

# Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

No. 21

NEWSLETTER

June 1998



(L-R) Editors William Harms and John Dyck receive a copy of the 1880 census volume from Ken Reddig, MMHS president. The volume was published under the auspices of the Local History committee chaired by Adlof Ens. See p. 4 for a listing of other members. Photo: Courtesy of Elmer Heinrichs, Altona, MB

## Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Launches Volume II of the West Reserve Series

by Elmer Heinrichs

A book launch of Volume 2 in a series on the Mennonite West Reserve featuring the 1880 census of settled villages took place in Reinland, Manitoba, Saturday, March 21.

The launch included a presentation of dedicated copies of **The 1880 Census of the Mennonite West Reserve** to editors John Dyck, Winnipeg, and William Harms, of Altona. It was made by Ken Reddig, president of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, which published the 500-page volume.

This book follows the **Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch**, which was published in 1994, and is a printed version of the first church register of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church which had its main church at Reinland, Manitoba at that time.

The information for Volume II was compiled by committee members Adlof Ens of Winnipeg, Mary Ellen Neufeld and Bruce Wiebe of Winkler, Otto Hamm and John Wall of Morden; William Harms of Altona; John Dyck of Winnipeg; and Abe Loewen of Gretna.

The original 1880 West Reserve census included the 37 Mennonite villages then established with a total of 769 families including 3,595 persons.

The book edited by Dyck and Harms also includes the 1880-82 individual tax records by villages, the 1880 family census with supplementary data (birth, marriage), and profiles of Reinlaender bishops, ministers and deacons.

In the volume are also an 1891 federal census of the Mennonite West Reserve and 1880-1896 passenger lists of Mennonite immigrants from southern Russia landing in Quebec and moving on to western Canada.

The book is available from Mennonite Books, other bookstores, and from members of the historical society.

Sixty persons interested in genealogy and historical research attended a day-long historical programme here. An unexpected guest was Dr. C.W. Wiebe, of Winkler, now 105. During the Reinland meeting historian Adlof Ens made a presentation on four West

Reserve administrators - Isaak Mueller 1875-1886; Franz Froese Sr. 1887-1908; Johann W. Rempel 1909-1918, and Franz Froese Jr. 1919-1925 (years indicate term of office).

In a preview of the next volume (Vol. III) Adlof Ens suggested it would be more story-oriented stressing West Reserve's unique history, how events affected Mennonites, biographical sketches of bishops, etc., local studies, and miscellaneous.

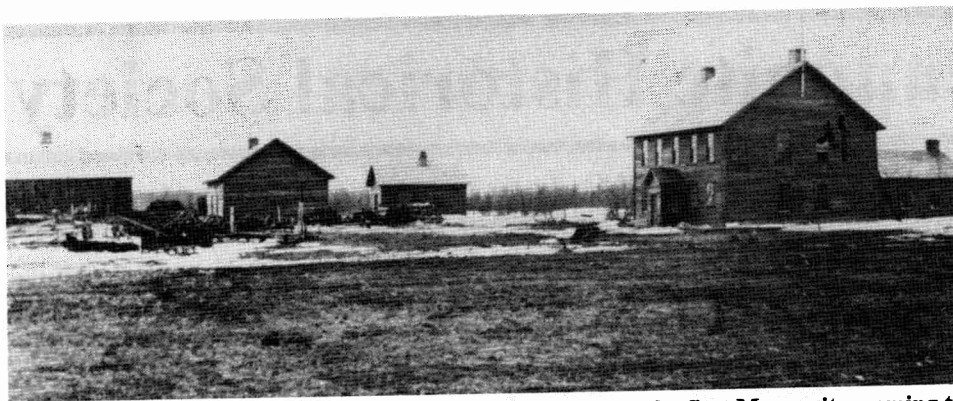
John Dyck, co-editor of Vol. II, commenting on Vol. IV suggested it might contain village histories, a story on the relocation from the East Reserve to the West Reserve, early medical practitioners (chiropractors), the business community, and the Mennonite settlement in Fargo, ND, U.S.A..

Another highlight of the day was a talk by Rev. Abe Wiebe, of the Sommerfelder Church in Winkler. He dealt with the history of colony administration in Paraguay.



