day trip on the steamship "Bruton" we docked at Southampton, England where we were examined. Sadly my brother Peter Penner had trachoma and was sent to Lechfeld, Germany for treatment. After two years he was allowed to join his wife Maschenka and daughters Elsbeth and Hella in Canada".

**July 25, 1923**" one hundred and fifteen of us sailed to Quebec, Canada on the Empress of Scotland, arrived via Winnipeg, in Rosthern, Saskatchewan August 4, 1923. Here we were allocated to different homes. My parents, Tina, Helen and Dietrich to the

J. Epps, mother's relatives in Eigenheim. My work was at Andres, then at bank manager Gerhard Rempel's home in Rosthern. Later Tina, Helen and I worked in Saskatoon ". What a change it must have been from, having Dienstmaedchen (domestics) to becoming one! "We were well treated as were other young working



women in Saskatchewan although wages sometimes became an issue. "

The young women met regularly for socialization and spiritual activities at the old YWCA. The photo (1924) shown was taken on the City



Hall grounds nearby. Some readers might note familiar faces.

The incident of a city fire alarm box, as reported in the September 2002 issue of the SMH about the Maedchenheim, was frequently related by my mother. She was "the young girl, blonde, shy and very frightened" who set off the red fire alarm box, having mistaken it for a mailbox, when sent to mail a letter for her employer, Mrs. Gunn. This incident was reported in a 1924 issue of the Saskatoon Star. This story was often heard by us when the "working out" to pay the Reiseschuld (travel debt) was discussed.

While mother worked in Saskatoon my father had come to Canada from the USA for a visit (1924) to see his step parents and sisters, Sara Froese and Aganetha (Froese) Koslowsky, newly arrived from Russia. He visited old friends and neighbors, mother being one of them. She worked for the Gunn family until 1926, when she married father, Peter David Froese, who had emigrated from Marion, South Dakota, USA, to settle on a farm near Osler, Saskatchewan.

Now back to Chortiza-Rosental and my fathers' story as drawn from his journal, written while he was in the USA. Peter Froese was an intellectual, avid reader, storyteller of Russian folktales, philosopher, spiritual person and a

singer of Russian ballads, not a farmer as circumstance demanded of him. He had attended school in the "Dorfschule, Centralschule, and then Lehrerseminar in Chortisa", intending to be a teacher. It was not to be.

The memories recorded by my father are in a lengthy journal "Reflections of My Time and Service in the Deniken Wrangel Army and My Stay in Turkey". After his death in 1959 mother had it translated from German to English, by her friend Katherine Hooge. The recorded tragic events, atrocities, and personal experiences are heart wrenching to read. What events of the past must have run through his mind as he sat alone on the back steps watching the prairie sky, or gathered us as children around him to assure us of the safety of the sheet lightning in the dark sky, after a hot summer's day. Deep thoughts - little said.

My writing is a scant sketch of events, with quotes from this journal illustrating the mental and physical suffering of his youth (1915-1921).

**1915** I was 18. We as students of the Chortiza Lehrerseminar shook our teacher's hand and heard the words, "See you again in the fall—" "the summer was quiet— until one day in Aug., 1915 my father handed me a printed sheet—"Now your time has come", he said. August 10, 1915 to Jekaterinslav—then to a Moscow hospital as a medic— until 1917 when we were granted home leave. The Bolsheviks took over the hospital—the robber bands descended on our village and the dance began. Anyone who lived in the Colonies is informed about this period. The Mennonites who served as soldiers (known as 'vaseline smearers') served as conscripted non-combatants - possible in the White Army due to a concession made to Mennonites as pacifists by Catherine the Great

**1919** Selbstschutz - the young men had formed an organization to protect the Colonies from bandits— If perhaps a few members of the Selbstschutz took up arms out of adventure, the majority did so because we thought it was the only way to protect our loved ones. This movement is controversial to this day, but we believe we saved many from harm including even those who were very critical of us.

This protective group was disbanded in the Old Colony (mine) since it was not our intention to fight political parties, although it was almost impossible to distinguish them from bandit groups. The young men who had served in the alternate service and worn the Russian uniform were marked men. They were reported by informers and could only return to their roles as non-combatant medics with the White Army.

**1919** A few young men, I among them, decided to join the Whites. My conviction was that I was helping subdue the robber bands who brought destruction to us. Time proved, though too late, that we miscalculated the might of the military forces and the strength and nature of the White Army. Following is a sketch of places and events as recorded in horrendous detail in the journal.

