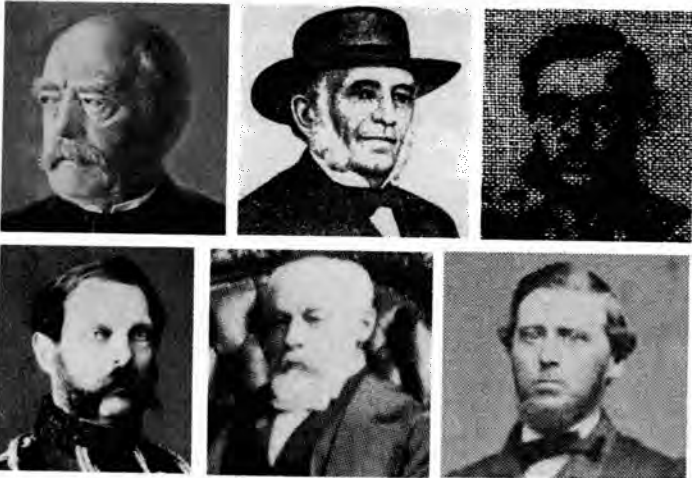


HERITAGE POSTING

Newsletter of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

No.24 March 1999



Top (l to r) Otto von Bismarck, architect of the German Empire in Europe; Cornelius Jansen, a Mennonite businessman in Berdiansk, south Russia; Dimitrii Miliutin, Minister of War under Alexander II in Russia; Bottom (l to r) Alexander II, Tsar of Russia, 1855-1881; William Hespeler, Special Immigration Agent for Canada; and John F. Funk, Mennonite editor of *Herald of Truth* in Elkhart, Indiana, USA.

Makers of the 1870s Mennonite Migration to Manitoba

by Lawrence Klippenstein

In 1999 and 2000 many Manitoba Mennonites will be reflecting once more on the coming of their kinfolk to Canada one hundred and twenty-five years ago - a "millennium project", perhaps of a "Mennonite kind".

That story has been told and retold many times. Centennial celebrations in 1974 brought it to the fore not that long ago. But many of our younger readers (we hope there are some!) and some other ones may not have heard it then, or forgotten somewhat what was said. It may warrant revisiting one more time.

Where are the deepest roots of this movement and who made it happen? That is the question this retelling will put centre stage, realizing, of course, that many other questions could be asked about the event, and no doubt will be before the revisiting is all done. It is possible that the discovery of new source material, more first-person comments, along with improved access to the tsarist Russian archives will enhance our knowledge and understanding of that migration even further.

Let's begin with Otto von Bismarck who became the prime minister of the Prussian German state in 1862. With a distinct "imperialistic" approach to politics, Bismarck managed to annex a number of German areas adjacent to Prussia, and by 1871 could

Heritage Posting: To our Readers

We are pleased to introduce you to the somewhat reshaped and expanded MMHS newsletter now appearing as **Heritage Posting**. It is to focus especially on the 125th anniversary of Mennonites arriving in Manitoba - with ongoing coverage, to be sure, of other regular Manitoba Mennonite historical themes.

We invite readers to submit materials that fit these special areas of research and study. Also we invite you to get involved with anniversary celebrations somehow and somewhere. And, do send us information on your commemorative plans and projects.

Save your **Heritage Posting** issues - but if you do not, why not pass them on to a friend? Thanks a lot!

The Editors

create what has been called "a new German empire in Central Europe". The final acts of achieving that goal were a victorious war with France fought in 1870, and the crowning of the Prussian king, William I, as emperor of the new German Reich on January 18, 1871¹.

The Mennonites of Prussia who were, of course, a part of this story too, viewed these events with mixed feelings. The new political order generated pride for some of them, but was very worrisome to others. Prussia had enacted a universal military service law in 1867, a law which at least some Mennonites were disposed to accept without undue protest. Others however took a different position, since the Act also removed the military exemption clause which had existed up to that time.

A Prussian Mennonite delegation, sent to Berlin to negotiate new conditions of exemption learned that they could obtain alternative service by serving in a medical corps. This was satisfactory to some Mennonite congregations but not to others. The result was a second delegation to Berlin which went to reaffirm their call for total exemption, and mentioned that many would consider emigration to Russia if that request was not met. They were told that what was happening in Prussia would soon happen in Russia as well².

Enter John F. Funk, an American Mennonite publisher who was editing issues of Volume 7 of the *Herald of Truth* at this time. In the April issue of 1870 he offered quotes, in English translation, of discussions on this military service dilemma, going on in the Prussian Mennonite periodical, *Mennonitische Blätter*, during that time.

