

HERITAGE POSTING

Newsletter of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

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Der Deutsche in Canada (Germans in Canada) was published in Hamilton, Ontario, from April, 1872, till April, 1875.

Jacob Y. Shantz and the Narrative of a Journey Report: A German Version

by Victor G. Wiebe

The background story of Mennonite emigration from south Russia to Manitoba is being recalled in this issue of HP, and has been dealt with in numerous other publications. Those who are familiar with it will recall the early stages of investigation in which Jacob Y. Shantz, a Swiss Mennonite businessman from Berlin Ontario (now Kitchener, Ontario), and Bernhard Warkentin, a Russian Mennonite from Berdiansk in south Russia, travelled to Manitoba in 1872 to see if it could be a suitable place for Russian Mennonites to settle if they moved to North America¹.

A report on this trip was published in 1873. It was titled **Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba**, was translated into several languages, and used as a promotion piece for recruiting settlers for Western Canada². Interestingly enough, no German translation appeared to have been made at the time. Recently, however, such a translation has turned up, and in the process a potential new source of information for the immigration itself may have been unearthed as well.

The material we have here is really a response to questions about the source of this German translation. We are very pleased to share the answer given to us by Victor Wiebe who works with government records in Saskatoon, SK, and who is also the archivist of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. The notes comment on the basic fact that the German translation of **Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba** was published by a relatively obscure (only to us perhaps) Ontario publication known as *Der Deutsche in Canada*.

¹ Copies of the periodical, *Der Deutsche in Canada*, are

reproduced in the CIHM (Canadian Institute of Historical Microreproduction, Periodical item number 04154, 10 microfiche, 26 X reduction). Unfortunately the set is far from complete. The CIHM collection consists of only ten issues: Vol.1 (1872), no. 37-40, 44-46; Vol.3 (1874, no.13-15. Fortunately the Shantz narrative is reprinted in these last three issues. Herbert Karl Kalbfleisch in his book **The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario, 1835-1918**, (Toronto, ON, 1968), 76-77, asserted that *Der Deutsche in Canada* was published by Conrad Marxhausen, also known as Charles Mack, between April, 1871, and April, 1875. Volume 1 seems to end with December 1872. Kalbfleisch indicated that a newspaper directory cited a circulation of 1,200 copies in 1873, but then declared this to be exaggerated.

The periodical, *Der Deutsche in Canada*, is very rare with Kalbfleisch unable to list any known copies. Only as CIHM searched out all nineteenth century Canadian publications did some copies surface from the Hamilton City archives. Kalbfleisch indicated the page size to be 9 by 12 inches and this seems correct, but then added that it was a 24 page monthly. This is not correct. All microfilmed issues suggest that the periodical was an eight-page weekly. The issues were identified by month and year, i.e. "April 1874", and three sets of numbers: a volume number, i.e. "3.Band", a monthly number, i.e. "Drittes Heft", and an issue number, i.e. "No.15".

Presumably a volume consisted of 48 to 52 issues of eight pages each for a total of between 384 and 416 pages. The quality of the printing of the issues of the first volume was quite poor with poor inking. A lot of ink "bled" to other pages to such an extent that some pages are difficult to read. By the third volume the printing quality had improved. In the first volume each issue contained a couple of pages of advertisements but Volume Three had almost none. No.13 in that volume had an irregularity in the pagination which went from page 66 to page 68 with no page 67. This may have been intended to correct a past mistake but seems odd since the small tears on the outside edges of the pages do not match.

The German translation of Shantz's **Narrative** spells his name as "Schantz". His pamphlet is reproduced in the CIHM collection as items No. 30,484 for the English edition and No. 13,478 for the French edition. A careful examination of Shantz's printed pamphlet reveals many different printings. That is, the text of the work that has been reset many times and there are a number of small variations in the text.

It is interesting to speculate why Marxhausen would have a translation made and published. The Canadian government was advertising widely in a variety of newspapers and magazines, including *Der Deutsche in Canada*, for people to settle in Manitoba. Marxhausen may have received encouragement from the government or he may have thought that they would be more sympathetic to him if he did something useful for them.

Some time ago I came across a note that on 6 September, 1873,
(cont. on p.2)

Jacob Y. Shantz

(cont. from p.1)

C. Mack had written a letter to the Canadian Department of Agriculture (Letter No. 9043) in which he stated that the next issue of his periodical *Der Deutsche in Canada* would contain a correct and full translation of Mr. Shantz's pamphlet on Manitoba."

The English translation of the **Narrative** can be located easily in the archives of Mennonite Heritage Centre and probably in other libraries³. The German translation is now also quite accessible on the Internet. We will nevertheless conclude with a short passage from the German text to provide the flavour of this version.

Beschreibung einer Reise nach Manitoba⁴

Berlin, Ont., 28 Feb. 1873.

An den Achtb. J.H. Pope, Ackerbau-Minister in Ottawa.

Mein Herr,

..... Von einer Thatsache indessen bin ich vollständig überzeugt, daß Manitoba ein ausgezeichnetes Feld bietet für Einwanderung, ... und zwar für Alle welche wünschen, für sich selbst und Familien eine gute und billige Heimstätte zu erwerben. Sie alle können sicher sein, ihre Unabhängigkeit zu erringen, wenn sie nur arbeiten wollen,.... und mäßig zu leben verstehen.

Ich habe die Ehre zu sein, geehrter Herr, Ihr ergebenster

Jacob Y. Schantz.

