

# M

Manitoba  
Mennonite  
Historical  
Society



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NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1991

## Historical sketch of Pacifism and its Relevance today

— by Stan Penner

*War is the sum total of human villainies.* (John Wesley)

It is common knowledge that the early Church was committed to non-violence. Killing, even in war, was considered murder and soldiers, upon conversion, were told to leave the army.<sup>1</sup> Jesus had said, "Love your enemies," and the Apostle Paul wrote, "Overcome evil with good." With the "marriage" of Church and State under Constantine things changed and Augustine, bishop of Hippo, came up with a "Just War" theory. (A letter in Newsweek recently charged that Augustine must have been a magician, not just a theologian, to get around Jesus' words.<sup>2</sup>) Since Augustine, "Prince of Peace" people on both sides of many a conflict, have slaughtered non-Christians and each other with the blessing of the Church and continue to do so to this day.

In the Middle Ages another theory, the "Holy War" theory, promised immediate glory to those killed fighting Muslim "infidels." Christians were led to believe they were doing God's work by killing. (Sounds too much like the recent Gulf War, I think.) During and after the Reformation, Protestants and Catholics warred so much that in the Thirty Years' War in Germany, for instance, *over half the population died.*<sup>3</sup> Also, the Inquisition was established with acts so atrocious, all in the name of God, that one can't stand reading about them to this day.

(Recently I sent a bit of financial support to a Jesuit Centre to help the suffering people in Central America. I enclosed a note about Inquisitional suffering inflicted in the past. The Centre's reply was much appreciated: "We too hope that the days of the Catholic Church as Persecutor are over. We can't ever forget.")

### Believers were slain

Surely true Christians are to be gentle and compassionate (Col.3:12) and Braght's book, *Martyrs Mirror*, points out from the time of Christ Himself, many of just such believers were slain, first by the government and then *by the Church per se*, simply because they lived and preached their faith, a faith that believed Jesus when He said, "Do good to those who hate you." The Anabaptist movement was born and Conrad Grebel, one of the earliest Anabaptist together with some of his friends wrote: "The Gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor are they thus to protect themselves . . . all killing has ceased with them."<sup>4</sup>

After the Munster debacle in which some early

Anabaptists, to their shame, did again take up the sword, a former Roman Catholic priest, Menno Simons, led the Anabaptists out of their spiritual wilderness. He made a sharp distinction between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of Christ and wrote: "Christ is our fortress; . . . the Word of God, our sword; . . . And iron and metal spears and swords we leave to those who, alas, regard human blood and swine blood about alike."<sup>5</sup>

Followers of Christ must love their fellowman *even at the cost of their own life*. Such a position has been labelled pacifism, nonresistance, defencelessness (*Wehrlosigkeit*), surrenderness (*Gelassenheit*), or simply discipleship. Today we might call it agape love - total, self-giving love.<sup>6</sup> Anabaptists wanted someday to hear their King say, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." And, strangely, the more they were killed, the more they increased in number. A certain Burggrave Dietrich put it this way: "What shall I do? the more I cause to be executed, the more they increase."<sup>7</sup>

### Vision has survived

The Anabaptist vision of Biblical nonresistance has now survived (in various forms and not everywhere) some four and a half centuries and has been taken from country to country and from continent to continent. In Russia a sort of Mennonite Mecca developed, but witness wise, after so terribly much persecution, they became more subdued. (In fact, Mennonites became known as the "quiet in the land," a label which one hardly thinks befitted the early Anabaptists.) Family and tradition became the important ways of spreading the faith - a faith that still very much included the peace teaching. However, in 1917, during the First World War, trouble developed when the Russian government became very weak, and lawless revolutionaries and robber bands roamed relatively freely among the Mennonites, plundering, raping and killing.

