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OBITUARY - DELBERT F. PLETT

*Excerpted from the obituary written by the family of
Delbert F. Plett*

Delbert was born March 6, 1948 in Steinbach, Man. He grew up on the "Plattehof" in the Blumenort district and enjoyed a happy and secure childhood. He attended school in Blumenort, Man., enjoying his studies, but also frequently getting into mischief. As a teenager he helped his Dad on the farm and in the family's bush camps. At 16 he left home to work in construction camps in Saskatchewan and Northern Ontario. He began his university studies in 1968 and graduated from the University of Manitoba with a law degree in 1972.

Delbert was baptized upon confession of his faith in Jesus Christ on June 7, 1964 in the Ridgewood Evangelical Mennonite Church. In 1975 he married Doreen Thomson of Winnipeg. On December 1, 1985 they joined the Steinbach Mennonite Church. To his lasting regret, the marriage eventually failed and ended in divorce in 1998.

In 1973, Delbert started his own law firm and in 1975 joined with Ernest R. Goossen, to form Plett, Goossen & Associates. Delbert continued to practice with various associates until this year. In February 2004, Delbert was diagnosed with terminal colon cancer and consequently, on June 1, retired from his law practice. He enjoyed his practice immensely, meeting and serving clients up to his very last day at the office, March 12, 2004.

Delbert had a zest for business, and land development in particular. Over the years he was involved in various development projects in and around Steinbach, Mitchell, Blumenort, and La Broquerie.

His "farm" in the Friedensfeld area gave him special enjoyment as he would spend countless hours wandering the fields in deep contemplation over the mysteries of life. Delbert served his community and province by sitting on various committees and boards. He was honored to be appointed "Queen's Counsel" by the Government of Canada in 1992.

Having a passion for history since grade 9, Delbert turned to the study of his own roots and heritage in about 1978. He studied the Mennonites who immigrated to Manitoba in the 1870s, as well as their history in Russia, Polish-Russia and Flanders. In 1995 he organized the first of five Mennonite heritage tours,



retracing the steps of Mennonite ancestors in Europe. In early June, 2004 Delbert was privileged to lead this tour one last time and to participate in the Bicentennial celebrations of the Molotschna Colony (1804-2004).

Delbert wrote and compiled 14 books on conservative Mennonites and published as many by other authors. In 1988 he organized the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and oversaw its operations until 2003, when the name was changed to Flemish Mennonite Historical Society Inc. Delbert had been the editor of the history magazine, *Preservings*, since 1995. In 2001 he and Adina Reger co-authored, *Diese Steine*, a popular history of the Russian Mennonites.

Delbert F. Plett Q.C. passed away peacefully after a battle with liver cancer on Thursday, Nov. 4, 2004 at Bethesda Hospital in Steinbach, at the age of 56 years. Since Delbert left no immediate family, he has left the bulk of his estate to the "D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation Inc.," meant to foster and encourage research and writing about the conservative and traditional Mennonites.

Meditation at Plett Funeral

by Roy Loewen

Excerpted by Gilbert G. Brandt

In John 15 Christ bids his followers to "remain in me as I in you; as a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches." In Matthew 5, Christ outlines a series of blessings: (1) Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth, (2) Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God, (3) Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

Who are "branches of the true vine," who are the "meek, the pure in heart?" They are the Children of God. They are our parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Christ had broken the power of evil on the cross, had died for the sins of the world, and thus with assurance, they knew they could be followers of Christ. They could know a life of divine love and mercy.

When earlier this year, and shortly after learning that his cancer had metastasized to his liver, Delbert called me over to his house and asked me to speak at his funeral. His instruction was clear: don't praise me, but tell the people about the vision that propelled my writing. (If I praise Delbert too much we'll let him chide me when we meet again). Just why he went to such extraordinary lengths, spent so much energy, devoted so many resources, to publishing so many books, was a mystery to many people. His answer always was simple: to tell about the faith of our ancestors, our grandparents, those Mennonites and their descendants who came to the southern plains of Manitoba in the 1870s.

Today I want to offer a description of these people as Delbert told it to us. As I see it, they were: first, followers of Christ; second, intense and firm believers in God's guidance; third, humble and meek, the quiet in the land; fourth, ordinary 'flesh and blood' humans with a zest for life; fifth, people with a strong sense of belonging.

