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Manitoba
Mennonite
Historical
Society



NUMBER 12

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1990



The Zentralschule in Nikolaipol was built in 1905 and is still in use today. Gerhard Derksen, father of Eugene Derksen of Steinbach, was the principal of the school at one time and Arnold Dyck was a teacher.

The Mennonite Historian and Perestroika

- by G.K. Epp

Dr. George Epp is president of Menno Simons College, Winnipeg. He took a trip to the Soviet Union in May, 1990, his first time back since he left in the 1950s.

Perestroika, Glasnost, a new law establishing full freedom for religious organizations . . . that is all very exciting, but also very confusing for the Soviet citizen. And, as we all know, there is no unanimity on the future road of the Soviet Union.

The old bureaucracy resists Gorbachev's reforms, because this new "aristocracy" has much at stake — all the privileges . . . And then there is the younger generation, impatiently demanding a faster pace. The 38-year-old metal worker, who tried to shoot somebody, during the "celebration" of the "Great Revolution," is no exception, he is only a little more impatient, a little more irrational about the "great expectations." Shlomov wanted to finish communism by eliminating its leader, Gorbachev, who happens to be one of the most reasonable forces in the present chaos. But Russians do not understand our admiration of Gorbachev — they see him as timid and

procrastinating.

However, these are the well-known facts, but what is new for the visiting Russian Mennonite historian?

Taught to obey

In many conversations with Soviet teachers, administrators, students, archivists . . . we heard time and again: we would like to work with you — things are changing so fast we cannot keep up with all the mental gymnastics. Forgive us if we are slow, because for 70 years we have been taught to *obey* and nothing else. Even thinking was dangerous (although Solzhenitsyn and Kopeliev say "there is no jail for thoughts").

Yet, when I read that apparently there is not much happening in Russia, and that Russia's future looks rather bleak, I have to disagree. It is true the Soviet Union faces enormous problems, from the economic chaos to the "moral vacuum," which Amalrik talked about 15 years ago. He said: "When Russians gave up their Christian values, they were left with a moral vacuum, and since there was no substitute for those values, society had no choice — it had to resort to brutal force to main-

tain a semblance of order." — Today we can see his point. Soviet citizens find it difficult to "be free" . . . they have to get used to it.

Took a risk

Gorbachev took a great risk when he proclaimed *glasnost* the right to speak up. But Russians, Ukrainians, Bielorussians, and the rest will learn to be free, and there is a future for Russia, there has to be a future for the sake of 285 million people, but also for the sake of a better world.

Speaking to young Russians (in May, 1990) I found myself arguing against the immediate destruction of their system: "Be careful; in 1917 Russians made a mistake when they became impatient with the reforms of the first revolution (February 1917) — as a result you had 70 years of what you now hate. You have to give your government time. Since you do not have a civil service without communist connections, it is neither advisable nor possible to throw out all communists, or former communists without endangering any reform attempts of the government."

The most depressing aspect of Soviet society today is the general pessimism of the population, and an outright cynicism of the younger generation. But some of these young people were quite shocked when I told them that their country had no future.

"Why not, a minute ago you told us Russia could have a bright future."

"Yes, but now I have listened to you, and a country where the young generation does not believe in the future, cannot have a future." They were quite willing to enter serious discussions, but unfortunately our time was limited.

Sober group of people

However, somewhere between the old, who in frustration may say the Stalin years were at least years of "order," and the young, who rebel against the hypocrisy which was imposed on them for as long as they remembered, there was also a sober group of people whose thoughtful optimism had to be respected, and they were usually people between 40 and 55. They knew the country would have many years of difficulties, but they were determined to make it. These are the people on whom the governments of Gorbachev, or Yeltsin, or any other reformer will have to rely.

But we had come not to reform the Soviet Union, although we could not help but sympathize with the people of the Soviet Union. We were touring the Soviet Union with our interest focusing on our Mennonite history. That history, like all history, has been distorted in Soviet history books and therefore it will be difficult for the people to sort out what is history and what is propaganda, but the amazing thing was that so many people tried to be helpful in our search for the roots of our Russian Mennonite history.

continued on page 2

Want to help

There were the principal and his vice-principal in Chortitza, who wanted to be of some help in restoring our historical monuments; there was the Ukrainian organization *Shliakh* ("The Road"), that offered cooperation in the restoration of the Mädchenschule in Chortitza; and there were the ladies in the archives who were friendly, cooperative, and *very competent*; and there are people in Moscow and Leningrad who offer their help in our research. There is a new era — a new chance to really work on our history, and there are valuable materials in a number of archives. Let's not blow it! We will have to be patient, understanding, and realistic in our expectations. But my colleague, Peter Letkemann and I have much praise for our Russian and Ukrainian friends, and that includes several very knowledgeable tour guides, who are going the second mile to help.