**Chortiza to Tamahova** - cannon shooting—beat the Red Army.

**Nicopol** --assigned to a regiment of Terek Cossacks (Not as peaceful as the Don Cossacks) increasingly unfavorable impression of the poorly led White Army.—

**Fastavo** -here I have seen the greatest atrocities of the war and faced death many a time—how disappointed one was with the Whites—in complete silence we marched through the forest and without incident reached the station, were loaded on a train and off to Kiev—there was unrest in the city. In the houses we stayed the walls were splattered with blood and the drinking water wells were filled with corpses—as the Reds moved in we fled, seeing whole families with wagons and bundles moving southward. We realized our escape to the Crimea was being cut off—We were on our own- a group of 80-100 fleeing men. We were advised to stay in Kherson—redirected to Rumania—denied entry—then decided to cross the Polish border, the majority of us sick—

**Poland**-loaded into railway cars—we who were barely able walked—Here I was alone, sick, penniless and in a foreign land. What had become of my loved ones in Russia? Were

they still alive?—P. O. camp, Sluschehy, -we were bathed and put into barracks. I didn't recognize myself in the mirror, long beard—no wonder acquaintances didn't recognize each other—"old man" they called me—here 6 months—we escaped over a fence, hid and slept in straw stacks, then started walking east, were informed it was impossible to cross the German border so returned to P.O, camp, sneaking back in.

**Crimea** POWs recalled by Wrangel (the new commander of the Whites)—transported through Bulgaria, Rumania, up the Danube to the Black Sea, down the Danube—Russian ships took us to Theodosia, back to the battle front—defeated and pushed back to the Crimea—my plan to flee home gone. We stole some mules and found our way through the mountains to Simferopol and then to Sevastopol on the backs of the abandoned mules (they had been used to pull cannons)—to the ship Saratov which we sereptitiously boarded by rope—another escape from the Reds—nothing in my bundle but 2 loaves of bread and a few pounds of bacon—I would attempt America from Constantinople.—

**1920 November 1, 1920** The Saratov set sail. "Where are we going? Which country will admit us? For the second time I was leaving Russia—will I ever return?—will I see my loved ones again? "

**Constantinople** "Starvation, filth, disease. It seems people became machinelike, no feelings. One wonders what a person's life means. How will it all end?—heard rumours— a few men had been taken off the ship by American Mennonites—there was a Mennonite Home— Christmas Eve 1920 - the time we used to be in the midst of our loved ones—now we were in the coal room of a ship in the Marmara Sea. Arriving in Constantinople, instead of being sent to "The Home ", we -were taken to "The Valley of the Dead", a tent town for sick people. We heard a voice 'Are there any Mennonites here? We were thankful to leave the army behind as the doors of The Home closed behind us. It was like Paradise after our experiences, which only those who participated in them could appreciate. I left The Home for a while to work for a Turkish prince—worked 3 1/2 months for a Turkish farmer—then one morning

someone called, 'The papers to go to America have arrived!'—We had waited nearly a year—were examined—

**1921 August 3, 1921** Boarded the Acropolis, stopped at Athens Greece— September 3, 1921, after a month aboard ship across the Atlantic Ocean debarked at Ellis Island, New York, USA, aptly named 'The Island of Tears'—were denied entry due to some Labour Law, appealed, and—October 1921, I, one of 62 men was admitted provisionally—a \$500.00 bond—and put on our way to Lancaster, Pa.-

-attended Mennonite workshops—then to Chicago and on to Hurley, South Dakota. I was picked up and welcomed to the Orlando Waltner farm at Marian, SD—remained there for 4 years—working, attending English School, and making new friends. A kind Christian family"

and many others dispersed to Germany, Canada and the USA). This excerpt with the photo is from an article in Der Bote (late sixties). A letter of thanks signed by the men was also published. When in South Dakota, father received word from Russia that emigration of Mennonites from Russia to Canada was being planned.

**1922** Word from Canada—"my sisters and stepparents were to arrive soon." His brother David (18) had died of Typhus and his father had been killed by bandits.



**1923** "I went to Canada for a visit, to see my family at last. How? By car. My decision, even though everything was not to my liking, was to join all the others in Canada and to establish my home there ".  
End of journal –

Back Row—L—R—Johann Friesen, Peter Froese, Peter Nickel, Abram Guenther, Jacob Isaac, Heinrich Penner Seated—Johann Dick, G. Klassen, Jacob Loewen, Gerhard Wieler, Abram Friesen **1915—to Moscow**

Peter D. Froese (my father) was one of "62 die in der Weissen Armee in Russland Dienst getan hatten, und dann nach Konstantinopel flohen wo sich das Mennonitische Zentral Komitee ihrer abnahm. Von da kamen die "62" und viele andre nach Deutschland, Canada, und USA." (Translation— who had served in the White Army, fled to Constantinople where they were received by the Mennonite Central Committee. From there the 62

My notes only segments.

**November 1925 -**

Father came over the border with his car and sold it for the down payment on a homestead at Osler, Saskatchewan. He rejoined his family, relatives, childhood friends and neighbours, living as a bachelor in his new home, a courtship developing with my mother.

I now return to my mother's journal.