As followers of Christ, as *Nachfolger Christi*, these people were pilgrims in this world. They had come to Manitoba in the 1870s because of their simple, intense commitment to follow the way of Christ, to "be part of the vine," "to remain in Christ." As followers of Christ many also departed, leaving for Mexico and Paraguay in the 1920s and 1940s where they sought to rebuild their communities of faith. To be a follower meant to take a stand, to embrace costly discipleship.

In the summer of 1980 Delbert, successful young lawyer of 32, having ridden the heady real estate market of the 1970s, flattered me, a rookie schoolteacher, by inviting me into his office at the old Goossen-Plett law building at the far end of Steinbach's Main Street. He led the way into his vault and there pulled out the old Gothic handwritten manuscript of Bishop Peter Toews. It was at least 100 years old and told the story of how back in 1812 Delbert's great great grandfather, Rev. Klaas Reimer, had led a

spiritual renewal movement in Russia. In this old writing, which became the foundational document in Delbert's seven books on the *Kleine Gemeinde*, Reimer had stood up to his bishop by insisting that the people of God must be true followers of Christ.

This commitment to follow Christ literally led to the founding of the *Kleine Gemeinde*. They had rediscovered, as Delbert believed, the "Anabaptist Vision," the insight of the Mennonite founders almost 400 years earlier, that "faith" in Christ could not be divorced from "following Christ". To be a true Christian was to accept the teaching of Christ that religion was irrevocably linked to peace, community and love.

This same commitment to "follow Christ" led Bishop Johann Wiebe to Canada in the 1870s. And for me the most powerful chapter in Delbert's *Old Colony Mennonites* in Canada is the one depicting the life of this envisioned and stubborn follower of Christ. Imagine the newly-arrived Bishop Johann Wiebe standing on the banks of the Red River in Manitoba in 1875, looking westward, anticipating the settlement in the West Reserve. This land of Canada, he declared to his Old Colony church, was one of opportunity. Waving fields of full-headed wheat would come for sure, but more importantly in this land they would follow the way of Christ. Here in Manitoba the church congregation and not the state would teach the children, here the followers of Christ would alone determine their response to threats of war. A second feature of the people in Delbert's books was their intense and simple faith. Like the writer in Psalm 46 their world might have been one in turmoil, military service threatened, seas "roared and foamed," nations vied for supremacy. Yet, they had a faith that anchored their very life. The stories of stubborn, firm belief in God's providence fill, indeed overflow, Delbert's writings.

One of my favourites is the story of great great great grandmother Elisabeth Reimer of Blumenort who at a family gathering in 1875 heard her son Klaas, Steinbach's leading merchant, and son-in-law Abraham Friesen, Steinbach's confident windmill owner, talk about leaving frigid, grasshopper-prone Manitoba. They would lead the clan south to the rich soils and temperate climate of Nebraska. It seems as if the two businessmen had considered all details, except the force of their mother. Elisabeth was the matriarch of the clan and she had the final say. Delbert thought that her 200 pound body secured her authority or perhaps it was the fact Elisabeth was the main breadwinner. Her husband, as Bishop David P. Reimer of this congregation once put it, was simply too intellectual to "end up on a green twig." As I see it, her force came from her simple, stubborn faith. As well-heeled sons Klaas and Abram made their plans on that Sunday afternoon, Elisabeth interjected, standing in their path, with

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nothing more than a simple rebuke: "God has led us to this land, and in the land we will serve Him." There would be no moving south and hence Steinbach flourished, and as Delbert reminded his readers, the Reimers of Steinbach became national leaders, leading businesspeople, even celebrated authors.

If these people knew where they stood in their faith, they were nonetheless the quiet in the land. They might be maligned, but they would not defend themselves. And here I will make a digression and indeed praise Delbert. I always saw Delbert not only as historian, but indeed as lawyer. Except this lawyer was less interested in real estate and corporate law than in seeking justice in a virtual courtroom. How else could one understand Delbert's single-mindedness, his relentlessness? In his writing Delbert was the "good lawyer", the one offering a service known in the profession as *pro bono*, service for free. He granted that service to the 'quiet in the land', the conservatives who refused to defend themselves and whose simple discipleship we moderns found it so hard to appreciate. And so Delbert stepped in, putting their story to a jury of skeptical history readers.