On our tour in May of this year, the group split in Zaporozhie, which enabled us, as a team, to investigate what is left of two daughter colonies, Nikolaipol (Jasykowo) and Baratov-Shliachtin, and many villages in the two mother colonies, Chortitza and Molotschna. It is almost impossible to recognize some villages, because they have changed or simply disappeared, but many of the architectural monuments are still witnessing of the Mennonite past. How long? We don't know. Our ancestors have built well, but after so many years of neglect and abuse many of these beautiful monuments are slowly disappearing.

This is another reason why we are eager to record now as much as possible before it is too late.

MMHS President's Report

- by Lawrence Klippenstein

The focus of MMHS activity in 1990 definitely fell on things related to Mennonite World Conference. Our Society co-sponsored an exhibit of Mennonites in Canada, partnered with the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. Literature was distributed there, and publications were displayed with it.

Our Society also sponsored a pioneering visual art exhibit, entitled *Mennonite Artist: Insider as Outsider*. It was curated by Priscilla Reimer and was very well received. The exhibition, placed in the Main Access Gallery, opened on July 13 and continued through the days of MWC sessions.

A serial catalogue was prepared for the exhibit. It is available as advertised elsewhere in this issue. The exhibit will be taken on a one-year tour of rural Manitoba communities beginning next spring.

The completion of the fourth volume of the Arnold Dyck *Collected Works* was another highlight of the year's activity. This fourth volume, the final one in the series, was edited by Dr. George K. Epp and Elizabeth Peters. The series editors including Dr. Al Reimer and Dr. Vic Doerksen were recognized at a Mennonite Author's night at the University of Winnipeg on November 9 to 10. Yes — we

do need some donations to help with payment of Vol. IV — a Christmas gift to MMHS perhaps?

In addition to these activities, the Fine Arts Committee sponsored a Mennonite Artists exhibit, chaired by Peter von Kampen, at the Mennonite Heritage Village during Pioneer Days.

A membership drive continues as well. The Society has just under 190 paid up members at present. We'd like to get that figure to rise to 200 again if possible. Can you help recruit someone in your circle?

We should probably add as well that the Local History and Monuments Committee of the Society helped a Winkler/Schanzenfeld committee to erect a memorial to Jacob V. Schantz on the grounds of the Southwood Elementary school at Schanzenfeld. A report on the event appears elsewhere in the issue.

And, of course, there is Mennonite Books, our MMHS book distribution agency. Sales have been very good so far this year. Many Mennonite books have been sold. Have you been to the scene of this mailing service — 208-1317A Portage Avenue? It's open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays. Why not stop by to visit — and buy a book or two? Susan and Karen will be happy to help.

Polish Scholars Speak at Mennonite Symposium

The first symposium of Mennonites in Poland and Russia was held July 21 to 24 at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. Sharing information were individuals who had been conducting private research into the 400-year evolution of a Mennonite presence in the Prussian and Polish regions.

The majority of these Mennonites were of Dutch background and thus at first were known as "Hollanders." After the Prussian takeover in 1772, these colonists became associated with the newly arrived German population which had serious effects on their legal and religious status as well as on their relationship to the Polish peasants.

Wojciech Marchlewski, an ethnographer from Warsaw, presented a paper on the Mennonites, Catholics and Evangelicals during the nineteenth century. He gave details of the daily lives of the Mennonites, their values and how they perceived themselves as a minority group in a changing society and political climate.

By the mid-1700s, Mennonite communities were incorporated into the Prussian state with the laws of the Catholic Church limiting their practises.

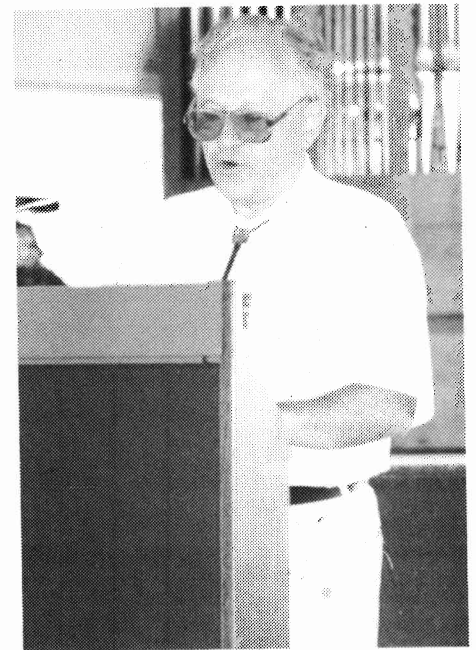
These changes forced many to leave for Polish Mazovia (central Poland) where they were legally privileged and exempt from military service.