Now Anabaptist Mennonites formed their own "army," the "*Selbstschutz*" (a self-defence unit). Subsequent fighting led to numerous Russian and Mennonite deaths. (It is noteworthy that the Hon. Jake Epp, in a speech at a Mennonite Study Conference in 1982, makes mention of the *Selbstschutz* in light of decisions he might some day have to make in regard to war.<sup>8</sup>)

When the Red Army came out victorious, the Mennonites tried to come to terms with it but this was difficult. When two Gnadenfeld villagers asked the Red Army General Dobenko for forgiveness, he shouted at them, "You damned renegades from

the faith of your fathers. For 400 years you could not take arms, but now for your damned Kaiser Wilhelm . . ."<sup>9</sup>

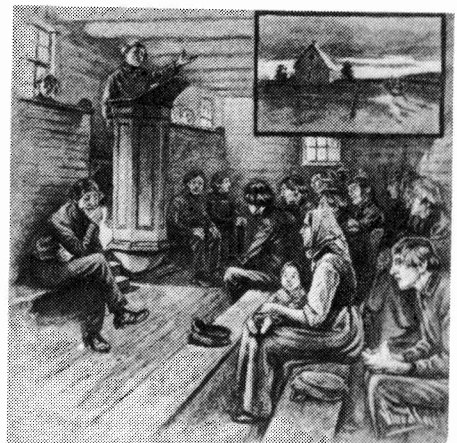
"The *Selbstschutz* action was later officially condemned by Mennonite conferences as a tactical blunder as well as a violation of biblical peace principles . . ."<sup>10</sup>

### Good life was over

The "good" life in Russia was basically over and many Mennonites chose to emigrate to Canada (and elsewhere) specifically because of military exemption. Lord Dufferin in 1877, told them, "If you have come hither to seek for peace - peace at least we can promise you."<sup>11</sup> However, by 1916 with World War I raging and ever more men falling in the trenches of Europe, support for the Mennonites dropped and for a while even immigration to Canada was denied them.

In World War II, many of the Mennonite young men, at least in the USA and Canada, remained true to their peace position but others joined the Armed Forces, some never to return. CO's (conscientious objectors) did alternative work such as logging, farming and hospital work; most were treated well considering the circumstances but some had to serve time in jail and a few Hutterite young men were actually so mistreated they died.<sup>12</sup>

Before, during, and also after the recent Gulf War, I corresponded with some organizations and individuals in regard to a Christian's participation in war. Because many Christians tell us killing people (the enemy of the day, of course) in wartime is not only right, but that it is our scripture-ordained duty, Christian pacifists will have to know



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very clearly why they hold to their *blood-bought* peace position. I will share some statements from some of the letters I received. From *Focus On The Family*: "... Dr. Dobson and Focus ... have been inclined to view Operation Desert Storm as a rather clear example of a 'just war.'" *Kurt De Haan Radio Bible Class*: "Soldiers on the battlefield are not committing murder" (in a booklet sent to me). *Billy Graham Assoc.*: "... sometimes it becomes necessary to fight the strong to protect the weak" and a reference to Romans 13:1-7 is included. *Hon. Jake Epp, MP*, "... the state is given the power of the sword and may have to be used."

#### Use the same arguments

Politicians and clergy from other countries use the same arguments and the very same Bible verses. Let's remember the Inquisition, Auschwitz and Hiroshima were all actions of the state. Does Paul's teaching in Romans 13 mean the Christian is to obey each and every order a government gives no matter how evil? (International laws wouldn't even agree to such). Paul also commands children to obey parents (Eph. 6:1), wives are to submit to husbands (Eph. 5:22), the young are to submit to elders (Col. 3:20), but *surely only in doing good*.

There were other voices. *The War Amps of Canada* wrote: "Never Again! (on letterhead) ... we earned the right to tell it like it was and it is

a sad fact that the world doesn't appear to be listening." *Tony Campolo, Eastern College*: "... I asked the simple question over and over again, 'What would Jesus do?' and I conclude He would not kill, even in battle. To be a follower of Jesus is to think like He thinks and to act like He would act if He were in our shoes. That leads me to a pacifist stance ... You will find that I preach, 'yell,' a message of pacifism loud and clear." *Elizabeth Elliot, radio speaker and widow of missionary Jim Elliot, killed by Aucas*, told me in a telephone conversation her husband had been a conscientious objector. (He chose to die rather than to kill and "he being dead yet speaketh." Thanks, Jim.)

I think it goes without saying that as Christians and as Christian pacifists, Mennonites want to be good citizens of their country. Inasmuch as their conscience allows, they will support their government and will pay for their elected representatives but they simply *refuse to shed human blood*.

And being a conscientious objector to war is usually not a popular position. But, then, our Lord Himself gave us a fair warning when He said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you ... " The road of love, agape love, can be very costly; it was so for the One whom Christians trust their very souls to; it was also so for our Anabaptist forefathers who gave up their lives for just such love. These "of whom the world was not worthy" left

us a message that we will do well to hear.