Delbert had his critics for sure, suggesting that he saw issues in terms that were far too "black and white," that he lacked objectivity. But his defense of his agenda never wavered; he stayed on message. These people, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, spread from central Nova Scotia through southern fields of Ontario and Manitoba, to northern Alberta, from Manitoba's Interlake to the mountain valleys of Mexico, the jungles of Belize, the hot bush lands of Paraguay and Bolivia, must have their defense. Fourth, the people in Delbert's many writings were a people who belonged, they were all connected. Delbert's amazing knowledge of genealogy will be remembered by everyone. His own books were always impeccably and laboriously indexed; no one was left loose and undefined. And Delbert took special delight in providing these links to unsuspecting folks: suddenly university professors and archivists who knew each other professionally were linked by kin. Perhaps because he had no children of his own, the Mennonite family became his clan and he the facilitator of those seeking their place in the family tree.

In his most recent book, Delbert returned to the subject

of his very first, the Plett family. In *Johann Plett: A Mennonite Family Saga* readers are introduced to a clan divided by migration, some came from Russia in the 1870s, others remained to face the horror of revolution, collectivization, successive wars, and then eventual exile to Siberia. Within the pages of this vast book are hundreds of people who come alive and who offer their testimonies of faith. Consider how the many descendants of David L. Plett, the great great grandfather of many members of this congregation, are strengthened in this sense belonging. The 'flesh and blood' humans in Delbert's books are not only caring and thinking. They are also hearty, earthy, farm folk of the Low German culture. Delbert was an historian with an ear to the ground, an eye for the everyday, a nose for the sensual. He wrote "social history," the life stories of ordinary folks, our grandfathers and grandmothers. Like, Delbert, one sensed that they knew whose accomplishments were worthy, whose were merely boasts; these people knew pedigree, they had those they respected and those they dismissed. They were also people of the pen: young men keeping the diaries, young women the heart-felt poetry, elderly grandfather copying 'morality literature.' They were people who loved to work with their hands and express their artistic senses: notice their fine pottery, exquisite calligraphy, tender wood carving, solid furniture, beautiful *Frakturmalen*, their colourful hand-drawn paper-cut art. Listen to their own Low German stories and know them as folks with an appreciation for the ironic, people who revelled in "earthy folklore and ribald humour." And of course these stories of the everyday often had a moral. My own moralizing has it that Delbert was like his grandfather Heinrich. He would publish relentlessly, expending energy beyond description, but as hundreds of local writers, lay historians, family tree buffs, will testify, Delbert was especially skilled in helping (some might say cajoling and manipulating) other historians write their own side of the story of faithfulness. He would make it seem as if it was their idea, he would offer them the richest of historic materials and then allow them to pen their name to the story.

Delbert's love for the people of God cannot be dismissed. I know he was moved by their commitment to follow Christ daily, by their rock-firm faith in God, their quiet and meek hearts, their sense of belonging, their earthy everyday enjoyment of the ironic. They left a powerful testimony. And as Delbert shared on numerous occasions, perhaps his faith had been weakened in his early years as "rich, young lawyer." What brought him back to the faith, what led him to meditate on God's word, what sent him to the fields to contemplate God's mercies, was the testimony of these our ancestors, simple followers of Christ. At the end of his life, Delbert could attest that "things were right between him and God." He had come to know a deeper side to life. The path was clear, it was quiet obedience, it was coming to be still and knowing that a merciful God calls his children to his side, to live as branches of the true vine.

Co-editors

Gilbert Brandt & Bert Friesen

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Elmer Heinrichs (chair), Gilbert Brandt,
Bert Friesen, Marianne Janzen, Sarah Schwab

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The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter, *Heritage Postings*, welcomes letters and reports pertaining to the historical interests of society members. Correspondence can be mailed to Gilbert Brandt, 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 2E2, or e-mailed to the editor at: editor@mmhs.org ISSN 1491-2325



Back row: Alf Redekopp, Victor Wiebe, David Giesbrecht, Richard Thiessen, Peter Penner. Front row: Linda Hubert Hecht, Abe Dueck, Sam Steiner, Bert Friesen, John Sharp.