Between 1792 and 1805, with a change in Poland's borders, the Prussian government brought in settlers and the land was taken over mainly by the Germans. To the Polish all colonists were Germans, and all German colonists were Protestants.

Also presenting studies on Mennonites in Poland were two other Polish Scholars, Edmund Kizik from the University of Gdansk and Arkadiusz Rybak from the Bureau of Historical Preservation in Elblag.

Other papers included a genealogical study by Adalbert Goertz of Pennsylvania, a look at education by John Friesen of Winnipeg and analyses of the 1940s, the final years of the Mennonites in the region, by Horst Gerlach of Germany and Ted Regehr of Saskatchewan.

This article was adapted from an article in the Mennonite Reporter (Aug. 20, 1990) by Rosemary Kuzina.



Adalbert Goertz addressed the Genealogy section of the Polish-Prussian Mennonite Symposium, July 24, 1990.

Genealogy Committee Report

- by Martha Martens

Since my report in April we have been involved with the Mennonite Genealogy seminar held July 21 at the CMBC, with Dr. Adalbert Goertz as guest speaker. The attendance we felt was good with 85 people registered. They came from Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Germany, Minnesota and Florida. Dr. Goertz' topic was *Tracing Mennonite Roots in Prussian and Eastern Europe*. Hans took my place in finalizing a lot of the above activity and I would like to say, Thank you, Hans.

The West Reserve Committee organized an evening for October 25 in the Winkler Senior Centre. John Dyck gave a presentation on the *Basics*

of starting a Family Tree, and also *1880 Village Registeres, ship lists, church records*, Wm. Schroeder reported on *Maps and Atlases of Mennonite Settlements in Russia*. Ed Falk was present to give help to any one that wanted information on family registers that he has on computer. The 80 enthusiastic people who came out for the evening made it a worth while evening.

John Dyck and Wm. Schroeder had a display set up in the Clearspring Mall in Steinbach for the week-end of November 9 and 10. Lawrence Klippenstein joined them with a display of books. John Klippenstein was on hand to show what could be done on computer with family history. Invitations were also handed out for November 29, 7 p.m.

at the Mennonite Heritage Centre; where John and Wm. gave similar reports as they did in Winkler. Al Hamm on behalf of the East Reserve, felt they had had a successful weekend.

Talking to Margaret Kroeker, the Winnipeg Committee is planning a meeting for February 25, at the Manitoba Archives, 200 Vaughan Street. They have asked Elisabeth Blight to speak on the History of Photographs and preserving them. Dr. George Epp will talk about the aspect photographs of Russia. It sound like an interesting evening.

In regard to the contest of Family History, I have contacted Winkler, Altona and Gretna; and will try to do a few more.

Fine Arts Committee Report

- by Lawrence Klippenstein

Members of the committee are Peter von Kampen, Ken Braun, Tina Buller and Lawrence Klippenstein, chair.

The committee sponsored an exhibit of paintings during Pioneer Days in August at the Mennonite Heritage Village.

Projected activities are:

- An exhibition of paintings by a group of artists headed by Peter von Kampen at the Mennonite Heritage Centre beginning Saturday, November 17. An open house at the Heritage Centre is being planned for Friday, November 23, 8 p.m.

- Plans are laid for doing a survey of Low German literary, musical, dramatic and other activity of the past several years to see if we can get a larger picture of what's going on in Manitoba in that regard.

Discussion was given recently to the question of how we might follow up the termination of the Westgate Art and Music festival. Something similar seems to be needed and we feel the "vacuum" left may need attention.

aided by Liz Coffman at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Gerald Loewen as a member of the steering committee and Lawrence Klippenstein liaison appointed by the MMHS executive.

MMHS sponsored this exhibition. It generated a good deal of interest during MWC days and a number of very positive reviews as well (Marg Reimer's recent one in *Mennonite Reporter* being the most recent one we think).

Priscilla is now working for Visual Arts and tells us a number of the paintings will be retrieved from the artists to begin a "Manitoba road show" (taking it to the smaller Manitoba towns and communities). This showing will begin in spring.