Manitoba und der Nordwesten

Am 5. November 1872 verließen wir, Herr Bernard Warkentine, von Rußland, und ich selbst, Berlin mit der Grand Trunk Eisenbahn, um die Provinz Manitoba zu besuchen. Wir kamen zunächst nach Detroit, gingen dann per Southern Michigan Eisenbahn nach Chicago, von da nach St. Paul, Minnesota und weiter mit der Lake Superior und Mississippi Bahn nach Duluth; hier nahmen wir die Northern Pacific Eisenbahn und fuhren nach Moorhead, einem Platze am Red River, unmittelbar an der Grenzlinie welche Minnesota von Dacotah scheidet, und von diesem Platze begaben wir uns nach Pembina and der Grenze von Manitoba.

Nachdem wir in diese Provinz eingetreten waren, reisten wir 72 Meilen weit mit dem Omnibus nach Fort Garry und Winnipeg, welcher letztere Platz dicht bei dem Fort liegt und sehr im Aufblühen begriffen ist....

Endnotes

1. Cornelius Krahn, "Letters of Bernhard Warkentin Pertaining to the Migration of 1873-1875," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Vol. XXIV (July, 1950), 248-62, and David A. Haurly, "Bernhard Warkentin: A Mennonite Benefactor," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Vol. XLIX (July, 1975), 179-202. Haurly erroneously dates Warkentin's trip to Manitoba as taking place in January, 1873 (p.184), not November, 1872, as the primary sources have it.
2. J.Y. Shantz, *Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba* (Ottawa, ON: Robertson, Rogers, and Co., 1873).
3. The most recent reprints of the **Narrative** report are in Clarence Hiebert, ed. *Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1974), 30-34, and in Samuel J. Steiner. *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jacob*

Y. Shantz (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press, 1988), 163-81. Steiner was not able to locate a German edition at the time of that publication.

4. J.Y. Schantz, "Eine Reise nach der Provinz Manitoba," *Der Deutsche in Canada* Band III, Drittes Heft, No.13 (April, 1874), 68-69, was the first instalment of this German-language reprint.

Ältester Peter P. Toews (1841-1922) of the Kleingemeinde in South Russia

by Delbert F. Plett

Ältester Peter P. Toews was the son of Johann Toews (1793-1873) and Maria Plett Toews (1811-1895) of Fischau, Molotschna. As a young man, Toews was converted although "the emphasis was more on living a life of discipleship." His favourite devotional reading at the time was Menno Simon's "Meditation on the 25th Psalm". In 1863 Peter Toews had the privilege of accompanying Isaak Harms (1811-1891) on a trip looking for settlement opportunities, visiting what became known as the Fürstenland area, and several other locations.

Later that year he married Anna L. Warkentin (1843-1925), daughter of Johann Warkentin, formerly of Blumstein, Molotschna, and later of Blumenhof, Manitoba. In 1864 Peter Toews and his bride moved to rented land at Andreasfeld, Markuslandt, northeast of Chortitza. In 1866 Peter and Anna Toews moved to Blumenhof, Borosenko, where they acquired a *Wirtschaft* of 140 acres.

In that same year Toews was elected as minister of his Kleingemeinde congregation. He was a man of genuine piety and intense religious experience. In his "1866 Epistle for Intercession" written after returning home from the Molotschna where he had just been elected as a minister, Toews reflected on his anxieties over his election. "On the one hand I felt within myself my very great impoverishment and my sinful flesh and blood which are my greatest enemies. On the other hand, I felt my very definite calling and the vast fields ripe for the harvest."

But the epistle quickly focused on a much more traumatic event, his young son who lay dying when he arrived home in Blumenhof, Borosenko, "Here my pride and joy, my only child lay prostrated and on the death bed, and also died, having preached repentance to me for two days and two nights, suffering in all parts of the body. It was not the death of the child, rather the sorrow and loneliness of my wife and the acknowledgement of my sins in the suffering of the innocent child which grieved me so."

In 1870 Peter P. Toews was elected as Ältester of what became known as the Blumenhof congregation. Several branches of the Kleingemeinde were reconciled under his leadership. The family also raised two foster children, Isaac Wiens and Anna Broeski.

Ältester Toews led the denomination through the difficult emigration period of the 1870s. In 1875 Toews led the last 30 Kleingemeinde families leaving south Russia. Peter and Anna settled in Grünfeld, Manitoba. Upon arrival in Manitoba Toews poured immense energy into the organization of the pioneer church and educational system.

(cont. on p.7)

Makers of the 1870s Mennonite Migration From South Russia to Manitoba (Conclusion)

by Lawrence Klippenstein

A certain Count Mentshikov, it is said, informed William Hespeler, the newly-appointed Canadian immigration agent, that he might find south Russian Mennonites open to an invitation to emigrate to Canada. The introduction of universal military conscription legislation in Russia under the Minister of War, Dmitrii Miliutin, had brought the issue here to a head already in 1870¹.

Representatives of Mennonite communities had made responses almost immediately. Two delegations, first sent to St. Petersburg in February, 1871, and then to the Tsar's resident in Yalta in January of the next year, failed in their mission. The assurances they wanted that the original *Privilegium* would remain in force, were not forthcoming. It seemed that emigration would be the only alternative.

Hespeler arrived in Berdiansk on July 25, 1872, and a few days later met Mennonite leaders interested in leaving Russia. Another meeting to discuss these issues took place in November, but by then Russian police were putting on pressure for Hespeler to leave. He was authorized to promise that the Canadian government would pay travel expenses for several people if they wished to visit Canada to investigate settlement possibilities there².

In fact a group of five persons had already gone to the USA in spring earlier that year. The presence of Bernhard Warkentin in this group had particular significance for contacts that now developed with both Canada and the USA. An official eleven-man delegation established by the Russian Mennonite congregations began to leave in groups in late February, 1873³.