1926 October 3, 1926



1926 Tina, my stepsister, and I had worked in Saskatoon until we had a double wedding in the Hague Mennonite Church, Altester J.J. Klassen of Dundurn officiating. I, Maria Penner, to Peter Froese, Tina to Johann Penner, my cousin. We had all been friends and neighbours as children, now reunited after separate journeys that led Peter and me to Osler, Saskatchewan, our new home. Peter's and my honeymoon was a Bennett Wagon ride, loaded with our belongings, to the farm he had taken over in the spring. We were thankful to God and happy!

Peter Froese's journal covers the period 1915-1923. Looking at a map the distances covered by father on foot, by mule, train and ship were unbelievable. The experiences left him with a

deep lasting impression - a quiet disdain for ideological and partisan dogma and a reliance upon the wisdom of abiding faith and tolerance. Both parents never wanted to return to Russia ever again after their ordeal, not even to visit!

This concludes Chapter 1. The unwritten Chapter 2 -post 1926-would relate the joys and sorrows of paying Reiseschuld, farm debts, raising and educating four children; their sacrifices and encouragement in giving us an education, a legacy denied to them because of the War and the Revolution. John and Jerry Froese, my brothers recently deceased, would join the two family survivors, Elmer and me, in our gratitude to our parents for instilling in us their values - a sense of security, self-confidence and enduring faith.

### The Old-Time General Store

Victor Carl Friesen

Standing in a supermarket line-up today and seeing a string of grocery carts piled high with packaged foods, one is amazed at the efficiency of the modern store, even in some rural towns. In the most modern stores the check-out person whisks the items past the computerized till, recording the prices, so that another fifty-dollar purchase is processed in a matter of seconds.

All this sets me thinking about how the customers in any town ever managed to get their shopping done, say, sixty years ago. I am thinking not only of the Great Depression, when shopping was at a minimum, nor just of the wartime, when rationing was in effect. I am thinking also of the immediate post-war years, when the economy was starting to boom and a general optimism pervaded our lives. My hometown of Rosthern then had a population somewhere around 1,500, much as it has now, but that of the surrounding farming community was much greater than today's, for there was at that time a farm family on most quarter-sections, here in the parkland region of the province. A town store actually served a larger clientele then than now.

Yet a typical shopping trip by a farm family was a lengthy undertaking. This was particularly so if the family still made the trip to town by Bennett wagon

**Old Time General Store**(cont. from p. 19)  
or buggy. Stowed away in a corner of the wagon box or under the buggy seat was a basket of eggs to be sold in the store, and at the back of the conveyance was a five-gallon can of cream to be delivered to the town creamery.

Once in town, the housewife proceeded to the general store, and the shopping got under way in leisurely fashion. (I am thinking specifically of shopping at "Friesen & Co.," which at that time was located on the south side of Main Street in the middle of the block. Note that the store people were not relatives of the author.) On entering the store, she was immediately surrounded by all the delicious smells of "bought" goods--a curious mix of food aromas from one side of the building and of pungent dyes emanating from bolts of new cloth stacked neatly on the other side. Then there was the odor of the building itself, particularly that of its dark, oiled floor underfoot. Standing amid all these fragrances was already a balm to the mind, a kind of luxury indulged in without cost.

Meanwhile, the storekeeper, or one of the clerks, waited behind the counter to serve the customer. The storekeeper himself had a business-like air and may even have worn black sateen shirt protectors over his forearms to show that he was able and ready to do his part. Some of the clerks were often young men and women from the farm, usually from differing ethnic groups (such as Mennonite and Ukrainian) and from opposite ends of the trading district, who would draw in the widest range of customers. For the group of farm people whom these clerks represented, it was a point of pride to have one of its own working in town instead of being mere hired help on a neighboring farm. Sometimes these customers would wait with their shopping until "their" clerk was free to tend to them. I know because my sister Elsie was one of the clerks.

Once the actual shopping began, the conversation ran somewhat along these lines:

"And what can I do for you today, Mrs. ----- ?"

The pencil came away from behind his ear as the storekeeper held his order pad in one hand before him.

The farmwife took her order from her purse and read off the first item: "Well, I'll start with some sugar."

"White or brown?"

"White."

"How much do you need?"

"Five pounds will be fine."

"You wouldn't want some brown, too, would you?" continued the questioning. "I got in a batch yesterday."

"What does it cost?" answered the farmwife, for what she bought that day depended in part on what that same storekeeper gave her for the eggs she had brought in and also the size of the cream cheque. (There is a delightful comment in Sinclair Ross's classic short story, "Cornet at Night," where a farmboy on a trip to town alone cannot just hand over the grocery list to the general store to be filled out while the boy tends to other business. The list has to be "explained"--the quantity of some items depending upon the egg money.)

After the matter of brown sugar had been settled, the farmwife read out the other items on her list, each one accompanied by a similar series of questions and answers between herself and the clerk. Each item in turn was secured from a shelf and placed on the counter, many of them needing to be taken from a bulk source and then weighed or measured and packaged. Sheets of brown paper were torn from a huge roll at the end of the counter for wrapping flat goods, while brown bags of various sizes held other material.