Susanna (Rempel) and Peter Abrams with their children. Peter had business interests in Reinland and Gretna. He and his brother-in-law Wilhelm Rempel were directly instrumental in opening the Gretna Normal School (later Mennonite Educational Institute) in 1889. Photo: Courtesy of Leonard Doell, Saskatoon, SK.

*Elmer Heinrichs of Altona is a member of the MMHS Membership and Publicity Committee*



These buildings were part of the Fort Dufferin premises when the first Mennonites coming to the West Reserve in 1875 docked at this location. Several buildings still exist at this site. Are they originals? It is hoped that several events will take place at this site just north of Emerson, Manitoba, during the celebrations of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this landing to be held in the year 2000. Photo: Courtesy of the Provincial Archives and the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

## MMHS Bus Tour to West Reserve Was a Big Success

by Dolores Harder

On Saturday, 20 June 1998 42 people participated in a tour through Southern Manitoba, organized by our Society. Our tour leaders were Lawrence Klippenstein and Henry G. Ens. The emphasis of the tour was the arrival of the Mennonites in the 1870s and some of the areas they settled after immigrating to Canada.

The tour started in Winnipeg and took us first to the landing site of the first Mennonites who arrived in Manitoba in 1874. This site is situated near St. Agathe at the junction of the Rat and Red Rivers. There is a monument at this site.

Mennonites came to Manitoba after landing in Québec and travelling by ship and rail to Fargo/Moorehead. From there they travelled down the Red River to Manitoba by boat. The East Reserve (the east side of the river) was designated for settlement and the earliest immigrants settled here.

From here we travelled on to the one-time Fort Dufferin near Emerson. This became the landing site of the Mennonites who settled in the West Reserve (west of the Red River) in 1875 and later. West Lynn, nearby, became the first post office for the new Mennonite settlement.

From here we travelled through some of the villages settled by the early Mennonites. One of these villages, Neuberghthal, has now been designated a National Historic Site. Many of the trees lining the street are over a hundred years old.

Our next designated stop was the village of Reinland. Here we had a wonderful lunch prepared by the ladies of the community. Our lunch was in the village community centre. This building was originally a church and we were informed that this was the oldest and largest Mennonite church in Western Canada for quite some time. It was here that church leaders from other areas came to deliberate important decisions. We were also able to visit one of the original houses of the area. This house with attached barn is in very fine condition.

From here we travelled on to Schanzenfeld, just south of Winkler, to see the monument erected in honour of Jacob Y. Schantz. He played a very important role in getting the Mennonites settled in southern Manitoba.

Mennonites settled in small villages when they first came to Canada. Many of these villages no longer exist while others have grown into major centres. One of the major centres right now is Winkler. It is one of the fastest growing communities in Manitoba and is attracting some major industries. One of the big industries in Winkler is in recycling. The Valley Rehab Centre Inc. provides employment for mentally handicapped. It is well worth a visit to see recycling being done on such a large scale.

The church plays a very important role in the community and Winkler has several large churches (two of which were visited briefly). Winkler is also becoming a favourite

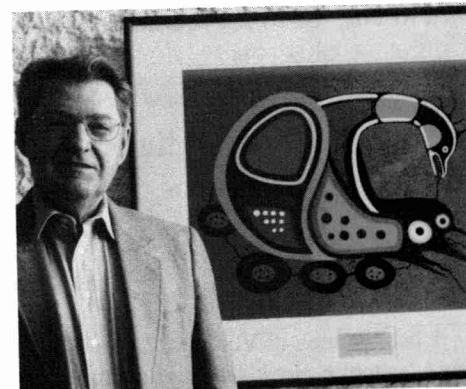
retirement community. There are several large senior centres and community centres. We had afternoon coffee and fresh baked goodies at one of these centres.

Our route back to Winnipeg took us through Burwalde and Carman. Ed Hoepfner and Bert Friesen gave us background information on the Mennonites who settled in this area.

Our group included several young people, (some accompanying their grandparents). It was wonderful to see the interest they took in the tour. Four people from Germany (who recently immigrated there from Siberia) were also part of the tour. They are spending some time in Canada hoping to learn more of their Mennonite roots. Those on the trip who have grown up in Manitoba or lived here for some time also benefited as some of us had never been to many of these areas. The general consensus was that it was a day well spent.