The costs of the exhibition are all covered (basically by grants) except a portion of the curator fees (ca. \$4,200). Assets left to the Society include about 800 unsold catalogues (1,050 were printed), and it is hoped that the sale of these, along with some donations still expected, will make it possible to pay the balance of the fees sometime in 1991. Our own contribution to the exhibit till now has been around \$1,600.

MMHS sponsors art exhibition

This exhibit was prepared by Priscilla Reimer

Letter to the Editor

Dear Ms Penner,

I have belonged to the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society for about six years now. I have enjoyed the many articles in the newsletter as well as the *Mennonite Historian*. I haven't seen any articles on Genealogical Research in Progress for some time now so I would insert one.

I'd like to share with fellow members the line of my research as follows:

Dyck, Abe., 722 Cavalier Drive, Winnipeg, Man. R2Y 1C3. Is working on genealogical lines of Peter Hiebert 1818-1877, Kropp, Kavenhowen, Esau, Gerbrandt, Harder, Fehr, Enns and Pries.

I could give you a lot more family names but there are Peters' wives' names (Kropp and Kauenhowven? and his sons' wives names — William (Esau), Peter (Gerbrandt), Johan (Harder)

(my grandfather), Jacob (Fehr), Abram (Enns) and Helena Hiebert (Jacob Pries). I am being ably assisted by John Wohlgenuth of Hadashville and Bill Hiebert of Winnipeg.

And I have had quite a lot of assistance from John Dyck, who does a lot of book reviews (his door is open later than the Historical Society) and from the staff at 600 Shaftesbury — Kimberly Epp, Jim Suderman and Lawrence Klippenstein. I may be distantly related to Lawrence by marriage. My Dad's sister, Maria was married to Bernard Klippenstein and they lived at Alt Bergthal.

That's more than I should have written.

Sincerely,
Abe and Helen Dyck
Winnipeg

1991 Membership Fees due

The membership of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society stands at 190. It is important for society members to attend events sponsored by the society and invite others to come along. This is a way of exposing interested people to the society and perhaps in opening the door for future memberships.

The Membership and Publicity Committee continually struggles with collecting the annual membership fees. How many years should a member be kept on the list if fees go unpaid?

Why not get a headstart on the New Year and pay your 1991 fee now? This will boost the bank account of the society and help it pay off some outstanding debts. And it will ensure your name will remain on the membership roll.

— Doris Penner, Chairperson
Membership and Publicity Committee

Mennonite Genealogy Workshop

Date: Monday, February 25, 1991
7:30 p.m.

Place: Archives Reading Room
Provincial Archives
200 Vaughan Street
Winnipeg

Speakers: Miss Elizabeth Blight, Provincial Archives OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN Manitoba with Emphasis on Manitoba

Dr. George Epp, Menno Simons College PHOTOGRAPHY IN MENNONITE COLONIES IN RUSSIA

Sponsored by the Winnipeg Genealogy Committee, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

Local History and Historical Sites Committee Report

- by Adolf Ens

With the many activities related to Assembly 12 of the Mennonite World Conference in spring and summer, the Committee did not attempt to meet until this fall. At that point it was discovered that all of its non-Board members declined reappointment at this time. To date, therefore, the Committee has not reconstituted itself nor reorganized.

Nevertheless, I want to draw attention to a few items we have considered in informal discussions.

1. Revision and adaptation of the *tour guide* prepared by Lawrence Klippenstein and Ken Reddig.

Discussions of this project in the ad hoc Mennonite World Conference Publishing Committee suggested at the outset that a booklet of this nature should be kept in print after the Assembly 12 sessions. It should be adapted to serve well as a self-guiding resource to individuals or small groups visiting Manitoba and interested in historic sites of Mennonite interest. Members of the Assembly

12 Tour Committee as well as persons who served as tour guides during that time might be helpful resource people in planning the proposed revision-adaptation.

2. Nomination of books to the Manitoba Historical Society for consideration for the Annual Margaret McWilliams awards.

Several recent volumes might be appropriate, since they relate to Manitoba.

- a. the MCI history by Gerhard J. Ens
- b. the two small volumes by John Dyck on *Oberschulze* Jacob Peters and the working papers of East Reserve village studies
- c. Delbert Plett's volume 5 of the *Kleinegemeinde* series, which deals with the pioneer years of settlement in Manitoba
- d. Leo Driedger's booklet on Mennonites in Winnipeg prepared for Assembly 12.

There might be others. Nominations have usually been made by the Executive Committee, but sug-

gestions have come from a larger circle within the Board.