Funk noted that many Prussian Mennonites were contemplating emigration, and that negotiations about moving to the state of Tennessee in the U.S.A. were going on already. He cited an 1859 statistic which noted that 18,000 Mennonites were living in Prussia. The June issue mentioned the possibility of a Mennonite delegation coming to the USA shortly.

By July, 1871, the US Department of State had begun to

The 1870s Mennonite Migration

(cont. from p.1)

receive dispatches from Timothy C. Smith, US Consul from Odessa in south Russia, indicating that an identical issue regarding military service was now exercising the Mennonites of Russia. They were also needing to deal with a new law of universal military conscription, formally under consideration since the year before. A certain Cornelius Jansen, "one of the foremost of them as to property and intelligence", these dispatches said, had begun to inquire about settlement possibilities and government concessions for immigrants in the USA.

Exactly how or through whom the first news of these south Russian developments reached Canada is not quite clear. It is known that Jansen contacted the English Colonial Secretary in London, about the same time that he was starting to exchange letters with John F. Funk in 1871. This opened direct contact with the Dominion government in Ottawa almost immediately³.

The first significant Canadian connection is more commonly associated with the activities of William Hespeler, a German Canadian former distillery owner from Ontario who had emigrated to Canada around 1850. Hespeler had undertaken a long trip to his original homeland soon after he sold his distillery business in 1868. While in Germany he became a volunteer stretcher bearer during the Franco-German War of 1870.

About the same time Hespeler began to read about German-speaking Lutherans and Catholics from Alsace-Lorraine, and others from German areas, as well as Mennonites from southern Russia, who were interested in emigrating, perhaps to North America. It is also said that he got more details from the Russian scene through conversations with a certain Count Mentshikov who, it seems, was also vacationing in Germany at the time. Hespeler happened to know about the interest of the Canadian government in obtaining new immigrants to settle the western prairies, particularly in the new province of Manitoba which had come into being in 1870.

Hoping perhaps for some related government appointment, Hespeler relayed this information about immigrant hopefuls in Europe to the Canadian government in Ottawa. The John A. Macdonald administration asked him in February, 1872, to serve as Special Immigration Agent to recruit whom he could in German and south Russian lands where new immigrants might be available⁴.

(to be concluded)

Urry draws crowd despite stormy weather

by Glenn Bergen

Noted scholar of Mennonite history, Dr. J. Urry, spoke to a large audience at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on 23 February. About 70 people turned out for the presentation, despite near-blizzard conditions. Urry is senior lecturer in Anthropology at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Urry spoke on the topic, "Mennonites in politics in Manitoba, 1874-1974". He had been in the province for the previous six weeks researching the subject for the final chapters of an upcoming book. While Mennonites are generally not thought to have become involved in politics in Manitoba before the 1920s, Urry noted, his new research showed extensive political involvement among the Mennonites dating back to the 1890s.

Royden Loewen, chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg and president of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, thanked Urry for his presentation and for reminding us of the importance of seeking out unexplored archival materials.



Dr. James Urry (left) began his research on Mennonites in Russia at CMBC in 1974. He has been back numerous times to continue his work on other projects related to Mennonites in Canada. Erdmann Penner (right), a businessman from Gretna, ran as a Conservative in the Manitoba provincial elections of 1892. He lost to Enoch Winkler, another businessman, but shortly afterwards became the mayor of Gretna. Photo credit (Urry): Glenn Bergen, Winnipeg, MB

Mennonite Literary Society Launches Issue 2 of Rhubarb

The Mennonite Literary Society "unveiled" its second issue of a new magazine titled *Rhubarb* at an evening of Mennonite readings held at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery on March 11. Editor Victor Jerrett Enns chaired the programme. Readers included writers David Bergen, standing in for Sandra Birdsell who could not be present, and Sarah Klassen of Winnipeg. Musicians Dr. Doug Reimer, professor at the U. of M. and his daughter Jess were also featured, singing folk, blues, bluegrass, and gospel selections. Ken Reddig, director of Mennonite Heritage Centre, hosted the evening.

The second issue of *Rhubarb*, which has 23 contributors, was put together under the theme Immigration, with a striking cover image entitled *Our Resting Place* of a painting by Peter Martens who has mounted a major paintings exhibit in the gallery, to run from March 5 to April 23. To connect with the *Rhubarb* editor, Vic Enns, email mennolit@mb.sympatico.ca

The William Hespeler and Gerhard Hiebert Stories: A Research Note

by Edwin D. Hoepfner

A visit to the St. John's Cathedral (Anglican) cemetery in Winnipeg on a sunny, warm day early last fall, 10 September 1998, with the temperature peaking at 32.4 degrees Celsius in the late afternoon, yielded an unexpected bonus for Lawrence Klippenstein and the author.

