



HERITAGE POSTING

Newsletter of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

No.40 March 2003

MMHS AGM

by Bert Friesen

The Society's annual general meeting was held in the Kleefeld Evangelical Mennonite Church on Saturday, 1 February 2003.

The day began with standing committees of the society meeting to go over their agendas and plans for the coming year. This was followed by a plenary session of all the committee members meeting with the full board. There was a wide-ranging discussion about plans and new ideas to explore. These included new projects such as an oral history project of COs and their reminiscences, improving the society's web site: mmhs.org, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Molotschna Colony in New Russia, and writing the society's own history.

The annual general meeting heard reports of the activities of the society and its committees. These activities have been reported in these pages previously. The members approved a revision of the society's bylaws which attempt to decentralize the activities of the society by giving more responsibility to the standing committees. A deficit budget was approved. The deficit is projected since major publishing efforts will incur costs which will be recovered over more than the coming fiscal year (FY2003). A new board was elected. Of the 17 members 13 are from Winnipeg: Alf Redekopp, Anna Ens, Art Toews, Bert Friesen, Colleen Epp, Conrad Stoesz, Donovan Giesbrecht, Ed Hoeppner, Hans Werner, Jake Peters, Paul Friesen, Roland Sawatzky, William Schroeder; and 4 from outside Winnipeg: Evelyn Friesen, John Giesbrecht, Lawrence Giesbrecht, and Royden Loewen.

The day ended with a banquet, music provided by a local male quartet, and then Henry Fast, a society member from Steinbach, reading some letters from early settlers in the Kleefeld/Grünfeld. These recorded some of the activities of these early settlers.



Jake Peters, President, chair the annual general meeting in Kleefeld. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz



Henry Fast lecturing on the history of Grünfeld/Kleefeld in Kleefeld. Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs



Society members at the banquet in Kleefeld.

Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz



Official opening of the Altona Archives.

Photo credit: Elmer Heinrichs

Altona Archives Opened

by *Elmer Heinrichs*

The Altona & District Heritage Research Centre, housing collections from dozens of sources was officially opened Tuesday, Feb. 4 with speeches of commendation and refreshments.

Board chairman Dick Hildebrand welcomed about 40 interested persons to the new archives established in the Golden West Plaza adjacent to the Altona library, and announced that it will now be open for business one day weekly.

In their greetings at the opening, local civic officials praised the organization and its volunteers for creating the centre. Altona mayor Mel Klassen said, "I commend Dick Hildebrand and the committee on the task of assembling the archives."

Klassen suggested that the archives is "the gift of one generation to another, providing direction and a vision to the future."

Rhineland Reeve John Falk said, "it's great to see people interested enough to create such an archive. For us (Rhineland RM), it's also a great place to store some of our records. Congratulations!"

"It's great to see the effort in recording our historical record," said Emerson MLA Jack Penner, giving personal recognition to Al Schmidt, T.E. Friesen and (neighbour) Jake Rempel. "It's truly a historical event. These are records we should hold dear."

Penner added that "records, such as those of the Rhineland Agricultural Society, would provide agricultural background. I encourage you."

Al Schmidt, Altona's archivist, said "an archive usually consists of original documents created in the process of living." He noted the start-up assistance of Lawrence Klippenstein, retired archivist from the Mennonite Heritage Centre, and said they are waiting for new materials.

After accepting, sorting and recording collections from dozens of sources, the centre will now open for several hours Tuesday afternoon to allow people to come in and view materials and use it for research.

Schmidt added that "both the Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Manitoba archives encouraged us in our start-up effort." He suggested that they realize that people are more willing to turn records over locally, than they are to give them to an archive in Winnipeg.

One of the many collections currently of interest to historians, says Schmidt, are those of the Altona Optimist Club, which recently ceased operations.

Flanked by board members, with assistance of chair Hildebrand and archivist Schmidt, volunteer Jack Klassen cut the ribbon officially opening the heritage research centre. Vice-chair Lawrence Giesbrecht, treasurer Eugene Heinrichs secretary Ken (Sam) Braun, other members T.E. Friesen, and Jake Rempel, with Marg Friesen and Marlene Plett, as volunteers.

Volunteer archivist Al Schmidt, and several volunteers, have spent countless hours receiving, sorting and computer-cataloguing materials from individuals, amateur historians, schools districts, community and business sources, and the RM of Rhineland.

With subjects cross-referenced on computer and materials neatly organized in labelled boxes on shelves, people can find what's available quickly and easily. There is also a large table where they can sit and examine the material.

The centre is a public archive of general and Mennonite history pertaining to Altona and district within the bounds of the RM of Rhineland. It is different from a museum, which retains artifacts of the past, and from a library, which maintains a record of our literary past.

For more information, or if you feel you have something of value, and is perhaps in danger of being lost, contact Al Schmidt, 324-5442, or drop in at the archives Tuesday afternoon for some personal research.

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Section Editor
Conrad Stoesz (Book Reviews & Notes)

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Elmer Heinrichs, Conrad Stoesz

Editorial Committee
Ed Hoepfner (chair), 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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Example of Cornelius D. Klippenstein's Fraktur art and handwriting taught in Reimer's at age of about 12 years. Courtesy of Lawrence Klippenstein

ALTBERGTHAL SCHOOL STORIES: PETER D REIMER AND MY FATHER'S ART

by Lawrence Klippenstein

The Altbergthal village community was founded around 1879 on the east bank of Buffalo Creek about two and half miles west of Altona, Manitoba. As in most early Mennonite villages, if not all, a school of some sort would have been begun very early in the life of the community. Exactly when the first classes began in Altbergthal is not known. The first name on a known list of teachers was one Johann Guenther active in the early 1890s. However a bylaw establishing the school had been passed in the RM of Douglas (later Rhineland) by 19 August 1884, and the next year its beginnings were noted in the report of J.S. Somerset, the Superintendent of Protestant Schools for Manitoba¹.