3. West Reserve village history research.

It has been suggested that the Committee seek to stimulate and facilitate research and compilation of information about villages west of the Red River in a manner similar to what the HSHS is now doing under John Dyck's direction. Perhaps a first step should be for the Committee to compile a list of what has already been published in one form or another, so that the scope of the task could be more thoroughly assessed? In addition to a number of village history books, there is the series of sketches in the *Echo* by the late J.C. Fehr.

4. Schanzenfeld cairn details

Two items remain to be completed on this project: the setting up of highway signs and the preparing of donor certificates for the sponsors of the project.

Manager of MHV Addresses Board

Following are the words Peter Goertzen, manager of The Mennonite Heritage Village spoke at the November board meeting of MMHS held in Steinbach.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, staff and myself, I welcome the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society to the Mennonite Heritage Village here in Steinbach. It's of particular significance, since we share common roots of origin, going back to the 1950s when the original historical society was formed.

We're meeting today in our recently completed Village Centre. With these facilities it is now possible for us to operate throughout the whole year. Our expansion has cost us close to three million dollars, which means we are now looking at paying off a substantial mortgage. We will be looking for a great deal of support from our community.

The past few years have been very busy ones as we prepared for our opening and for Assembly 12. I'll just note some of our activities.

In 1989 the provincial government department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation named Mennonite Heritage Village as one of three Regional Museums in the province. This addresses the performance of these museums in the areas of school programming development, up-grading of facilities and sharing activities with other museums.

A curricula-oriented Winter School Program, from Kindergarten to six, was developed last summer and will be implemented in January of next year. Various teaching modules make up the program, including a substantial hands-on component.

The Village Centre contains a museum, with receiving and insolation areas for newly acquired artifacts, conservation and storage space, exhibit preparation room and two exhibition galleries. The

entire area is environmentally controlled, meeting national museum standards. Other very important areas are the J.J. Reimer Library and Archives, the gift shop and the multi-purpose rooms, which is where we are right now.

This additional space allows us to host various functions and to present additional activities ourselves. For example, starting tomorrow, the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa, is presenting a two-day workshop on environmental and insect control — which will be attended by individuals from across the province.

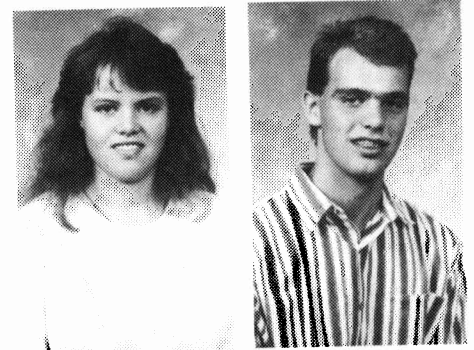
Next week we are having a fundraising banquet for 250 people, here in the centre.

On December 7 and 8 staff and volunteers will present *A Touch of Christmas*, an annual event which includes a bake sale, sleigh rides, carollers and three-act play.

I'd like to also note a publication we brought out in conjunction with the Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation: *Architectural*

Heritage; Traditional Mennonite Architecture in the Rural Municipality of Stanley. It's available in our gift shop for \$4.70.

In conclusion, I thank you for meeting here tonight. I'm very interested in maintaining and strengthening our bonds, which I believe can only be beneficial to both our societies.



Awards Given For Best Family History

On June 24, 1990 two SBC Collegiate students were presented with the Henry E. Plett Memorial Award. This award is given annually to two Manitoba high school students by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society for the best essays on a family history, and is made possible by the generous donation of Delbert and Doreen Plett of Steinbach. First prize of \$100 was given to **Elda Reimer** for her history of "The Rempel Family." **Kenley Penner** received \$50 as second prize for "The Reimer Family" essay. These essays were written as student projects for the Mennonite History course taught at SBC.

MMHS Annual Meeting
Saturday, January 26, 1991
at the Mennonite Heritage Village,
Hwy 12, Steinbach

4:30 — Business meeting
6:30 — Banquet (cost is \$10)

Feature: this evening will pay tribute to
Eugene Derksen of Derksen Printers.

You are welcome to bring a guest.

RSVP by January 19 — send in the form enclosed in the mailing or call during the day:
Lawrence Klippenstein — 888-6781 (Winnipeg)
Doris Penner — 326-3421 (Steinbach)

Book Reviews

Reimer, Priscilla B., *Mennonite Artists: Insider as Outsider*. (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1990). 60 pp., pb, \$10.00 CDN. Reviewed by Neil Funk-Unrau.

