



# HERITAGE POSTING

Newsletter of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

No. 45 July 2004

## New Beginnings: Immigrants Tell Their Story

About 50 individuals interested in the ongoing immigration of Mennonites from Russia to Germany, and then to Canada heard several people tell about these moves in the last few years, relating some personal experiences, and give a few impressions of the community and Canada.

"New Beginnings" was the topic of a workshop held by the local history committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society in the Winkler Friendship Centre Saturday, April 24. The story unfolded as a panel of three new immigrants, who came to the Winkler community in the last five years answered questions posed by a moderator, and two individuals related their personal stories. In the first story,

**Maria Toews, who emigrated from Russia to Germany, then to Canada, with her husband Jakob Toews, related their personal experience at the local history workshop.**

—Photo by Martha Martens

Maria Toews told briefly about growing up in an Enns family in Russia, where she heard the story of Jesus from her Grandmas. She and Jakob Toews were married in 1984 and they moved to Germany in 1989. Here they soon obtained an apartment, the children were enrolled in Kindergarten, and they attended Sunday school and church.

But her husband Jakob Toews had a desire to move to Canada. So, they obtained the necessary papers and now, after being in Manitoba almost four years, Mrs. Toews says "we're happy to be here."



Olga Grass related how she had dealt with the transitions in her family life in a second story. She told how her own place of residence changed from Russia to Germany, and then to Canada, now with her own family. She overcame many difficulties and has hope for the future, both for herself and her children.

She told of how the doors to immigration to Germany opened in 1988 with Gorbachev's new "open door" policy. She felt "at home" in Germany and worked as a machine operator. The family heard about people migrating to Canada; they too applied and were accepted.

We arrived in Nov. 2002, and "now our first problem is learning the English language. Here we have to support our children with our own strength and the help of God," said Grass.

Jacob Hildebrandt chaired the panel. The panelists were Jakob Toews, Elvera Loewen, and Gerhard Loewen. In a question-answer format, there was discussion about life in Russia, in Germany, and now life in Canada.

It was noted that the main reasons for each migration were:

- greater economic opportunity;
- more freedoms;
- better church/religious life, and
- better education and opportunities for their children.

Panelists talked about growing up in Russia, living in villages, where most people were German-speaking, a few Russian. They went to school for up to 10 years, worked in the fields in summer, participated in youth meetings and church services, and the boys joined the army at 18.

Several German-speaking villages would become one collective farm, and if it was seen that the farm did very well, one or more Russian villages were added to the collective unit. The panelists, all in mid-life, also said "we always had enough to eat, German was stressed at home,

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**Panel members: Jacob Toews, Elvera Loewen and Gerhard Loewen at workshop April 24, 2004.**

—Photo by Elmer Heinrichs



**Attendees pay close attention to panel members.**

—Photo by Elmer Heinrichs

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and with relatives already in Germany, it always seemed like it was the land of our ancestry."

A move to Germany became easier after 1988. Properties were sold, often to relatives; however those leaving were restricted in the amount of money, 90 Rubles at one time, they could take with them. And to satisfy the army, Gerhard said he agreed to stay behind to finish his term.

In Germany they were paid a "work wage" to learn the language and find employment, but housing was scarce. They could worship freely. But Canada beckoned. Here, learning English is difficult, but they like the open space, school system, and good outlook for work and business.

The audience, though small, was very appreciative of the openness in the discussion. It was very informative, at times entertaining, ex.: a Russian folk song, and Low-German humour.

### Around The Province

**Mennville/Morweena:** These Interlake communities near Riverton were begun around 1950 when Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites moved here seeking land. An attraction is Integrity Foods, run by Cornelius and Dora Friesen. They bake up to 80 loaves of bread at one firing in an outdoor brick oven.

**Winnipeg:** With over 22,000 Mennonites, this city has over 40 Mennonite churches, as well as a Mennonite theatre company, children's choir and symphony orchestra. The Canadian Mennonite University campus houses the Mennonite Heritage Centre and Gallery, as well as offices of Mennonite Church Canada and Manitoba.

**Lower Fort Garry:** Through August every Tuesday volunteers demonstrate quilting as it was done in the 1850's.

**Austin/MacGregor:** Cheaper land attracted Mennonites from the West Reserve to this area in the 1940s. The Manitoba Agricultural Museum at Austin, with the largest collection of vintage farm equipment in Canada, is celebrating its 50th anniversary during its Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede July 28-31. The Homesteaders' Village simulates village life in the late 19th century.

## New Beginnings: A Migration Story

Olga Grass presented her story at the Local History Workshop, Winkler, April 24, 2004. This is her story.

My name is Olga Grass, my maiden name is Dyck. I'm married and I have three children – three girls. We came to Canada from Germany almost one and a half years ago. My husband and I were born in Kazakhstan where I spent my whole childhood and a part of my youth.

Since I can remember I've heard stories about my background. Sometimes they were funny, but most of these stories gave me a reason to think about who I am. I'm not only the youngest child of the family but the only daughter as well. I was loved by my father, spoiled by my mother and protected by my brothers. It was a perfect world for a child like I was. I didn't see or I wasn't willing to see the problems my family had. My father was a successful engineer and a gifted craftsman. The people used to say he had golden hands. Everything he touched became a tasteful work. He was very smart and intelligent but he was seldom at home. My mother had to work, too, to keep our position of society. We were known as a well off family. All the financial worries often made my mom inaccessible to the children's needs.

Practically we grew up by ourselves. Surely, there were moments in my childhood that made our family look happy. I can remember my mom singing folk songs while baking cookies and telling stories about her childhood. I also remember my father being proud after a parents' meeting at school where the teacher told him that his daughter was one of the best students in school.