Peter D. Reimer did not begin his teaching in the district till 1913, but remained until 1919, it would seem, which made his term the longest of any teachers ever to serve in the district². As it happened, my father, Cornelius, born in 1905, and beginning school around 1912(?) would have been a pupil of Reimer's for the entire five year period of his employment there.

Father went on to complete Grade VIII, as far as we know, then left school, to return for most of a year in 1927 - 28, to take Grade IX at the MCI in Gretna. He also got married that year³.

His teacher, Peter Reimer, was the son of Derk and Maria Groening Reimer who had moved to the village of Schoenfeld in the East Reserve very soon after emigrating from south Russia to Manitoba in the summer of 1875. Peter was born there on November 15, 1885, as were his older brothers Diedrich (b. 1876) and Johann (b. 1879). In 1886 the family moved to the West Reserve where they purchased a farm just outside the village of Reinthal, about four miles south of Plum Coulee⁴.

It is said that Peter showed an aptitude for drawing and painting already as a young boy. His mother, Maria, encouraged him to get "book learning" which he did eagerly. He became proficient in both German and English and continued to speak Low German well.

At the age of 19 he met his wife to be, Maria Neufeld, who was then aged 16. Both wanted to get married immediately, but Maria's parents, Gerhard and Anna Kroeker Neufeld, originally from the Chortitza colony, who had moved to Manitoba only in June, of 1891, counselled against it. They were married not long afterwards. As it happened Anna's grandfather, (Maria's great grandfather), Paul Neufeld, had been married to Agatha Klippenstein, also from the Old Colony, and born Dec. 31, 1830. In all likelihood she was a first cousin to Heinrich Klippenstein, the grandfather of Cornelius, and giving him a not so distant family link to the Peter Reimer family itself.

The record of the Reimer's move to Altbergthal is somewhat unclear. It has been dated by one of the sons, Paul, as being "about two years before the birth of their third son, Paul" on April 20, 1916. The family, with two daughters, Anna and Mary, had come from the village of Heuboden located further west where the school had been smaller. At Altbergthal they moved into living quarters that were attached to the school room in one still rather new large building⁵.

It is known that Mr. Reimer would sometimes attend summer schools, hence "be away for extended period of time", and would also help with threshing operations of local farmers before school would begin in the fall. He was reputed to have been a strong man, more than six feet tall, and able to lift a bushel of wheat weighing 60 pounds (in one hand?).

Again little is known about the work of Mr. Reimer in the classroom. My father's surviving school materials are an illustration of the kind of work that was done. Notably he saved some of his art work, Fraktur, it is called today. I do not recall him ever talking about his days as a school boy, but my father also had a good handwriting and liked to practice doing his signature. Penmanship will have been important in his curriculum also⁶.

As it happened the Reimer years were difficult years as far as relating to the government were concerned. Altbergthal was also one of the school that reverted to being a private school after 1916, when the government made a ruling that all instruction must be in English. By 1918 the school reverted back to being a public school, with a small private school building having been built at that time, and all parents agreeing, it has been said, to send their children to this school instead⁷.

The story about an Altbergthal teacher coming to school for an entire year without any pupils being there, but always raising the flag, and marking the register, and described by one writer as "typical of responses to the new law, in southern Manitoba schools", fits the mood of the times, and could have been Mr. Reimer himself. However, his son Diedrich, born in Altbergthal in 1917, told me a few years ago that he could not recall his father ever mentioning an incident like that from his years in Altbergthal.

From Altbergthal the family would move to another school at Hochstadt, somewhat north and east of Altona. That is where a sister, Helen, was born. That is also where Reimer would get an offer to teach at the MEI in Altona, which he accepted and which then led to a move to reside in Altona. The MEI burned down in 1926 and Mr. Reimer next found employment with the Altona Public School, and did some small farming with livestock on the side⁸. He took great interest in community activities of all sorts, including those which would lead to the work of local cooperatives later on⁹. Peter Reimer passed away in 1936, not yet 51 years of age, and beset at the end once more by a disease

(cont. on p.4)

Altbergthal

(cont. from p.3)

which had struck already as a young man. Maria managed to maintain the little farm, and then the homestead itself for several decades after Peter passed away.

ENDNOTES

1. The early history of Altbergthal is discussed in Lawrence Klippenstein, "Altbergthal 1879 - 2000", in Adolf Ens, Jacob E. Peters and Otto Hamm. **Church, Family and Village. Essays on Mennonite Life on the West Reserve** (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2001), 287 - 308.

2. Biographical information on P.D. Reimer is basically all taken from Paul Peter Reimer. **The Life and Times of My Grand Children's Ancestors** (np, 1995), 5-1 - 5-4; 7-1-7-5; 11-1 - 12-10.

3. Cornelius D. Klippenstein family records.

4. The Paul Reimer account cites the arrival in Canada as 1874, but John Dyck. **Bergthal Gemeinde Buch** (Steinbach: HSHS, 1993) mentions the Derk Reimer family arriving on the S.S. Quebec on July 20, 1875. (p. 306).

5. Records suggest that the Altbergthal school building which the Reimers came to was built in 1904. The building is still extant, having been moved to Altona where it is awaiting more renovation and conversion to community uses. It was moved from its original site to the campus of a nearby consolidated school (New Hope) around 1965. See **Church, Family and Village**, 299.