It is always risky to have an art catalogue reviewed by someone totally outside the art world but perhaps this can help to emphasize one more dimension of the insider/outsider theme of this specific catalogue. For this reviewer, an opportunity to examine the booklet provided an opportunity to examine myself and my own heritage from several fresh perspectives.

Mennonite Artist: Insider As Outsider is the result of an art exhibit held in Winnipeg last summer as part of the 12th Assembly of the Mennonite World Conference. The exhibit highlighted the work of 14 Mennonite artists of whom at least 10 are Manitobans. All of these artists have grappled deeply with their cultural and religious background, breaking out of a relatively closed society and then interpreting their impressions of it for the outside world.

The catalogue includes an extensive essay on the themes of the exhibit written by Priscilla Reimer, curator and administrator for the project, followed by a one-page biography of each artist and a sample of her/his work. The variety of artistic styles and values presented here could certainly attract a wide audience.

Several significant themes predominate in the items included in the catalogue. Some of the pieces focus on the world of nature, exploring too-familiar prairie landscapes or experimenting with the natural forms we take for granted. Other artists have confronted their heritage more directly. This is especially true of those artists who continue to struggle with the past and present roles of Mennonite women. Here the insider/outsider theme gains another poignant, yet very necessary perspective.

The reason for including Erma Martin Yost in addition to the Canadian Mennonite artists was not fully clear to this reviewer. Did her work add something missing from the rest of the collection? Be that as it may, the juxtaposition of a traditional Mennonite art form with traditional Native American rock art, as shown in her quilt was intriguing and challenging. Not only does Yost take the risk of stepping outside her heritage to see it afresh; she also uses this as an opportunity to dialogue with another minority culture.

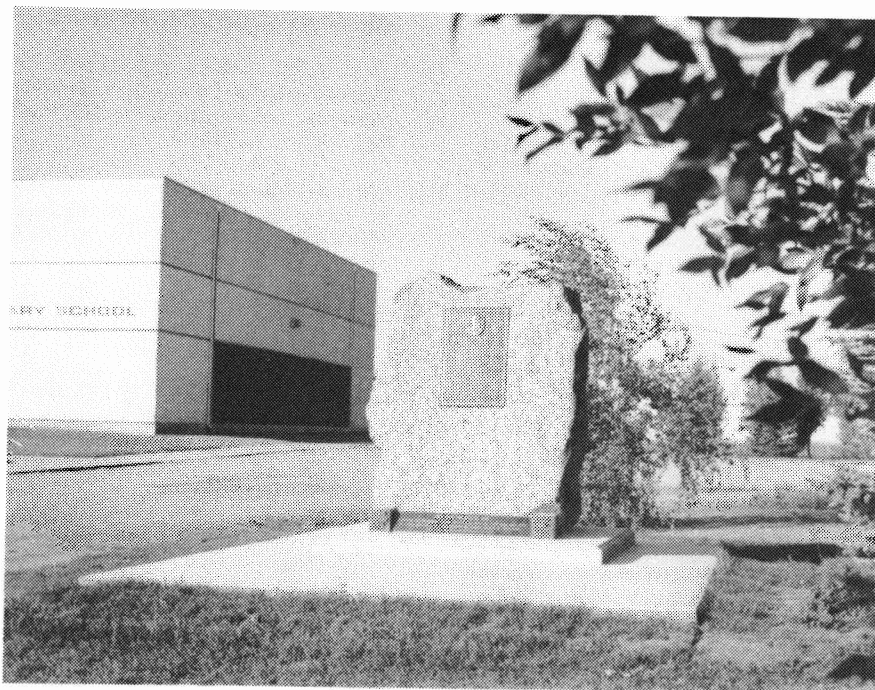
This then remains as a challenge for all who seek ways of communicating who they are and where they come from. Through this exhibit and its catalogue, these artists have all gifted us by allowing us to begin to see dimly through their eyes. Fortunately, the Mennonite peoplehood appears better able now than in the past to affirm this gift and begin to learn from it.

Neil Funk-Unrau is a researcher and awareness advocate with the Native Ministries Board of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

continued on page 6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Shantz Plaque Unveiled



- Photo from *Die Mennonitische Post*

This plaque for Jacob Shantz, a member of the "Old" Order Mennonite Church in Ontario was unveiled at the end of June at the Schanzenfeld School north of Winkler.

Jacok Yost Shantz was born to Swiss parents in Berlin (presently Kitchener), Ontario in May of 1822.