This life ended when I was 11. My mother decided to leave my father. She always told us that one day she would do that because they didn't understand each other anymore, but we never believed her. This time it was reality. My brothers were allowed to choose whether to leave with mom or stay with dad. Now I'm glad I didn't have to. My brothers decided to stay with dad. They couldn't even imagine a life somewhere else than their usual neighbourhood and they feel obliged to take care of our father. Mom and I move to my stepfather. He was a widower with three children. He and my mom are still together. My stepfather is a powerful, humorous person and was always fair to me. But from the moment we left my father I understood that I can't change anything that the adults were doing, that I only have to take care of my life, that my parents' deeds shouldn't harm my soul.

When I became older I faced different problems: one was nationality. The question about my nationality I've heard since I could communicate. All the friends, neighbours, teachers always asked me about it. My parents taught me to be proud of my German nationality. And I was proud. And although I've heard a lot about discrimination against German people I never thought it

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would happen to me or to my family. Of course, when I was a child the other kids called Hitler's name behind me, but it wasn't really meant so. Now the problem became more serious. My brother wasn't allowed to participate in the training for an airline worker. It was his dream. He worked hard in school to be worthy/deserving of this profession, but his application was not accepted, without any explanation.

My cousin altered his last name to a Russian sound to have a chance at a military school. I was as few years younger than my brother and my cousin and their experiences were the reason for me not to reach for the stars. At this time, Gorbachov issued a decree that made it possible for German people to leave for Germany. But it wasn't that easy. Besides a lot of paper work there were comments at work and in school like, "You're a traitor!"

We were sure to be on the way to our home country. It was difficult for my parents because we weren't allowed to take money with us. We only packed the most necessary things, gave our house and our car away and moved to Germany in December 1988 with 270.-DM for each person. I was 18 and very excited about the new situation. At last I'd be equal to everyone because we were German people in a German country! I took the whole moving quite easy. No wonder, I didn't have to be responsible for anything – it was my parents' job. I was just enthusiastic about everything I saw. There was only one confusing point: I became dependent on my parents like a little child because I didn't speak a word in German. It changed after a 10-month German language course. Now my parents asked me to deal with things like bank, doctor or employment centre. Everybody encouraged me to learn a profession but I wanted to earn money. I found a job in a plastic factory as a machine operator.

After a while I got married and have had children. On my 23rd birthday far away in Kazakhstan my father died. My brothers came to Germany with their wives. Life seemed to be even until my kids started school. Every day you could hear about cases of rape, violation, sexual crimes, and murder. When my kids were late from school by only 5 minutes I ran towards them. And that wasn't even the worst. In school the children weren't taught to respect teachers and parents, there were fights and mockery between children. Teachers weren't able or even willing to do anything to stop this chaos.

Because my husband had loved Canada for as long as he can remember, we began to think about immigrating. When we heard about the Manitoba Immigration Program we decided to apply. It was like a revolution to all our friends and relatives. Hardly anyone could understand our decision, least of all my mother. She always started weeping when she just heard the word "Canada". I felt torn between my family and my mother. It was hard to see her unhappy about our plans. I prayed to God to settle this problem. I didn't know that at the same time my mother prayed to God to put obstacles in our way if we were acting against His will. But we didn't get any problems with the



**Olga Grass tells her personal story** —Photo by Elmer Heinrichs

paper work. Everything was quite perfect. One day my mom surprised us by blessing our immigration. I'm glad and thankful to God for this miracle.

In November 2002 we moved to Canada. The first problem – English. The difficulties seem similar to moving to Germany, but now my husband and I are responsible for our three daughters. Now we can't just say "Mom, come with me" or "Mom, help me." Now we have to help our kids to settle into life here and have to do it with our own strength and with support of God.

Olga Grass performed this song as part of her presentation.

Mountain ash, why are you standing so alone,  
swaying with the wind and bowing until your branches  
reach the ground?

Over there across the street, behind the wide river,  
An oak tree is standing as lonely as you.

I would like to move to that oak tree!  
then I'd stop swaying back and forth.

I would cuddle up to him with my skinny branches  
and whisper to his leaves all days and nights,

But . . . it's impossible for a mountain ash  
to move to the oak tree.  
It is probably my fate to be alone my entire life. . .

*Note: Mountain ash: symbol for a beautiful young lady  
Oak tree: symbol for a strong young man*

# Conscientious Objectors Story Finally Told

Winnipeg, Man. — About sixty years ago, over 10,000 Canadian conscientious objectors, many of them Mennonite, chose alternative service instead of fighting in the Second World War.

Their story has been largely relegated to short print-run books and contributions to archival collections. In 1996, Conrad Stoesz, now archivist and researcher at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, contacted the federal government to obtain conscientious objector (CO) records but was told the files had been destroyed.

This revelation planted the seed of an idea that has now grown into a comprehensive 700 page web site called [www.alternativeservice.ca](http://www.alternativeservice.ca). The web site tells the stories of men who, built roads and bridges, fought fires, taught school children, mined, logged, farmed, worked in manufacturing and the medical field. By law, most of their earnings were sent to the Red Cross for relief work. The site makes comprehensive use of rare archival documents and photos, film footage, and audio recordings. It also tells the stories of families and churches that supported COs.

At the web site launch, May 26, Esther Epp-Tiessen representing Mennonite Central Committee's peace and justice desk, said, "Conscientious objectors gave us the gift of showing another way, and this website is an example of their gift." MCC together with Mennonite Church Canada, the Department of Canadian Heritage through the Canadian Culture Online Program, as well as the Canadian Council of Archives, the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and private donors helped fund the project.