The Canadian section of their inspection tour took place from June 14 to July 8. At the rendezvous in Moorhead, Minnesota, they were joined by Hespeler, and a Canadian Mennonite businessman from Ontario, Jacob Y. Shantz, who had also agreed to serve as a special immigration envoy to assist the delegation and support Canadian recruitment efforts now fully underway.

The tour of southeastern Manitoba was a stressful experience in some ways. Travelling was difficult, mosquitoes were thick, and the swampy wooded areas did not look altogether promising for farming. Four of the delegates, Jacob Peters and Heinrich Wiebe of the Russian Bergthal congregations, as well as David Klassen and Cornelius Toews of the Kleingemeinde group, nevertheless

decided to travel to Ottawa to seek terms for settlement in Canada. The agreement was signed on July 23, after which the delegates departed to arrive in their south Russian home communities in late August.

In Russia meanwhile Tsar Alexander II had decided to send a personal envoy, General Eduard von Todleben, to visit the Mennonite colonies to see if the emigration could be averted. His visit to the villages took place in April, 1874. A generous compromise of alternative service in forestry camps was offered, but for a significant number of Mennonites it was not a satisfactory answer. He ordered the issuance of passports of those who still wanted to leave, and about a third of the Mennonite population of south Russia, a total of about 17,000 persons, departed during the next six years.

Ältesters Gerhard Wiebe of the Bergthal communities, and Peter P. Toews of the Kleingemeinde congregations became the spiritual leaders of the move, while the delegates retained a hand in making other preparations. A third group from the congregations of Chortitza and Fürstenland, and led by Ältester Johann Wiebe, began its exodus in 1875. The former two groups would almost totally settle in an area then known as the East Reserve (east of the Red River and southeast of Winnipeg), while the Old Colony Reinländers as they came to be called, moved into the western portion of the West Reserve (west of the Red River and southwest of Winnipeg)⁴.

All immigrant arrivals in Manitoba from 1874 on (totalling just over 7,000) were under the supervision of Jacob Y. Shantz who took responsibility for meeting the various contingents of families after they reached Canadian soil, and then helping them settle in on the two reserves. He kept records of expenses incurred with their coming, oversaw the erection of immigration sheds near the junction of the Rat and Red Rivers where unloading took place for the first shiploads, and gave major assistance in arranging for financial support through loans that were needed in the early years of settlement⁵.

In 1872 Shantz had also undertaken an independent investigation trip to Manitoba, to see whether it could be recommended for settlement as the Canadian government hoped it could, Bernhard Warkentin, mentioned above, had been with him on that occasion, and the lengthy report which resulted from that trip became an important document for promoting immigration in the seventies and later on⁶.

Historical accounts of this crucial event in Manitoba Mennonite life have tended to highlight the role of leaders and these have been recalled here also. The importance of countless other individuals whose specific contributions have not been recorded must not be underestimated nor ignored. The achievement of this relocation and its significance is as much a tribute to the unnamed as to those who are called "makers" in the narrative summary offered in this essay.

Endnotes

1. Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church State Relations, 1789-1936," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1984, 43ff.
2. George G. Leibbrandt, "The Emigration of the German Mennonites from Russia to the United States and Canada in 1873-1880," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* Vol. VI (October, 1932) and Vol. VII (January, 1933), pp. 205-26 and 5-41 respectively.

(cont. on p.4)



(L-R): Bernhard Warkentin, Jacob Y. Shantz, and Cornelius Toews, one of the Kleingemeinde delegates who visited Manitoba in June, 1873.

Makers of the Mennonite Migration (cont. from p.3)

3. The delegation is often referred to as "twelve-man" because it included Kornelius Buhr who paid his own way, but was not an authorized delegate. William Schroeder. *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, rev.ed, 1986), 60ff.
4. In addition to earlier literature, e.g. Schroeder, cf. also Delbert Plett, ed. *East Reserve 125: Hanover Steinbach 1874-1999: Celebrating Our Heritage* (Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 1999), 3-13.
5. Samuel J. Steiner. *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jacob Y. Shantz* (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press, 1988), 77ff.
6. David A. Haurly, "Bernhard Warkentin: A Mennonite Benefactor," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* Vol. XLIX (July, 1975), 179-202. the original report on the 1872 trip is in J.Y. Shantz. *Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba* (Ottawa: Robertson, Rogers and Co., 1873). See also the first article in this issue.

March West: RCMP Trek Reenacted

by Elmer Heinrichs and Linda Ens

The first Mennonites who came to settle in the designated West Reserve of Manitoba's Red River Valley disembarked from the International at Fort Dufferin, just north of the bustling twin towns of West Lynne, and Emerson across the Red River.

Dufferin, never an actual fort, but situated on a high point, was bought and used by the International Boundaries Commission in 1872, and two years later became the staging ground for a "march west" by the North West Mounted Police.

One hundred and fifty riders, Mounties and civilians, left Fort Dufferin on Saturday May 8 this spring on the RCMP March West, a re-enactment of the first journey by the North West Mounted Police. Riders and wagons travelled 28 kilometres, often in sunshine, and breaking at Halbstadt for lunch. They reached the first night's stop in Gretna by 5 p.m.

To friendly waves from 1,000 people who gathered for the sendoff and hundreds more who watched along the route, riders and wagons set off travelling along the historic Post Road "the Mennonite highway", used for safe travel and commerce during the 1880s and even later.

During the first week, March West participants rode through the former Mennonite reserve and points west. The travellers arrived at the south end of Reinland at 3 p.m. on May 10, where they were met by a crowd of onlookers. After a delay, the Border Valley Elementary school band played four numbers, and the riders were officially welcomed to Reinland. The riders then rode in a red-coated parade through Reinland to the campsite at the west end of the village.