1. See Jon Bonk, *The World At War The Church At Peace* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Press, 1988) p. 19.
2. Harry Ruja, Letters to the Editor, Newsweek, March 11, 1991.
3. "Thirty Years' War," *World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. T, p. 199.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
5. See Bonk, op. cit., p. 65
6. Dyck, op. cit. p. 106.
7. T.J. van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1977), p. 437.
8. Epp, Jake, (Hon.) P.C., M.P. "The Christian and Political Involvement" Speech to Evangelical Mennonite Study Conference, Braeside Evangelical Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB, March 27, 1982.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1962) p. 35.
11. Abe Warkentin, Ed., *Reflections on our Heritage* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers Ltd., 1971) p. 284.
12. Frank H. Epp. op. cit. p. 100.

## Photography workshop held at Archives

— Anna Ens

Both informative and fascinating were the illustrated hands-on presentations of Elizabeth Blight from the Manitoba Provincial Archives of Manitoba and Dr. George K. Epp of Menno Simons College given at the Mennonite Genealogy workshop on February 25. Sixteen persons attended.

While quite technical in nature, Blight traced carefully the early photographic processes beginning in 1839 with the French Daguerreotype - silver plate - and going on to the more modern dry plate approaches. She passed around or handled with gloved hands some of the sensitive photographs that illustrated the respective processes.

Photos need to be protected not only from light, but from the oils of our hands, she said.

Being able to recognize the characteristics of the process and the appearance of the resulting photographs helps to identify the time period in which they originated. The studio decor and backdrops in the photos, the size of the image (especially for portraits), the mounting style, the frequent elaborate backing of the photos, the photographers inscript at the back or at the bottom of the photo, also all assist in identifying the time period and the place of origin of the photo.

Epp pointed out that photographs in the early Mennonite villages of Ukraine became known in the 1860s but were very rare earlier. A French photographer is known to have visited Ukraine in 1874. Those photos would have a Paris imprint.

Mennonite villagers travelled long distances e.g. to Alexandrovsk/Zaporozhye, Jekaterinoslav (the most favourite place), Nikopol, Cherson, Melitopol, etc., to have individual and family photographs taken. Many of the photographers were Jewish. A few were Russian.

Among the first Mennonite photographers were Koop in Altonau-Molotschna (1900), Peter Gerhard Rempel in Rosental-Chortitza (1890-1917)\*, and perhaps the best in Russia, B(ernhard?) Dyck in Davlekanovo-Ufa in the 1890s.

Displays included a variety of genealogy books, photos from Mennonite Genealogy, and Epp's own collection.

\* John Rempel and Paul Tiessen, eds. *Forever Summer. Forever Sunday. Peter Gerhard Rempel's Photographs of Mennonites in Russia, 1890-1917*. (St. Jacob's, ON: Sand Hills Books, Inc., 1981).

#### For Sale

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 for \$25.00 each or all four for \$90).

Janzen, William and Frances Greaser. **Sam Martin Went to Prison. The Story of Conscientious and Canadian Military Service. Ojection**. (1990) pb., 62 pp., \$5.00.

Klippenstein, Lawrence, ed. **That There Be Peace. Mennonites in Canada and World War II**. (1979) Pb., 104 pp., \$8.00.

Reimer, Princilla. **Mennonite Artist. Insider as Outsider**. (1990) Pb., 60 pp., \$10.00. Produced for Mennonite World Conference.

**These items are available at:**  
Mennonite Heritage Centre  
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3P 0M4

**Mailing and GST costs are extra.**

These books are publications of MMHS.

#### Genealogy Workshop

Monday, Oct. 28

Winkler Senior Centre  
394 6th Street  
Winkler

featuring

Dr. George Epp - Overview of Russian Mennonite family records at Odessa

Hans Werner - Mennonite Board of Colonization records

Sponsored by Genealogy Committee  
West Reserve, MMHS

## Book Reviews

Rempel, John and William Harms. **Atlas of original Mennonite villages, homesteaders and some burial plots of the Mennonite West Reserve Manitoba**, (Altona, Man.: John Rempel and William Harms, 1990).