Possible Expansion of Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia

report by Bert Friesen

The Editorial Board of the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (CMEO) met in Waterloo, 3 Dec. 2004, to discuss this on-going project. This project successfully has made information about Mennonites in Canada more accessible. The growth in the number of visits to the site has been steady.

In view of this growth, the Board felt that it was ready to expand the parameters of the project. Therefore, the decision was made to make this a global Anabaptist/Mennonite encyclopedia online. The first phase of this expansion would be to limit the content to English-language material but to have no geographic limitation.

The CMEO Board is inviting the historical committee of Mennonite Church U.S.A. and the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission, a North America group, to consider joining the project. These two groups will decide on the matter in 2005. After that, plans will have to be made in terms of structure, policy, and editorial process as to how the project will proceed.

This change could also in the long-term affect the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. To date this has been a project of this society and a major focus for it. Any expansion beyond Canada will affect this society's mandate.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MANITOBA MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Saturday, February 5

1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Place: To be announced

Details of the Agenda to follow

Discussions:

- increasing membership
- setting vision
- determining new projects
- usage of the new logo

Election of Board and Executive

Local history workshop and Membership and Publicity organized tour in Austin/MacGregor area

2005 April 16

Features: a brief history paper on the 7 Mennonite congregations in the area a tour of these congregation meeting houses, MCC store, Manitoba Agricultural Museum

Bus will leave Winnipeg only and only if enough people register by 15 March 2005. Otherwise we will travel in private vehicles and have a local bus only for the tour.

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

Come and explore your family history!

FAMILY ROOTS DAY

Saturday, March 19, 2005

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

at

Canadian Mennonite University

600 Shaftsbury Blvd

CMU Chapel (south east corner of campus)

On display...

- Genealogical records
- Family registries – von "ditt Zied & yant Zied"
*(If you are interested in displaying your family records,
contact Werner Toews at W.Toews@shaw.ca)*
- Census lists/ship lists/church records
- Register early for a free 15 minute consultation on your genealogy questions
with Grandma 4.1

Genealogy Workshop 1:00 p.m.

By Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

Introduction to a new tool...

- The origin of the Sommerfeld Gemeinde
- The development of the new Sommerfelder Gemeinde Buch
- A power point presentation on how to use this new resource
- And more!

Other

- Book sales
- Introduction to the Heritage Centre, and its many resources
- Walk around and view the CMU campus
- Visit and find new relations!

Admission \$3.00

Purchase lunch in the cafeteria, or bring your own.

**Sponsored by Mennonite Heritage Centre
and the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society**

GENEALOGY — The Bergthal Colony Schroeders — Part 1

by Glenn Penner

Introduction

Many Mennonite Schroeders in North and South America are descended from two Schroeder families who lived in the former Bergthal Colony in imperial Russia. The two Schroeder families are those of Johann Schroeder (1807-1884) and Simon Schroeder (1817-1876). The purpose of this article is not to trace the descendants of these two people, but to look at their origins, their ancestry and their connections to other Mennonite Schroeders.

Part I Simon Schroeder (1817-1876)

I have been attempting to determine the parentage of Simon Schroeder since 1976. He, together with his wife and their children can be found in volume A, page 141 of the Bergthal Colony church register.¹ During the next 20 years the only sources of information on his possible origins were found in two references on pages 357 and 358 of B. H. Unruh's book.² The first reference indicates that a Simon Schroeder of Neumünsterberg, West Prussia, moved to Schönhorst, Chortitza Colony in 1839. This information appears to have come from an "Ausland Paß" of 1839 and an "Auswanderung Erlaubnis" of May 12, 1841. These two documents are apparently lost. The location of his birth is given in one of these documents, but is unreadable. Unruh gives "Marienburg?" as his birth location. The sources of these documents are not given. The other reference (BHU p. 358) is to a Simon Schroeder born in Schönsee, West Prussia, who moved to Schönfeld, Chortitza colony sometime before 1852. According to Unruh this document also indicates that a Johann Schroeder and a Johann Sawatsky did the same thing. This information comes from "Hyp. Beil. Akt. Schönsee, Bl. 11". These are estate (court) records. It looks as if the Simon Schroeder mentioned on page 358 is the one who is in the Bergthal Colony since the village of Schönfeld was in the Bergthal Colony, not the Chortitza Colony. But could Simon Schroeder who moved from Neumünsterberg, West Prussia to Schönhorst, Chortitza Colony in 1839 be the same person as the one in Schönfeld, Bergthal Colony in 1852?