The riders were given some time to tend to their horses and settle in before supper. After a meal of baked beans, potatoes, and a barbeque, the village of Reinland presented a programme featuring presentations, the Dry River Boys, a Mother's Day meditation by Reinland EMMC pastor Darrell Dyck, and a presentation on local history. In spite of cool and wet weather, the riders and Reinlanders enjoyed learning about the past and each other.

The March West riders departed for Winkler at 10:30 on Monday morning, then visited Morden, and finally drove on beyond the former West Reserve to Manitou, Crystal City, Cartwright, and other "points west".



A remnant of the last(?) post from the historic Post Road, still visible at Reinland. Photo: Courtesy of Conrad Stoesz, Winnipeg, MB.

HP Readers Respond

- To the photo of the sewing class (**HP**, December, 1998, p.1): "I can identify a number of the persons in the group. Standing in the back (l-r) are Agnes Wiebe, Lowe Farm, and Wanda Schwartz, Kleefeld, and in the middle row are (second from the left) Hedy Fast, Chortitz, and (second from the right) Helen Schmidt, of Lowe Farm. In the front row I can identify only the instructor, Olga Guenther, second from the left. I think the photo comes from the late 1940s but can't be sure." *From Erna Fast Enns and Jackie Anderson, Winnipeg, MB.*
- To the "Old Newspapers" article on the Houston S.D. situation, (**HP** March, 1999, p.8): "I have some court records that deal with the WWI school problems of Houston S.D. which you mention in your "Old Newspapers" article". *From Dick Hildebrand, Border Real Estate Ltd., Altona, MB.*
- The document dealt with the court case of John Hildebrand who "unlawfully neglected to send Maggie, who was over the age of seven and under the age of 14 to some public school ...", and the case of Doerksen, which was "substantially the same as Hildebrand, except that the latter was born in Russia and came to this country as a child in 1874 ...".
- To the note on the Schanzenfeld school problem: "I have a memoir of my uncle Jacob Unger which seems to deal with the situation your article speaks about, and I will send you a copy." *From Henry Unger, Crystal City, MB.*
- To the Anton (Jacob) Hoepfner gun story (**HP**, March, p.4): "We were privileged to see this gun at our Hoepfner reunions. I am so glad Anton donated it to the Mennonite Heritage Village.... I have written to see if we cannot get a complete set of your newsletter for our use" *From Vera Falk, Dundurn, SK.*
- To the William Hespeler story (**HP**, March, p.4): "As far as I know Gerhard Hiebert did not come from Bergthal, as the article says, but from the Molotschna colony. Hiebert did some of his studying in Minnesota, but both he and Erdman Penner, Jr. (son of Erdman Penner, Gretna), got their MDs at McGill." *From the late John Dyck, Coral Cres., Winnipeg, MB.*

New Mennonite Genealogy Series Coming

by Richard Thiessen

The Genealogy Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society has agreed to move ahead with plans to commence publication of a series of documents pertaining to Russian Mennonite genealogical research. The series, tentatively entitled Russian Mennonite Genealogy Series, is to be comprised of at least seven publications.

- No. 1. Mennonite emigration from Prussia and settlement in Russia: 1789-1835, part 1, by Peter Rempel. This collection includes lists of settlers in Chortitza Colony from 1789-1796, census lists from 1797 and 1806, and lists of established households from 1803 to 1828. Much of this information is not in B.H. Unruh's *Die niederländische-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen*.
 - No. 2. Mennonite emigration from Prussia and settlement in Russia: 1789-1835, part 2. This collection includes additional immigration data for 1803 to 1835. Many of these documents are from the St. Petersburg archives microfilm collection. They include lists of Mennonites who immigrated to Molotschna in the first half of the 19th century and those who immigrated to other areas of Imperial Russia, such as Ostrog, from 1811 to 1819. The collection may also include some documents, provided and transcribed by Adalbert Goertz, that are Prussian in origin and listing Mennonites immigrating to Russia.
 - No. 3. Molotschna Colony 1835 Census, 2nd edition, by Richard Thiessen. This will be a corrected revision of the 1st edition of the census, and will also include annotations with additional information on the individuals located in the census. Annotations will be taken from previously published sources such as the B. H. Unruh study, items previously published in this new series, the GRANDMA database, and both published and unpublished genealogies.
 - No. 4. B.H. Unruh: Genealogical Documents. This would be basically a translation of significant parts of B.H. Unruh's *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe*.
 - No. 5. The First Mennonite Settlers in Chortitza by Henry Schapansky. This would be a reworking of the individual articles written by Schapansky and first published in **Mennonite Family History**.
 - No. 6. Mennonites in Russia, 1835-1900. This would be a collection of a variety of documents taken from the Peter Braun (Odessa) and St. Petersburg collections, and perhaps even new items from the Odessa archives, if they become available. These documents include items from forestry records such as census lists, and school registers for Molotschna.
 - No. 7. Mennonite Church Documents of the 19th century. This publication would include at least two documents: the Schoenhorst Church Register for the village of Schoenhorst, Chortitza Colony, and a baptism register for Fürstenland Colony.
- Over the next several years, numerous other documents may very well be discovered and incorporated into this proposed series. Anyone interested in donating to this project may designate funds to the Genealogy Project. % Richard Thiessen, Concord College, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2L 2E5.

In Memoriam

John, son of Katharina Wiebe and Peter J. Dyck, a teacher, was born on 10 August 1928 in the village of Neuhorst near Gretna. When he was almost five years old the family moved to Reinland, and later to Neubergthal.

Early on he worked in retail stores at Steinbach, and also in Gnadenthal, during which time he met and married Elma Penner.

In 1960 John, Elma, and family moved to Winnipeg where John worked in the farm machinery industry. He first worked at Nu-Way Distributors Limited, where he served a general manager for ten years, and then at Ajax Equipment Ltd.