*Reviewed by Paul Friesen*

The value of maps of as a source of information is seldom appreciated to the extent that it could be. It is indeed heartening to see the publication of an atlas detailing the villages, homesteads and burial plots of the Mennonite West Reserve. In this atlas, which is a sequel to their atlas of the settlement of the East Reserve published in 1988, John Rempel and William Harms present the reader with a cartographic essay. It is a story of the Mennonite settlement of the West Reserve townships in southern Manitoba, based on township survey plans. Within the broader framework of the opening of the Canadian west, it is the story of attempting to accommodate Russian Mennonites and their desire to perpetuate their village system in the Canadian prairies where the Homestead Act determined settlement patterns and possibilities.

The primary interest of the authors is to document the location of the villages established by Mennonites in the West Reserve and to delineate the areas associated with each. Readers are taken on a stage coach tour of the reserve which followed the Post Route Trail that crosses the settlement. Side trips are taken to each of the villages not on or near the trail. Each village indicated on the township plans reproduced in this atlas is briefly described along with a list of known inhabitants. The names of those who obtained patent for the land in each township is included both on the survey plans as well as on a list that accompanies them. Knowing how to read township plans is taken for granted. It would have been helpful if readers would have been given some explanation of how these large scale maps are read. At the end of the atlas a list of cemeteries and burial plots in the West Reserve is included, as is a supplement that lists those who homesteaded in the Scratching River settlement.

This atlas is more than a collection of maps. The research done by the authors introduced them to an array of historical documents and tools, samples of which they have included to further illuminate the story they are telling. An assortment of photographs, correspondence, village plans, petitions, rural municipality by-laws and minutes, and church records are included. They further illuminate the circumstances of the Mennonite settlers and the issues they had to face.

John Rempel and William Harms need to be commended for the excellent work they have done. Theirs is not the polished product one would expect from trained historians and cartographers. Yet they have shown their expertise in working with the very basic tools of historical research and have produced a most valuable resource for those interested in the early settlement of the West Reserve in Manitoba.

**Penner, Vic and T.E. Friesen, Altona: A Pictorial History.** (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen, 1990). 293 pp., Hdc.

*Reviewed by Ken Reddig*

Certain impressions of books sometimes come in anecdotal form and just possibly tell you more

about the book than an indepth review. Permit me to depart from the usual format, and relate a brief anecdote concerning this volume.

Asked to write a review of this book I received the copy and placed it in my briefcase, where it stayed for about one week. Then, on a nice bright Sunday afternoon, sitting in my back yard and watching the boats speed by along the Red River, I sat with a stack of reading material, for a long afternoon of relaxation, and yes, snoozing. At one point my sixteen-year-old son came to sit with me. We talked a bit, he sipped from my cold glass of iced-tea, and then picked up the *Altona* book which I was just about to dip into.

Later in the afternoon, after I had finished my other reading, gone into the house for a bite to eat, I came back to see how he was doing. In the meantime some two or more hours had elapsed. I engaged in conversation with my son and he proceeded to tell me all about Altona and this great book they had produced.

What can a historian father say to follow up such an occurrence?

I could leave that anecdote as the review. However, I must hasten to say the next evening I did read the book and found out why my son was so engaged with it.

Composed mostly of wonderful photographs, with delightful captions written by Vic Penner, the book easily draws you through the story of Altona. Thoughtful and concise introductions by Ted Friesen, lead the reader into each chapter. My only complaint with this method is the noticeable repetition between the narrative and the captions. At times it was noticeable enough to be somewhat annoying. But it is a minor complaint.

In an age when we are concerned about how to get our young people to become interested in history, particularly our own local history, we perhaps need to consider producing more books such as this. I am sure, without a doubt, a strictly narrative book on Altona, a place my son has never visited, would not have been picked up and read like he did this one.

Congratulations to Vic and Ted for an exemplary production.

## Recent Publications

### Mennonite World Conference

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

Lichti, Dieter Goetsz, ed. **Mennonite World Handbook. Mennonites in Global Witness.** (1990) Pb., 290 pp., \$10.00.

Peachey, Urbane, ed. **The Role of the Church in Society. An International Perspective.** (1988) Pb., 120 pp., \$2.00. (Emphasis on peace service.)

### Low German Items

Ens, Gerhard and Henry Ens, readers. **Low German Readings from Arnold Dyck's Complete Works, Vol. II & III.** (1991) \$10.00. Cassette.

Goulden, Veleda, arr. and narrator. **De Goldene Schlut.** Low German Rhymes. (1990) \$10.00. Cassette.