Dr. David Schroeder, a site contributor, briefly told his story to the 50 plus people gathered to commemorate the launch. After he was drafted, he applied for CO status, and became an orderly at St Boniface Hospital.

He spoke about how conscientious objection led many men to lives of service. Of the twenty-eight COs that worked in the St. Boniface hospital with him, twenty-five of



**Dr. David Schroeder is interviewed by a local TV station. He wore a white lab coat to symbolize his alternative service work as an orderly at the St. Boniface Hospital in Winnipeg.**

— Photo by Dan Dyck

them pursued careers in social service. "In the long run, I am more convinced that I made the right choice. We need to address the futility of war."

Henry Borne worked in a forestry camp at Radium Hot Springs with other COs. The conditions could be challenging. "We ate elk meat that was so old that they were just about ready to die off. That's what the boys got. Old tough elk meat. Boy, you had to have good teeth."

Borne described the reaction of some people to the CO stance. One of the cooks accused them of cowardice, saying, "Our men are out on the front lines and you're just fooling around here in the bush." What could we do? We just shut up and did our work and kept on going."

Content developers respond to frequently asked questions and accusations leveled at pacifists, such as, "What is the difference between being a pacifist and a coward?" Schroeder's own thoughtful responses to the tough questions bring integrity to the entire package.

Developers paid close attention to the making the language accessible to a wide age range. "We developed the content keeping in mind that students in at least two grades in Manitoba have units in their curriculum that relate to the Second World War. Our hope is that teachers and students, in addition to others, will visit the site to learn more about peaceful alternatives to war," said Stoesz.



**Thousands of trees were cut as one expression of alternative service at Cave Trail, BC. COs also planted trees - 17 million on Vancouver Island alone.**

— Jake Krueger photo collection

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# Family Roots Day

by Bert Friesen

Family Roots Day was held on the 27 March 2004 at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach.

There were about 15 exhibitors displaying their research and offering advice. Some lectures were offered. Individual consultations helped with personal quests and research methodologies.

The exhibitors displayed results of their own research into their family roots. This was displayed in large charts, published books, binders, and many also brought their tools, computer hardware and software, to show how they worked with their research results and how other tool resources are available. All day one could see a small group gathered around examining, probing, and delighting in new found treasures.

Private consultations were also arranged where individuals helped each other in various genealogical questions. These would range from: "Do you know who my great great grandfather was?" to "How do I find my maternal ancestor using the internet?" Usually both benefited from the exchange.



**Ed Hoeppner discusses his family background with some attendees.**

—Photos by Bert Friesen

Lectures were offered. The one was repeated three times during the day. It was on the source of family names for northern European Mennonites descendants. Participants often have wondered where their surname came from and this lecture attempted to point out some possibilities. (Check the genealogy pages for some options suggested.)

The second lecture was on the topic of heritage seeds. This discussed some of the origin of the seeds we use to produce our foods.

All participants, about 75, appreciated the many activities of the day. The Mennonite Heritage Village offered a superb context and facility for this day. Good food and interaction made the day a great day for genealogy and family roots.



**Conrad Stoesz, Mennonite Heritage Centre, helps with genealogical research.**

## Did you know:

*compiled by Marianne Janzen*

The Bethel Mission Church has an interesting past:

- that before it became the Bethel Mission church that it had been the Winnipeg Bible Institute before it moved to Otterburne and changed the name to Providence College?

- that it had been built in 1913 as All Souls Unitarian Church at 103 Furby; that after it was St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church; that in 1973 it became St. Demetrios Romanian Orthodox Church; and that it is now on the West Broadway Heritage Tour? So much for its history.

# THE EARLY HISTORY OF BURWALDE

by Edwin D Hoeppner

Several Mennonite communities in Manitoba are undertaking local history projects at this time. Halbstadt, Reinfeld, Altbergthal and Winkler are among them. This article draws attention to another study, namely, a book on the village of Burwalde, northeast of Morden. Mari Hildebrand, Winkler, is editing it with assistance from Ike Froese of Winnipeg.

Ed Hoeppner's article here is part of a longer study on the beginnings of Burwalde as a village, which will appear in the Burwalde book. It is to be published in fall, if plans materialize. This section is being published by permission of the editor. More information will be forthcoming soon.

### First European Approaches

The first Europeans known to have actually set foot in southern-most Manitoba were French explorers and traders led by LaVerendrye in 1734. In October, 1738, LaVerendrye led a group south-westward from his first Fort La Reine near Poplar Point, crossing the Boyne River near Carman, passing close to the northwest corner of the West Reserve near the site of Nelsonville. With the end of the Seven Years' War, the French were replaced by traders from Montreal led by entrepreneurs of Scottish and English origin. One of these men, Alexander Henry the Younger, established Fort Pembina in 1801 at the confluence of the Red and Pembina Rivers. There his men, of Metis and French Canadian origin, devised the first Red River carts, which carried trade goods and furs across the West Reserve area between Pembina and seasonal posts at Pinaceawaywining southwest of Morden and elsewhere. The Selkirk settlers arrived at Red River in 1811.

In the decades thereafter semi annual buffalo (bison) hunting groups of Metis from White Horse Plains and Red River crossed the West Reserve area on their way to the Dakota Territory. An artefact of the Metis presence was the community at St. Joseph (now Walhalla, N.D.) and the trail from Walhalla to Morris, Manitoba. It seems likely that on the flight from the Wolseley Expedition, which ended the Red River "Rebellion", Louis Riel walked along this trail on his way to sanctuary in the woods along the Pembina River in 1870.