For some time already, John had developed an interest in Mennonite history, and soon turned to writing. He began working as a researcher on several projects, whereby he was re-trained to develop his writing skills. Since that time he wrote numerous books, articles, and presented numerous papers at symposia and conferences. Some of the book titles are as follows: *Oberschulze Jakob Peters 1813-1884: Manitoba Pioneer Leader*, *Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories 1874-1910*, and *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch*.

John passed away on 22 June 1999. He will be greatly missed not only by his family and friends but by his colleagues in the historical field where he was so active and productive for fifteen years or more.



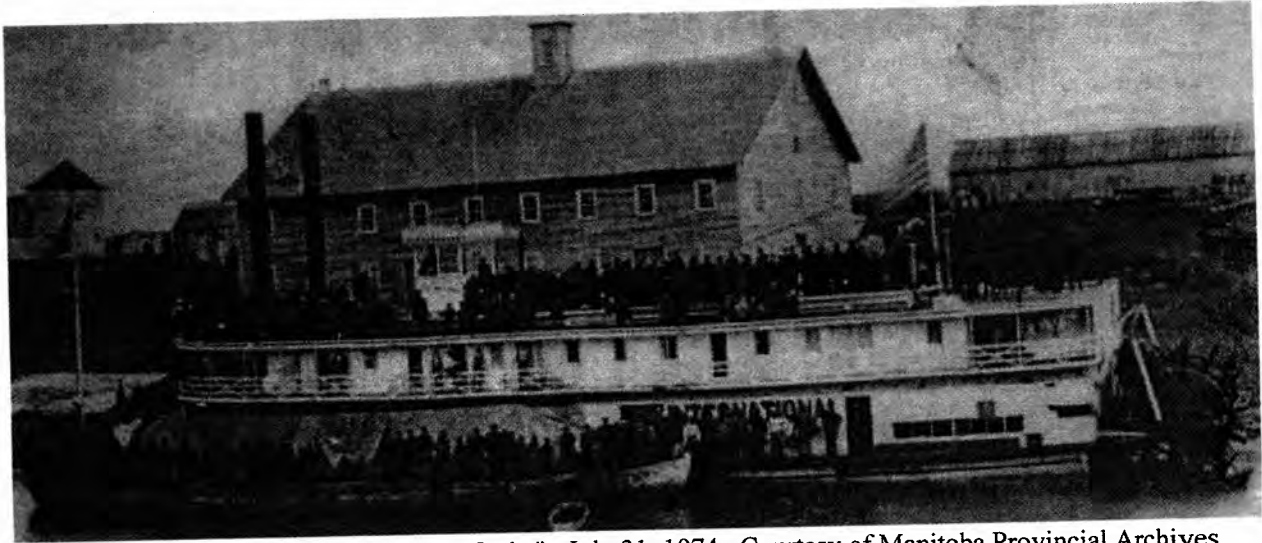
John Dyck, 1928-1999



Manitoba Mennonite participants at the Khortitza 99 International Mennonite History Conference in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine (l-r): Harold Jantz, Winnipeg; Donald Loewen, Winnipeg (now at the Moscow Mennonite Centre); Delbert Plett, Steinbach; Dr. Jack Thiessen, New Bothwell; Dr. Peter Letkemann, Winnipeg; Jacob Siemens, Winnipeg; Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, Winnipeg; Dr. Royden Loewen, Winnipeg (l. in left inset), and Heather-Anne Mattson, Winnipeg (right inset).

DON'T MISS THE BOAT!

August 1, 1999 at the Forks - Winnipeg



The SS International arriving at "The Forks", July 31, 1874. Courtesy of Manitoba Provincial Archives.

The years 1999 and 2000 represent the 125th anniversaries of the Mennonites' arrival in Manitoba (1874 for the East Reserve and 1875 for the West Reserve). You and your friends are invited to the Forks port on Sunday, August 1, 1999, at 8 am to commemorate this event. Come and witness the reenactment of this historic event. The worship service will include singing and expressions of thoughts and feelings these brave people wrestled with as they began a new life.

After the service, descendants of the 1870s migration will have the opportunity to board the Paddlewheel where a group picture will be taken. This picture will replicate the photo taken on July 31, 1874 as the Mennonites stepped off the *International* at the Forks port.

Time: 8:00 a.m. Sunday, 1 August, 1999

Place: The Forks port, Winnipeg, Manitoba

To Bring: Lawn chairs, camera, friends

Who Can Come: Anyone and everyone

In Case of Rain: The service will be held on board the Paddlewheel

MMHS News & Notes

Workshop Focuses on the Post Road and a Fort Dufferin Tour

by Elmer Heinrichs

Over 50 persons participated in a Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society local history workshop in the Gretna Prairie Senior Centre on April 24. An afternoon tour included such points of interest as Fort Dufferin, the David Schellenberg farm at Cairn Corner, the CMC cairn at Hochstadt, the Altbergthal School Museum in Altona, and the Klaas Heide homestead.

It was an opportunity to get a head start on 125th anniversary celebrations marking the arrival of Mennonites from southern Russia in southern Manitoba.

Celebrations west of the Red River will really take off in the year 2000 marking the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first Mennonite families which landed at old Fort Dufferin on the Red River, just north of West Lynne (now Emerson).

At the April 24 workshop, researcher Conrad Stoesz of Winnipeg reported on one of the important features of the new settlement region - a road, known as the Post Road, which was set up early in the settlement period connecting Emerson/West Lynne on the Red River with Mountain City/Nelsonville/Morden in the Pembina Hills. It ran through a score of the new Mennonite villages which were set up in the West Reserve.

The road served people from the Mennonite villages as well as non-Mennonite businessmen, farmers and stage coaches, and it became a preferred route for mail carriers.