6. C.D. Klippenstein family records.

7. See **Church, Family and Village**, 300 - 301.

8. See Esther Epp Tiessen. **Altona: the story of a Prairie Town** (Altona: D.W. Friesen and Sons, Ltd., 199ff).

9. Ibid, 163 - 64.

Peter T. Kroeker at the MCI during WWI

In previous issues we included articles about Johann W. Dueck. This article is the story about one of Dueck's nephews, Peter T. Kroeker, also from Rosenort/Rosenhoff near Morris. This slightly edited excerpt is taken from My Dad, Mr. Peter Kroeker, as I remember him, written and published by his son, Frank P. Kroeker, in 2002. It is used with permission.

In the fall of 1914, with the inspiration and encouragement of Johann W. Dueck, Dad's uncle and former teacher, Dad went into the teaching profession in the Rosenhoff private school. With the outbreak of war, teaching English became obligatory in all schools, and private schools were in danger of losing their status.

Consequently in order to upgrade his teaching skills, and obtain his qualifications as an English teacher, Dad attended summer school at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna during the summer of 1915. Following that, he became the first teacher of the Provincial Private School District #61 at Rosenort, and the next year taught in Rosenhoff School district #60.

I remember Dad telling me some of his learning experiences at MCI. First, he held Mr. Henry Ewert, the principal, in very high regard. Dad not only considered him a very wise and deeply-spiritual man, but also the "man of the hour", for he had a good understanding of some of the more conservative Mennonite groups, like the Kleine Gemeinde, and arbitrated on their behalf.

Dad also told of one day at the MCI, when the whole school, as a class in Nature Studies, was to go into the nearby woods that afternoon and look for a most unusual specimen of nature. The student bringing back the best trophy would get a prize of \$5.00. Imagine that, in those days!

A certain student, too lazy to participate, played hooky and hid behind the north end of the school building, hoping to take a little nap. Just before he dozed off, he noticed a large pig-weed plant right there beside him, and he casually began scratching around its fat tap-root with his finger. As he continued



Kroeker, the teacher, attending the MCI, together with a teaching colleague, George B. Kornelson (seated).

Photo credit: MCI Crossroads

scratching, digging and poking deeper, his curiosity eventually overcame him, and he wondered, "How deep down does this tap-root go anyway?"

The ground soon got too hard, and the hole too deep, to continue excavating with his hands, so he went to fetch a spade and a hoe. To his amazement, the root just kept on going down farther and farther. He kept on digging faster and faster, deeper and deeper, till he finally reached the very tip of the root - at 8 feet from the surface!

Just when he was finished, the rest of the students returned with their abundant variety of trophies - each one hoping to win the prize. Well, the lazy student figured he might as well present his findings too. When the teacher got up on his chair to pin up the pig-weed plant on the front wall of the classroom, its 8-foot-long root reaching right down to the floor. The students all burst into a round of applause. He won first prize!

Dad continued to teach for six years, while at the same time holding down a job, and later also farming during the summer months. An amazing outcome of Dad's teaching career was that two of his students became public school teachers as well: Peter K. Dueck, Dad's cousin, a son of Johann W. Dueck, and George P. Goossen, taught at Rosenhoff South School for more than two decades.

MMHS News & Notes

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada news

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada held its annual general meeting and board meeting on Saturday, 6 December 2002. It was held for the first time in B.C. on the campus of Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford.

On the previous day the CMEC editorial committee met to discuss the online project. The web site has generated over 700 unique visitors per day or over 250,000 over the last year. The site now has institutional, congregational, and biographical articles. About 65 articles, mainly biographies, were added in 2002. More are anticipated this year.

The board meeting and general meeting heard reports on the CMEC project. There was a report on the 'Return of the Kanadier' conference, part of the Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites project. There were reports of the many and varied activities of the provincial societies and church societies. There was some discussion about the financial status of the society. Some options concerning fund raising will be considered in the coming year. There was news of the establishment of Mennonite archives in Calgary and Saskatoon.

The local hosts took interested participants on a bus tour of the Fraser Valley. The history of the settlement here by Mennonites was highlighted. Many buildings, both church and educational, were viewed and toured. At an evening banquet an individual gave an account of her experience growing up as a Mennonite here.

The plan is that over the coming years these meetings will be rotated in other provinces.

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society news

At the annual meeting of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society it was decided to change the name to the Flemish Mennonite Historical Society. This name change reflects a change of emphasis from

a local to a broader scope. This would potentially take in Mennonites now living in most parts of North and South America as well as Europe and other parts of the world. These Mennonites have organized themselves in many church conferences to reflect various emphases of their Anabaptist heritage. The society will continue many of the same activities such as publishing and holding public events except for this broader scope.

MMHS Local History Workshop

From USSR to Germany to Manitoba

Winkler Seniors Centre

26 April 2003

9:30 Registration and Coffee

10:00 Introductions and introduction to the theme

10:10 Creating a Context: Previous Mennonite migrations from Russia-USSR to Canada
1874 – 1880; 1923 – 1930; 1947 – 1959; 1970s.
-by Adolf Ens

10:40 Panel Discussion: Life in the USSR after WW II

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Panel Discussion: Life in Germany

2:00 Panel Discussion: Life in Canada

Cost: \$15.00 (includes lunch) payable at the door



Jim Wiebe was a student at the University of Manitoba and had a summer job with the Parks and Recreation Department, City of Winnipeg. Here he met Jack Gallager, Superintendent, Kildonan Park. Mr. Gallager mentioned a cottonwood in the park and on the bank of the Red River was the largest cottonwood in Manitoba. He thought there might be one further west possibly around Neepawa, that might be almost as big. Jim measured both the Kildonan and our tree and proved we had a larger cottonwood on our farm.

