

HERITAGE POSTING

Newsletter of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

No.38 September 2002

400 ATTEND LOEWEN REUNION IN GRETNA

by Larry Kehler

Four-hundred descendants of Heinrich and Sara (Toews) Loewen, who were born in the 1820s and who grew up and were married in Molotschna Colony in South Russia, gathered at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna July 12-14 to celebrate their kinship. The participants came from across Canada (every province from Quebec to British Columbia was represented), from five states in the USA (Indiana, New Jersey, North Dakota, Texas and Virginia), and from Mexico.

Activities at the reunion included bus tours of the area where the Loewen family settled in 1879, a midnight viewing of the homestead in Silberfeld, wagon rides and walking tours of Gretna, a golf tournament, a service to dedicate a memorial erected on the homestead site, viewing the massive genealogy charts, artifacts and picture displays in the MCI gymnasium, and of course, much visiting. Special activities were available for the nearly 80 children under the age of twelve who came to the event.

There were two larger get-togethers in the MCI chapel. One was a Saturday evening program at which stories were told about the five children of Heinrich and Sara who grew to adulthood and about their families. The second larger gathering was a Sunday morning worship service. Garry Loewen, the Executive Director of the North End Community Renewal Corporation in Winnipeg, presented the sermon. It was entitled, "Longing for Home."

The reunion concluded Sunday afternoon with the dedication of a memorial to Heinrich and Sara Loewen at the homestead site in Silberfeld, which is approximately 3 miles northeast of Gretna, and a traditional Sunday afternoon meal (faspa) at the MCI.

The local hosts for the Reunion were Benno and Mary Loewen from Silberfeld, who were members of the Reunion

Committee. They and their family received many accolades for their superb hosting.

Descendant listings of each of the five branches of the Heinrich and Sara Loewen family have been prepared by Ralph Thorpe of Nepean, Ontario, who is a member of the Loewen Reunion Committee and who is an accomplished genealogist. Copies of these listings are available to any interested persons at a cost of between \$7 and \$17, depending on the size of the listing.

Jen Loewen of Winnipeg scanned numerous photos onto a CD-ROM which were brought to the reunion by a broad range of participants. Most of the photos date back to the first half of the 20th century. Copies of this CD are available at a cost of \$10 each.

A video of the reunion, shot by Marvin Loewen of Winkler, will be available in both DVD and VHS format in late autumn or early winter. Cost \$15.

Persons wishing to place an order for a descendant listing, the CD-ROM or the video may contact Larry Kehler, the secretary of the Reunion Committee. His address and phone number are: 440 Best Street, Winnipeg, MB R3K 1P3 ; (204)-888-8192; and his email address is <jessieandlarry@aol.com>



Sara and Heinrich Loewen family, ca.1868-69, one earliest known photographs from Russian in this era. Children: (L-R) back-Katharina, Anna, Heinrich and front-Maria, Jakob. Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs from the Loewen family.



At the Loewen homestead in Silberfeld, 13 July 2002. Abe and Margaret Loewen, the last Loewen residents on the Loewen homestead.

Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs

Yarrow Research Committee News Release

The publication of local histories with new information is always cause for celebration. The Yarrow Research Committee is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of two volumes under the shared subtitle *Yarrow, British Columbia: Mennonite Promise* that explore a historic Fraser Valley community in a way not done before.

Early in 1928, a fragmented group of war-ravaged European immigrants began arriving in Yarrow, BC to build a new home for themselves and their families. Now, almost seventy-five years later, a number of former Yarrow residents and associates have written two books that explore both the pre-Mennonite history of Yarrow and, after 1928, the fascinating and at times painful story of the founding and development of this immigrant settlement. The initiative for starting this study came from anthropologist Dr. J. A. Loewen, who in 1998-99 invited a number of scholars to join in a project of research and writing. Perhaps like Pacific salmon that spend years crossing in an open ocean but eventually feel compelled to return to their spawning channels, these former Yarrow residents found such an invitation irresistible.

After several years of work, the Yarrow Research Committee (YRC) can report that a distinguished publisher, Heritage House of Victoria, BC, has agreed to publish our study of Yarrow, covering the years 1928-1958. The projected release date is early December 2002. We expect to offer this set of 6in. x 9in. volumes, titled *Before We Were the Land's* and *Village of Unsettled Yearnings* respectively, in a slip case. The text will be complemented by some 120 pictures and a number of maps. This will be the first such study of a Mennonite community ever released by a publishing house in B.C.

While carefully researched and documented, these two volumes are written for the general reader. Volume I provides a historical survey of pre-Mennonite and early Mennonite settlement and, in its last two parts, features excerpts from personal memoirs and journals of 30 Mennonite settlers, ten of them women. Volume II offers numerous essays designed to serve collectively as a cultural mural of Yarrow from 1928 to the end of the 1950s.

Anyone placing advance orders for the two-volume set will receive 25% discount. Subsidies have reduced the retail price of these volumes, and we are pleased to offer the discount. This offer, at \$32.00 per two-volume set (which includes GST), applies only to the complete set, and only to advance orders paid for before November 1, 2002. Shipping costs will be added to your order unless the books are picked up in person.

Persons interested in placing advance orders should contact either David Giesbrecht at 604-853-0382 (dg@paralynx.com) or Lora Sawatsky at 604-795-5197 (rsawatsk@dowco.com)

Russian Mennonite Studies Symposium

by Bert Friesen

On 8 June 2002 a group of interested Russian Mennonite studies individuals met to hear progress reports on projects in this discipline. Eight projects were described. Exhibits were viewed which enhanced the reports. There was some lively discussion about the status of the discipline and its future.