Lawrence Klippenstein reported on the 1872 construction of winter housing at Dufferin for the Boundary Trails Commission. In 1874, a year after the commission began its survey work, the North West Mounted Police used Dufferin to stage its ride west. (see article on March West elsewhere in this issue)

The first Mennonite families of the newly opened West Reserve arrived in Fort Dufferin in mid July, 1875. They stayed some time to organize as a church and then moved to the western part of the 18 townships reserved area to set up villages. Reinland village was one of the first established in the area. Here the Jacob Giesbrecht family often opened up its home to Post Road travellers.

Sally Harms of Winkler did a fine illustrated presentation on the Klaas Heide homestead. Information on Neuberghthal Historic Site developments was shared as well. Otto Hamm, chairperson of the MMHS Local History Committee, led the programme of the morning.

News from the Committees

The newly-formed MMHS 125th Anniversary Committee has been busy planning the August 1 celebration at The Forks (see announcement elsewhere in this issue). The Forks officials have been strongly supportive of Mennonites commemorating anniversary events at this location.



(L-r) Historian Felix Kuehn, Winnipeg, in the persona of Wm. Hallet, Chief Canadian Scout of the International Boundary Commission, with Martha Martens, MMHS Historic Sites Com. member, and exhibit director at March West, and Dora Doell, exhibit attendant in Mennonite historic costume. The painting was done by artist Art Friesen, Winkler, for the Post Road sign to be erected at the corner of Hwy. 75 and the former Post Road near Emerson. Photo: Courtesy of Elmer Heinrichs, Altona, MB.

The **Membership and Publicity Committee** has been helping to gather material for the upcoming issues of **Heritage Posting**. Readers are invited to submit Manitoba Mennonite history articles to the newsletter (see p.2 for mailing and email addresses to submit entries). The committee will warmly welcome applications for membership during the anniversary celebrations.

The **Executive Committee** commends the East Reserve 125th Anniversary Committee, headed by Karen Peters, for its very active program of commemorations in the former East Reserve area (see p.6 for announcements of upcoming programmes).

Historic Sites and Monuments Committee members prepared an exhibit and Post Road sign materials (painting and a map) for the March West program held at Emerson on May 6-8. Plans include possible posting of these materials at the Mennonite Heritage Village museum, and the Sunflower Festival in Altona (end of July) as well as other southern Manitoba local Mennonite community events of the summer.

The **Research, Scholarship, and Publications Committee** continues to work with the Heidi Koop manuscript dealing early settlement by Mennonites of North Kildonan. Elisabeth Peters is helping to process the editing of this manuscript. The committee also affirms various private projects of historical research and publication now being carried on in Manitoba Mennonite communities. This includes the publication of Gerhard Lohrenz's book *Sagradowka*, in an English translation, by CMBC Publications this fall.

The **Genealogy Committee** is ambitiously planning a series of document publications in the next few years. A separate note on this appears elsewhere in this issue. It could be added that some interesting material on the Klippenstein family was obtained from a Zaporizhzhian archives during the history conference held there in late May. It came from a large ledger of Mennonite family records kept by the Chortitza community in the early years of settlement there. The material is in Russian and should be available in translation soon.

The **Local History Committee** is working on Volume III of its West Reserve series. A spring workshop sponsored by this committee is noted above.

125th Manitoba Mennonite Anniversary

Symposium 1874 Revisited

On October 1-2 the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and the Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg will co-host a symposium entitled, "**The Mennonites Manitoba: 1874 Revisited**". Scholars and local historians will present papers on topics relating to the coming of the Mennonites in the 1870s. The keynote speaker will be Dr. John Warkentin of York University, Ontario, who wrote a landmark dissertation on "The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba". More details will follow.

Landmark Heritage Days

A dozen or more local communities of the former East Reserve will hold a series of celebrations during the summer and fall months of 1999. Landmark Heritage Days was one of the first of these. It was held on June 11-13. Among the events was a trilogy of Low German dramas under the theme "*Fraejoa enn de Oost-Rezarv* (Long ago in the East Reserve)" presented at the Landmark Collegiate on June 11. The dramas were entitled "Daut Jeshpanst (The Ghost)", "Du meen Schutz en Treest (You My Protection and Comfort)", and "Dit Heet Waealoss Zenne? (And this is Pacifism?)", written and directed by Anne Funk of Grunthal and Wilmer Penner of Steinbach.

Two new publications, *East Reserve 125*, edited by Delbert Plett, and *Two Landmark Grandmothers* by Mary Blondina Barkman, were available at the presentation.

Chortitz: Village Anniversary

The community of Chortitz, a few miles southeast of Winkler, will celebrate the 125th anniversary of Mennonites coming to Manitoba, on 9-11 July, 1999. For further information on this homecoming event, contact Anne Thiessen, 1068 Hector Bay E., Winnipeg, MB R3M 3S1, ph. 1-204-452-6836, or email stvklass@mb.sympatico.ca. According to Anne, three of the pioneer buildings at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach (church building, housebarn, and the old private school) all come from the village of Chortitz. It is expected that Mennonite Heritage Village representatives will be present at the celebration.

Toews Family Reunion - Moving from East to West

The descendants of Julius Toews Senior are planning a reunion that will span historical experiences in both the former East and West Reserve. Roots of the family go back to a homestead in Kane (near Lowe Farm) area, and dispersion came to include Steinbach and area. Dates for the reunion are August 14-15, 1999. For further details contact Elbert Toews, 1-204-326-3930.

Twin Oak Museum

In these anniversary years (1999-2000) you are invited to visit the **Twin Oak Farm and Museum** south of Morden, MB. Come in May to September by chance or appointment. Call David and

Linda Peters, 1-204-822-3305 for further information to find the site, etc.