Genealogy

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

The Early Mennonite Groening Family

by Glenn Penner

Johann Groening (1807-1866) of the Bergthal Colony

Johann Groening (1807-1866) is the forefather of most of the Mennonite Groenings in Canada. According to the Bergthal Colony church records he was born in 1807 (exact date not known) and died on May 12, 1866.¹ He married Helena Krause in 1834 before coming to the Bergthal Colony, which was founded in 1836.² Johann and Helena Groening had 12 children before Johann's death. Helena remarried on Jan. 17, 1867 to Heinrich Dyck (1818-?). The family of Johann and Helena Groening is outlined in Table 1. The purpose of this article is not to trace the descendants of Johann Groening, but to put together all of the pieces of information we have on him, his ancestors and his possible siblings.

According to the immigration lists found in the books by B. H. Unruh³ and Peter Rempel,⁴ there were only two Mennonite Groening families that made the move from West Prussia to Russia. These are the families of Peter Groening (in 1803) and Johann Groening (in 1818) who both moved to the Molotschna Colony. The family of Peter Groening has been investigated in some detail and it is obvious that Johann Groening (1807-1866) is not a member of this family. The reference to Johann Groening on page 362 of Unruh's book simply states that in 1818 Johann Groening, an "Einwohner" of Horsterbusch (West Prussia) and his wife Christina Woelke moved to the Molotschna Colony together with children Anna (21), Christina (12), and Johann (10). The age of son Johann matches his birth year given in the Bergthal Colony church records. Johann (1807-1866) and his family are also found in the 1858 Russian census.⁵ At this time Johann (Johann)

"Groening" age 50 is listed in the village of *Schoenfeld* in the Bergthal Colony with his wife Helena (Peter) (43), sons Johann (18), Peter (16), Kornelius (13), Heinrich (11), Abram (6), Jacob (4) and Franz (1) and daughter Maria (2). The oldest daughter Helena had married (1856) and left the household by this time. This census confirms that Johann's father was indeed Johann. It also indicates that Helena Krause was the daughter of Peter Krause. The 1835 Russian census for the Molotschna Colony also exists.⁶ This document indicates that the Groening family lived in Marienthal, where Johann Sr. died in 1825. The newly married Johann (aged 27) and his wife Helena (20) are listed in the household. The census also indicates that Johann and Helena moved to the Chortitza Colony (shortly after 1835).

The entry for Johann and Helena (Krause) Groening in the Bergthal Colony church records has the notation "Schoenw." added, indicating that this family came from the Frisian Gemeinde in the Chortitza Colony. The Frisian Mennonites in the Chortitza Colony lived in the villages of Schoenwiese, Kronsweide and Kronsgraben. There is only one possible Peter Krause who could be the father of Helena (Krause) Groening, and that is Peter Krause (b. 1790), the son of Kornelius Krause (b. 1752), of Kronsweide. Peter Krause is listed in the 1814 Chortitza Colony village census for Kronsweide as living with his father-in-law Heinrich Arend (b. 1759). The families of Kornelius Krause, Peter Krause and Heinrich Arend are outlined in Henry Schapansky's book on the Chortitza Colony Mennonites.⁷

To summarize: Johann Groening (1807-1866) was born in West Prussia, moved to Marienthal, Molotschna Colony with his parents in 1818, then moved to Schoenwiese (or possibly Kronsweide) for a brief period, probably living with his wife's family and then moved to the Bergthal Colony. The Groenings probably moved to the Bergthal Colony because they were landless.

Johann Groening (1769-1825)

The next step is to see what can be found on Johann Groening Sr. He and his family appear to have moved from Horsterbusch, West Prussia to Marienthal, in the Molotschna Colony in 1818, where he died in 1825. The village of Horsterbusch is in the Elbing district of West Prussia. The 1811 census of Mennonites for this region includes one Groening family.⁸ This is the family of Johann Groening a Tagelöhner (day laborer) in the village of Einlage (just 3 miles from Horsterbusch) who was 42 years old. He did not have a wife at this time. Included in the census is a daughter age 10 (likely Anna), a daughter age 7 (likely Christina), and a son age 6 (likely Johann). This nearly matches the family of Johann Groening mentioned in Unruh's book. The Mennonites of the villages of Horsterbusch and Einlage belonged to the Flemish Mennonite church of Elbing-Ellerwald. Unfortunately the Elbing-Ellerwald church records prior to 1825 no longer exist. All we have are the baptisms and marriages recorded in the diaries of the Elders Gerhard Wiebe (1778-1795)⁹, Peter Dueck (1801-1807)¹⁰ and Jacob Kroeker (1809-1820)¹¹. These provide no further information on the Johann Groening family. An alternative source is the Lutheran church records. From 1800 on the Lutheran church (which was the state church) kept vital records on Mennonites (births, marriages and deaths). Several references to Johann Groening of Einlage are indeed found in the burial records of the Neuheide Lutheran church of Elbing.¹² This register records the deaths of two children of Johann Groening and Anna Goertzen: Agatha on Apr. 21, 1799 and Johann on May 17, 1800. The Mennonites of Einlage are also found in the records of the nearby Jungfer¹³ and Zeyer¹⁴ Lutheran churches. The death of infant Johann Groening on Nov. 18, 1801, the son of Johann Groening and Christina Woelke is found in the burial records of Zeyer. This implies that Anna Goertzen died sometime May 11, 1800 and very early 1801, and that Johann Groening remarried to Christina Woelke. A further entry in the Neuheide Lutheran records is for the death of Christina, wife of Johann Groening on May 14, 1810 at the age of 44 years, followed by the death of daughter Elisabeth on May 20th. This jibes with the 1811 census which does not list a wife for Johann Groening but does not agree with the entry in Unruh's book, which indicates that Christina Woelke accompanied the family to Russia. On the other hand it does explain why there is no Mrs.