*Dolores Harder is a member of the MMHS Historical Sites and Monuments Committee.*

## News Notes



**Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, retired historian and archivist of the Mennonite Heritage Centre was recently awarded the Prix Manitoba by the Dept. of Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship. The award was a print entitled "Blue Avion" by aboriginal artist Jackson Beardy. Photo: Courtesy of Aiden Schlichting Enns, *The Canadian Mennonite*, Winnipeg, MB.**

The village of Reinland is planning to put up a cairn memorial noting the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mennonites coming to the West Reserve in 1875. Its community hall is the building which was the first worship house of the Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde built that same year.

(cont. on p.3)

# Kroeker Family Origins and the Anabaptist Movement

by Bert Friesen

The earliest known Kroeker ancestor, for which we have a record, is likely Hans or Johann Greicker. He was a leader of an Anabaptist congregation in Heppenheim, then in the Palatinate, today in Hesse, Germany.<sup>1</sup> He is known because of his involvement in the Frankenthal disputation held from 28 May to 19 June, 1571 under the auspices of the Duke Frederich of the Palatinate. Frankenthal is about 25 km. south-west of Heppenheim, both in southern Germany. This Greicker was most likely a fruit farmer in the area. The record of the Frankenthal disputation is entitled: "*Christliche Vermanug der Churfürstlichen Pfälzischen Kirchendienern / so dem Gespräch zu Franckenthal beygewohnt. An die durch mißverständnis verstrickte genante Widertäufer.*"

A central part of the argument put forward by Greicker in 1571, as recorded in the record of this disputation, was the peace position.

*Die andern mein ich wie Paulus sagt: So aber jemandes zancket haben wir dieselb weiß nit auch die Gemein Gottes nit/ 1. Corint. 11. Er ist nit ein Gott des zanck's sonder ein Gott des friedens wie inn allen Gemeinen der Heiligen/ 1. Corint. 14. Glaub sey nit not vis wieter darzuzureden.*

The importance of this disputation is supported by the length of it, 23 days, and the fact that a detailed record of it is extant, hundreds of printed pages in Gothic script. Also there were representatives of the brethren there from Switzerland and various parts of southern Germany. Hutterites were also represented. The central issues of Anabaptism were discussed during this lengthy disputation including the peace position. Greicker was therefore a person of note in the Anabaptist world of southern Germany. He would have known about the Anabaptist groups in Switzerland where the movement had begun

a the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century through contacts made at various occasions including the Frankenthal disputation. His family ancestors might well have come from there. The evangelizing work of the Swiss brethren certainly influenced the Anabaptists in central and southern Germany.

At the time of the Frankenthal disputation, the Palatinate ruler, Frederich, was a Calvinist adherent, which put him at odds with the Catholic and Lutheran authorities in most of the other German jurisdictions. It was a haven for many who were persecuted by Catholics or Lutherans. So this territory probably continued to attract persecuted peoples including Swiss Anabaptists. However the tensions continued and it became increasingly difficult for the Anabaptist in the Palatinate. Nearly all had left before the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century for Moravia, directly to the east.

During the next 30 years, beginning around the turn of the century, these Anabaptists in Moravia moved north to join their co-religionists from the northern parts of Europe in the Vistula delta between the Vistula and Nogat Rivers. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this was part of the Kingdom of Poland. In 1627 we find a Klaas Kröcker listed in Tiegenhagen. It is possible that he was the son of Hans Greicker in which the last name changed to reflect the local conventions. Other variant spellings are Klaas Kreker or Klaas Kröker. Horst Penner concludes this when he states:

*Hans Grecker verlaßt, um seines Glaubens leben zu können, die sonnige Pfalz, um im fernen Weichseldelta - er ist ziemlich sicher mit dem dortigen Hans Krecker identisch - das Dorf Tiegenhagen in ein Zentrum des Mennonitentums und eine fruchtschwere Niederung zu verwandeln.<sup>2</sup>*

The connection between the Anabaptists of Switzerland and southern Germany with the Vistula delta is tenuous, but nevertheless, the possibility is there. Persecuted peoples moved to wherever they could find refuge and have a relatively tranquil existence. Therefore, when opportunities presented themselves, they moved from south-western Europe to north-eastern Europe to begin a sojourn that lasted nigh 200 years.