A cone of white "store string" hung from the ceiling, and the storekeeper grasped the dangling loose end to wrap around the packages. Every storekeeper had from long practice a deft way of tying knots and effortlessly tearing off the string from the cone when he had finished. This he did with a particular flourish if he knew some small farmboy or girl were watching him. (This string, incidentally, was meticulously unknotted when the packages were unwrapped, back on the farm kitchen table, and the

**Old Time General Store** (cont. from p. 20) string wound onto the ball of similar string saved from previous shopping trips. The author caught his first fish as a young boy on a line that he had pieced together from short lengths of such "store string.")

Not only were all the items secured individually by the storekeeper as they were read off the shopping list, but he also wrote each one down, in duplicate, into his little pad: quantity, name, and price. If the customer were to buy an item such as coal oil, which could be obtained from the back of some stores and poured into the customer's own can or jug, why then the time of shopping was extended even longer. Finally all the foodstuffs were placed in a box, the bill totalled up and paid (or credit arranged for), and the customer said goodbye till next time.

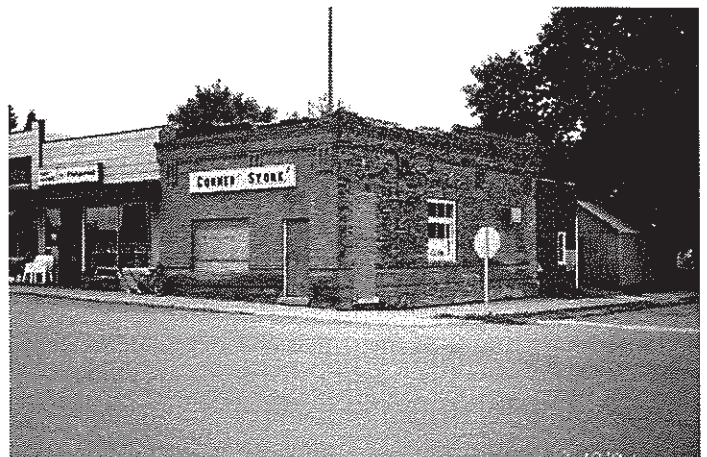
To the children at home, whether or not the bill had been paid was of no great immediate consequence, but the bill itself had some interest. For fastened to it was the carbon paper, which we called "tracing paper" in those days. The children might quarrel over its possession since it could be used in all kinds of imaginative, artistic amusements. Sometimes, a kindly storekeeper might put a bag of mixed candy into the grocery box as a goodwill gift and a treat for the family--little was actually spent on treats back then. On one occasion there was no bag of candy, but the storekeeper had jammed a gumdrop onto the spout of the coal-oil can, which had been missing its cap. The child at home salvaged the candy, soaked it in water overnight, and although it still smelled of coal oil, ate it anyway.

Grocery shopping, then, as practised by a farm family sixty years ago, was a whole afternoon's experience—what with driving to town with horses, waiting at the creamery, asking at the general store for each item individually and watching them being weighed and packaged, and eventually driving home for supper. It was a varied and interesting experience, an outing, a getting away from the routine of farm work.

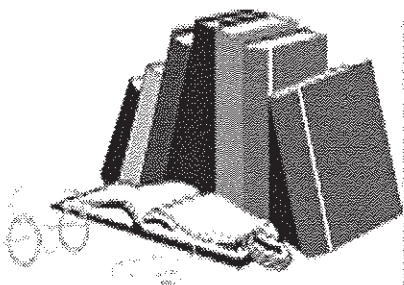
Really, not much was bought, usually just some of the staples for everyday living, for a farm family was pretty much self-sufficient in terms of what it ate. A general store could well serve a large farm community in the apparently leisurely way described here.

Today, there is concern about farm families increasingly bypassing their local town merchants and going to the huge city plazas to do their shopping. True, they still go to town, something they can do in fifteen minutes in their half-ton pickups, and push their shopping carts along the grocery aisles in about as little time, and then drive home with their purchase. But it seems that the feeling that shopping should be an excursion is deeply ingrained in rural people. A drive into the city by car now takes as long as a wagon trip into town in the olden days. The shopping mall with its many sights and sounds is as varied and interesting to a more sophisticated shopper as the simple general store used to be to its customers. And a treat nowadays is a meal out before driving home rather than a mere bag of candy (or a kerosene-soaked gumdrop).

It is not only the variety of goods and somewhat cheaper prices that attract rural dwellers to city shopping. Country people are but once more finding the end in the means, making the weekly grocery shopping a worthwhile experience in itself—just as their parents did at the old-time general store in town.



The old General Store on Hague's main street was boarded up when Bob Sawatzky took this picture of his father, Jake Sawatzky's, former store in the 1980's and the store is now gone.