### Other Publications

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

Friesen, Bert, ed. **Mennonitische Rundschau Index. 1880-1889.** Vol. I & II (1990) Hdc., 1003 pp., \$50.00 per volume.

Harms, Wm., and John Rempel. **West Reserve Atlas.** (1990) Pb., 195 pp., \$30.00. About Mennonites in Southern Manitoba.

Klassen, Peter P. **Die Deutsch-Völkische zeit in der Kolonie Fernheim, Chaco, Paraguay. 1933-1945.** (1990) Pb., 144 pp., \$10.00.

Rempel, Peter, ed. **Der Bote Index. Vol. II, 1948-1963.** (1991) Pb., 430 pp., (two parts) \$30.00.

Winter, Henry A. **A shepherd of the oppressed. Heinrich Winter: the last Ältester of Chortitza.** (1990) Hdc., 230 pp., \$16.00. (Trans. from an earlier German version.)

Zacharias, Peter D. **Footprints of a Pilgrim People. Story of the Blumenort Mennonite Church.** (1985) Hdc., 291 pp., \$15.00.

All items are available from Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftsbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB. R3P 0M4.

## Books about History

**Mennonite Templers** by Heinrich Sawatzky; translated by Victor G. Doerksen. 1991; 103 pp; with photos and maps; pb. \$9.00. Details the Templer movement from its beginnings in the Ukraine to its colonization in Palestine. Includes stories of Mennonite families within the movement. Translated in the Echo Historical Series.

**The Kuban Settlement** by C.P. Toews, Heinrich Friesen and Arnold Dyck; translated by Herbert Giesbrecht. 1990; 91 pp. maps and photos; pb. \$9.00. Describes the beginnings of the Mennonite Brethren movement in Russia. A comprehensive account of religious, agricultural and economic aspects of the Kuban colony in the Caucassus region of southern Russia. First in the translated Echo Historical Series.

## CMBC PUBLICATIONS

Available from local bookstores or directly from the publisher.  
600 Shaftsbury Blvd.,  
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 (204)888-6781  
(include \$1.00 per book for postage handling plus 7% of total for GST)

— **Note:** MMHS is co-sponsor of this project - translating all volumes of the Echo Verlag Series originally edited by Arnold Dyck.



In her address at the MHV on Mother's Day, Mary Lou Driedger told the audience it was through the vision and perseverance of Olga Friesen (r) that the monument honoring pioneer women was established.

## At the Mennonite Heritage Village: A Tribute to Pioneer Women

On Mother's Day, May 12 a ceremony was held at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach to honor pioneer women. At the event Mary Lou Driedger explained how the monument, set up just outside the artifacts building as a reminder of the contribution of pioneer women, came to be.

Many years ago, while travelling through South Africa, Olga Friesen and her husband, Ed, visited a museum in Pretoria. At the museum, Olga Friesen heard the story of the pioneers who left Capetown to move northward and set up new communities. She was particularly intrigued by a bronze statue dedicated to the courage and determination of the women pioneers of South Africa.

The statue made Olga Friesen think of the pioneer women who had first settled in the Steinbach area. Those women had lived in little sod shanties with dirt floors. They were always pregnant, a tribute to their husbands' belief in the Biblical edict to "be fruitful and multiply." Many of those pioneer women died in childbirth. Diphtheria epidemics swept through their villages often wiping out whole families. There were no daycare centres in the 1800s. Women were forced to tie their toddlers to the legs of the kitchen table while they went out to plow and plant beside their husbands. Year after year, the pioneer women worked the land, cooked, baked, sewed, washed, cleaned, canned, gave birth to children, taught children, cared for sick children, and buried dead children. "Those women were like slaves," Olga Friesen thought. "Someone has to tell their story and be sure that all the hard work they did is never forgotten."

Upon her return from South Africa, Olga Friesen approached the board of directors of the Steinbach Heritage Village Museum about building a memorial to pioneer women. The men on the board suggested a small flower garden with a com-

memorative sign. "Not good enough!" said Olga Friesen. "We need something big and solid. Something that suggests the strength of the pioneer women."

She shared her dreams with the other members of the museum's Women's Auxiliary. Together they conceived the idea of a large monument with bronze plaques depicting the work of pioneer women. When they investigated the cost of such a project, \$16,000 they immediately forged ahead with a variety of fundraising activities, but only raised \$4,000.