## Endnotes

1. This was first stated in the **Mennonitische Lexicon** and quoted by Horst Penner, *Die ost- und westpreußischen Mennoniten*, p.22.
2. Penner, p.22.

*Bert Friesen is a member of the MMHS Membership and Publicity Committee.*

## News Notes (cont. from p.2)

The village of Neubergthal is continuing to develop its program as a newly-designated National Historic Site. See the recent article "Preserving Resources at Neubergthal National Historic Site," by Frieda Klippenstein in *Research Links*, Vol.5, (Winter, 1997), published by Parks Canada, Western Canada. The MMHS Historic Sites and Monuments Committee has also received Frieda's longer research report on the project called *A Cultural Landscape History: Neubergthal National Historic Site: A Mennonite Street Village on the Canadian Prairie*.

A further issue of a family newsletter *Klippings* put out by the Klippenstein clan will be published in July. Ted Friesen and Lawrence Klippenstein edit this occasional publication.

A **Harder** family reunion will be held at CMBC on 23-26 July. For further information call Wilma Poetcker at 1-204-896-1354.

The commemorative cairn noting the beginning of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Manitoba is now located on the grounds of the Mennonite Brethren church house in Winkler, MB. The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Winkler has placed an outdoor plaque noting its hundred years of presence in that community. The Schantz monument is located at the Southwood School (Schanzenfeld) a more or so south of Winkler off the highway.

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**Protocoll/ des fünffien**  
**Greucker. Die andern mein ich/wie Paulus sagt: So aber**  
**jemandes zancket/haben wir dieselb weiß nit/auch die Gemein**  
**Gottes nit/ 1. Corint. 11. Er ist nit ein Gott des zanck's. Son-**  
**der ein Gott des friedens/wie inn allen Gemeinen der Hei-**  
**ligen/ 1. Corint. 14. Glaub sey nit not/wi weiter darzuzure-**  
**den. )**

A visual portion of the disputation text as printed in col.1, paragraph 2.

(cont. on p.4)

## News Notes (cont. from p.3)

A **Schroeder** family reunion is being planned at the Mennonite Heritage Village at Steinbach for 15 August. It will include the unveiling of a stone grave memorial once placed in a Mennonite village in Ukraine in honour of Maria Dyck Schroeder, and recently brought to Winnipeg. The unveiling will take place at Mennonite Heritage Centre. For further details contact Ken Reddig, 1-204-888-6781.

The first event of the recently reorganized Mennonite Literary Society is *Love & Work: A Labour Day Celebration*. Words and Music featuring Di Brandt, Cate Friesen, and Patrick Friesen on Friday, 8:00 p.m., 4 September, 1998 at the West End Cultural Centre, 586 Ellice Avenue, Winnipeg.

The Mennonite Heritage Village Museum has mounted an exhibition about Drs. Anna and Alexander Schilstra, long-time medical doctors in Gretna and Steinbach. It will be open until February, 1999. The personal papers of the Schilstra family were deposited at the museum by Garth Reimer of Reimer Agencies in Steinbach.

A **Buhler** family reunion is being planned for 24-26 July 1998 at MCI in Gretna. For further information contact Henry Loewen at 1-204-888-6781.

A **Stoesz** family reunion is being planned for 18-19 July 1998 at the Senior Centre in Winkler, Manitoba. For further information contact Kathy Dyck, Altona at 1-204-324-5957.

**The MMHS Genealogy Committee has awarded the annual Henry Plett awards. They were given as follows: Joint-first to Westgate students Andreas Rutkauskas and Stephen Gregg; Joint-second to Steinbach Christian High School students Laurie Mae Penner and Adrienne Reimer.**

## MMHS Board Reorganized

The Board of the MMHS for 1998 is the following: Adolf Ens, Winnipeg; Henry G. Ens, Reinland; Helene Friesen, Winnipeg; Otto Hamm, Morden; Elmer Heinrichs, Altona; Ed Hoepfner, Winnipeg; Marianne Janzen, Winnipeg; Vic Janzen, Steinbach; Lawrence Klippenstein, Winnipeg; Irene Kroeker, Steinbach; Martha Martens, Hordean; Matthew Neufeld, Winnipeg; Jake Peters, Winnipeg; Ken Reddig, Winnipeg; Conrad Stoesz, Winnipeg; Richard Thiessen, Winnipeg; Hans Werner, Winkler.