Our interest in the history of the first Mennonite immigration from today's Ukraine to Manitoba, motivated our search for the grave of William Hespeler. Hespeler, special immigration agent for the government of Canada in 1872 and thereafter, had an important role in influencing Mennonites who were leaving south Russia, to choose to come to Manitoba. That immigration began in 1874¹. Its 125th anniversary is this year.

Wilhelm Hespeler was born in 1830 in Gernsbach, approximately 8 km. east-northeast of Baden Baden, Germany. He died in 1921 in British Columbia, Canada. His body, returned to Winnipeg at the time, is interred in St. John's Cathedral cemetery in Block J, Plot 3 North ½ and Plot 4 South ½. the inscription on the gravestone reads as follows:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF WILLIAM HESPELER BORN DEC.29th 1830 DIED APRIL 18th 1921 AND HIS WIFE

CATHERINE ROBERTSON BORN 1836 DIED JUNE 9th 1920 HESPELER

His career had been noted in several brief articles². In all of them, William's wife's name is given as Mary H. Keatchie. This suggests that she was his first wife and one may conclude that Catherine Robertson was his second wife. Hespeler appears to have been an extraordinarily active, effective and versatile business entrepreneur, government agent, municipal and provincial politician, and community leader. For two years he was an alderman of the City of Winnipeg and for many years an MLA and Speaker of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. He was appointed first Consul of the German Empire in Manitoba, and was gifted with diplomatic and negotiating skills.

Thanks to his initiative, thousands of immigrants, bilingual German and French speaking natives of Alsace-Lorraine, Lutheran German colonists of Bessarabia, Kherson and the Crimea, as well as many Mennonites from southern Russia chose to come to Canada. Here in Manitoba, not only Mennonites, but also the descendants of the "Canuck" neighbours near and on the Pembina Escarpment, have reason to honour his memory. They do well also to recall his associate Dominion Land Surveyor (DLS) William Pearce, as colleague in the investigation and successful resolution of the Menno-Canuck Difficulty in the western sections of the West Reserve. This has particular reference to the once thriving but now extinct villages of Burwalde, Schönfeld, Schöndorf, and Waldheim, as well as the vanished community of Nelsonville, 10 km. north-northwest of Morden³.

Just prior to our discovery of the Hespeler family plot, we spotted a gravestone, which concerns a family of undoubtedly Mennonite origin. It records family data as follows:

GERHARD HIEBERT BORN SEPT. 13th 1868 DIED DEC. 25th 1934 HELEN WIFE OF GERHARD HIEBERT DAUGHTER OF ERDMANN AND MARIA PENNER 15th OCT. 1874 - 12th FEB. 1920 HELEN EFLRIEDE ALLEN 29th JUN. 1908 - 28th NOV. 1982 INTERRED WANDLEBURY RING CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND

Gerhard Hiebert worked for his father-in-law Erdmann Penner in the latter's business enterprises as a young man before going on to medical studies in Minnesota⁴. Both men had their origin in the Bergthal Colony. Dr. Gerhard Hiebert initially had a medical practice in Winnipeg, before being appointed to the position of Chief Surgeon at Winnipeg General Hospital. His former employer and father-in-law was a very prosperous businessman, first in Winnipeg, then near Niverville and in Gretna⁵, where he was mayor, and in Morden⁶.

Helen (Penner) Hiebert's memoirs constitute a significant source for Gretna centennial history. It is extremely probable that Hespeler and Erdmann Penner knew each other. Hespeler served for fifteen years as President of Winnipeg General Hospital. The interconnectedness of historical events, and of people, not least of all Mennonite affairs, becomes even more palpable when we note that the location of Erdmann Penner's "Branch No.1," the Town of Morden, became the main "urban" centre of the Canuck protagonists in the "Difficulty". It was a difficulty which William Hespeler, in this capacity as a trouble-shooter for the Department

(cont. on p.4)



Top left: William Hespeler; Top right: Helen Penner Hiebert;
Bottom: The William Hespeler headstone in the St. John's Cathedral Cemetery. Right: Edwin Hoepfner.