The projects were as follows:

1. Peter Letkemann gave data and statistics to describe his research into the dekulakization in the Chortitza region in 1929-1930. He described how most Mennonites were classified as kulaks, in today's term somewhat middle-class or above the lowly worker, and so removed from the area.
2. Werner Toews described his research into Mennonites who settled in the city instead of in the colony's villages. He is studying their influence on the village co-religionists and their contributions to the development of the cities and the industry there.
3. Ed Hoeppner provided some new evidence that showed that his ancestor, Jakob Hoeppner, was not guilty as charged. He was the original delegate from Prussia to Russia and then migrated with the first group of immigrants and within a few years was charged with theft and abuse among other accusations.

4. Helene Friesen noted that *Der Bote* could be a useful source for data on Russian Mennonite studies. She demonstrated this with some of the subjects in the subject index of *Der Bote*.

5. Helmut Hübert gave some detailed information about Mennonite estates in Imperial Russia. He is using various sources from that era to ascertain who and how many there were and describing them in as much detail as can be ascertained from these sources.

6. Lawrence Klippenstein talked about his research of about 15 to 20 years ago about alternative service in Russia before 1917. He posed the question about what he should concentrate on now in view of the new source material that has come to light since his original research.

7. Rudy Friesen gave a visual graphic presentation about the project to build a new Mennonite Centre in Zaporozhe. It is initially a senior citizen housing project that will expand to other phases in time.

8. Harold Jantz described his translation project of letters his parents received from close relatives over about a 15 year period in the 1920s and 1930s. These describe the family situation in these desperate times and their struggles.

Each presentation was followed by questions, opinions, and comments. Then there was a general discussion about how to encourage and make such research easier to do and share more widely. Many ideas were heard and some of these will be followed up in the next year when this group will undoubtedly meet again in some forum.

General Editor
Bert Friesen

Section Editors

Elmer Heinrichs, (MMHS News & Notes),
Conrad Stoesz (Book Reviews & Notes)

Photo Editors

Elmer Heinrichs, Conrad Stoesz

Editorial Committee

Ed Hoeppner (chair), Irene Kroecker, Elmer Heinrichs

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter, *Heritage Posting*, welcomes letters and reports pertaining to the historical interests of society members. Correspondence can be mailed to Bert Friesen, 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 2E5, or e-mailed to the editor at editor@mmhs.org

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Johann W Dueck and the MCI Connection (II)

by Lawrence Klippenstein

This is the second in a series of notes from Johann W. Dueck's diaries, published in 1995 as *Prairie Pioneer: The Writings of Johann W. Dueck*. These materials were translated, edited and published by Levi Dueck, currently residing in Rosenort, Manitoba.

Johann Dueck ended his contract with the Neuanlage school (near Gretna) in 1891, the year that Heinrich Ewert came from Kansas to Gretna to lead the Gretna Normal School (soon to be renamed Mennonite Educational Institute). Johann described his move as follows: "In the summer of 1891 I moved with bag and baggage from Neuanlage, Gretna, to the Morris area. I had received a well-intentioned letter from my (future) father-in-law in which he lovingly and sincerely admonished me to come to this new sphere of activity, since there was danger of going astray in the midst of all this higher learning in Gretna".

That "new sphere of activity" referred to Dueck's second school involvement, this time not in the West Reserve, but in the village of Rosenort near Morris. This was one of two villages, the other being Rosenhof, which had been established by Kleine Gemeinde families who had moved from south Russia to this area, north and west of Morris, in 1874-75.

Of these beginnings at Rosenort Dueck wrote: "Fall came and so also came the beginning of my teaching year in the village of Rosenort. Fortunately I had already gained some knowledge and experience in the teaching profession in the past two years, otherwise I would have been quite anxious, for when I started teaching in Neuanlage I had before me a small poorly-educated school, whereas here it was a large one with a good education".

His connections with Gretna however did not terminate. After mentioning a teachers' conference held at Rosenort in 1893, he noted also that he and other teachers would frequently go to Gretna and write exams (presumably to upgrade their credentials - LK).

Some years later Johann and his wife

Maria attended a teachers' conference in Gretna. He described it in some detail: "Many teachers were present at the Teachers' Institute which began today (Sept. 5, 1898). My wife and I stayed at the Peter Duecks for nights. Teacher H. H. Ewert had words of welcome and led some of the sessions. Other speakers included Dr. Brice(sic) of Winnipeg who spoke on geology, botany and nature (Dr. George Bryce had earlier recruited Ewert in Kansas, and brought him to Gretna - LK). In the evening Pastor Hanson (of the Lutheran church - LK) told of his 25 years of service for the Lord. Then W. A. McIntyre, principle of the Winnipeg Normal School, had a very good speech on training children in the schools. He spoke the next day, and was followed by another Mr. McIntyre.

I did not write my exam but will do so later in Steinbach when Mr. Ewert will be holding a two-week institute there". Dueck and his wife left for home on Sept. 9, taking with them "several bags of flour, 22 pails of plums and 18 large watermelons". The fruit he sold in Rosenhof in one day, for 35c per melon or pail.

A Sept. 17 entry in the diary has a follow-up on the conference report: "At noon I went to Morris to meet Mr. Ewert and took him to Steinbach where he will be training teachers how to teach properly". A few notes followed on his experiences in the course. He mentioned that seven teachers were taking the course, and later added: "We are studying Physiology, Math., Algebra and Grammar. Hours are 9 - 12 and 1-4" Finally, on Sept. 30 he mentioned: "Exams which began yesterday, ended today. They did not seem difficult to me".

On that same day, at 2 p.m. Dueck and Ewert left Steinbach on the way back to Gretna. They stayed overnight at Kleefeld (Grünfeld - Dueck's first home in Canada - LK), and the next day left for Silver Plains where Ewert took the train to go the rest of the way. Johann arrived back at home at 4 p.m.

In a 1924 entry in his diary, Dueck noted a school festival held at Gretna, which he attended. It was held over two days, with students presenting parts of the program. Some ex students (alumni) presented a program as well. The dates appear to have been June 1 and 2.