# Mostly About Books

By Victor G. Wiebe  
Book Editor

Funk, Jack. I Was Younger When I was a Boy. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Apex Graphics Ltd. 2003. 197 pp. ISBN: 0-9732836-0-2. Price: \$25.00 Available from Mr. Jack Funk, 1212 Osler St., Saskatoon, SK. S7N 0T9. Reviewed by Victor G. Wiebe.

Jack Funk tells his story and reveals all about his adventures, as a pre-teen in Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan from about age six to twelve during the 1930's. What occupied and interested a mischievous, adventuresome boy in a small town in Saskatchewan during the Depression? He describes his Russian Mennonite family; father as a shopkeeper, mother as a homemaker, older sisters as a bit troublesome to the only boy in the family. He takes considerable pride in the town of Blaine Lake - a town with six grain elevators. Blaine Lake was an Anglo-Saxon town with the one Mennonite Funk family and with Doukhobors, Ukrainians, French and Indians in their own settlements around the town. Jack tells how the changing seasons impacted on his daily activities, how he got on in school and how he observed his family participation in daily activities and in church - the Mennonite Brethren *Kirk Jeinseite* [Low German for "the church of the other side."] This book is more a narrative of his interaction with friends and townspeople than a description of the place and events.

His narrative is written in a simple, familiar style that makes readers comfortable with referring to the author as Jack! Jack is an ordinary, happy, well liked, good natured but curious boy. For Jack, even though it is the dirty

thirties, life seems good and this joy seems to have been a life long satisfaction for the author. Even today as an older retired man, Jack still presents his life as a happy story. Some readers may be surprised at the language used in the book. In places it contains the vulgar vocabulary that young boys and some adults would use. At Plato's Palace, the local pool hall, Joe the proprietor, kindly explains in graphic detail the facts of life to young Jack.

One of the interesting features of the Funk family is that one of Jack's older sisters, Katie, (Katie Funk Wiebe) also wrote her side of the family story as: The Storekeeper's Daughter: A Memoir. (Scottsdale, Penna. Herald Press. 1997). The two books overlap in places but of course also diverge and in reading both one gets a multidimensional look at Blaine Lake and the Funk family.

Jack Funk calls I Was Younger When I was a Boy a work of fiction and he does leave out some interesting details, for example, he never identifies the Mennonite Brethren Church they attend. This is probably to spare some hurt feelings since he does parody some church practices. He also changes others and no doubt adds fictitious events to make a funny and more readable story. Adding fictional elements to a story can make it more dramatic, more humorous, but to me this always detracts for it makes me doubt all the facts in the book. However, what I do not doubt is that Jack Funk is authentic in telling us what life for a young boy in small town Saskatchewan some seven decades ago was really like and what was encountered and important to a school boy.

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

The MHSS archives recently received a large collection of papers that had been stored in the attic of the store in Osler for a number of decades. When store owners Jacob and Margaret Loeppky discovered the boxes of files after they purchased the store in 1965, they recognized their importance in documenting the history of Osler and the surrounding community. The papers, which include letters, invoices and receipts filed by Isaac Loewen who ran the store from the years 1902 to 1918, were micro-filmed and given to the Osler Historical Museum, who in turn donated them to the MHSS at the end of last year. They have now been transferred to files and are stored in eight large boxes, and are available to be studied by historians and any other researchers interested in the early history of Osler and area.

The bulk of the material in the collection relates to the general store begun and operated by Isaac Loewen in the town of Osler, Saskatchewan. This material includes correspondence with merchants in the towns of Hague, Rosthern, and Warman, as well as with merchants and companies in southern Manitoba and other parts of Canada and the United States. Because Isaac Loewen was also involved in the farming community in marketing grain and in acting as a land agent, the collection includes the grain statements and correspondence on land loan agreements regarding many Mennonite families in the Osler area. I was able to find a number of documents relating to several of my great-grandfathers. The collection also contains letters from Isaac Loewen's friends and family members in Russia, the United States, and Canada. These letters include ones from men such as David Toews and Peter Regier who were early leaders of the Rosenort Mennonite Church in the Rosthern area. Some of the letterheads of the local businesses tell a history all on their own. (See Hella Banman's book, Bits

& Pieces of Osler & District, 1890-1908, pp. 36-42 for samples.)

From Osler's First Storekeeper by Alan Guenther

Alan Guenther, who joined us as a volunteer at the Mennonite Historical Archives at Bethany Manor this winter, has been working on organizing the Isaac Loewen collection of papers. Based on the work he has done with this collection, Alan has written a very interesting article for us on Isaac Loewen which we will be featuring in our August edition of the Mennonite Historian with pictures from Grace Wiens, granddaughter of Isaac.

We also plan to continue our series on Saskatchewan museums by taking a look at the Osler Museum in our next edition. Memories of Hague by a former resident, the tradition of the Saturday night bath and some surprising Mennonite-Muslim connections are some other features to look for in August.