The Canada-USA boundary was surveyed and marked in 1872-1874/75 by the British and U.S. Boundary Commissions, headquartered at Fort Dufferin, near Emerson, and Fort Pembina near Pembina, N.D. The vacant Fort Dufferin barracks and related facilities temporarily sheltered the first Mennonite immigrants headed for the West Reserve in July, 1875, and in the following years.

### Settlement Patterns After 1870

Canadian men from Ontario, who had been employed on the boundary survey, were favourably impressed by the wooded land along the Pembina Escarpment, and by the ribbon-forests along the streams which issue from the hills out into what was called the "Big Plain" — streams such as



Burwalde School, a familiar landmark for many years.

Plum River (i.e. "coulee") near Waldheim/Glencross — Schanzenfeld, Dead Horse Creek through Morden and near Schoenfeld (Zion S.D) and in Burwalde, Shannon and Brian Creeks (Nelsonville), and the Boyne River at Carman. The news spread and soon people from Ontario began taking up homesteads in the forested areas, penetrating south-westward from Winnipeg via LaVerendrye's old Missouri Trail, elbowing aside Metis squatters near Carman on the Boyne, and by the fall of 1874 and spring of 1875 legal homesteaders and squatters were established around the new community of Nelsonville, six miles north-northwest of Morden, and in the woods along Dead Horse Creek, Plum River near the hills, and along the hills.

In 1873 land scouts from the "Mennonite Commonwealth" in southern New Russia of the Russian Empire viewed land in Manitoba and interacted briefly with some Metis individuals near "House's Hotel" at Pigeon Lake. The Mennonite East Reserve, east of the Red River, begun in 1874, and the West Reserve, initially seventeen townships, with its first villages founded in 1875, resulted from that delegation's trip.

The better drained land in the West Reserve was largely occupied by villages founded in 1875-76, and new arrivals and young newly-married couples from villages such as Osterwick and Waldheim (1876) were looking for land to the north of those areas. Blumstein was founded in 1875 and Schoendorf, just southeast of the Research Station at Morden, and Schoenfeld, approximately one mile northwest of the "three-mile corner" on P.T.H. No 3 were founded in 1876 and 1877.

### The Menno-Canuck Difficulty

Villages such as Waldheim, Schoendorf and Schoenfeld, on the western periphery of Mennonite settlement and on unforested land, were in close proximity to the Anglo-Celt settlers from Ontario on forested lands. In their application for the land of the West Reserve, through William Hespeler and Jacob Schantz, Mennonite leaders had insisted on the inclusion of the partly forested western townships 1-5W, 2-5W and 3-5W in the areas to be reserved for a time for exclusive settlement by Mennonites

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because the forests were needed as a source of building timber and fuel. Although the Mennonite settlement began in the late summer of 1875, the reserve was not officially proclaimed by Order-in-Council until 25 April 1876. In 1875 and 1876 the government at Ottawa appears to have been ignorant of the fact of the presence of the Anglo-Celts, some legal homesteaders and some squatters, on the forested sections near Dead Horse Creek and Plum River below the hills. Since both groups, the Mennonites, who regarded the woods on the West Reserve as legally reserved for their exclusive use, and the Ontario homesteaders and squatters who had been in possession of those same forested sections, claimed that land, in some cases since late 1874, a collision was inevitable.

Unfriendly encounters between the Anglo-Celts, many of whom were Orangemen, who regarded anyone not of Protestant British origin as "foreigners", and Mennonite men harvesting timber for their log house-barns, developed in 1877, and began to be reported in Winnipeg newspapers under the heading "Menno-Cannuck (sic) War", later softened to "Difficulty". One such incident occurred in November/December 1877 on quarter sections SE 30-3-4W and NE 19-3-4W, land on which Johnston Rinn had a homestead claim. Rinn became aware that men of the new village of Schoenfeld were cutting timber on "his" land and made a legal complaint of theft of timber to the sheriff at Nelsonville. The latter came out to Schoenfeld to arrest the miscreants, but "they would not be arrested" - whereupon the sheriff went back to Nelsonville, swore in a posse of local stalwarts and returned to Schoenfeld to enforce his warrant. According to the papers, a "scuffle" occurred on the village street, and, although not totally successful, the sheriff and his assistants managed to take five Mennonite men back to Nelsonville, where they appeared before Justice of the Peace A.P. Moore, who sent them to Winnipeg under guard, where they spent the night in the provincial jail on Main Street. Next morning they appeared in court before Chief Justice Edmund Burke Wood, who released them on their own recognizance to appear at the March 1878 assizes.

The Dominion Government became concerned that the dispute would have a negative impact on further Mennonite immigration and, now aware of a problem in law which caused civil unrest, appointed William Pearce, Dominion Land Surveyor (DLS), representing the Department of the Interior, and William Hespeler, Immigration agent, representing the Department of Agriculture, and able to translate from German to English for Pearce, to investigate the problem and to make recommendations for a solution. This they did, meeting with Isaak Mueller and all the village mayors, and with the Anglo-Celt homesteaders and squatters.

Pearce prepared appropriate maps of all quarter sections in question in townships 2 and 3 of range 5 West and a detailed report and recommended action, signed by both Pearce and Hespeler. The investigation and negotiations continued from late 1877 until May 1878. The

solution adopted was to take about half the land in townships 2 and 3 range 5W out of the West Reserve and to compensate the Mennonites by adding Townships 1 range 7W and 1 range 8W to the Reserve. A boundary called the "Menno-Canuck Line" was surveyed and marked by cutting the undergrowth, and constituted a demarcation line between the Ontario homesteaders and the land remaining in the West Reserve. Non-Mennonite homesteaders east of the "line" were allowed to take homesteads further west on the condition that they would drop all charges of timber theft, etc. Squatters were summarily ejected — they had no valid claim. Johnson Rinn was eventually given the eastern half of section 3-4-6W, a claim that had been abandoned by one Herbert Acheson. The area east of the Menno-Canuck line continued to be reserved for exclusive use by Mennonites, along with the newly added townships 1-7W and 1-8W.