MHV Director Resigns

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Gary Snider, director of the Mennonite Heritage Village museum, completed his final day in the office on August 14. He had served in that capacity for over four years and managed to complete his fifth Pioneer Days celebration with flying colours. About 15,000 persons attended the weekend of Aug. 4 at the Museum this summer.

Gary was known for his long working days, and distinguished himself as coordinator of the reconstruction of the windmill during exactly one year after it burned down in October of 2000. Many other major improvements and changes took place during his time of office. A thank-you dinner was held in his honour on August 28, with festivities taking place on the deck of the windmill, the first of such events which Gary had dreamed of in his "leisure time". The MMHS salutes Gary for a job very well done, and sends best wishes for his transition to other work in the area.

ALTONA RESEARCH CENTRE NEWS

by Lawrence Klippenstein

The Altona and District Research Centre is sponsoring an awareness raising and funding dinner on September 28. The meal will be held at the EMMC church in Altona. Board members of the Centre now include recently-elected Ken Braun and Jake Rempel, with Dick Hildebrand now the chair. Al Schmidt continues to serve as archivist.

Award winning Rudy Wiebe of Edmonton, Alberta, will be the featured speaker with Dennis and Phyllis Reimer presenting music. For further details and to order tickets contact Al at 204-324-5442 or email him at aschmidt@mb.sympatico.ca



Emerson mayor Wayne Arseny, second from right, seen here with Metis on Red River journey during Emerson stopover July 20. Several carts, built for the occasion, were making the trek along the old Crow Wing Trail from Pembina, N.D., to Winnipeg, re-enacting an important part of Metis history in the West. A historical re-enactment of the first landing of Manitoba's Mennonites and the help they received from the local Metis population took place at the Mennonite Memorial Landing Site on PR 200 at the junction of the Rat and Red rivers west of Niverville.

Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs

LANDING SITE



(L-R) Royden Loewen, Orlando Hiebert meeting the Métis in an re-enactment of the meeting between the Mennonite immigrants of the 1870s and the Métis at the Rat and Red River junction.

Photo credit: The Carillon

Chortitz Cairn dedication

by Mavis Dyck and Bert Friesen

On Sunday, 28 July 2002 the Chortitz (Manitoba) cemetery cairn was dedicated. A crowd of over 300 from afar and near witnessed a moving event.

In 1999 the village of Chortitz celebrated a homecoming event. At that time conversations revolved in part around the history of the village and its changes. One noticeable part of that change was the neglect of the original village cemetery. It was overgrown and had few permanent markers.

It was decided that a way of remembering that past and demonstrating appreciation to God for leading our people to this wonderful land of Canada was to recognize all those who had been buried in the cemetery with a cairn. This idea grew to include also a recognition of the original 32 homesteaders as well as those who are buried on this site.

However, to recognize all who had been buried between 1875 and 1969, when this cemetery was in use, without many markers, was a challenge. The first 40 or so names were submitted by family members immediately after the homecoming. To find the other names required intensive research in genealogical resources and contacts with many individuals. Special recognition was given to Mary and Frank Penner, now in their 80s, who have lived in the village all their lives. Their memories were invaluable.

In the end 292 individuals were found to have been buried here. Their names and life dates are all listed in the memory booklet, Chortitz Cemetery Register 2002. The shock is that of these, 153 were children under the age of 4 and about 30 youths and single adults. In 1908, for example, 20 children were buried, up to three in one family. We have no understanding of the intense grief and despair families suffered.

All these names are listed on the cairn, a huge rock on a concrete base, with five plaques. One lists the 32 homesteaders on the original village plan, the second is the dedication plaque commemorating this day, and the other three list the individuals buried there.

The dedication service included a brief meditation and dedication prayer by the Old Colony bishop Peter Elias and a music group from the village.

The old village school grounds had a huge tent under which fasma was served, prepared by the villagers, following the service. There were also family history displays, books for sale, and information about other projects and groups.

MMHS News & Notes

Winkler Genealogy Workshop and Open House

Saturday, 19 October 2002
Winkler Senior Centre,
394 6th St, Winkler, MB
204-325-8964

Cost: \$15.00 inc. lunch

09.30 hr. Registration and open house displaying and discussing genealogy research

11.00 hr. Workshop on how to do genealogy research for 1870s Mennonite immigrants

12.00 hr. Lunch

13.30 hr. Workshop on how to do genealogy research for 1920s Mennonite immigrants.

14.30 More displaying and discussion

Jointly sponsored by the Winkler Heritage Society and the Genealogy Committee of MMHS

For more information contact Martha Martens, Winkler 204-325-0630

BUS TOUR TO INTERLAKE AREA OF MANITOBA

There will be visits to the Kleingemeinde darp of Mennville and the Kleingemeinde and IMF area around Morweena.

2002 September 28, Saturday,
leaving Bethel Church, Winnipeg at 08.00 hr. in the morning and returning around 20.00 hr. in the early evening.

Cost: \$35.00 for members of MMHS and \$45 for non-members (includes a noon meal at Mennville and a fasp at Morweena).

For more information call Conrad Stoesz at 204-669-6575 or Bert Friesen at 204-888-6781.



The Winnipeg launch of Dr. Ed Brandt's and Dr. Adelbert Goertz's latest book, *Genealogical Guide to East and West Prussia (Ost- und Westpreussen), Records, Sources, Publications, and Events*, was held at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on 12 July 2002. (L-R) Ed Brandt holding his book, Bert Friesen representing the Genealogy committee. At the launch, Brandt explained the content of his book and answered questions of those keen genealogists present.



Gretna elevator, 2002.

Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs.

Local History Workshop

There will be a local history workshop in the Morris area in mid-autumn. Papers will be presented on the history of the local area. Details of this event will be announced soon. For more information call Adolf Ens at 204-888-6781.

Genealogy

HP is republishing the genealogical data section of the Wolf article to make it clearer to the readers.

This is the first in a series of articles on Prussian/Russian Mennonite families by Glenn Penner.