(cont. on p.7)

Groening

(cont. from p.6)

Johann Groening in the 1835 Molotschna census. The evidence does seem to be in favor of Christina (Woelke) Groening having died in 1810 in Prussia. The family of Johann Groening (1769-1825) is shown in Table 2.

The Groenings in West Prussia

The 1776 census of Mennonites in West Prussia lists only one Groening: a widow living in Lakendorf with 3 daughters.¹⁵ She is listed as an *Eigenthümer*, which meant that she owned property. The mystery of who widow Groening was can be solved by using the 1772/1773 census of West Prussia, which lists "Mich. Gröning" in Lakendorf.¹⁶ He was a *Mietsman*, which meant that he rented his property. At that time he was living with his wife one son under 12 years and one daughter under 12 years. Most of the Mennonites of Lakendorf were members of the Rosenort Gemeinde. Unfortunately, like the situation for Elbing-Ellerwald, the early Rosenort records have not survived to the present. The only record available to us for the period before 1857 is the baptismal registers for 1782-95¹⁷ and 1814-40¹⁸, kept by the Aeltester of the Gross Werder Gemeinde. The baptism of Michael Groening's son Johann of Blumenort was recorded on June 29, 1789. This fits the expected baptism of Johann Groening (1769-1825). This would indicate that Johann Groening had moved to Blumenort sometime after his father's death and this is what I assumed in an article I previously wrote on the early Groening family.¹⁹ However, there are two problems with this assumption. There is no son counted in the 1776 census. In addition, the Rosenort baptismal register does not indicate that Johann was the *surviving* son of Michael Groening. The Gross Werder baptismal register denotes surviving children as "nachgelassene(r)". This would imply that Michael Groening, father of Johann, was still alive in 1789. This dilemma can be solved by using Lutheran church records. The Vital statistics for the Mennonites of Lakendorf were usually recorded by the local Lutheran church at Fuerstenau. Aside from the post 1800 records there is an earlier burial register specifically for Mennonites that was started in 1711.²⁰ Here the deaths of two Mennonite Michael Groenings are recorded! First, the death of Mennonite *Eigenthümer* Michael Groening of Lackendorf, age 34 years, is recorded on Sept. 25, 1775, just before the 1776 census. A daughter Helena, age 9, died on Oct. 8 of the same year. The fact that he is listed as an *Eigenthümer* indicates that he must have acquired land sometime between early 1773 and 1775. This property was presumably passed on to his widow. A second Michael Groening, an *Einwohner* (did not own land) from Blumenort, died at 8 pm on March 2, 1798 at the age of 76 years and 6 months. It becomes quite clear now that Johann Groening (1769-1825) was the son of the senior Michael Groening (1721-1798), not Michael Groening (1742-1775)! This leaves a few questions to be answered: 1) where was Michael Groening (1721-1798) in 1776?, 2) what happened to widow Groening?, 3) how are the two Michael Groenings related? and 4) how do the other Groening fit in (e.g. Peter Groening, who moved to the Molotschna Colony in 1803)?

1) I believe that Michael Groening Sr. was living in the region of Danzig not covered by the 1776 census. The Danzig Mennonite (Flemish) church books record the death of Mrs. Michel Groening ("De Michel Grönigsche") on July 4, 1779.²¹ The widower Michael Groening probably moved from Danzig to the Gross Werder sometime between 1779 and 1789. The fact that Catharina, daughter of Michael Groening was baptized in Danzig on May 28, 1788 suggests that either he moved between this date and the baptism of his son in 1789, or she stayed behind in Danzig until the time of her baptism. There is no marriage record for Catharina Groening in the Danzig church books. She may have moved elsewhere shortly after her baptism.

2) At present we do not know exactly what happened to the widow Groening. The West Prussian land census of 1789 does not list any Groenings.²² One can assume that she either sold her property, remarried or died before 1789.

3) Regarding the relationship between the two Michael Groenings, one can only speculate that Michael Groening (1721-1798) was the father of Michael Groening (1742-1775). If this were the case Michael Groening Jr. would have been a step-brother to Johann Groening (1769-1825). Their age difference (about 27 years) is not unusual, but

dictates that they would have had different mothers.