Over the past several years some of the Russian census data covering the Mennonite colonies has become available. For example, 1850 census extracts for a number of Mennonites who moved from the Chortitza to the Bergthal colonies are available.³ These include the family of Simon Schroeder. According to the census extract Simon Jacob Schroeder of Schönhorst arrived from abroad in 1840 and settled in the Bergthal colony in 1843. The unreadable Bergthal village name looks like it may say "Schönfeld". His family in 1850 consisted of the following:

	Simon Jakob Schroeder	34
Sons:	Kornelius	6
	Bernhard (Boris in Russian)	2
	Jakob	1
Wife:	Anna Kornelyeva	24
Daughters	Maria	5
	Susanna	3

This fits with the family of Simon Schroeder as found in the Bergthal colony church records. Since son Abraham is not included one can assume that the census was taken before May of 1850. This census confirms that the two Simon Schroeders found in Unruh's book are the same person. The census also indicates that the father of Simon Schroeder was Jakob Schroeder and that the father of his wife Anna Banmann was Kornelius Banmann.

According to pages 357 and 358 of Unruh, Simon Schroeder was born in Schönsee, West Prussia and later lived in Neumünsterberg, West Prussia before moving to Russia. The Mennonites of Schönsee belonged to the Ladekopp Flemish church. Simon Schroeder's birth could not be found in the Ladekopp church records.⁴ In fact, a search of all the available West Prussian Mennonite church records for the birth of Simon Schroeder proved fruitless. Fortunately, over the past 5 years, a large amount of Russian archival material on the Mennonite colonies has been microfilmed and these microfilms are available at many of the North American archives. One of these large collections is from the Odessa state archives.⁵ Here we find documents regarding an inheritance received by Simon Schroeder and by the surviving children of Peter Ens and Katharina Wiens.⁶ The documents in this file, dated in the year 1852, indicate that the inheritance is from Maria (Westerwick) Schroeder. They also state that Simon Schroeder was formerly of Schönhorst and was living in Schönfeld, Bergthal colony in 1852. Furthermore, these records state that Simon Schroeder was the son of Bernhard and Maria (Westerwick) Schroeder of Schönseerfeld, West Prussia. This is not in agreement with the 1850 Russian census, which gives Simon's father's name as Jakob. Interestingly these documents also mention Johann Schroeder and Johann Sawatsky as the guardians of the Ens children. Therefore Unruh has mistakenly included these two as immigrants to the Bergthal colony from West Prussia, when they were in fact born in the Chortitza colony.⁷ So far I have been unable to determine what the connection is between the Ens children and Simon Schroeder. For those who are interested one of the documents contains the signature of "Simon Schroeder".

With this information at hand a second search of the Ladekopp and Bärwalde (Fürstenwerder) records gave a baptism for Simeon, son of Berend Schroeter of Neumünsterberg, on June 7, 1834 in the Bärwalde baptism records. Unfortunately in 1880 the entire church record collection of the Bärwalde congregation was destroyed,

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with the exception of the baptisms for the years 1782-1801, 1803, 1805 and 1834, which were kept by the Ältester in the Tiegenhagen church.⁸ Fortunately from 1800 on the Lutheran church, which was the Prussian state church, was required to record births, marriages and deaths of Mennonites. I was able to find the birth records of Simon Schroeder and some of his siblings in the Lutheran records of Neuteich.⁹ According to these records Simon Schroeder, the son of Behrend Schroeder and Maria Westerwick, was born on Jan. 29, 1817 at seven in the morning in the village of Mierauerwalde. At this time his father was classified as a "Mitnachbar"; a landowner. The birth of brother Behrend (Apr. 13, 1810) and sisters Gertrude (Dec. 17, 1811) and Maria (Feb. 18, 1819) are also recorded. The Neuteich records confirm, without a doubt, that the parents of Simon Schroeder were Bernhard Schroeder and Maria Westerwick and show that the 1850 census incorrectly gave him the patronymic Jakob. The Ladekopp Mennonite church started a family register in the 1840's, after Simon Schroeder had left for Russia, which contains Bernhard Schroeder and Maria Westerwick, together with some of their children.⁴ According to these records the family moved from Neumunsterberg to Schönsee in 1846. The family of Bernhard Schroeder and Maria Westerwick can now be reconstructed as follows:

Bernhard Schroeder	b. Aug. 24, 1786	West Prussia
m. 1808-1809	d.	West Prussia
Maria Westerwick	b. May 24, 1799	West Prussia
	d. Jan. 19, 1852	Schönsee, WP
Children		
Bernhard	b. Apr. 13, 1810	d. before Dec. 1814
Gertrude	b. Dec. 17, 1811	
Bernhard	b. Dec. 23, 1814	
Simon	b. Jan. 29, 1817	m. Anna Banmann
Maria	b. Feb. 18, 1819	
Abraham	b. about 1822	d. July 15, 1842
Franz	b. June 2, 1823	

The birth year for Maria Westerwick is obviously incorrect. This is certainly an error by whoever entered the information into the church register. Her year of birth is probably 1789. The family appears to have lived in Mierauerwalde from before 1810 to sometime after 1819. They lived in Neumunsterberg from before 1834 until 1846. From 1846 on they lived in Schönsee(erfeld). All of these locations were within 5 miles of each other. One can now go on and look for the parents of Bernhard Schroeder and Maria Westerwick.

Bernhard Schroeder is very likely the Börend Schroeder of Vierzeinhuben, son of Siemon Schroeder, who was baptized into the Bärwalde Flemish church on June 23, 1805.⁸ The baptismal records also show that Siemon Schroeder had another son, Franz, who was baptized on June 26, 1803. After the Bärwalde records were destroyed in 1880 an attempt was made to construct birth and death registers for this congregation from the post-1800 Lutheran church records.¹⁰ These registers include the death of

Simon Schroeder of Vierzeinhuben on Aug. 15, 1808 at the age of 57 years. His wife Gertrude, born Reimer, also died in Vierzeinhuben, on Feb. 26, 1808 at the age of 52 years. These records also show that their son Franz died on Nov. 7, 1805 at the age of 21 years and 6 months. There is also a Simon Schroeder of Vierzeinhuben who was born on Sep. 9, 1810 and died on Nov. 25, 1810. He was the son of a Simon Schroeder. It is possible that this father Simon was a son of Simon (1751-1808). There is another Simon Schroeder in the Bärwalde records who died in the village of Vorwerk on Sep. 11, 1807 at the age of 64 years (1743-1811). He is mentioned elsewhere in the Bärwalde records, as well as other West Prussian records.

There are several censuses and other lists from this time period that can be consulted. Vierzeinhuben is included in the 1776 census of Mennonites in West Prussia but Simon Schroeder is not found in that village.¹¹ It is likely that he was not married and the head of a household at that time. The land census of 1789¹² and a Mennonite census of 1811¹³ do not cover Vierzeinhuben or the villages in that area. There is only one Simon Schroeder in the 1776 census. He was living in the village of Vogtei with his wife and one daughter. The 1789 census of Mennonite landowners includes 2 Simon Schroeders, one in Rosenort and one in Petershagen. The Mennonite church records, with the exception of the baptisms from 1782 on, were destroyed in 1812, but Simon Schroeder of Rosenort is mentioned in the Lutheran burial register of nearby Fürstenau.¹⁴ On April 29, 1785 Anna, daughter of Simon Schroeder of Rosenort was buried in the Fürstenau cemetery. Simon Schroeder of Petershagen is mentioned in the Mennonite Church records of Tiegenhagen.¹⁵ He is mentioned in the Tiegenhagen church records from 1788 until 1800 and was living in Petershagen during this time. The Tiegenhagen death register records the death of a four-year old unnamed son on April 1, 1788. The following children of Simon Schroeder were baptized into the Tiegenhagen church: Helena (1793), Michael (1796), Simon (1800) and Gertrude (1800). Daughter Helena married Peter Conrad in 1796. The fact that there is a son Simon, who was born before 1790, and a daughter Gertrude leads one to suspect that this is the same family as the Simon Schroeder who lived in Vierzeinhuben between 1803 and 1808. The key to connecting Simon Schroeder of Petershagen and Simon Schroeder of Vierzeinhuben is the marriage register of the Lutheran church of Baarenhof.¹⁶ This register includes Mennonites from 1800 on and includes the village of Vierzeinhuben. Here we find the following marriages of children of Simon Schroeder of Vierzeinhuben: Gertrude (age 24), 2nd daughter of Simon Schroeder on July 23, 1805 to Jacob Classen; Michael (age 31), eldest son of Simon Schroeder on July 10, 1808 to Maria Gerbrandt (38) widow of Peter Daniels of Vogtei; Simon (age 29), 2nd son of Simon Schroeder, on March 16, 1809 to Elisabeth Wiebe (47) widow of Heinrich Classen; and again on Oct. 8, 1809 to Catharina Plett (29) daughter of Johann Plett. As one can