The Early Mennonite Wolf Family in Prussia and Russia

by Glenn Penner

The First Three Generations of the Mennonite Wolf Family

(Due to typesetting errors this information was not correctly formatted in the last issue of *Heritage Posting*)

Generation 1:

Gottfried Wolf	b. about 1714	
1 st m. 1735-45	d. Oct. 20, 1794	Krebsfelde, Prussia
name unknown	b.	
	d. 1750's	Krebsfeld, Prussia
children:		
child	b.	d. 1747
child	b.	d. 1749
child	b.	d. 1751
Helena	b. 1752-54	m. Peter Wilms, Jacob Vogt
Jacob	b. 1753-55	m. Christina Harder

2 nd m. 1760's		
Margaretha	b. about 1739	Prussia
	d. Jan. 30, 1803	Krebsfelde, Prussia

Children:		
Maria	b. about 1770	m. Johann Neufeld
Margaretha	b. about 1773	m. Johann Dyck, Cornelius Lepp

Records show that Gottfried Wolf lived in Krebsfelde in 1749, 1772 and 1776.

Generation 2:

Jacob Wolf	b. 1753-55	Krebsfelde, Prussia
m. July 21, 1776	d. 1789-95	Schönhorst, Chortitza, Russia
Christina Harder	b. 1758	Prussia
	d. 18??	Chortitza Colony, Russia
Children:		
Johann	b. June, 6, 1778	m. Anna Peters
Christina	b. Sept. 8, 1780	
David	b. 1784	
Peter	b. Jan. 10, 1787	
Jacob	b. 1789	

Jacob Wolf lived in Heubuden from 1776 to 1789. He moved to Russia in 1789 and lived in Schönhorst, Chortitza Colony until his death.

Diary of Heinrich Friesen

by Irene Kroecker

Rev. Heinrich Friesen came to Canada with his in-laws on July 27, 1874, settling in Manitoba in the village of Hochfeld. Heinrich and his wife Agatha had 13 children (4 died) and one girl that they adopted later in their lives. Rev. Friesen loved to read novels and poetry. He also enjoyed creating his own poetry, his favourite style being the traditional style of beginning each line with the letter of the person he was presenting the poem to, making sure it would rhyme. In fact, every month in his daily diary ended in verse, and every year ended in a poem. Heinrich Friesen lived a very full and busy life. Being a farmer, a husband and father, a deacon and later a minister in the Chortitzer Church kept him very busy. He served in the Church for 36 years. His records show that in his lifetime, Rev. Friesen had preached approximately 998 times, served at 71 funerals and 25 weddings.

1894

Mar 23: Good Friday. I traveled from Grunthal to Burwalde in the afternoon and it snowed, but it was not very cold. Toward evening the wind turned to the north and it became stronger. During the evening we had an unusually strong storm pass over. It was the biggest snowstorm of the winter and it continued all night long.

Mar 24: I stayed in Burwalde. In the morning the wind had abated somewhat, but it was very cold for this time of the year. -24.

Mar 25: Easter Sunday, -25 degrees in the morning. After Church I went from Burwalde to Strassburg. It was so cold that I could not keep myself warm because the wind was still from the north.

Mar 26: Easter Monday. Still cold but the wind came from the south. During the afternoon the cold had abated somewhat. It was overcast with a south wind.

Mar 27: The frost had abated somewhat. It was overcast with a south wind.

Mar 28: It was mild with a strong NW wind.

Mar 29: My sons went to the woods again.

Mar 30: Melting temperatures today, but in the afternoon it started raining. sw wind. We went to Burwalde towards evening to visit. The boys came home from the woods. In the evening the wind came from the north

(cont. on p.7)

(cont. on p.7)

Wolf family

(cont. from p.6)

Generation 3:

Johann Wolf m. 1803 Anna Peters	b. June 6, 1778 Heubuden, Prussia d. Apr. 11, 1848 Schönhorst, Chortitza, Russia b. July 28, 1783 Prussia d. Russia
Children: Anna Johann Jacob Abraham David	b. Feb.??, 1806 b. Feb. 20, 1809 m. Elisabeth Friesen b. Feb. 2, 1811 m. Justina Giesbrecht b. Jan. 13, 1814 m. Maria Riediger b. June 13, 1817 m. Katherina Peters
2 nd marriage Helena Niebuhr	b. about 1799 d. 18??
Children: Peter Elisabeth	b. Apr. 22, 1822 m. Sara Neufeld b. 1820's m. Peter Hildebrandt
Peter Wolf m. name unknown	b. Jan. 10, 1787 Heubuden, Prussia d. before 1847 Wernersdorf, Molotschna, Russia b. d. 1825-30
Children Justina Peter Kornelius Helena Johann Maria	b. about 1815 m. Jacob Lingau b. about 1817 b. about 1819 m. Katharina Kaethler b. about 1821 b. about 1823 b. about 1825 m. Jacob Kroeker
2 nd marriage 1825-30 Katharina	b. about 1801 d. 18??
Children: Anna Jacob	b. about 1831 b. about 1834

Records show that the Peter Wolf family lived in Wernersdorf in 1825, 1835, and 1847.



Agatha (1843-1918) & Heinrich Friesen (1842-1921)

Photo credit: Irene Krueker

Diaries

Friesen diary

(cont. from p.6)

and became stronger. It started snowing.

Mar 31: In the morning the snow came down hard with a strong wind. In the afternoon it cleared up and then we returned home from Burwalde. It was only a few degrees cold but there was a strong nw wind that gave blowing snow.

Apr 2: Cloudy with a south wind. The oxen were brought away today. David went to the bush again.

Apr 3: Mild. David came home from the bush. Kornelius Friesens came to visit.

Apr 4: Cloudy with a south wind. In the afternoon it rained and in the evening the wind came from the north. During the night we had some frost. We also had some snow. The water rose to the edge of the bridge in Bergthal.

Apr 5: I wanted to go to Bergthal in the morning but the water flowed over the dam.