The Jacob Hoepfner Gun Gifted to Museum



A gun owned in the 1780s by the one-time Prussian Mennonite delegate to New Russia, Jacob Hoepfner, was recently donated to the Mennonite Heritage Village of Steinbach, Manitoba. It had come to Manitoba originally with people of the 1870s migration to Manitoba. Given at that time to another Jacob Hoepfner (1825-1907) of Waldheim (near Morden, MB), Manitoba, it was passed on to Jacob's nephew, Peter A. Hoepfner (1896-1986), also of the village of Waldheim. It then became the property of Peter's son, Anton, of Austin, MB, who donated it to the museum. In the photos we see Anton at the Jacob Hoepfner monument at MHV, and (below) the family of Anton including (l-r): Henry, Tina and Isaac, mother Sara, Anton, Father Peter, Jacob, Annie and Peter. Photos: Courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach, Manitoba (statue and gun), and Anton Hoepfner (family group)



Information Needed

I. I am a freelance writer researching an article (for a national magazine) that will focus on especially meaningful family heirlooms - like my own great-great grandfather's diary of his journey across the Atlantic from Southampton to New York City in 1840.

Any help you can give would be very much appreciated. Thank you! Contact: **Mary Lynn O'Shea, 1120 Windrush Drive, Oakville, Ontario L6M 1S8** e-mail: oshea@pathcom.com

II. We have received some interesting information about "Swedenborgian Mennonites" which we hope to share in a future issue. Our source here is Doreen Funk of Quesnel, B.C. Doreen is writing about a community of these people living at one time in Happy Lake School District in the Boggy Creek area somewhere not too far from Roblin, MB.

Among the earliest Mennonite families to arrive in the area were Julius and Anna Dueck Hiebert who may have homesteaded in the Neuhoehnung S.D. west of Altona, then moved to Plum Coulee, and on to other places from there. Doreen would like to hear from anyone who has information about this community, and especially Funk families connected to it. Write to her at **R.R.8, Box 10, Johnstone Site, Quesnel, B.C. V2J 5E6**.

William Hespeler and Gerhard Hiebert (cont. from p.3)

of Agriculture, helped to resolve in 1877/1878. That is a fascinating story which remains to be told.

Endnotes

1. E.K. Francis; *In Search of Utopia - The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona, Manitoba, 1955), pp.37, 41ff, 91-93, 113ff, 146, 154, 157, 164. Werner Entz; "*William Hespeler, Manitoba's First German Consul*", (German-Canadian Yearbook, Toronto, 1973). See also "*William Hespeler - John A. MacDonald's Special Immigration Agent, The Emperor's First Honorary Consul, Speaker of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly (1830-1921)*", Historical Society of Mecklenburg Upper Canada Inc., and German-Canadian Historical Association Inc., 1976 WE. This article came from the late Rudolf Thiele, Honorary Consul, Federal Republic of Germany, in 1981. D. Roger, "*Wilhelm Hespeler zum 60. Todestag*", Kanada Kurier, 19. März 1981.
2. John Henry Warkentin; *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1960), pp.62, 65, 67, 68.
3. John Dyck, (Winnipeg) - personal communication.
4. William Schroeder; *The Bergthal Colony* (rev.ed. CMBC Publications, Winnipeg, 1986).
5. F.G. Enns & Gaile Whelan Enns; *Gretna - Window on the Northwest* (Gretna, MB, 1987), pp.16, 17, 18, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 36, 58, 65, 164, 165, 166, 167, 170.
6. *Morden* (Morden Centennial Committee, 1981), p.9.

MMHS News & Notes

MMHS Board of Directors - 1999

Elections of the January 23 annual general meeting resulted in the following list of MMHS directors for 1999:

Abe Dueck, Centre for MB Studies, **vice president**; Adolf Ens, CMBC, **president**; Henry Ens; Bert Friesen, **treasurer**; Otto Hamm, **chair of the Local History Committee**; Elmer Heinrichs; Ed Hoepfner, **chair of Membership and Publicity Committee**; Marianne Janzen; Lawrence Klippenstein, **chair of Historic Sites and Monuments Committee**; Irene Kroeker, **executive member-at-large**; Martha Martens; Jacob Peters, University of Winnipeg; Alf Redekopp, Mennonite Heritage Centre, **chair of Genealogy Committee**; Ken Reddig, Mennonite Heritage Centre, **secretary**; Gary Snider, Mennonite Heritage Village; Conrad Stoesz; and Hans Werner, **chair of Research, Scholarship, and Publication Committee**.

The active committees again include Executive, Membership and Publicity, Genealogy, Historic Sites and Monuments, Research, Scholarship, and Publication, and Local History.