MHV Pioneer Days Special Service

A special church service commemorating the 125th anniversary of the coming of Mennonites to Manitoba will be held at the Mennonite Heritage Village near Steinbach, MB on Sunday, August 1. The service will begin at 10:30 a.m. Dr. Archie Penner of Kola, MB and Dr. Royden Loewen of Steinbach and Winnipeg, will be the main speakers. Several community singing groups will share in the programme. For further details contact the museum at 1-204-326-9661.



The Menno Simons exhibit at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, will be open to the public to August 15. Call Gary Snider, 1-204-326-9661 for further information. The next presentation of the Landmark Low German skits will be at Rosenort, near Morris on July 24. For further info call 1-204-377-4409.

Celebrate the Coming of Mennonites to Manitoba

Visit These Local "East Reserve" Events in 1999

Mitchell July 18
Steinbach July 30 - Aug. 2

Mennonite Heritage Village
Worship Service, 10:30 a.m. August 1

Clearsprings August 1
Randolph August 8
Grunthal August 13-15
Kleefeld August 21-22
Pansy August 28-29

For Details or Mementos
Call 1-204-377-4409

The Chortitz Church is now 102 Years Old

by Jacob Doerksen

Southeastern Manitoba's oldest Mennonite meeting place still in use is located about five and a half miles west of Steinbach and one mile north of Highway 52 in the former village of Chortitz (now the postal district of Randolph). Built in 1897 it has been in continuous use by the original conference which built it.

Starting in 1874 two larger Mennonite church groups immigrated to southeastern Manitoba, the Kleingemeinde from Borozenko west of the Chortitz Colony, and the congregation from Bergthal Colony, north of Mariupol on the Azov Sea. The Bergthal Ältester, Gerhard Wiebe, settled near the middle of the reserve in the new village of Chortitz. A few years later this became the site of the first church building on the reserve.

By the mid 1890s it was decided that the pioneer building should be replaced. Even though no documented support has been found, according to oral tradition it may have been damaged by fire or lightning. During the winter of 1897 building materials were hauled in with construction starting in spring. Gerhard Schroeder, chief carpenter, organized the work and by June 19 they were ready for the dedication. According to a newspaper article of that time, much enthusiasm was created by this event.

In the years following other church buildings were built in other locations but Chortitz and maybe to a degree also Grünthal remained the main churches for the next fifty or sixty years. During the sixties, seventies and eighties however new and larger more modern buildings were built, and Chortitz slowly lost its status. It now houses one of the smaller congregations of the conference.

Over the years the church in Chortitz played a major role in Manitoba Mennonite history. It was the first Mennonite meeting place constructed in Manitoba by the largest south Russian Mennonite group to immigrate to Canada during the 1870s. It is the "Mother church" for all those who came from Bergthal settlement.

When the Bergthaler people came to Manitoba they all settled on the East Reserve. They built their first meeting house in Chortitz in 1877. They referred to themselves as the Mennonite Church (*Gemeinde*) at Chortitz, and hence the name Chortitz in today's Chortitzer Mennonite Conference.

From this original church body have sprung up the Bergthaler and Sommerfelder congregations on the former West Reserve, as well as their branches in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mexico, and elsewhere.



The Menno and Bergthal churches in Paraguay and their affiliates in Bolivia and elsewhere have their roots here also.

The first division of the church occurred in 1882. A new Ältester was ordained on the West Reserve for the Bergthal group which had left the East Reserve to settle west of the river. This group who had been joined by Mennonite from other parts of Russia was not blessed by unity. Within a few years a split occurred over modernization in both schools and church. The majority of the people involved once more came to Chortitz and asked for help to establish yet another church. As a result three distinct churches came into existence out of what once was the Bergthal colony Church in Chortitz. The first and original were the Chortitzer. The second and smallest was one of the first churches formed on the West Reserve. It used the former Russian name, Bergthal or Bergthaler, and the last one became known as Sommerfelder because its Ältester lived in the village of Sommerfeld near Altona. Both Mennonite migrations from Canada to Paraguay during the 1920s and the late 1940s also originated in Chortitz or one of the churches mentioned above.

Even though the church at Chortitz has seen many changes the building itself has experienced relatively few. It has remained intact, still having almost the same features as it had when it was first built. Most of the original woodwork still exists both inside and out. Only a few rooms have been added inside, the heating system has been replaced and the seating arrangement has been changed.

The building was constructed at a time when weddings and funerals were held in homes, and Sunday schools had not yet started. These facilities were later provided for in separate buildings. At present the building is in its senior years. Originally it was slated for closure in 1975 but a small group of worshippers decided that they would like to keep it open for Sunday morning worship.

Worship services are conducted every Sunday in the German language with singing from the Mennonite *Gesangbuch*. The congregation also maintains the original cemetery across the street. Today this group is aging together with the building and is not sure what the future has in store for it. For the present the church remains open for those who wish to come and worship here.

Jacob Doerksen is a local historian who resides in the Niverville area.

Ältester Peter P. Toews

(cont. from p.2)

In 1882 he left the KG to join with Johann Holdeman. In 1897 Toews was the co-founder of *Botschafter der Wahrheit* of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, being the first denominational paper among all the Russian Mennonites.

In 1900 Peter Toews moved to the village of Hochstadt, several miles to the southeast of Grünfeld. In 1911 they moved again to Swallow, Alberta, to join their four sons - Johann, Cornelius, Peter and Isaac - who had moved there several years earlier to homestead.

Peter P. Toews was an historian and collected many writings and documents pertaining to the history of the church in his 1873 "Sammlung zur Historie ... der Kleinen Gemeinde der Molotschna Kolonie..." Toews was a gifted poet and expositor of the evangelical faith and some 20 of his sermons are still extant. Peter Toews' extant writings and documents form one of the more important collections of source materials of the 19th century Russian Mennonites.