Apr 6: Thawed a lot today. I went with Johann Hiebert to Bergthal. I left our vehicle on this side of the water and went by (gondal) rafte to the other side. Today we began building Peter's house. It was thawing.

Apr 7: It was mild with a south wind. In the afternoon Peter Doerksen's son Johann died after 7 days of very difficult sickness. Peter rode home in the evening. The water was still high. In the evening it became dark in the west.

Apr 8: Sunday. It snowed very much all day. I did not go to church because of the high water.

Apr 9: Cloudy and foggy all day. Peter and Agatha (Harder) came to visit. Water has gone down so that there was no more water at the dam in Bergthal.

Apr 10: Peter Doerksen's had a funeral. In the morning the water was frozen but in the daytime the weather was mild. Aged Tante Goertzen was buried as well.

Apr 11: There was some frost in the morning. I and Peter Doerksen went to a funeral in Rosengard by Isaac Doerksens. In the evening it became cloudy in the nw and the wind came from the south.

Apr 12: It rained in the morning. It snowed until noon and then we had rain again, but only a light rain. The wind came from the South. Towards evening the wind came from the North and it started to freeze. During the night there was a strong frost.

Apr 13: Everything had frozen hard. It was cloudy and there was a light snowfall on and off during the day. The wind came from the north. In the afternoon the sun came out and it was milder.

Apr 14: The wind came from se and during the day it was cloudy but nice. At night we had some rain.



Edna & Diedrich Dueck, present owners of the 'Home Place', sister and brother-in-law of the author.
Photo credit: Glen Wiebe

Edenburg

by Glen Wiebe

The village of Edenburg, 5 km east of Gretna on the international boundary between Canada and the USA, was founded in the winter of 1885-1886. The founders of the village included Johann Buhr, David Stobbe, and Johann Wiebe. It lasted less than ten years. Yet signs of its existence are still evident. There is the long driveway connecting the village to the Post Road. The trees planted around the Edenburg Bergthal Church are still there as is the cemetery. At the end of the driveway is the original Lemky-Wiebe farmyard with many Manitoba maples and large cottonwood trees. The next farmyard is the Hruha farm also with many trees still standing. These trees are a memorial in many street villages of the West Reserve. These two properties were first surveyed in 1875 and ten years later became the centre of the village. Evidence of habitation still turns up during cultivation of the land in this immediate area. Then there are the depressions of old cellars and wells, some old gnarled plum trees, and some ditches.

So, just what is interesting about this property? For starters, this is where my father, Abram Wiebe was born. My mother, Agnes Schmidt, was born about a kilometre to the northwest. They were married 10 October 1926. My siblings and I were born on the farm. By age we are Edna, Alvin, myself, Eldon, and Harvey. The house, built in 1911, is still in use and in good condition. It is the only one remaining of five similar houses that were once located within a 1.5 km radius. The original barn and outbuildings are still in place and in use. The granary was constructed with the plate between the walls and the roof being spliced together with wooden pins. The approximately 10m by 25m Hruha barn, built in 1922, was re-located to our yard before the Hruha yard was disbanded. The yard is about 800 m from where the original Edenburg School no. 330 was located. The school yard was also located on part of two quarter sections, namely S.W. and S.E. of 11, 1, 1 W of P., and along the north edge of the Post Road. Edna has a 1912 public school register showing my dad, my mom and her sister, Mary, and brother, Henry, all in grade 1.

The Edenburg Bergthal Church, until it was relocated in about September, 1952, was about 800 m from our yard. The land on which the church was built was donated by my great grandfather, Jacob Lemky, in 1906. Two additional things should be said about the church. The original pulpit is now located at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on Shaftesbury Boulevard, Winnipeg. The pulpit was built with an adjustable table height and is in excellent condition. It is not known what happened to the stained glass Star of David window located at the top back end of the church. That star was intact when the church was moved from

Edenburg.

After the church was moved, my dad traded the church yard for an extra area of land adjacent to the cemetery. The cemetery is located a few hundred metres to the west of the original church yard. It was after this that the driveway was straightened out to run across what had been the church yard. The original house for the church caretakers had been demolished some years earlier. The last caretakers were Mr. and Mrs. Schellenberg.