4) An extensive search of all available West Prussian Mennonite records prior to 1820 yields only 5 further Groening entries: i) Peter Groening of Marienburg, baptized in the Heubuden Mennonites church on June 22, 1788; ii) Anganetha Groening of Halbstadt, also baptized into the Heubuden church on June 16, 1793;²³ iii) Anna Groening of Heubuden died on Oct. 25, 1788;²⁴ iv) Anna Groening of Lakendorf, surviving daughter of Michael Groening, who was baptized into the Rosenort church on July 13, 1790;¹⁷ and v) the marriage of Peter Groening to the widow of David Epp on Feb. 26, 1795 in the Elbing-Ellerwald church.⁹

Peter Groening (1768-1827)

The birth of Christina, daughter of Einwohner Peter Groening and Anna Esau of Krebsfeld, on Dec. 31, 1801 is found in the Lutheran records of Fuerstenau. The death of Anna (Esau) Groening on March 8, 1802 in Krebsfeld at the age of 30 years is recorded in the Fuerstenau Lutheran churches register of Mennonite burials. Peter remarried to Christina Friesen (b. ca. 1780) sometime between this time and their migration to Russia in 1803. Anna Esau was probably the widow David Epp who married Peter Groening in 1795. The genealogies of the descendants of Peter Groening can be found in two published family histories.^{25,26} Unfortunately the Heubuden baptismal records do not state who the father of Peter Groening was. The 1835 census of the Molotschna Colony record him as Peter Peter Groening, who lived in Halbstadt and died there in 1827. This would suggest that Peter Groening's father was also a Peter Groening. I believe that this is incorrect and may be due to the fact that he died before the census and none of the remaining members of his family would have known his father or known his father's name. Since the census of 1776 does not list any sons for the widow of Michael Groening (1742-1775) I suspect that he was the son of Michael Groening (1721-1798). This would make him the brother of Johann Groening (1769-1825). It would also be expected that if Peter Groening was the son of Michael Groening Jr. he might have inherited the land left to the widow Groening in 1775.

(cont. on p.8)

Groening

(cont. from p.7)

Anganetha Groening

Anganetha Groening was baptized in the Heubuden Gemeinde in 1793 (father's name not given) and seems to have married Johann Baerg sometime in the 1790's. Because this marriage is not recorded in the Heubuden church books it can be assumed that she married into another congregation. The birth of their son Johann on Apr. 18, 1802 can be found in the Jungfer Lutheran records. At this time they were living in Hegewald. According to Unruh's immigration lists they moved from Hegewald, West Prussia to the Molotschna Colony in 1803. They appear in the village of Halbstadt in the 1808 census of the Molotschna Colony. This is the same village in which Peter Groening lived. Since Peter and Anganetha were both baptized in the same congregation and later lived in the same village in Russia I have tentatively included them as siblings and children of Michael Groening (1721-1798).

Anna Groening (? - 1788)

Anna Groening is likely a sibling of Peter and Anganetha Groening, who where also living in the Heubuden region at about the same time. This would tentatively place her as a daughter of Michael Groening Sr.

Table 1*Johann Groening*

b. 1807 West Prussia
d. May 12, 1866 Schoenfeld, Bergthal, Russia m. 1834

Helena Krause

b. 1816 Kronsweide, Chortitza, Russia
d. Manitoba

Children:

Anganetha	b. Jan. 27, 1837	m. Peter Kehler
Helena	b. Jan. 28, 1838	m. Johann Wall
Johann	b. Nov. 23, 1839	not married
Peter	b. Nov. 27, 1841	m. Agatha Peters
Kornelius	b. May 18, 1844	m. Helena Hiebert
Heinrich	b. Jan. 22, 1847	m. Anna Siemens
Anna	b. Apr. 8, 1849	d. Oct. 22, 1849
Abraham	b. Jan. 10, 1851	m. Helena Loecky
Jacob	b. Apr. 28, 1853	m. Agnetha Siemens
Maria	b. Oct. 2, 1855	m. Diedrich Reimer
Frans	b. Jan. 17, 1858	m. Maria Fehr/Marg. Dyck
David	b. Apr. 22, 1861	d. Apr. 25, 1861

Table 2*Johann Groening*

b. 1769 West Prussia
d. 1825 Mariental, Molotschna, Russia

m. 1787-96

Anna Goertzen

b. West Prussia
d. ca. 1800 Einlage, West Prussia

Children:

Anna	b. ca. 1797	bapt. June 15, 1817 Rosenort
Gemeinde		
Agatha	b. Oct. ?, 1798	d. Apr. 21, 1799
Johann	b. Apr. ?, 1800	d. May 17, 1800

2nd m. 1800/1801

Christina Woelck b. ca. 1766
West Prussia

Children:

Johann	b. 1801
	d. Nov. 18, 1801
Christina	b. 1806
Johann	b. 1807
	m. Helena Krause

Table 3

Michael Groening b. ca 1742
West Prussia
d. Sep. 24, 1775
Lakendorf, West Prussia
m. before 1767

name unknown b.
d. after 1776

Children:

Helena	b. ca 1768
	d. Oct. 8, 1775
Anna	b. ca 1770
	bapt. 1790 Rosenort

Gemeinde

Daughter	b. 1773-75
Son	b. before 1773
	d. 1773-75

Table 4

Michael Groening b. ca 1721
West Prussia
d. Mar. 2, 1798
Blumenort, West Prussia

m. about 1740/41
unknown b.
d. before 1767
2nd m. before 1767
unknown b. before 1747
d. July 4, 1779

Danzig

Children:

Peter	b. ca 1768
Catharina	b. ca 1768
Johann	b. ca 1769
Anganetha	b. ca 1773
Anna	b.
	d. Oct. 25, 1788