With that, the land that we know as Burwalde, was mainly retained in the West Reserve — but not the western portion of the "Burwalde Woods". Burwalde village came into existence in the spring and summer of 1878. The quarter section on which the school stood from the summer of 1937 on, was always for us Burwaldeans the central focus of our community, i.e. SW30-3-4W. It was also right next to the focus of that scuffle on the street of Schoenfeld. The resultant Menno-Canuck Line was an artefact of law, affecting all of the West Reserve and a precedent in early Manitoba and prairie settlement history. It was totally forgotten until John Warkentin's research uncovered it in 1960. As we shall see, it was not the last compromise in the early history of Burwalde.

## Great Publishing News

*Reinländer Gemeinde Buch 1880–1903, Volume I* of the *West Reserve Historical Series*, will be reprinted! The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society translated this genealogical and historical tool from the original German documents and published it in 1994. Edited by John Dyck and William Harms, this volume has been out of print for some time now and requests for it continue to come in.

Before reprinting the Local History Committee of the MMHS would like to correct any errors in the first printing. The committee is also collecting any additional information for the families listed in this register. This could include birth, baptismal and death dates, as well as spouse's and children's names. The source documentation must be included. This information will be used at the discretion of the editorial committee. Please forward any corrections or new information as soon as possible to:

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# Mennonite Heritage Village Celebrates 40 Years

We are celebrating 40 years of activity and development of a Mennonite museum, now known as Mennonite Heritage Village. It is an occasion to look back at a truly massive community project which has become known throughout the country and abroad as well. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of visitors from

foreign countries have visited the Village over the years.

A Mennonite museum was the primary goal of people who gathered to form the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society in 1957 and 1958. They had been preceded in their more general goals by local organizations in Steinbach and Altona which stressed Mennonite heritage concerns, but had to terminate activities after three or four years.

By 1963 heritage promoters had brought to fruition advanced planning on a museum, including acquisition of land in the Steinbach (former East Reserve) area. Bylaws were put in place by 1964, with an emerging on site program already taking shape. People like John C. Reimer, Peter J. B. Reimer, Gerhard Lohrenz, Gerhard Ens, Victor and Elisabeth Peters, and others were prime movers of the project in those early days.

We want to recall the pioneering founders of the project, as was mentioned, but also the hundreds of local and other volunteers who have formed the backbone of service and support during the 40 years. There would have been no museum, of course, were it not for hundreds of thousands of visitors and guests who continue to demonstrate that MHV remains a centre of interest and significance for people far beyond our borders, as stated above. Figures for last year show 85,000 or more, and we are expecting at least that many to become a part of our celebrations in 2004. With your encouragement and own participation, there may indeed be many more.

The vision of MHV founders included a deep appreciation of the heritage of the Mennonite community. All believed this heritage needed to be kept alive and shared because it included a whole way of life that had been experienced by all over many centuries and in different countries. They knew changes would come, but hopefully not at the expense of losing the values which remain the core of Mennonite thought and life as other generations come upon the scene.

The Mennonite story is a part of the larger world wide Christian story. It represents a community's religious experience and self-understanding drawn from a number of historical settings in various parts of the world. These facets of living and working together have shaped the way

in which an interpretation of biblical beliefs was formed. Under God's guidance, this understanding has been made the springboard for mission and action over the years.

It has always been the intention of the directors of the museum to communicate this to new Mennonite generations of young people, and to people of all ages from other religious traditions also. When the premises were significantly enlarged in 1990, at the time of the Mennonite World Conference in Winnipeg, this expansion included an enhanced and more permanent Mennonite heritage exhibit. It now tells this story more graphically, and we believe, more meaningfully, than before. Our frontline people on the museum grounds, including several hundred trained volunteer guides, tell this story to groups and individuals who come to the Village each week.

## Introducing New Staff and Board Members

### Staff

**Jim Penner**, our new executive director, took office on April 18. He works with the MHV management team including **Abe Martens**, grounds manager; **Linda Schroeder**, programs and volunteers director, and **Wilma Bell**, accountant, as well as our curator, **Roland Sawatzky**. Several others serve on full-time staff, and are currently assisted by ten or more summer staff students and others.

### Board Members

The board consists of 13 people, three represent the RM of Hanover, the Ladies' Auxiliary, and The City of Steinbach and the others are elected. We list the names below (in alphabetical order)

David Banman, City of Steinbach rep, Chair of Fund Raising Com

Roger Druwe

Bert Friesen, Chair of Finance Com

Evelyn Friesen, Ladies Auxiliary rep.

Al Hamm, vice president

Elmer Hildebrand

Elsie Janzen

Lawrence Klippenstein, interim president

Ken Mantle

Herman Martens

Julaine Penner, Chair of Special Fund Raising Events

Arnold Reimer, secretary

Neil Warkentin, RM of Hanover rep

The board includes people from the communities (also in alphabetical order) of Altona, Grunthal, Marchand, Rosenort, Steinbach, St. Anne, and Winnipeg. Because the museum is incorporated as a Manitoba Mennonite institution, and looks for a wide representation of support and involvement from all Manitoba Mennonites, and others, the board attempts to illustrate this in its makeup from year to year.