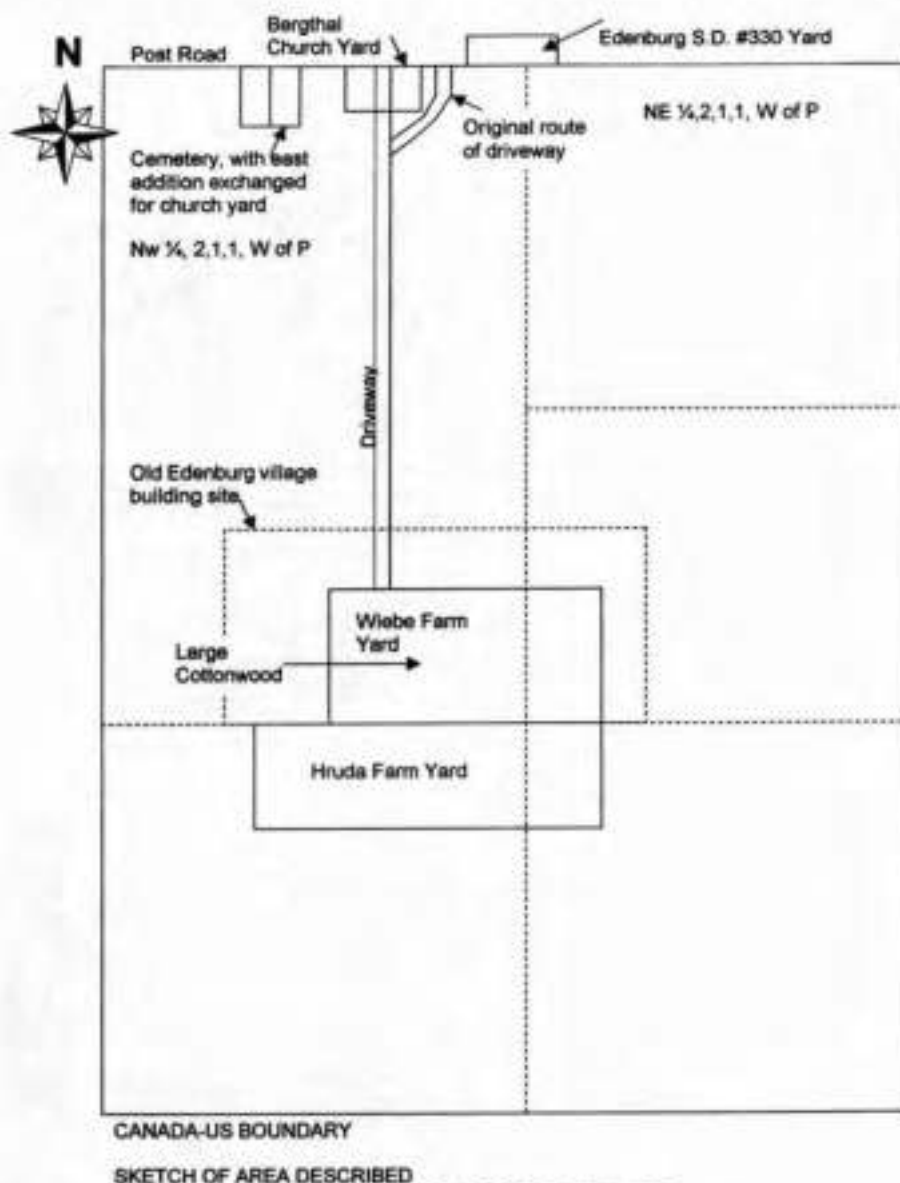
The farm is of interest for another reason. The N.W. quarter has been in the family since 1896 while the parcel on the NE quarter has been in the family since 1902. Both are centennial properties and are being registered as such. I should note that my great grandfather Jakob Lemky married Margaretha Bergen on 2 May 1864 and may well have farmed the land before he bought it.

Our family has enjoyed the farm for a number of years. This is where cousins continue to gather and hopefully it will remain in the family for another hundred years. Edna and Diedrich have two sons, Cameron and Lorne, who reside in Manitoba with their families. The possibility of succession is there.

Personal Remembrance

If I can identify a single common factor since I was born on the farm, it is change. When I started grade 1, it was with five other students. Helen Wiebe, my aunt, was my first teacher. By grade 9, I was the only one of six left in the community. This exemplified the rapid depopulation of rural western North America which was taking place and continues today. I witnessed the coming of rural electrification, telephone, all-season gravel roads, farm equipment on tires as compared to steel wheels, and farm output specialization.

Peggy and I still farm. A friend once asked, why? I gave the usual reasons and added that I like it. Some time later, I read two books by Thomas Moore on *The Soul*. Until then I'm not sure I ever had a good idea of what the soul was. I now know that farming for me is the same category as hiking to a mountain top and seeing nothing but the tops of other mountains and the bluest blue sky; or walking for kilometres on a beach at low tide and listening to the breakers; or enjoying a home dinner with family and friends. Farming is good for my soul. I know I have my background to thank for this.



"Home Place" lane to the Post Road at Edenburg.
Photo credit: Glen Wiebe



Wiebe homestead, "Home Place" at Edenburg.
Photo credit: Glen Wiebe



Plum Coulee Festival, 17 August 2002.
Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs.



Claudette Ek, Métis Elder from St. Adolphe, Manitoba, Bill, cart driver, Ed Jerome the cart builder from Hallock, Minnesota, Caroline Chartrand at the Pembina Metis Cemetery, 20 July 2002.
Photo by Cindi Adams, Kittson County Historical Society



Altona Sunflower Festival, 31 July 2002.
Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs.

Dr. Abraham B. Hiebert (Physician, chiropractor, herbalist)

by his great-grandson, Edward Falk

Abraham Hiebert was born 11 Aug 1847, probably in the village of Burwalde, Chortitza Colony; to Abraham A. Hiebert and his wife Anna (nee) Hildebrandt, the daughter of Diedrich Hildebrandt and Gertrude Martens of Burwalde, Chortitza Colony in Russia. His father was Abraham A. Hiebert who was born in village of Nieder-chortitza in 1820. He married Sara Loewen 15 June 1869. Sara was the daughter of Franz Loewen and Agatha (nee) Krahn.

In 1875 the Hiebarts and their 2 oldest children left their home in Burwalde. They will have left Russia for the same reasons as others of the 1870's Mennonite settlers. On 1 July 1875, they arrived in Quebec, Canada on the S.S. Moravian and travelled west settling first at Maple River, 12 miles west of Fargo, North Dakota, USA. In 1880 Abraham advertised 640 acres of land, with farm buildings, and watered by the Maple River (with good fishing) for sale at a cheap price. At about that time they moved to Manitoba, living first in the Village of Schanzenfeld. Why they, and a number of his family, settled at Maple River in North Dakota is not known, it may have been that land agents convinced them to purchase land there. Why they left there so soon after their arrival is also subject to speculation, but Julius Toews wrote in the "Mennonitische Post" in April 1977, of his grandfather, Jacob Toews, Abraham's brother-in-law, that when the Mennonites sent their children to the "Swedish" schools, to learn some English they were making friends with the "Swedish" and the parents began to fear that remaining in that environment would eventually lead to intermarriage with them, so they moved to Manitoba. In 1883 he purchased the NW quarter of 3-2-41 W in the Village of Rosenthal and by 1885 the family was residing there. He also took up a homestead at SW 20-3-3 in 1885 which is northwest of Winkler, but the family never lived there. In 1888 on May 7 the Hiebert home burned down. Records indicate that the family owned farm animals and as many as 9 horses at one time but the fact that requests for medical assistance were many may have prevented him from being a full-time farmer for most of his time in Canada. Abraham & Sara had 11 children, of whom 3 died in infancy. Dr. Hiebert died in Feb. 1914 of nephritis and coronary disease and Sara died in 1929. Both of them were interred at the cemetery at the west end of Rosenthal.