Then Olga Friesen had another inspiration. She thought her husband Ed was a grandson of two of those hardworking women who first came to Canada from the Soviet Union in 1874. "It is he and other men like him who should donate the money for a memorial to their grandmothers."

Together with her husband, Olga Friesen made a list of all the men in Steinbach whose grandmothers had been part of the 1874 immigration to southeastern Manitoba. Most of those men owned businesses on Steinbach's Main Street, and she went to visit them all. She explained the Women's Auxiliary project, told the story of the pioneer women and left with a cheque. Not a single grandson turned down her request for funds. It wasn't long before the Women's Auxiliary had more than \$16,000 they needed.

The large stone which now sits just outside the door of the main artifacts building at the Steinbach Heritage Museum is a tribute to the hard work and courage of the pioneer women. It is also a tribute to the vision and perseverance of Olga Friesen and the other members of the museum's Women's Auxiliary who were determined that the contributions of their female ancestors would be recognized and remembered.

## President's Report

— by Lawrence Klippenstein

The year seems to be flying by. It feels as if our January annual meeting took place only last week. By the way, over 100 people joined us for the banquet, and apparently "a good time was had by all!"

The big recent event, in a sense, has been the sale of Mennonite Books to Brandt Family Enterprises. You will see more on this elsewhere in this issue. It has allowed us to pay final bills for the Arnold Dyck project (publishing his *Works* in four volumes) and pay for the outstanding accounts of the *Mennonite Artist's* project at MWC.

Perhaps even more important, it has given us resources to think about doing some new projects. Please give *your* ideas to your executive at any time.

"We're pleased to say all our committees have been provided with chairpersons and we hope their programs can flourish in 1991 and beyond. Currently the chairpersons are: Education - Dr. Abe Dueck, Winnipeg (new); Genealogy - Martha Martens, Horndean; Publicity and Membership - Doris Penner, Landmark; Fine Arts - Henry G. Ens, Reinland, Winkler (new); Local History and Historic Sites - John Dyck, Winnipeg (Coral Cr.) (new); and Research and Publication - Dr. Harry Loewen, Winnipeg. The executive of last year continues unchanged for 1991. If you would like to serve on one of these committees and haven't been asked contact Doris immediately!

Several new board members need to be welcomed also. They are: Dr. Vic Doerksen, Dr. Abe Dueck, John Dyck, and Henry G. Ens and we are pleased that the others are able to continue for 1991.

We note our membership is around 200 again. Some have still not paid their fees for 1991, but the number shows strong interest is still there.

Why not write a note to our newsletter editor, Doris, telling the readers how you look at the *Society*, whether changes are needed, new ideas, etc.? We need to hear from each other too!

## ECHO-Translation Project well underway Report of the Research and Scholarship Committee

— by Harry Loewen, Chairperson

Now that the Research and Scholarship Committee has completed the Arnold Dyck edition (four volumes), all that remains to be done is to encourage readers to purchase this beautiful and valuable set of writings by one of Canada's well-known Mennonite writers, editors and publishers. The set or individual volumes of the *Arnold Dyck Works* are available from CMBC, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4, (204) 888-6781.

The Committee is now concentrating on the translation and publication of the ECHO-Verlag series, fourteen historical booklets published under the direction and editorship of Arnold Dyck around the middle of this century. For those who no longer read German these books in English translation will be a most welcome source of Russian-Mennonite history.

Two translated volumes have now been published. *The Kuban Settlement*, translated by Her-

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Karin Dirks and Susan Froese were presented with a gift of appreciation by MMHS chairman Ken Reddig for their years of voluntary work with Mennonite Books.

- Photo credit: Peter H. Rempel

## Mennonite Books Celebration Day

About fifty people gathered on May 5 and 6 at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg to celebrate the contribution of volunteers for an operation known as "Mennonite Books," and meet the new owners of this business.

The project, begun "in the basement of Roy and Ruth Vogt" of Winnipeg, started with the notion of setting up a Mennonite Book Club. This was the vision of Al Reimer, dating its origins to the mid-seventies. Susan Froese, Karin Dirks, and Margaret Bergen joined the project as volunteers when the operation changed from being a club to being a discount mail order selling business. Margaret was unable to be present at the celebration.