# Events

## Heritage Village Events

**June 19 - Antique Farm Equipment Show.**

**July 1 - Canada Day Festivities.** This is a celebration of Canada's multicultural diversity through music, traditional dress, nourishing meals and other activities, including many for children.

**July 20 and 22 - Windmill Terrace Gala Dinner.** Watch for further announcements or contact the office.

**July 30 - August 2 - 40th Anniversary Pioneer Days.**

This is normally our biggest public event of the year. Four days of pioneer activities, parades, steam power threshing, milling, horse show, petting zoo and other children's fun, craft market, ox cart and

horse wagon rides, music, and traditional foods.

**September 6 - Fall on the Farm.** Highlighting harvest time activities for all ages, along with hearty food, music and pioneer demonstrations.

**On any day the museum is open,** you are encouraged to take self-guided tours, or avail yourself of guided excursions around the grounds.

*For further information on above items call:*

1-204-326-9661, or email [info@mennonitevillage.com](mailto:info@mennonitevillage.com)

## Visit the Many Heritage Celebrations in Manitoba this Summer

This summer will provide many opportunities for residents, visitors and tourists, to see, hear about and join in celebrating the 130-year Mennonite heritage in Manitoba. Holiday options include historical events, reunions, many fairs, and festivals, museums and community visits. Here are a few summer events and attractions, July to Sept., grouped geographically.

**Altona:** Here in the heart of the Mennonite West Reserve, this town hosts the Manitoba Sunflower Festival July 16-18. Other attractions: an aquatic centre with huge play area and a new aquatic centre (as well as a replica of Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" on an easel seven stories tall).

**Gretna:** Site of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, the oldest Mennonite secondary school in Canada. A cairn nearby is a memorial to the Mennonite pioneers who settled the area. Gretna will be the site of the 2004 "Hot Spot" Festival September 4-5.

**Rempel Reunion** for the Wilhelm Rempel/Agatha Sawatzky family will be held August 6-8 at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna.



**Niverville:** One of the oldest Mennonite communities in Manitoba, it's become a fast-growing town of 2,300, and every June features the Niverville Old-Tyme Country Fair. Nearby is the Mennonite Memorial Landing Site, at the junction of the Red and Rat rivers, where Mennonites first landed in Manitoba in 1874.

**Morden:** Situated near the Pembina hills, this historic town provides an opportunity to walk down Morden's tree-lined streets, to see the arts gallery, the marine dinosaur museum, explore the hills, and join in celebrating the 38th Corn and Apple Festival.

**Pembina Valley Threshermen's Museum:** The museum holds its annual Threshermen's Reunion Sept. 10-11, featuring old-time threshing and traditional Mennonite Food.

**Plum Coulee:** Site of the future Prairie View Elevator, favourite attractions are the pond, its beach and a series of pathways for hikers, with benches to sit, relax, read and observe nature. Summer highlights are the Plum Fest, Aug 20-22, and a Perogy Supper, Sept. 25.

**Post Road:** Post Road Memorial Tours take participants through the West Reserve, from Fort Dufferin where Mennonite settlers got off a steamer and set foot on Manitoba soil in 1875, through Mennonite villages as far west as Mountain City (now a ghost town), near Morden.

**Winkler:** Manitoba's fastest growing city, built by Mennonites and industrialists, hosts the Winkler Harvest Festival and Exhibition on August 13-15. Noting Winkler's agricultural roots the Stanley Agricultural Fair is run alongside.

**Rosenort:** Situated on the Morris River, the Kleine Gemeinde (Evangelical Mennonite Conference) founded the town in 1874. It is a prime farming area with some prosperous industry and Roselane Heritage House & Tea Room is one of the community attractions.

**Grunthal/Kleefeld/Blumenort:** These villages in the Mennonite East Reserve area each host summer events: the Hanover Agricultural Fair & Exhibition at Grunthal August 13-15. The others are the Blumenort Fair in early June, and the Kleefeld Honey Festival celebrates its claim to fame in late August.

**Boissevain:** Mennonites from Russia began a church in this western Manitoba town in 1927. An attraction is the nearby International Peace Garden, dedicated to the peaceful relationship between Canada and the United States. It includes a campground, interpretive centre and hiking trails. Boissevain and nearby Killarney, also influenced by Mennonites, are located in the Turtle Mountains. Several camps are situated on nearby lakes. A prairie pioneer day threshing demonstration will be held at Killarney July 10.

# Altona history group continues Mennonite study

by Elmer Heinrichs

The resettlement of East Reserve Bergthalers immigrants to the West Reserve in the period from about 1878 to 1882 was the theme of Altona History Seekers study this year.

A good turnout of over 25 at W.C. Miller Collegiate at the first Feb. session heard historian Lawrence Klippenstein introduce the sessions on relocation, outline some of the reasons for the move, the number of migrants involved, and the villages founded in the process.

In five more sessions of exploring this year's topic historians heard about a planned revision of the Rempel and Harms Atlas, adding new data on villages founded by the relocating Bergthalers, and heard about education debates: the MEI and the MCI, private and public schools.

As well historian Adolf Ens told about church transitions and tensions to 1900, Peter Bergen covered Sommerfeld village and Gemeinde history. Other presenters told about early days in Gretna and Plum Coulee, and about the early history of Edenburg, Halbstadt and Neubergthal.

Only one-seventh of the 50,000 Russian Mennonites whom Canada had hoped to attract chose the young dominion as their new homeland. The first arrivals in 1874 - Bergthalers and Kleine Gemeinde settled on the East Reserve, wrote Frank H. Epp in *Mennonites in Canada*.