Dr. Abraham Hiebert was never registered as a doctor in Manitoba. He got formal training in Ohio in 1894 or 1895. A letter from Dr. L. H. Gratigny of Ohio, USA indicates that he qualified to treat cancer tumours, skin diseases, nasal catarrh and rheumatism. In an interview with his daughter Justina Wiebe, this writer was told that he had received funds for such training from the churches in southern Manitoba. She also described how she had to spend much time in assisting her father washing the bottles used for the storage of herbs and other substances used in his preparation of medications. In 1894 in a letter from Dr. Gottfried Millbrandt of Crosswell Michigan (obviously in response to a letter from Dr. Hiebert) in which he indicates that he purchased the materials used in preparation of his medications from Germany, Austria and Russia. It seems to have been the norm that doctors also served as pharmacists. In addition to his training Dr. Hiebert had medical books which were later used by his son, Abraham Hiebert.

It is likely that Abraham got his early training in "tracht-moecken" and herbal medicine from his uncle, Diedrich Hildebrandt, who was known as "der alte Doctor Hildebrandt" of Burwalde, Chortitza. Letters to Dr. Hiebert (which have recently been discovered and transcribed and translated by this writer) indicate that his advice, assistance and prescriptions were requested from persons in Russia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan (Rosthern, NWT). Requests came not only from the Mennonites but also from others.

In his medical practise he made house visitations, travelling by horse and buggy or horse and sleigh or by car. He treated people in his office/home and gave medical advice by letter and sent medicine by mail. There is some evidence that he saw patients in Winkler at the Stanley Hotel. One would assume he rented office space there.

A newspaper of that era reports that a rural doctor (Dr. Hiebert) has discovered a "cure for cancer, something which city doctors have not been able to do." Oral history indicates that there was a certain amount of envy or enmity from doctors in Morden and one can only speculate whether that was for personal or professional reasons, but it is easy to surmise that such publicity caused a negative reaction. The doctors in Morden, Manitoba took Hiebert and another doctor (Katherina Thiessen) to court in ca. 1895 over the lack of a license to practice medicine in Manitoba. Hiebert was fined but continued his practice. That his medical practise was reasonably successful is indicated by the fact that he left an estate worth \$13,000.

More research needs to be done to complete the records of this family and the history which



Dr. Abraham Hiebert and his wife Sara.

Photo credit: Edward Falk



Anna and Abraham Hiebert, Dr. A. Hiebert's parents.

Photo credit: Edward Falk

relates to the medical help available to the early Mennonite settlers of the West reserve.

[Much of the above information results from the diligent research done by another great-grandson, Bruce Wiebe.]

THE METIS WELCOME THE MENNONITES TO MANITOBA

by Royden Loewen

On Thursday, 25 July 2002, I was one of several participants in a re-enactment of the first encounter of Mennonites and Metis at the Mennonite Memorial Landing Site, three miles west of Niverville on the Red River. The meeting took place not at the initiative of the Mennonites but of the Metis of Manitoba. It was part of their own historic re-enactment of the Red River cart commercial traffic on the Crow Wing Trail, stretching in the mid-nineteenth century from St. Paul, Minnesota to Winnipeg, or Fort Garry as it was known in those days. I became involved when the Town of Niverville, having been contacted by the Metis who wished to visit the Mennonites as part of their journey up the Crow Wing Trail, contacted me. The town asked whether Orlando Hiebert and I, as trustees of the Landing Site, would be interested in meeting with Metis spokesperson Linda Morin and Al Benoit. We were. Orlando and I both attended a planning meeting with the Metis committee at the St. Adolphe RM Office. The idea of re-enacting the original meeting, walking up from the river and then riding with the Metis eastward into the lands of the East Reserve were welcomed by the committee.

On the day of the re-enactment, Orlando and I gave speeches, thanking the Metis for assisting our people back in 1874; the speeches were reciprocated by short speeches by Al Benoit, the official spokesperson for the Metis and by Satsh Dehailey, the trail boss and also the great great grandnephew of Louis Reil. Benoit spoke of sharing the land with the Mennonites and also of sharing a sense of justice with the Mennonites. The irony was not lost on the handful of Mennonites who gathered at the river. A stirring part of the short ceremony were two musical pieces. Violinist Rebecca Loewen, provided the slow and almost mournful music of the favourite Mennonite hymn, In the Rifted Rock, as the Jacob and Irene Isaac Family and two boys 'adopted' for the day, followed the Orlando and me, dressed as 'traditional' Aeltesten and GroutBoa, walked up from the river. After



Metis cart drivers welcome Mennonite immigrants re-enactment.

Photo credit: Jules Chartrand

our speeches, a Metis fiddler broke out in a traditional Michif gig and as the Mennonites looked on the Metis joined in a dance. As part of the ceremony too, the Metis presented us with gifts of an eagle feather, a hand-made sash, and a loaf of bread, and provided us with a spiritual blessing.

I trust it will mark not only a resurgence in historical interest, but in friendship between the Mennonites and the Metis.

And if you have never visited the Landing Site, it is a beautiful natural spot along the river and worth a visit, that is, if you remember the mosquito spray.

Part of the Speech read by Orlando Hiebert and Royden Loewen

"The Mennonites came singing their old hymns of peace, hope and faith. But they also came with trepidation...they had come a long way, from the southern steppes of Ukraine to this strange land; the last leg of their voyage was an 80-hour steam boat ride from Fargo (up the Red River). Here they were met by the Metis. Those people were your ancestors, the Metis freighters. With their Red River carts, they ferried the newcomers, men and women, small infants to elderly grandparents inland to immigration buildings south of Niverville, shelters built by Metis hands to protect the newcomers from the mosquitoes, rain and sun. Now, as you open your Red River carts to us...we thank you again. We humbly accept this kind gift. Its symbol is not lost on us. We pray that as a part of the rich tapestry of Manitoba cultures, the Metis and Mennonites will each take pride in their ancestral cultures and enrich one another by a continued friendship."