When Russian Mennonites inquired about immigration possibilities from the Canadian government, the government hired Mr. Shantz to check out possibilities in Manitoba which he did. This resulted in 6,000 to 7,000 Mennonites leaving in the 1870s for the East and West Reserves to settle in two villages: Schanzenberg in the East Reserve and Schanzenfeld in the West Reserve. These villages were named after Mr. Shantz.

President Explains Goal of HSHS

- by Delbert Plett

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc. was incorporated in 1988 with the sole objective of research, writing and publication pertaining to the early history of this area. We feel fortunate that we have been able to retain the capable services of John Dyck as our research director. He has looked after the editing of *Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories 1874-1910*, 229 pages, which was published by our society in October of this year. He is also conducting a series of oral interviews and co-ordinating the efforts of some 20 volunteer researchers. The board has decided on two new book projects: *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve 1874-1910* and *Documents of the East Reserve 1874-1910*, both scheduled for publication in 1993.

The board of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society would also like to thank the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society for its goodness in turning over the manuscript for the Oberschultz

Jacob Peters' book back in 1988. This gave our organization an immediate project to complete and served as an important milestone for us. For this you have our grateful thanks. We also would like to clarify that the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society was formed in order to allow a local group of interested people to pursue their field of research with a minimum of organizational complexities, and the maximum of access of government funding. I think the last two years have confirmed that this format has provided us with many advantages.

As the same time we would wish to reiterate that we do not see ourselves in any way competing with the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. We agree fullheartedly with your many endeavors and encourage you in the pursuit of same. Please let us know if there are ways in which we can be of assistance to you or whether there are areas where our two organizations can work closer together.

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Plett, Delbert, *Pioneers and Pilgrims* (Steinbach: Crossway Publications, 1990). 86 pp.
Reviewed by Doris Penner.

Set in the mode of a novel, *Pioneers and Pilgrims* offers a painless way to learn history, a great deal of it, all from 86 pages.

The book opens in the picturesque Kleine Gemeinde village of Blumenhof in southern Russia in 1874, takes us through the resettlement of Mennonite colonists in the East Reserve of Manitoba and closes in 1877, when 40 prosperous villages flourish on what only a few years before was bleak wilderness.

The main character in the story is Aron Warkentin, son of a well-to-do Kleine Gemeinde farmer, who marries Greta, of Old Colony stock, soon after their arrival in Manitoba. Through the Warkentin family — there are three children in the space of the next three years — we experience what it means to claim the land to provide food, to build the first crude shelters, to deal with fierce prairie blizzards. We experience with them the hardship of losing a child through death and the battle to keep the faith strong and pure in spite of testings.

Actually, we are meant to experience these things, but somehow we remain detached because the book is simply too brief to allow for any character development, and therefore it suffers as a novel. To truly feel with people, to rejoice with them and weep with them, we have to get to know them through their conversations, their quiet reflections and their reactions to various events.

Some of the statements beg for more detail, as if the author takes us to the brink without allowing us to look over the edge. For example, after a particularly trying period, Aron and Greta "agreed the precious experience has brought them closer to God." Why was this so and what was the result?

All in all, the book is not so much a story with a plot, climax and resolution, as a recitation of history — and as a history book it shines. The extensive research Plett has done on Russian Mennonites, particularly on the Kleine Gemeinde, is very much in evidence.

The first chapter — one of the most graphic in the book — gives a picture of the shocking brutality and injustice of the Czarist political and economic system. Then there is a fine description of the way the villages and farms were laid out in the new settlements in Manitoba, and as the book moves along we get a feel how spiritually rich their heritage is as they sense some of the values espoused by early members of the Gemeinde. There are comments on their view of education, on the practical manifestations of love among the fellowship members, on their respect for the beliefs of others, even though they are different from their own, and even a statement on the kindly treatment of their farm animals (a few farmers were disciplined by the church for using excessive force with their livestock).

A short historical sketch of the Mennonites at the beginning of the book is invaluable for the uninformed and a refresher even for the "informed." The novel also includes a glossary of Low German words, a bibliography and maps showing Kleine Gemeinde settlements in Russia and Manitoba.

As I read the novel, I kept thinking, I want to hear more — more about Aron and Greta before 1874 and after 1877, more about other Kleine Gemeinde pioneers; there must be dozens of stories

shrouded somewhere in the annals of historical document. Perhaps *Pioneers and Pilgrims* is not the sweeping novel with a panoramic view of Mennonites of the era that Plett imagined but I hope that one is still coming from him, followed by others.