Karin, Susan and Margaret devoted countless hours of work to mailing these orders to all parts of the North American continent and beyond. All three were honoured at the gathering, with mention also of the committee members, Ken Reddig,

Roy Vogt and Victor Doerksen who "steered" the project in recent years.

Mennonite Books, owned and operated by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, was recently sold to Brandt Family Enterprises, also of Winnipeg. Gilbert and Susan Brandt with other members of their family, including Darryl, who will manage the project now, were introduced at the gathering.

They had prepared a book exhibit for the occasion and were present when people working at CMBC and the offices of CMM and CMC gathered for a "get acquainted" coffee the next morning (May 6). A new catalogue was available as well.

The new address and phone number of Mennonite Books are as follows: 67 Flett Avenue, Winnipeg, MB. R2K 3N3. Ph. (204) 668-7475.

## Is it time to write stories about Mennonite women?

The following are excerpts from an article written by **Katie Funk Wiebe** in **Manitoba Mennonite Memories** (1974).

*As I read Mennonite history books, it has always concerned me how few laymen, particularly women are mentioned as having performed any distinctive service to either church or community outside the Anabaptist period. Some men are occasionally singled out, but women become a general part of the mass of humanity which has no defining characteristics.*

*During Anabaptist times laypeople including women were numerous among the martyrs for their faith. Their names appear frequently in history: Anna Roggens was drowned as was Anna Buckhorst . . . the list goes on. Yet as one studies Mennonite history of the period closer to our own, the names of women are missing almost entirely. Because they had no official position in the church, their names never appear in the rosters of the great. Yet greatness is not measured by prominence, by ability, by position, by superior talents in preaching, art, music, politics, but by character. Jesus said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant."*

*And there have been hundreds of thousands of unknown servants of God among the Mennonites in past history whose names will never be indexed in a history book.*

*I think of women like Aganetha Barkman Reimer of the former Kleine Gemeinde who was of great service to the community of Steinbach during her lifetime. Because of village had no medical help, the minister of the church encouraged Mrs. Reimer, a young mother with more than half a dozen children, to take a midwife course in a distant city. In more than forty years of practice she delivered about 700 babies. In difficult cases she knelt before the patient's bed and prayed. When someone died she was the undertaker. The busy mother's services were free. She always found time for others in her devotion to God. Her stories can doubtless be duplicated in many communities. But we don't know about these stories.*

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## MMHS Display at Manitoba Day

— by Peter Rempel  
Membership and Publicity Committee

Manitoba Day is sponsored by Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation as an opportunity for heritage organizations to present information about their part in Manitoba's heritage - usually it is on a particular theme. This year the theme focused on women getting the vote in Manitoba and MMHS prepared a display featuring Mennonite domestic servants in Winnipeg.

Beginning in the 1920s many young Mennonite women came from their rural communities to work in the homes of wealthy Winnipeg families. These young women formed the vanguard of the urbanization of Mennonites in Manitoba and it seemed

appropriate to feature them in our display for this year's Manitoba Day.

The location of the Manitoba Day displays and program was The Forks. The turnout was quite light, especially in the morning and early afternoon. Thereafter it was steady but never crowded. The facilities were excellent, there were several fine displays and an interesting program but there seems to have been a lapse in publicizing the event. Most visitors just happened to have come to The Forks that afternoon and few knew about the event beforehand.

In any case, there is now a modest MMHS display on Mennonite women which is available for other occasions.

bert Giesbrecht, appeared in 1989, and *Mennonite Templers*, translated by Victor G. Doerksen, appeared in 1990. The series is published by CMBC Publications.

The following volumes are scheduled to appear next: *Unser Auszug nach Mittelasiien*, written by Franz Bartsch, and *Die Molotschnaer Ansiedlung*, written by H. Goerz. Both books are being translated, the former by Elisabeth Peters and the latter jointly by Al Reimer and John B. Toews. They are almost ready for the printer.

The remaining ten ECHO books will appear as their translations and funds become available. In the meantime we wish to urge our readers to purchase these attractive volumes for their own use and as source materials for study classes and church libraries. No Russian-Mennonite home, school, or congregation should be without them.

The MMHS Newsletter is published twice a year by the Publicity and Membership Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. Editor: Doris Penner. It welcomes letters and reports pertaining to the historical interests of society members. Correspondence should be mailed to the MMHS Newsletter, Box 3, Landmark, Manitoba R0A 0X0.