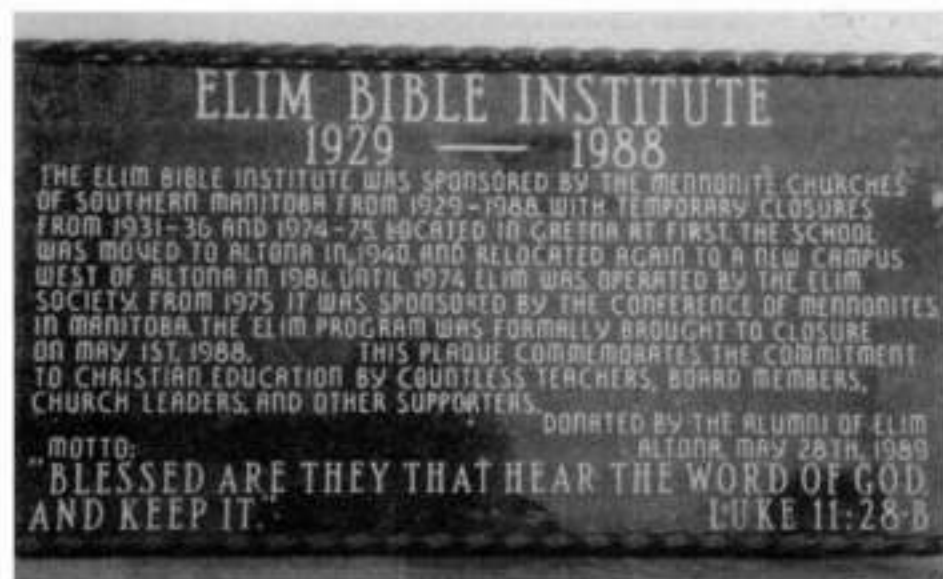
(cont. on p.9)

Groening

(cont. from p.8)

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A project of the Historic Sites and Monuments Committee is to create a list of the historic sites in Manitoba which are important to Mennonites. There are many cemeteries, buildings, unmarked graves, and monuments that are important, but not well known. There is no one resource where people can go to find information on these important sites. The committee is looking for your help in documenting these locations. A form is available on the MMHS web site or send a letter to the society for a copy or email cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca. The committee is hoping that a booklet with maps, photos, and data on these sites can be created. Two photos are requested showing the historic site up close so that if there is text that it can be read, and one showing the context of the site. One site such site is the Elim Bible Institute Commemorative plaque (see above). It was dedicated in 1989 by the Elim alumni at the time of the closing of the school. After the building was sold the owners did not want the plaque and it was removed and placed in storage. When the building was purchased by the Rhineland School Division (now the Borderland School Division) the plaque was placed on the outside of the south wall of the former school administration building located on the West side of Altona, Manitoba at 120 9th St. NW.

..... The committee asks for your help in documenting the historic sites important to our communities.

Conrad Stoesz, Committee chair

Camp Assiniboia History Research Begins.

By Bob Wiebe

Winnipeg, MB (Mennonite Church Manitoba) - A research project into the history of Camp Assiniboia was recently launched. Egon Enns of Winnipeg will be developing a detailed chronology of key events, assembling documents and identifying sources related to the camp, which opened in 1949. The long range goal of the project is for a complete history to be written.

This is a follow up project to a booklet of stories from Assiniboia's past and an historical photo display prepared in 1999 as part of the Camp Assiniboia 50th anniversary.

One of the ways in which it is anticipated that historical data will be collected is through a "constituency workshop" which will bring together persons to reminisce and recall important aspects of the camp history.

It is hoped that persons will be found to undertake similar research for Camp Koinonia

and Camp Moose Lake.

Camps Assiniboia, Koinonia and Moose Lake are part of Camps with Meaning, the camping ministry of Mennonite Church Manitoba.

Braun 2003 Reunion

Pembina Threshermen's Museum
Hwy.3 between Winkler & Morden
6 July 2003

9:00 Confirmation of Registration, distribution of colour-coded name tags, donation of 'Silent Auction' items, Set-up interest items on Memorabilia tables and meeting/visiting relatives

10:30 Devotional

11:30 - noon: Potluck lunch, visiting

1:30 - 3:30 Reminiscing and Children's activities

2:00 - 4:00 Tour Guides available for 'Threshermen's Museum Grounds' (The Braun Log House will be available all day)

4:00 Business meeting

5:00 'Faspa', prizes, Silent Auction draws, visiting, touring, pictures (Note: Our registration fee enables us to visit as long as we would like!)

Historic Driving Tour 5 July 2003

10:30

Meet at Garden Valley School Parking Lot

Tour of:

Winkler Cemetery

Waldheim Cemetery

Braun Monument

Historic Jacob & Maria (Fast) Braun Gravesite

(Lunch and Restroom facilities will be available)



Employees of the Erdman Penner chain of businesses in the West Reserve. Penner's business chain began with a store built in Gretna in 1882 after having started in the area with one at Neuanlage, built in 1881, and his very first one put up in Niverville the year before. He also operated stores in Reinland, Plum Coulee, Gaudenthal and Morden. The date of this photo is not known. Of the seventeen persons on the photo (believed to be an inside view of the Plum Coulee store), the one seated on the extreme right is Johann Schroeder (1863 - 1952). In 1881 he had moved to the village of Heuboden, several miles south of Plum Coulee, with his wife, Susanna (1874 - 1957) and family. If you can identify others in the photo please contact Bert Friesen, the editor of HP.

Photo credit: Bill Schroeder, Winnipeg (a grandson of Johann), who received this print from his uncle, the late Peter Schroeder of Rosefeld. Another uncle, Jim, identified the site of the photo.

Reunion Notice

Heppner-Hoeppner Reunion is planned for 2004 July 23/24/25 at the Marvin M. Schwan Retreat and Conference Centre, Trego, Wisconsin, USA.

Information on accommodation/lodging and meal package rates is available from the reunion organizer, Darrell Heppner 2004 Heppner-Hoeppner Reunion, P.O. Box 577, San Leandro, CA 94577, USA.

Trego is approximately 100 km south of Duluth, Minnesota. Lodging registration must be in by 2004 April 30 complete with payment.