Two problems were exposed immediately to the farmers just arrived from the Russian steppes: a heavy covering of brush and trees, seemingly inferior soils and bad weather conditions.

Not surprisingly therefore, wrote Epp, some 32 Kleine Gemeinde families, better positioned than others, turned their backs on the East Reserve from the outset, and set out to settle on the west side of the Red River, northwest of Morris, along the banks of the Scratching River.

Klippenstein told the class that of 527 Bergthal families migrating from Russia, 440 came to Manitoba, with some going directly to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, USA, and some staying in the Fargo, N.D. area for some years. Bergthal families constituted 40 per cent of the Mennonites.

Twenty-one villages were set up on the East Reserve from 1874-76, and of these 16 were Bergthal villages. The crops were poor in the first few years, and the soil of inferior quality. Prof. John Warkentin's East Reserve study confirms that at best five of eight townships were suitable for farming. Early on, some decided to relocate to Butterfield, Minn., and a few joined the Reinlaender settling on the west part of the West Reserve from 1876 on.

After a year of heavy rains - the final straw - the major exodus for the West Reserve began about 1878, starting with several villages on the E. Reserve's northwest, with Bergthal as one of the largest. From here brothers Peter



Garry Enns, Editor of Gretna's centennial history, shares an item with Joe Braun, one of the organizers of the Altona history classes.

— Photo by Elmer Heinrichs

and Bernhard Klippenstein helped found Neubergthal.

The diary of Maria (Mrs. Martin) Klaassen records the move from the E. Reserve to Winnipeg for supplies, putting these on a steamer to Emerson, following with wagon and oxen, possibly along the Pembina Trail. Her nephew Dave Schellenberg also recorded the move.

In a matter of a few years as many as 20 villages sprang up on the West Reserve, mostly on Class 1 land in townships 1 and 2. Among these were Edenburg and Neuwaldegg, east of Gretna.

The 1881 federal census the area had at least 19 Bergthal villages, some 260 families, with the larger villages, of Edenburg, 117 residents; Schoenthal with 123 and Neuhoffnung, 117.

Klaas Mueller, first RM Warden, had jurisdiction over village development for the Reinlaender, and this initially included the villages of Rosenfeld and Halbstadt (14 families, 37 people), which both came under Bergthalers jurisdiction soon afterward.

Later, Klippenstein commented on his research on Altberghthal, established in 1879, now celebrating 125. In this village was the home and church office of Aeltesfer Johann Funk, from 1880 till his retirement in 1911. He also noted research sources at times overlooked.

One evening Mel and Margaret Klassen gave a slide presentation from their cruise on the Dnieper River and a look at the Ukraine today, with highlights and photos of Mennonite villages.

## Did you know:

compiled by Marianne Janzen

- that North Kildonan was once referred to as a "Chicken and garden village"
- that MBs first settled in 1928 on Edison
- that GCs came in 1929 and settled on Devon
- that they worshipped together in the same church on Edison Avenue until 1935

## Book Notes

by Lawrence Klippenstein and Sarah Schwab

The long-awaited atlas of the Chortitza Colony, giving historians a copy of the large 1867 map in the archives at Zaporozhe, Ukraine, is now in print. The editor is Heinrich Bergen of Regina, Saskatchewan, and the publisher, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. In paperback ringbound format, it is titled **Chortitza Colony Atlas - Altkolonie**, and contains 67 coloured maps. The price is \$30.00.



The **Mennonite Your Way Directory** is now in its ninth edition, and dated 2003-2005. As a 100 page paperbound volume, it is now in a new format under new publishers, Jay and Greta Basler of Mundelein, Illinois, USA. To contact them use email address [myw@mywdirectory.com](mailto:myw@mywdirectory.com) or phone/fax 1-847-949-6179. The Manitoba section alone (pp.79-81) contains over sixty entries, many of them in Winnipeg, but including numerous other communities also.



Historical studies in progress include community histories of Kleefeld and Steinbach in the former East Reserve, as well as Halbstadt, Burwalde, Winkler, Altbergthal, and Reinfeld, of the former West Reserve. Publication of the West Lynne/Sommerfelder Mennonite Church registers under the direction of the MMHS local history committee is planned for the near future, and a manuscript on interviews of residents of North Kildonan, Winnipeg, prepared by the late Heidi Koop is also awaiting publication.



Celebration of the 45th anniversary of the Winnipeg Mennonite Children's Choir, founded in 1957 by, and still under the direction of, Helen Litz, has included the publication of a beautiful photo album, **Winnipeg Mennonite Children's Choir: God is my song** (Winnipeg:



### Bus Tour to Austin / MacGregor Area

*Plan now to participate in this great one-day tour:*

**Date:** Saturday, October 9, 2004

**Time:** 8:00 a.m. bus pickup (Winnipeg) with possible pickup in Niverville and / or Carman.

**Activities:** Visit the EMC Church, coffee, with stories and displays

Tour the area churches, cemeteries, Care Home, local potato farms

Visit the Manitoba Agricultural Museum at Austin  
Lunch at the EMC Church

**Contact:** Bert Friesen (email: [bfrie@mts.net](mailto:bfrie@mts.net)) or Gilbert Brandt (email: [gbrandt@brandtfamily.com](mailto:gbrandt@brandtfamily.com)), 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E2

Deadline for signup: September 4, 2004. The bus arrangements need to be finalized.

Price \$40.00 pp inclusive. Meal only \$12.00.

Mennonite Children's Choir, 2002), hdc, 102 pp. A new anniversary CD of the choir's music is part of the volume. For further info contact Frank J Neufeld at 1-204-334-5425 in Winnipeg.