We welcome contributions of stories and pictures from our readers and invite your feedback on what you would like to see in this paper.

We also welcome your contributions of books, pictures, papers, etc. to our archive. Contact archivist Victor Wiebe about making donations or come to see us at the archive on Monday or Wednesday afternoons or Wednesday evenings.

As well as books, pictures, newspapers and serials, we also have the GRANDMA genealogy program on our computer for your use and we have a good collection of useful Mennonite books for sale.

To date, volunteers have spent much time organizing the serials collection, which is an ongoing project, and collecting and organizing obituaries. Don't throw out those old obituary clippings your grandmother saved; our files are particularly lacking in obituaries pre-1970. Copies of Family Genealogies are also very appreciated by the users of our archive. We thank you for your ongoing support.

## SASKATCHEWAN RIVER VALLEY MUSEUM HAGUE

When interest for a local museum grew, a founding committee met in October of 1983 to organize. By January 4, 1984, at a meeting of those interested, they elected the following to a governing committee: Jim Fisher, George K. Fehr, Rick Epp and George P. Fehr. Major contributions of money and artifacts were made by numerous persons, but we will list only a few that gave special gifts.

**TOBIE UNRUH** had a large private collection of artifacts but since he did not have the proper building space, they could not be attractively displayed. His whole collection eventually ended up in our museum although he had sold numerous items during the years. Tobie was a farmer, born March, 1919 and from childhood his interests centered around history and acquiring local artifacts. He was a driving force to move forward and when he died, his whole estate was willed to us. This enabled us to construct the new building that serves us so well.

**JACOB E. FRIESEN** was a merchant in Hague for all of his adult life. He was born in May of 1906 and is presently living in the Mennonite Nursing Home in Rosthern. Mr. Friesen had kept careful records of much of the history of this area, recording it in scrap books in an orderly fashion. We have many of them and they can be viewed anytime that the museum is open. Mr. Friesen also had a collection of very valuable items but most of them have been dispersed. He was also a person with a talent for art and has left many of his paintings to us.

**JIM FISHER**, was a farmer with the gift of public relations. This was a great asset and in the early years it caused the museum to grow rapidly. He, too, had a private collection which is widely known and although he passed away, much of this can be seen at the farm where Mrs. Shirley Fisher still resides.

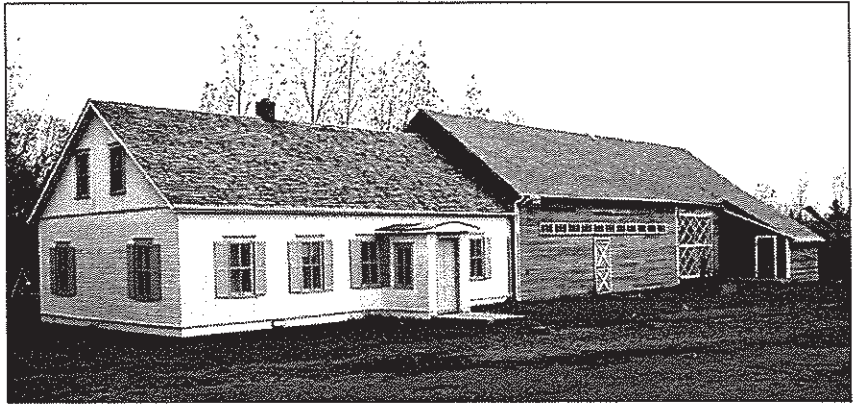
**GEORGE K. FEHR** was a farmer and big egg producer. He was born in December, 1921 and spent the last 18 years of his life working at the museum. His special gift was designing displays and carpentry which resulted in our showcases. He was rather particular about the order in which items were displayed and that made it attractive. Many hours were spent building, cleaning, repairing or refinishing items in his well-equipped shop.

Our sincere "thank you" goes out to the four persons mentioned above and many others who have volunteered during these 20 years. To try and mention all would make a long list. Today our governing board consists of nine elected members and one life membership. We meet monthly and the odd special meeting as the need arises. Our buildings are wheelchair accessible except for the two steps into the school. We have an active Ladies' Auxiliary which clean the buildings and serve coffee and even meals to groups if they ask for it well in advance. Our main building is heated year-round but open only upon request during the winter months. We have a house-barn, a one-room school and an early church on site, all furnished for viewing. We operate primarily with volunteer staff. It would please us if we were visited by you!

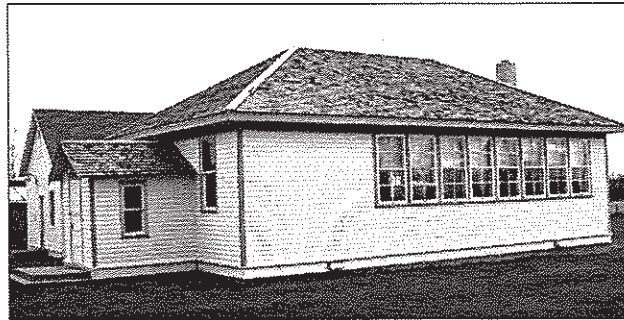
**NOTE:** John J. Janzen, author of the above article, doesn't mention his own very major contribution to the Hague Museum. Until his untimely death in November, 2004, John could be found almost daily at the museum and made sure that as many people as possible had access to the extensive museum displays. Since his death, the museum is open only by special appointment. He is very sadly missed.