Recent Mennonite Publications

We share with you a brief list of recent Mennonite publications relating to Mennonites in Manitoba. Note the publications of our Society in the list.

You may order any items on the list from:

Mennonite Heritage Centre
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB
R3P 0M4

Do not send money. You will be invoiced. Postage and handling extra.

Brandt, Di. *Agnes in the Sky*. (1990) Pb., 60 pp., \$8.95. Poetry.

Driedger, Leo. *Mennonites in Winnipeg*. (1990) Pb., 95 pp., \$6.00. (Sociological glimpses).

*Dyck, Arnold. *Collected Works. (Gesammelte Werke) Vol. IV*. Edited by George K. Epp and Elisabeth Peters. (1990) Hdc., 503 pp., \$25.00. Vol. I-III also still available.

Dyck, John. *Oberschulze Jakob Peters 1813-1884. Manitoba Pioneer Leader*. (1990) Pb., 138 pp., \$10.00.

Enns, Mary. *Selma Redekopp. An Unusual Woman*. (1990) Pb., 128 pp., \$10.00 (Selma belonged to a Mennonite Brethren congregation).

Ens, Gerhard J. *Die Schule Muss Sein. A History of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute*. (1990) Hdc., 286 pp., \$30.00.

Fast, Karl. *Lass dir on meiner Gnade genuegen*. (1989) Pb., 138 pp., \$11.00. About the author's mother in Orenburg, Soviet Union.

Klassen, Peter J. *A Homeland for Strangers. An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia*. (1989) Pb., 95 pp., \$18.00. (Many color photos).

Klippenstein, Lawrence and Jim Sunderman, eds. *Directory of Mennonite Archives and Historical Libraries*. (1990) Pb., 46 pp., \$6.00. Third edition. (All known in the world).

Klippenstein, Lawrence and Ken Reddig. *MWC Information Handbook and Tour Guide*. (1990) Pb., 32 pp. Available for cost of postage and handling (ca. \$1.00).

Ledehowski, Ed and David Butterfield. *Architectural Heritage. Traditional Mennonite Architecture in the Rural Municipality of Stanley*. (1990) Pb., 88 pp., \$6.00.

Lichti, Dieter Goertsz, ed. *Mennonite World Handbook. Mennonites in Global Witness*. (1990) Pb., 490 pp., \$10.00.

Neufeld, William. *From Faith to Faith. The History of the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Church*. (1989) Pb., 243 pp., \$10.00.

Peters, Victor and Jack Thiessen. *Plautdietsche Jeschichten: Gespraech-Interviews-Erzaehlungen*. (1990) Pb., 317 pp., \$25.00.

Plett, Delbert, Ed. *Pioneers and Pilgrims. The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba, Nebraska, and Kansas, 1874-1882*. (1990) Pb., 604 pp., \$22.00.

Plett, Delbert. *Pioneers and Pilgrims. The Story of Mennonite Settlement in Manitoba, 1874-1877*. (1990) Pb., 100 pp., \$5.00. (A novel based on historical data).

Reimer, Doug. *Older Than Ravens*. (1989) Pb., 158 pp., \$10.00. Stories based on early experiences in southern Manitoba.

Reimer, Margaret Loewen. *One Quilt Many Pieces. A Reference Guide to Mennonite Groups in Canada*. Third Edition. Pb., 53 pp., \$5.00.

*Reimer, Priscilla. *Mennonite Artist. Insider as Outsider*. (1990) Pb, 60 pp., \$10.00.

Schaefer, P.J. *Heinrich H. Ewert. Teacher, Educator and Minister of the Mennonites*. Translator by Ida Toews (1945, 1990). Pb, 128 pp., \$10.00.

*Published by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

MMHS Sponsors Booth at Assembly 12

One of the activities of our Society, jointly with the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, was to sponsor a booth at Assembly 12 Mennonite World Conference.

The focus was on Canada. The back wall of the booth featured a map of Canada, showing concentrations of Mennonite groups throughout. Two triangular columns were placed in the booth with books published by the Society, and pamphlets. Also, a demographic graph showing membership statistics of the various groups in Canada. Gerald Loewen, Winnipeg, was the designer.

MMHS BOOKS FOR SALE

Priscilla Reimer, *Mennonite Artist: Insider as Outsider* Pb., 60 pp., \$10.00.

Arnold Dyck, *Collected Works/Gesammelte Werke. Vol. IV*. Hdc., 506 pp., \$25.00 (Vol I-III also available)

Postage and Handling extra.

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