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see the ages of Michael, Gertrude and Simon at times of their marriages nicely match their years of baptism if one assumes that each was baptized at about the age of 19 or 20. Therefore we can consider Simon Schroeder of Petershagen and Simon Schroeder of Vierzehnhuben to be the same person.

We can now construct the family of this Simon Schroeder shown below:

Simon Schroeder	b. ca 1751
m. about 1773-5	d. Aug. 15, 1808 Vierzehnhuben
Gertrude Reimer	b. ca 1756
	d. Feb. 26, 1808 Vierzehnhuben

Children

Helena	b. ca 1773-5 bapt. 1793	m. Peter Conrad
Michael	b. Jan. 17, 1777 bapt. 1796	m. Maria Gerbrandt d. Mar. 25, 1813
Simon	b. ca 1780 bapt. 1800	m. Elis. Wiebe m. Cath. Plett
Gertrude	b. ca 1781 bapt. 1800	m. Jacob Classen
Son	b. ca 1783	d. Apr. 1, 1788
Franz	b. May 1784 bapt. 1803	d. Nov. 7, 1805
Bernhard	b. Aug. 24, 1786 bapt. 1805	m. Maria Westerwick

Son Michael died in Vogtei and his wife died in Vogtei on Mar. 1, 1813. His birth date is based on his age at time of death.¹⁰

Simon Schroeder would certainly have been the head of a family by 1776 and therefore he should be found in the 1776 census of Mennonites.¹¹ The census contains only one Simon Schroeder, and the information on him matches what we should expect. He was living in the village of Vogtei with his wife (Gertrude Reimer) and one daughter (Helena). He is listed as being a well-to-do farmer. Sometime between 1786 and 1788 he moved to Petershagen. According to the Mennonite land census of 1789 he owned 9 Morgen of land (about 12 acres).¹² Sometime between 1800 and 1803 he moved to Vierzehnhuben, where he died in 1808.

The Tiegenghagen church records also include entries for another Simon Schroeder who appears to have lived in Stobbendorf from before 1802 until his death in 1807. This information can be used to partially reconstruct his family:

Simon Schroeder	b. before 1762
	d. Oct. 8, 1807 Stobbendorf, WP

Children

Simon	b. ca 1782 bapt. 1802	d. Dec. 6, 1812
Anna	b. ca 1782	
Maria	b. ca 1790 bapt. 1810	d. Oct. 13, 1827
Christina	b. ca 1792 bapt. 1812	
Cornelius	b. ca 1796	d. Mar. 25, 1814

We do not know where this Simon Schroeder was before 1802.

At present we can only speculate who the father of Simon Schroeder (1751-1808) was. If his father's name was Simon he could be Simon Schroeder of Bärwalderfeld, whose daughter Justina (1743-1803) married Peter Isaak (1732-1809).^{10,17} During the 1700's there were quite a few Schroeders in this area. In fact the settlement of Schroederskampe was less than 1 mile east of Vogtei.