The chairpersons of the standing committees are as follows: Local History - Adolf Ens; Genealogy - Helene Friesen; Membership and Publicity - Ed Hoepfner; Historic Sites and Monuments - Lawrence Klippenstein; Research, Scholarship, and Publications - Hans Werner.

Executive members include the following: Ken Reddig, president; Lawrence Klippenstein, vice-president; Richard Thiessen, secretary; and Irene Kroeker, member-at-large.

The Local History Committee members are: William Harms, Altona; David M. Friesen, Gretna; Bruce Wiebe, Ed Falk, and Mary Ellen Neufeld, Winkler; Otto Hamm and John Wall, Morden; John Dyck, Jake Peters, and Adolf Ens, Winnipeg.

## The Historic Sites and Monuments Committee Plans

The Historic Sites and Monuments Committee is developing its programme for 1998-1999 in several areas.

Providing heritage tours is one - as noted on an article on p.2. Very positive response to this tour could mean that a fall tour will be arranged as well. Watch for further announcements.

Another project has to do with celebrating the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mennonite settlement in the former West Reserve of southern Manitoba. Discussions have been started with the heritage preservation offices of the province of Manitoba, and the town of Emerson (Mayor Wayne Arseny), to see what development could be undertaken at the old site of Fort Dufferin near Emerson, where the first West Reserve Mennonites landed in July, 1875.

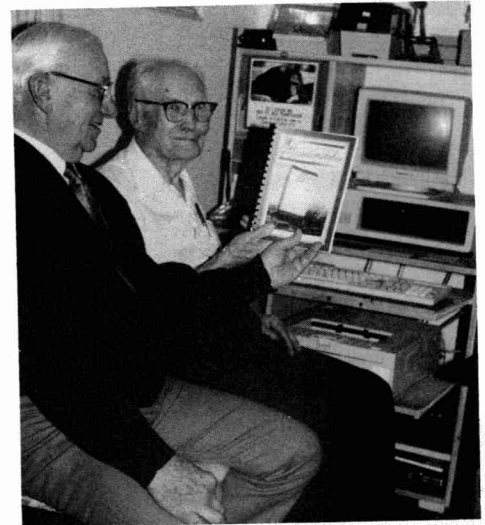
A third project has to do with renovating the Altbergthal school building as a small museum. The building is located in Altona now. Plans are to do some reconstruction, and see whether it can become part of a larger heritage area project in the northern part of the town.

Some exhibits on the history of the school may be available for visitors to Altona's Sunflower Festival in late July this summer.

## Book Notes

The German-language paper *Der Bote*, has just published a 40-page German and English

version of *The Swiss Mennonites in Canada*. They cost \$2.00 each if mailed and \$1.00 if picked up. To order call Lois Bergen at (204) 888-6781.



Jake Krueger and Bill Kehler displaying Jake Krueger's new book *Memorabilia* (pb., 168pp., \$15.00) For more information, or to order, contact Krueger at Box 552, Altona, MB ROG OBO. Ph. (204) 324-5396.

The first issue of a new poetry periodical, *Vox*, edited by Moses Dueck and published at CMBC, appeared early in the year. It is a paperback item with 20 pages. Copies can be obtained from Moses Dueck at Ste.1, 88 Maryland St., Winnipeg, MB R3G 1K8.

*Dies und Das* is a collection of columns in the German language written in past years for *Mennonitische Post* by former editor, Abe Warkentin. It is a recent paperback issue of 214 pages which may be ordered from *Mennonitische Post*, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0.

Albert Barkman of the Church of God in Christ Mennonite (Holdeman) at Beausejour, MB is editor of a republication of a war-time church newsletter for Cos titled *Home News*. The newsletter was published from 1943-1946, and all issues are included in this volume. It is a paperback edition can be obtained from the editor at R.R.2, Beausejour, MB R0E 0C0.

Randy Kehler has published *The Descendants of Peter Kehler 1836-1876. Johann Kehler 1864-1937* (pb., 106 pp.). Order from J.R. Kehler, Box 20737, Steinbach, MB R0A 2T2.

Elma Martens Schemenauer has just published *Jacob Siemens Family Since 1685* (pb., 200 pp., \$28.00).

For more information, write to Elma at Farland Press Inc., 92 Caines Ave., Toronto, Ontario M2R 2L3