1999 Plans of the Committees

The **Membership and Publicity Committee** is now overseeing an expanded version of the MMHS newsletter. **Heritage Posting** is to appear four times a year with eight pages each time. The 125th anniversary of the coming of Mennonites to Manitoba will be a major focus of the upcoming issues for 1999 and 2000. Bert Friesen and Lawrence Klippenstein will edit the newsletter for now. At its recent meeting it discussed plans for the coming two years of the newsletter which will include features on pioneer leaders, congregational histories, and other content of significance during the 1870s and 1880s.

The **Genealogy Committee** is working on a publication of genealogical records received from the former Soviet Union. Peter Rempel has provided the material. It is also hoping to edit and publish items from the St. Petersburg Archives microfilm collection obtained through the auspices of the St. Petersburg Christian University several years ago. A Russian-speaking student, Sergei Chaiderman, now residing in Winnipeg, has been assisting in translation under a summer grant.

The **Research, Scholarship, and Publication Committee** is considering the publication of a manuscript on the Mennonite pioneers of Old Kildonan (Winnipeg), prepared by Heidi Koop and Helga Dyck.

The **Local History Committee** is working on a third volume in the West Reserve series which already includes *Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch* and *1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve*. The committee is also planning a spring workshop in the Altona-Gretna area.

The **Historic Sites and Monuments Committee** has completed its Post Road research project under the direction of Conrad Stoesz. Several articles on the topic are being published in local Mennonite



Adele Dyck, a Winkler realtor and immigration agent, addressed the annual meeting of MMHS held at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on Saturday, 23 January, 1999. She spoke about issues related to a Winkler-based plan to bring 50 or more families of Aussiedler (emigres from the former Soviet Union living in Germany now) to southern Manitoba. She is seen in the photo (centre) with her daughter, Gabriele and Gerhard Ens, former *Bote* editor, and long-time principal at the MCI in Gretna, dealing with questions brought to the discussion. Photo: Courtesy of Elmer Heinrichs, Altona, Manitoba.

community papers. An Albergthol School museum committee is being constituted under the supervision of the Historic Sites Committee. Plans are now underway to collaborate with the town of Emerson in setting up a Post Road sign on Highway 75.

A **committee to direct 125th activities** is being set up. Celebrative projects already underway include the planning of a sunrise workshop service at The Forks in Winnipeg on 1 August, the establishment of a Post Road tourist route in southern Manitoba, and including theme-related papers at the spring workshop put on by the local history committee (see above).

The **executive committee** serves as finance committee. It also supervises a special project for archives development among Mexican Mennonites. Money for this has been raised by numerous showing of the Mexican Mennonite 75th anniversary held in 1997. The committee is also collaborating with the U of W Chair of Mennonite Studies to hold a symposium on "1874 Revisited" this fall. It will shortly complete the appointment of an 125th anniversary committee for MMHS. A winter lecture by Dr. James Urry on "Politics among Mennonites of Manitoba", given at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on 13 February, was planned by the executive also (see article on the lecture elsewhere in this issue).

Other News

- An ad hoc group in Altona has begun to discuss the establishment of an archival research centre for the town and surrounding area. It would be placed next to an expanded Altona library also under construction at this time.
- Seven Manitoba Mennonites are preparing special exhibits for an international Mennonite conference to be held at Zaporozhe, Ukraine on 27-30 May 1999.

125th Manitoba Mennonite Anniversary

It is our intention to include a regular column updating our readers about happenings and projections pertaining to the celebration of the 125th anniversary of Mennonite settlement in Manitoba. The early arrivals of the families coming to the former East Reserve arrived in the Winnipeg area around August 1, 1874. Almost a year later to the day (sources say it was July 14, 1875) another wave of settlement opened up the West Reserve area along the Canada-US border westward to the Pembina Hills.

Our listings here indicate where the first celebrations already have taken place, and what is to come. Reports will focus on four areas: the former East Reserve, now basically Hanover municipality; the Mennonite Heritage Village, which is viewed as a project of all Manitoba Mennonites (right?), the former West Reserve, and the Winnipeg area (which some say, now includes about half the Mennonites still resident in Manitoba (we invite corrections on that also).

The East Reserve

- Commemorative events in this area are being directed by a **large committee headed by Karen Peters** of Randolph, near Steinbach. Successful efforts have been made to involve the city of Steinbach and all the smaller communities of the region in the celebrations. A number of souvenir items have been produced (like mugs, etc.). Short historical vignettes on the various communities are being broadcast daily weekdays on CHSM just before 8 a.m. Detailed plans are being publicized in the periodical *Preservings* published by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, and edited by Delbert Plett (see Issue 13, December 1998 for a summary). For other details contact Karen at 1-204-377-4409.
- The Mennonite Landing Site Committee has been discussing the erection of a **cairn** or other monument to note the involvement of **Jacob Y. Shantz** in the immigration of 1874-1875, and later. Some improvements for the park itself are also under discussion.