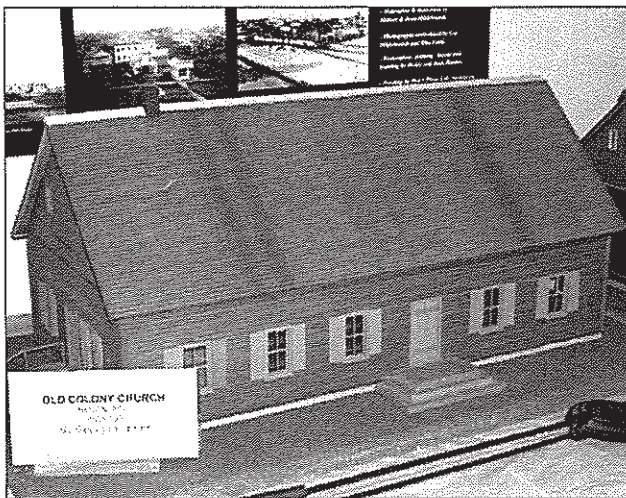
**EXAMPLES  
OF DISPLAYS  
AT THE  
SASKATCHEWAN  
VALLEY MUSEUM  
AT HAGUE**



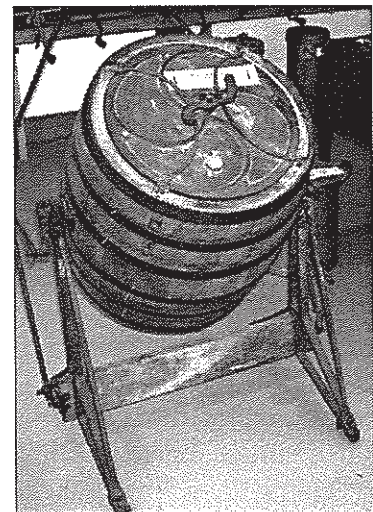
**Housebarn featured at Hague Museum**



**Former Renfrew School**

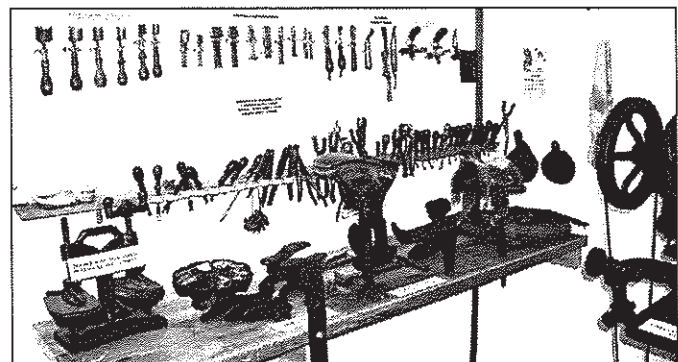
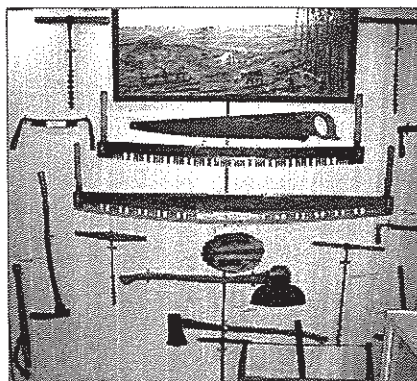


**Model of the Old Colony Church at  
Neuanlage**



Labour saving and energy efficient but don't spill the cream or you'll go short on groceries next week—trading butter for groceries was common

**Tools  
of  
Yesteryear**



**The Shoemaker's Shop**



# The Family Tree

Genealogy Editor—Rosemary Slater

*Preserving your family history for future generations*

## Remembering John J. Janzen, 1923 – 2004

By Rosemary Slater

November 8, 2004, a small group of us visited the Hague Museum where John Janzen of Neuanlage could be found almost daily. As we were leaving, John said, "I'm worried about who will look after this place when I'm gone." We assured John that we didn't expect him to be going anywhere anytime soon even if he was 81 years young.

Later that evening at the Pembroke School Reunion Committee meeting John began to reminisce, "This is something I have never told anyone before" and told the story of his experience during the World War – of being called before an unsympathetic judge to defend his status as a conscientious objector, being refused, classed as someone providing an essential service as a teacher in a small rural school, being replaced midterm as a teacher in that school by a young, untrained, inexperienced girl because he was Mennonite, and spending the rest of the war years as a voluntary worker doing the work that conscientious objectors were doing although he himself never obtained that legal status. I urged John to write his story down, never dreaming we would not meet again.