Metis and Mennonites meeting re-enactment at the Red and Red Rivers when the Mennonites arrived in the 1870s.

Photo credit: The Carillon

Book Review

Helen Grace Lescheid, translator and coauthor, *Lead, Kindly Light* (Belleville ON: Essence Publishing), 1999, 191 pp.

This autobiography of Agnes (Dyck) Loewen, b. 1912, is one of the most captivating of the 20th century heroic Russian Mennonite "women without men" stories. Agnes, the oldest child of Gerhard and Anganetha Dyck of Osterwick, Kronstal and Nieder-Chortitza ("the most beautiful place on earth"), fascinatingly recounts her happy childhood, growing up in troubled times, struggling for her and her children's survival, and making a new life in Canada.

Although set in the Chortitza Colony, the values, customs and circumstances of her early life transcend regionalism and readers from other places will recognize and identify with many of them. Honesty, hard work, keeping of promises, table grace, prayers before bed and more, all stood Agnes in good stead under Communist rule and on the refugee journey. Readers get a glimpse of some of the customs such as family chores for everyone, children eating after guests, sweeping the yard for festive days, villagers greeting each other on the street and chatting, father reading of far away places on winter evenings and singing hymns and folk songs with the children. All this before the men started disappearing and the uprooting began.

Agnes' earliest memory, between age 3 and 5, becomes a metaphor of her life's journey as it unfolds in this narrative. After three village boys cruelly grabbed her doll from her and disappeared with it, her father, taking her "small hand in his big calloused one" was unsuccessful in locating it. She writes: "at that young age, I had no way of knowing how often in my adult life something I cherished would be ruthlessly snatched from me never to be returned, nor how faithfully my heavenly Father would take my hurt upon himself and walk with me." (16)

Snatched from her or lost during the years of revolution, disease, famine and war were the closest "men" in her life: brother Hans in 1928 at age 3, father in August 1929 because of illness, three brothers exiled to labour camps in Siberia (and found in Germany in the 1980s), husband Isaac drafted into the Germany army and missing in action November 1943 never to be heard from again. Lost also were members of the extended family (Uncle Abram Dyck was killed by bandits, Uncle Peter Dyck died of cholera, cousin Peter and Uncle Jakob Dyck starved to death), as were her Neuenburg home and most possessions, when evacuation to Prussia took place in October 1943.

Her family shrinks from the large extended one, to the smaller nuclear, to being entirely alone with her four children. Strangers-become-friends are family to her while in the diaspora of Prussia, Poland, Austria and Germany, until her own mother, sister and other blood relatives are found in the postwar years of Germany and Canada. While Agnes could have made a good life for herself and her children in Austria, she longed for her own people. Already at the MCC Backnang refugee camp her longing was realized. "At last," she says, "I was with my own people." One of the many miracles is how the MCC representatives, American Arthur Voth and Dutch [Han] Vandenberg found Agnes and her children in Austria. Agnes' narrative thus adds details to the MCC story and the involvement and dedication of volunteers on a mission after WWII to find their "brethren"/people and to help family reunification.

The political and economic context given is helpful. Life is full of suspense and torment as Agnes tries to keep her children around her. Readers are not spared family tensions or Agnes' emotions of fear, frustration, stubbornness, despair and humiliation but also those of gratefulness, courage, confidence, hope and trust. Amazingly, emotions of revenge or unforgiveness are absent. Confronted by stupendous challenges, perilous and tragic situations, Agnes comes out an amazing survivor. Her closing confession attests to God's faithfulness. "How good God has been to me! Not one of God's promises has failed me." (188) The story is well told by Agnes and her daughter Lena. Helen Lescheid, a retired professional nurse, has authored numerous articles in a variety of

magazines and is the author of *Footprints of Compassion*. The book is recommended for all ages and all ethnicities.

Book notes:

• *David Toews Was Here 1870-1947*, by Helmut Harder is a 347 page book detailing the life and times of the man known as "Mennonite Moses". This soft cover book is published by CMBC Publications.

• *Gathering at the Harth, Stories Mennonites Tell*, ed. John E. Sharp, a compilation of 28 stories written by various Mennonites who try to 'reveal' Mennonites' core values through stories of our past. Included is a story by Gerhard Lorenz, and a story about David Toews. The book is sc., 223 pp. published by Herald Press.

• *Neu-Samara, A Mennonite Settlement East of the Volga*, compiled by Jacob H. Brucks and Henry P. Hooge, translated by John Isaak. This book is a translation of the original book first published in 1964. This new translation is complete with photos from the 1964 edition as well additional photos, some colour, and some of the current day region.

• *The Divine Covenants, Conflict or Harmony*, by Archie Penner. The book considers the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and reflects on the "concessive" will of God. Penner is an Evangelical Mennonite Conference leader and educator. This soft cover book is 217 pages and published by Servant Publishers of Elkhorn, MB.

• *Mennonite Alternative Service in Russia, The story of Abram Dyck and his Colleagues 1911-1917*, by Lawrence Klippenstein & Jacob Dick. This book is based on the memoirs of four Mennonite men who served in the forestry service and medical core (Sanitätsdienst). Included is an introduction outlining the alternative service in czarist times. This soft cover book is published by Pandora Press.

• *Hidden Worlds, Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s*, by Royden Loewen. This book documents the adaptation of the Russian Mennonites to their surroundings in Canada and the US, while maintaining their culture and social cohesiveness. Loewen used sources such as diaries, wills, newspapers and other sources for this book. It is a 139 page book published by the University of Manitoba Press.