La Crete

(cont. from p.12)

the next generation. The next generation feel they belong in La Crete and intend to make a life there to perpetuate their community, the Old Colony Mennonites who have adapted to life in this northern Alberta community.

Book Notes

- *Those Were the Days: and These are My People*, by Norman Unrau is a book of recollections by the author's about life in the communities of Steinfeld, Rosenheim, and Lister West. This 206 page book can be purchased for \$20 from the Mennonite Heritage Centre.
- *Chortitza Family Register*. This CD contains scans of 600 pages found in the only two known surviving volumes of family registers for the Chortitza Mennonite Church in Ukraine, 1888-1934. Also includes English translation of original records and indexes to the 7640 people found in the registers. It can be purchased from the Mennonite Heritage Centre for \$48.00.
- *GRANDMA Volume 4* is the new Mennonite genealogy database that is now available. It contains over 670,000 names in it. Included is an instruction book with the Brother's Keeper program to run the database. It can be purchased from the Mennonite Heritage Centre for \$48.00.
- Lynne Ward has produced a new Friesen genealogy entitled *David Heinrich Friesen & Family 1720-2001*. This book follows the descendant of David Friesen who was a founding member of the village of Sommerfeld, Manitoba. The lay out of this book is innovative and the format easy to read for those simply curious or those wanting in-depth information. Books can be purchased from the Mennonite Heritage Centre or from the author Lynne Ward, 3 Fawn Place, Winnipeg, MB, R3R 2Y9, e-mail boggle2@mts.net.
- Hugo Pauls has compiled 7 family genealogies. The titles include: *David Falk Family 1730-2002*; *Jakob Falk Family 1818-2002*; *Christof Niebuhr Family 1687-2002*; *Aron Martens Family 1756-2002*; *Peter van den Reimer Family ABT 1764-2002*; *Gerhard Enns Family 1787-2002*; *Franz Pauls Family ABT 1789-2002*. Copies for viewing are available at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies.
- Joanne Buhler Voth and Leland Willis Voth have published *Footprints Through Time! From about 1736 Abraham Buhler Genealogy*. This 240 page book follows the Abraham Buhler family, some of who settled in Mountain Lake, Minnesota.
- Jacob Schroeder has released *Landscape of My Life: Memoirs*. (Vernon, B.C.: self published, 2002), pb., 651 pages. As a long time resident of the West Reserve area before moving to B.C. the author deals with topics like the southern Manitoba cooperative movement and the Rhineland Agricultural Advisory Committee, in both of which he was deeply involved. For further information contact the author at Desert Cove, C. F. - R.R. 7, 813 8th Ave., Vernon, B.C. V1T 7Z3..
- "Directory of Mennonite Related Church Historians and Committees", published annually in Mennonite Historical Bulletin, edited by John E. Sharp of the Mennonite Archives in Goshen. See January, 2003, pp. 5, 14-16 for the latest edition. It is in a sense a successor to Directory of Mennonite Archives and Historical Libraries edited by Lawrence Klippenstein and Jim Suderman, and published in a third edition by Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, in 1990. For further info contact John Sharp at archives@goshen.edu
- A newsletter, *Legacy Links*, published by the Winkler Heritage Society, appeared in its fourth issue dated October 15, 2002. Among other things it announces the new status of Winkler as the ninth city of Manitoba. The editor of the newsletter, Sally Harms, may be reached at harms681@mb.sympatico.ca or calling 1-204-325-4698.

Mennonites in La Crete

Adapted from an article in the Edmonton Journal, by Jim Farrell

Mennonites have lived in the Alberta's Peace River country for much of the twentieth century. Also, since the 1920s Mennonites from many parts of Canada have moved to Mexico and South America to escape worldliness and government restrictions. The same thing happened to Mennonites in the La Crete area. They moved to Bolivia to seek a

secluded existence in the 1960s.

Now, a generation later, they are moving back to La Crete after an extended drought in Bolivia dried out their crops. La Crete has some of the best farm land of the Peace River area. Even though it is 58°N latitude, and has a short growing season, it has up to 19 hours of sunshine during the growing season. So it can grow bumper crops of wheat, barley, legumes, and canola. Nearby are also quick-growing forests of aspen and spruce which feed local sawmills.

The Mennonite homesteaders arrived in the 1930s to a new frontier. They had to build and operate their own schools, exactly what they wished. It allowed them to teach their values and language to the next generation. That is what the Mennonites had been allowed to do in Manitoba in the nineteenth century but this had subsequently been partially withdrawn and thus the move to South America. With such freedom and community solidarity, the Mennonites thrived. In the 1960s the Alberta government decreed that all private religious schools, like those established by the Mennonites since the 1930s now had to meet government standards. The most conservative of these Mennonites, the Old Colony group, decided to leave instead of meeting these standards. So in the late 1960s they moved to Bolivia. There they cleared virgin forests and produced corn, rice, and soya. The Bolivian government was very happy for this land development.

These Mennonites maintained their Canadian citizenship. In Bolivia they lived simply, as they had in Alberta. They used only tractors to take advantage of this technology to improve their agricultural production. In most Old Colony settlements in Mexico and Bolivia, besides the many prohibitions to their lifestyle, they also restricted the education of their children to reading, writing, and arithmetic, with German Bibles the main reading book.

The Mennonites who have now returned to La Crete, beginning in the 1990s, facing few prohibitions. They are adapting to their new environment, learning English, and using internal combustion-engine vehicles. The sense of community and family, though, have not been lost. They are advancing economically, but are also passing on their strong Christian values to

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