Delbert P. Plett, Q.C., is editor of a six volume Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series and also editor of Preservings.

Book Review

Delbert F. Plett, **Saints and Sinners: The Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia 1812 to 1875** (Steinbach, MB: Crossway Publications, 1999), pb., 352 pp., photographs, maps, C\$10.

reviewed by Hans Werner

Delbert Plett has spent twenty years researching the Kleine Gemeinde. The fruits of this research have been the six-volume **Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series**. This new history aims to present a synthesis of the Kleine Gemeinde story for the general reader. **Saints and Sinners** has twelve chapters with themes that touch on the religious, cultural, political and family connections of this relatively small, but important 19th century reform group in Russian Mennonite history. The author's reverence for the group's religious and cultural forbears results in a sympathetic analysis of the group's contributions to Mennonite experience in Russia 'acknowledged' by the author in the preface as an intentional point of view (p. 5).

Plett's history is clear in its belief that the group's leaders are the most important and the driving force in the story of the Kleine Gemeinde historical experience. Aeltester Peter Epp, Heinrich Balzer and Klaas Reimer, along with a host of other ministers and leaders dominate this story of the Kleine Gemeinde. A glance at the index reveals the prominence of individual personalities in the book's pages.

More disconcerting is Plett's view of what he calls the 'Separatist-Pietist' influence in Russian Mennonite history and its characterization as the universal enemy of the conservative tradition in Russia and the Kleine Gemeinde in particular. Plett finds little that is redeeming in the so-called 'Separatist-Pietist' orientation whose its proponents seemingly knew no bounds in opposing the Kleine Gemeinde. In addition to their pervasive negative theological influence, 'Separatist-Pietists', as Plett has it, had nothing but disdain for Kleine Gemeinde poetry (p. 144) and their 'arrogant spiritual elitism' restrained them from even 'cracking a smile at the' earthy humour of Kleine Gemeinde members (p. 169).

The thesis about a 'Separatist-Pietist' conspiracy is accompanied by Plett's confusing treatment of some personalities with connections to the Kleine Gemeinde story. Johann Cornies is decried for his heavy-handedness but most particularly for his banishment of calligraphy (*Fraktur*) from the school system. Most of the references to Cornies, however, betray a silent admiration of Cornies with whom the Kleine Gemeinde leaders seemed to enjoy a mutually supportive relationship. Similarly, Plett digresses from history to portray the contemporary writer, Patrick Friesen, as both a recognized poet in the best of Kleine Gemeinde poetic tradition and as a member of the 'so-called Mennonite literary tradition' that dismisses and disparages the efforts of leaders groups such as the Kleine Gemeinde (p210).

Does **Saints and Sinners** fulfill its goals of providing a synthesis of Kleine Gemeinde experience for general readers? In spite of a lack of consistency in attributing quotations to their sources in the text (there are no footnotes), Plett's extensive knowledge of Kleine

Gemeinde genealogy and family history offers many insights for readers of Russian Mennonite and Kleine Gemeinde history. The role of the narrative as a synthesis of what has been written is, however tarnished by diatribes against those who represented other religious orientations in opposition to or critical of Plett's view of Kleine Gemeinde 'Great Tradition.'

Hans Werner, of Winnipeg, MB, is a doctoral student at the U. of Manitoba, and chair of the MMHS Research, Scholarship, and Publications Committee.

Book Notes

- Gerhard Froese of Winnipeg, Manitoba, has published an illustrated biographical sketch of his father, Abram Froese (1899-1942). The book is entitled *Das Gefangenenlager: Bilder aus längst vergangenen Tagen. Erinnerungen an meinen Vater und seine Zeit* (pb., 56 pp., \$25.00 plus postage). The sketches were done by Abram while in prison (Siberia, etc.) from 1937 till the time of his death.
- Just off the press! *Mennonite or Nazi? Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists of Latin America, 1933-1945* (Waterloo, ON: Pandora Press, and Scottsdale, PA, Herald Press, 1999) by John D. Thiesen of Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, KS 67117. Order from Pandora Press, 51 Pandora Ave. N., Kitchener, ON N2H 3C1 (C\$28.00 plus shipping and GST).
- A brief popular version in paperback of Menno Simons' biography, written by Gerhard Ens of Winnipeg, Manitoba, can now be obtained from Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0 for \$2.00 plus postage and shipping.
- In April this spring Herald Press of Scottsdale, PA and Kitchener, ON, released a new translation of Peter Riedeman's *Hutterite Confession of Faith* (pb., 264 pp.), first published in German in 1565. The translation was prepared by Dr. John J. Friesen of Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, MB. A dozen or more representatives of Hutterite communities in Manitoba attended a book launch reception held at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg earlier this spring.
- Vol.III of *The Bote Index*, published by CMBC Publications in Winnipeg, is now in print. Vol.I and II were published in 1976 and 1991 respectively. All volumes can be obtained from CMBC Bookstore, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4. Vol.III has been indexed by various individuals including Olga Rempel of Virgil, Ontario, and most recently Helene Friesen at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, who is also the editor of Vol.III.
- Watch for the next issue of the new journal of the Mennonite Literary Society, *Rhubarb*. You are invited to submit entries for the youth issue planned for the spring of 2000. Mail to: *Rhubarb*, M.L.S., 200 Lenore St., Winnipeg, MB R3C 2C5.

A Sharing of Diversities: Proceedings of the Jewish-Mennonite-Ukrainian Conference. "Building Bridges"

Projected publication date: September/October 1999

Projected price: \$19.95

For further details, contact HP editors