Mennonite Heritage Village

- A special anniversary service for the entire Manitoba Mennonite community and others is being scheduled for 10.30 a.m. Sunday, **1 August, 1999**. Other regular programming of the year (Spring on the Farm, Pioneer Days, fall events) will be planned with the anniversary in mind.

The special **Menno Simons exhibit** just mounted in the museum should be kept in mind here as well. Many will recall the 500th anniversary of Menno's birth commemorated in 1996.

The West Reserve

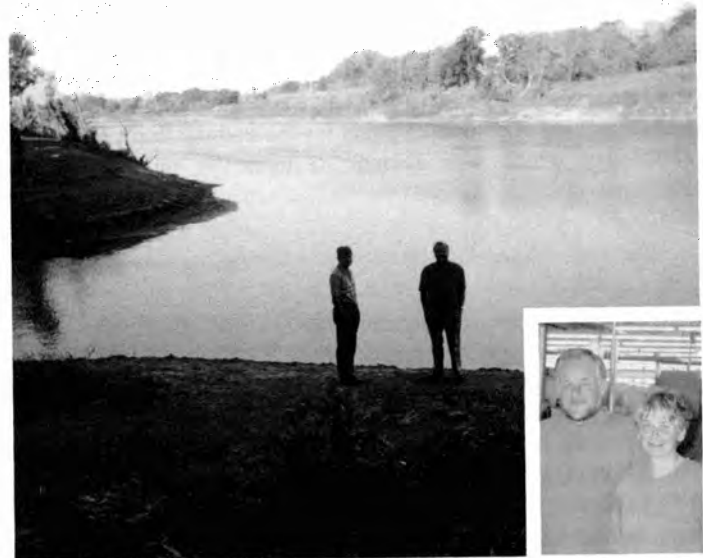
- The MMHS Sites and Monuments Committee and the MMHS executive committee are directing plans to date. An anniversary committee is being constituted to take over some of this activity.
- The bulk of the programming is being projected for the year 2000

which is actually the 125th anniversary of this area. This will include events at **the old Fort Dufferin**, just north of Emerson, the arrival site of Mennonites in 1875. Some smaller communities like Chortitz, near Winkler, are planning local events (see ad elsewhere in this issue).

As well some significant research has been done on the one-time **Post Road**, and it is hoped that a sign and perhaps reconstruction of some of the post road sections will be completed by 2000 also. Conrad Stoesz of Winnipeg has been gathering materials, and a short two-part story has already appeared in the *Red River Valley Echo*. Other Mennonite newspapers have asked to run the feature. The making of a new map is under discussion.

The Winnipeg area

- The MMHS executive committee has been laying plans for a **sunrise church service** to be held at The Forks of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. The date is also Sunday, 1 August, 1999. Further details will be forthcoming. This may be the time to place a plaque at The Forks, but we are not aware that plans are definitely in the making somewhere.
- The public "unveiling" of plans for a May festival, **March West** (to be based in Emerson) took place at the Legislative Buildings some weeks ago. It will feature the formation of the Northwest Mounted Police force in 1873, and its trek west to establish its "law and order" presence in Western Canada, leaving Fort Dufferin in 1874 about the same time as Mennonites were beginning to arrive at the junction of the Rat and Red Rivers for the downstream.



This past summer Nel and Harman Ament visited southern Manitoba from the Netherlands. Harman is the pastor of the Mennonite church in Alkmaar, N.H. They were most interested in the Mennonite history in this province and visited the landing site at the Rat and Red Rivers. They also visited Friesen's printing firm to see where their Menno Simons' 500th anniversary book entitled *Menno Simons: Places, Portraits and Progeny* had been printed.

The Gerhard and Anna Dyck Family of Kronsgart

by Bert Friesen

The MMHS Newsletter of September 1998, included an article on the settling of Kronsgart just north of the West Reserve. Here is the second part of the story of the Dyck family which founded the village.

Gerhard and Anna had nine daughters and three sons who survived childhood. The Dyck family had moved to Kronsgart area in 1897 where the last of the daughters was born. The oldest son was George, born in 1887. He was therefore ten years of age when they moved to the Kronsgart area. The railway came through in 1906-1907 when he was ending his teen years.