My father, John Pauls, himself a teacher, and John's friend and mentor during his early years of ministry, had often commented, "I wonder why John left teaching. I'm sure he would

have been a good teacher." John Janzen, however, although always quick to offer praise and recognize the accomplishments of others, was slow to lay blame or accuse others of treating him unfairly. He preferred to let his life speak for him and so Dad never knew why John left teaching.

Just after 2 p.m. on November 25, 2004, on Highway 9 near Beiseker, Alberta, a truck ran a stop sign and slammed into the side of the car in which John and Nettie Janzen were travelling to B.C. to visit their daughter and family. Both John and Nettie were killed instantly. Five days later, almost a thousand people crowded the Neuanlage church to pay tribute to this couple.

Who was this John Janzen and what made him so special to so many people? Always a smile on his face, a twinkle in his eye and a story teller supreme who didn't mind telling a story on himself and chuckling over it even as he down played his many accomplishments as a pastor, teacher, writer and historian, that was John.

There was the story of a group of teen age boys, John among them, raiding John Peters' watermelon patch in Neuanlage one beautiful, moonless fall night. Carefully the boys felt and tapped their way through the patch, picking only the really ripe watermelons, mouths watering in anticipation of the feast to come, unaware that they had been joined by a silent visitor. And then, when the last watermelon had joined the pile to be eaten, a voice out of the darkness and there stood Mr. Peters, "Na yo, Junges, nuh cheh ye dee aula em Stauhl nenn bringen." (So, boys, now you can carry them all up to

the barn.) And so they did, having worked an hour for nothing for Mr. Peters.

After the war ended, on October 20, 1946, John married his sweetheart, Nettie Ens, who, like John, was born in Ukraine and came to Canada, to Neuanlage, with her family in the 1920's.

John's father, Rev. John H. Janzen, died of cancer in 1949, leaving John, as eldest of a family of five boys, at age 26, with the responsibilities of being the family patriarch, leading the church of which his father had been the minister, as well as making a living for himself and his young family.



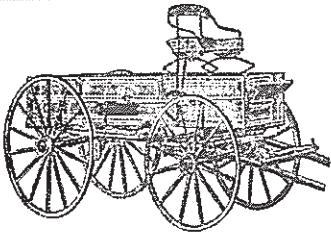
From his ordination in 1952 until 1980, John Janzen served the Neuanlage church without remuneration. On April 1, 1986, John retired but was immediately called on to fill vacancies first at Compass, SK from 1986 to 1989 and then for the Hoffungsfeld church from 1990 to 1992.

John had a keen interest in history and family genealogy and had worked on publishing the family history of both the Janzen family and the Ens family by the time he retired, for the second time, in 1992.

In 1993, John joined the Hague Museum Board which became a fulltime, unpaid job for him up to the time of his death. In February, 2003, John was inducted as a life member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. Ruth Friesen of Hague, writer, genealogist and good friend of the Janzens, was asked to write a tribute to John for this occasion.

Quoting from Ruth Friesen, "John J. Janzen is a humble man whose attitude is that he has but done the Master's bidding and deserves no special thanks. By faithfully doing all the little things he sees to be done, he has over his 80 years so far -- got quite a few big things accomplished. -- Rev. John Janzen, -- you have been a worthy and prolific contributor to Mennonite society and history. -- May God bless and reward you "

(Note: For the complete text of Ruth's tribute, unfortunately too long to publish here, and a tribute to John's wife, Nettie, please see Ruth's website at <http://Ruthes-SecretRoses.com/RoseBouquet/03/JohnJJanzen.shtml> and <http://Ruthes-SecretRoses.com/RoseBouquet/03/Nettie.shtml>. Ruth Friesen also hosts sites at <http://Ruthes-SecretRoses.com/RSR.html>, <http://AGodlyInheritance.com> and <http://BouquetofEnterprises.biz> that you might enjoy checking out. Ruth's tribute to Nettie begins, "The wives of prominent men are often unsung heroines. Their behind the scenes work is key to the success of the husbands." Thank you to Ruth for her help with this article. RS)



# From the Past

The best of prophets of the future is the past...Byron



Victor Wiebe, Archivist, writes, "The above is the photograph of the 1907 RJC class. The Photo size is 25 x 20 cm. It is sometimes referred to as a Cabinet Photograph because it is mounted on stiff cardboard for display rather than thin photograph paper for it to be held in an album. I purchased it in the early 1980's from an antique/junk store in Saskatoon. The photo is a little scratched but is still quite clear. Unfortunately I have mislaid my slip of paper with the names of some of the students. I never knew all the names."

So now, dear readers, over to you! Who are these people? We aren't offering any prizes for the best or most complete answer but perhaps a scanned copy of the photo would be a suitable reward? Your help in identifying these individuals would be much appreciated.