Helmut N. Enns has published **LaSalle Mennonite Cemetery: In Memory of our Fathers and Mothers** (Winnipeg, MB: privately published, 2003), pb, 94 pp. The book includes a good deal of community history also. For further info contact John Dahl, 3 Glencross Pl., Winnipeg, R3P 1M7 or call 1-204-488-7326.



Canadian Mennonite University Press has published the history of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada by Adolf Ens. This book, **Becoming a National Church**, will be released at the Mennonite Church Assembly in Winkler on July 8. The 250-plus page book encompasses the years 1902 to 1999.

A forthcoming book about the community of Reinfeld, entitled **The Village of Reinfeld: Fun, Frolic, Laughter, and Tears 1880 – 2004**, is authored by Sally Harms (Sara Heide-Friesen Harms). Further information about this book can be obtained by contacting the author at [sharms@mts.net](mailto:sharms@mts.net).

### How to obtain these books:

Unless otherwise specified, all books may be obtained from:

Mennonite Books at 1-204-668-7475 or email to [mennonitebooks@brar.dtfamily.com](mailto:mennonitebooks@brar.dtfamily.com)

Mennonite Heritage Centre at 1-204-888-6781 or email to [aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca)

### Membership Survey Results

A survey was included in the January 2004 mailing to all members. Of those who renewed, that is, returned a form, 55% filled in the survey. Of the total possible returns, this was about 31% return rate.

Of these the great majority, over 75%, were very satisfied with the Heritage Posting and the activities of the society. The only question with a divided result was the purchase of society publications. About 60% said they purchased society publications and 40% did not. This could reflect varying interests or needs.

The tentative conclusions are that for our members, the society is performing well. We are involved in activities that are favoured by the members. Many members are directly involved in various projects, support the society by attending functions, and provide generous donations. The society continues to be open to comments and suggestions. The comments made are valuable and will be noted carefully. Please continue to dialogue with us. Contact the members of the Membership and Publicity Committee.

## **Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society**

600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4

169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 2E5

## **REVIEW — Chortitza Colony Atlas: Mennonite Old Colony (1867)**

**by Lawrence Klippenstein**

Heinrich Bergen, compiler and editor. **Chortitza Colony Atlas: Mennonite Old Colony (1867)** (Saskatoon, Sask.: Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, 2004), pb. 116pp., 35.00 Cnd.

The story of this rather striking map collection begins in 1996, when Heinrich revisited his original home village of Einlage (Kitchkas) in the former "Old Colony", Chortitza, and then stopped in at the Regional Archives in Zaporozhe, Ukraine. He was shown a large coloured topographical map of the western part of the city, once known as Chortitza. Dated 1867, the map was obviously an important document even for the local archivist, Alexander Tedeev, who was proud to exhibit the map for Heinrich and others with him.

The map really caught the editor's attention, and from that moment he could think only of how he could obtain a copy and bring it back to Canada somehow. The local archives had no facilities that make duplicating easily possible, so a few snapshots of the map were taken, and the rest of the project remained a dream.

Heinrich never gave up, however, and spent several hundred dollars trying to have the photocopying done, but could not make it happen. It became a reality when Otto and Florence Driedger from Regina, frequent visitors to Ukraine, and short-term teachers in a social work school at Odessa, managed to photograph the entire map in smaller sections, and bring the negatives to Canada. After having the film developed, Heinrich had the whole document with him, but only in many pieces. Assembling them to get something like the original became did become possible, and a plan of publishing the material somehow could now be considered.

This atlas is the result of untiring efforts to put the fragments together, and make them usable for research. It features this very unique coloured map portrait of the colony's geography, showing the exact location of all the contiguous villages of the Old Colony on the Dnieper River (i.e. not including Kronsgarten and Schoenwiese because they were settled east of the river). The latter two villages are also featured, using other sources.

Keys for colour coding are included, along with various other kinds of interpretive aids, and related items to make the context clear for users. An important aspect of the final

portion of the book is a 15-page brief early history of the colony provided by this reviewer, and giving the story of the villages founded and developed in the early years. It also features a discussion, on themes like the headstone of Jakob Hoeppner on the island of Chortitza, and Johann Bartsch of Rosenthal. A plea is made to see if the monuments, removed years ago to the Mennonite Heritage Village at Steinbach, could be replaced in some way.

Most of the individual village portions of the larger map are supplemented with some type of village plan map showing the originals farmsteads and their owners at some point in the histories of these villages. Details include locations of the villages, designations of land areas for each community, as well as the location of creeks and gullies. Interestingly, these "schluchten" have Low German names transliterated on the map into Russian letters, hence are incomprehensible except for people who know and can read these two languages well — and have this key to reading them!

Among other items of interest are the locations of two sheep-raising pastures at sites called Gruenfeld, just east of Schoenhorst and Berghal, just west of Schoeneberg. An older map, provided by the Mennonite Heritage Centre, perhaps originating in the late 1830s, featuring both pastures, and the number of farmsteads found in each village at that time, has been added as Map 5b.

The number of maps totals around 70 with most being the different smaller portions of the 1867 large colour version. The fact that some sections are provided in German makes the atlas useful to German readers as well.

Many maps of the Old Colony, and also a number of the villages, have appeared in earlier publications. This collection brings the material together in a new convenient way, with perspectives that other versions usually do not have. The MHSS, with its assistant editor for the project, Victor Wiebe, has undertaken a very worthwhile project in releasing this work to the public. Bergen will retain the credit of making sure that something very valuable found hidden away in an archive in Zaporozhe (formerly Alexandrovsk), can now be consulted wherever a copy of this atlas will be available anywhere else in the world. We trust that readers of this review will increase the number of such locations and opportunities.