In 1913 George married Tina Bückert. They fulfilled his father's wish to farm in the same area which he did on land just north of his father's homestead. It had been planned that his youngest brother, Abram, born in 1894, should take over his father's homestead after his marriage. However, he fell victim to the flu epidemic in B.C. when he travelled there with his brother, Peter, born in 1889, to marry his sister-in-law's sister. His brother also died there during the 1918 epidemic. This situation had a profound effect on the family.

This was truly a case of the domino effect. First, George and Tina, were now mandated to take over his father's homestead. George was the only surviving son. A small retirement home and barn were built for his parents. This move meant that the farmstead where George and Tina had begun their married life just north of his parents was now vacant. It was taken over in 1920 by his sister Lena, born 1891, and married to Henry Banman in 1912. The Banman family had moved to a farm close to the Dyck siblings in 1915. This farm was now vacant and was taken over in 1920 by Lena's youngest sister, Margaret, who had married John Giesbrecht the previous year and had lived with the parents, Anna and Gerhard Dyck. So the original homestead was taken over by George, his farm by Lena, and Lena's by Margaret who had none.

Tina and George Dyck farmed the original family homestead until 1957, nearly forty years. It was then taken over by his son who still farms this land. George's health deteriorated quickly after their move off the farm into Winkler and he died there in 1961. His wife Tina, lived in Winkler until her death in 1981.

Lena and Henry Banman stayed on this farm until 1927. After this they left the family enclave for moves to various places in Manitoba before Henry's death in 1949. Lena stayed on the farm for a few more years with her daughter before moving into Winkler where she died in 1984.

Margaret and John Giesbrecht, who had moved onto the original Banman farm in 1920, stayed on this land until their retirement in 1953. They spent over thirty years, but then retired to Morden. Margaret died in 1962 and John over ten years later.

It is clear that by the 1960s the children of Anna and Gerhard had mostly retired. Only a few of the next generation were interested in living on their land. Eventually, by the early 1970s,

most to them had moved into Winkler. Some, however, continued farming in the area and do so to this day, continuing on into the next generation. They are Tina and George's son, Bert, who still lives and farms on the original homestead. Then one of the daughters, the eldest, Elisabeth has a grandson, Tim Labun, still living and farming the original Labun homestead. Finally, the second eldest, Katharina's grandson, David Penner, is also on the original Penner homestead. There are four grandchildren of Justina's who still live and farm in the area but not on the original Banman homestead.

Dr. Cornelius W. Wiebe - Winkler (1893-)

On Feb. 18 this year Dr. C.W. Wiebe, now resident in a personal care home in Winkler, celebrated his 106th birthday. Only weeks before that he also received the Order of Canada thus to become the oldest person ever to receive that honour. The awarding of this honour was featured in a special item in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on 13 January 1999, p.A8.

Everyone agrees it is a well-deserved award. Dr. Wiebe led an active life as a family doctor of the community from 1925-1978, and even after that could be found involved in his practise here and there (so we are told).

Dr. Wiebe was born in the Altona, Manitoba area in 1893. His involvements came to include a period of presidency for the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons and Manitoba Medical Association, 25 years service as a local school trustee, and a political life as MLA for Manitoba too from 1932-1936. He also spearheaded the drive to build the first Bethel Hospital in Winkler. It cost \$20,000.00 and opened in 1936 with 15 beds. In 1970 he also founded a rehabilitation centre for the handicapped.

He is widely known in southern Manitoba and elsewhere, and it has been said of him: He has given way beyond the call of duty in treating patients and helping people. We salute Dr. Wiebe, and hope he recovers quickly from a fall he had recently. He will no doubt receive the fine medical treatment which he was always ready to give others.

Persons wishing to know more about Dr. Wiebe's life and work are invited to read Mavis Reimer's 1983 publication *Cornelius W. Wiebe: A Beloved Physician*. It can still be purchased from Mennonite Books (call 1-204-668-7475). Other information may be found in *Winkler: A Proud Heritage* (1982).



What Old Newspapers Tell Us About Mennonites

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Someone at the Home St. Mennonite Church recently handed me a very old issue of *Free Press Evening Bulletin Winnipeg* dated October 1920. Dorothy Peters told me a lady had given it her to see if she knew someone who might want it.

I was not familiar with this paper but thought I would check to see if it had any news about Mennonites in it. It actually did at least one item, if not two.

A short note was titled "Houston Mennonites to Face Prosecution." It mentioned an announcement by Robert Fletcher, then Deputy Minister of Education, on October 6 that Mennonites of that district had received summonses "according to the Manitoba School Act".

It stated further that five families were being tried on similar charges in the district of Schanzenfeld (that would be near Winkler where the trial would be held) on similar charges on Saturday, October 9. Representatives of the department would be arriving by train to participate in the trial.

The nature of the charges is not mentioned. In all likelihood it had to do with resisting new regulations related to setting up of public schools. Many Mennonites in southern Manitoba did not support the setting up of public schools in their areas.

Can anyone give us the names of the five families and more details about the event, and also of the families in Houston (i.e. Blumenthal S.D. - ed.) who were involved in these prosecutions?

There is one other possibly Mennonite-related item in the same issue. It mentions that nine persons (lawyers) were made King's Counsel in Orders on Oct. 6. Among them was an H.A. Bergman, apparently from Winnipeg.

Can anyone provide more information about Bergman? Did he come from a Mennonite family? If so, who were his parents, and where were they from? Give information to Bert Friesen (ph 339-8677) or to myself (ph. 895 4421). Thank you very much.

Book Notes

- Mennonites first settled in Manitoba in 1874 and 1875. They arrived as immigrants from South Russia, a country with a government they considered had broken its promises. They had been granted privileges upon settling in New Russia at the turn of the previous century. Included in those privileges was military service exemption which was replaced by the obligation of alternative service. So they decided to emigrate, some to Manitoba and some to the U.S.A.

Within twenty years of settling in Manitoba, they again felt that one of their privileges was being rescinded. This time it was the freedom to educate their own children in their own language in their own schools. After much debate and negotiation over many years nearly a quarter of all Mennonites in Manitoba emigrated to Mexico and Paraguay between 1922 and 1926.

However, even in these new homelands, these Mennonites did not achieve all their ideals. Within a generation, in the 1950s, they began returning to Canada, mostly to Ontario, but also to the western prairies. At first it was a trickle, but by the late 1970s it had become a steady stream. The story of the Ontario return is told in two recently published books: William Janzen, *Build Up One Another; The Work of MCCO with the Mennonites from Mexico in Ontario 1977-1997* (Kitchener: MCCO, 1998), 70 pp and Victor Kliever, ed., *The Mennonites in Essex and Kent Counties, Ontario; An Introduction* (Leamington: Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, 1997), 109 pp. Janzen tells the informative story of the Mennonite community in Ontario assisting the returning Mennonites from Mexico. It is a detailed presentation of the facts with extensive documentation. Kliever's account of the Mennonites in Essex and Kent Counties is more a catalogue of the life and institutions of these people.

- *Klippings* is a periodical dedicated to telling the story of the Klippenstein family. The Vol.5, December, 1998 issue meets that objective very well. It tells the story of the Manitoba Klippenstein family history, the Klippenstein descendants in Germany, and is used as a forum to ask some questions about the Klippenstein family to which anyone can contribute answers. What is particularly interesting, because of the personal nature of the information, is the section: "Did you Know That . . ." It is a fine issue and should be of interest to all Klippensteins as well as those of us who have no direct connection to the family.

- Bert Friesen has recently published *The Kroeker Family Genealogy: The Ancestors and Descendants of Abram A. Kroeker and Elizabeth Nickel* (Winnipeg, MB, 1998), 93 pp. A descendant chart on p.1 gives a convenient summary of the "tree" at a glance. A number of family stories are included. The "clan" outline is clear and easily understood. The closing index to all names mentioned forms a good conclusion to the book.

- Dr. Johannes Reimer, director of Logos International, and now visiting lecturer at Concord College in Winnipeg, has given us two new Russian Mennonite missionary biographies. They are *Seine Letzten Worte waren ein Lied: Martin Thielmann. Leben und Wirken des Kirgisien Missionars* (Logos Verlag, Lage, Germany, 1997, pb., 115 pp., C\$16.00) and from the same publisher in 1998 *Bis an den Enden Sibiens: Aus dem Leben und Wirken des Ostjaken Missionars. Johann Peters* (pb., 156 pp., C\$12.80). Thielmann (b.1871) passed away in 1923, and Peters (b.1885) was executed by the Soviets in 1938. These volumes clearly indicate that the story of Russian Mennonite missionary work is in part at least a story still waiting to be fully told. Both books are available from CMBS, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5 (ph. 1-204-669-6575 or email adueck@cdnmbconf.ca

- **Flash!** Just off the press is Delbert Plett's **Saints and Sinners: The Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia 1812 to 1875** (pb., 351 pp). For further details contact director Ken Reddig of the Mennonite Heritage Centre at 1-204-888-6781 or e-mail kreddig@confmenno.ca Vol.7 of the Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series titled **Families of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Russia 1812-1874** is still at the press. Further information will be forthcoming.