One should also address the question of who the parents of Anna Banmann (1824-1897) were. Her father's name was Cornelius and according to the Grandma database her parents were Cornelius Banmann (b. ca 1802) and Susanna Neudorf (b. ca 1795), who originally lived in Kronsthal, Chortitza Colony.¹⁷ According to Odessa archival material Cornelius was living in the city of Berdyansk in 1852, and had been there since 1830. He owned a residence and a brickyard in Berdyansk.¹⁸ His father was also a Cornelius Banmann who was born about 1782 in the Jedwillen region of Lithuania, which was part of East Prussia at the time. Cornelius Sr. died in Kronsthal sometime before the 1850 census. The father of Cornelius Sr. was Heinrich who lived in Jedwillen in 1776. Heinrich died in 1787 at the age of 48 (born ca 1739).¹⁹ His family moved to Kronsweide, Chortitza colony shortly thereafter.²⁰

At present the parents of Maria Westerwick (1789-1852) are unknown. She is likely the daughter of Aron Westerwick of Pietzkendorf, Johann Westerwick of Fürstenau or Siebert Westerwick of Mierauerwald. These are all found in the 1776 Mennonite census and the 1789 Mennonite land census.

Reference and Footnotes:

1. Bergthal Gemeinde Buch, Hanover-Steinbach Hist. Soc. (1993).
2. Benjamin H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der Mennonitischen Ostwanderung im 16. 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. Karlsruhe, 1955.
3. Odessa State Regional Archives Fond 6, Inventory 2, file 14446.
4. Mennonite Church Records of Ladokopp, West Prussia. LDS #555792. Mennonite Heritage Centre microfilm #285.
5. See, for example: Paul Toews *California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin* no. 38, April 2003; Glenn Penner *Mennonite Historian* Vol. 28, no. 2, June 2002.
6. Odessa State Regional Archives. Fond 6, Inventory 3, file 14715.
7. Johann Schroeder (1808-1884), was born in Rosenthal, Chortitza Colony. Johann Sawatsky (1804-1855), was born in Chortitza, Chortitza Colony. See ref. 1 pages A56 and B8. Also ref. 18.
8. The Gross Werder Baptismal Register can be found in LDS film #1344013. The first part of this register, divided into the 4 Gemeinden, can be found on the MMHS web site.

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by Elmer Heinrichs

Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch, published by Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. Records preserved by the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba. Manuscript preparation: members of MMHS local history committee and volunteers. Edited by Henry Unger, Martha Martens and Adolf Ens. p.c., 530p. \$30 Cdn.

A new publication, Vol. 4 in the West Reserve Historical Series, consisting of the registers of the Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch, first known as the Church at West Lynne, 1881-1935 was officially launched Sat., Nov. 13 at the Altona Sommerfeld Church with 150 present.

Editor, historian Adolf Ens presented a short church history beginning with Menno Simons, and early

persecution that established a pattern of migrating frequently in order to worship freely. Granted religious freedoms they migrated to Prussia (Poland) in the 17th century.

Then when freedom in Prussia was slowly curtailed they moved to Russia after securing promises of freedom to worship and from joining the armed services. But by the 1870s Russia too was changing, and Mennonites were lured by promises of land for farming in North America.

The Bergthal Colony, the first daughter colony of the Chortitza church (1789), the first Mennonite congregation in Russia, along with the Kleine Gemeinde, sent delegates to North America. The Bergthaler then decided to emigrate coming to the East Reserve as an entire body.

But much of the land was poor; too much moisture and early frost disappointed the early Manitoba settlers. Since they already knew about the Fuerstenland Mennonites who settled on the western portion of the 17-township West Reserve, they too soon began to move again.

To facilitate ministry to these relocated members, the Chortitza Church in 1881 assigned one of its church ministers, Franz Dueck, to begin a new church register. He identified the group simply as "Die Gemeinde zu West

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The Sommerfeld Mennonite Church Mass Choir sang as part of the celebration.

— Photo by Bert Friesen

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- Rosenort: http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/Rosenort_Baptisms_1782-1795.htm
 Ladekopp: http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/Ladekopp_Baptisms_1782-1804.htm
 Tiegenhagen: http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/Tiegenhagen_Baptisms.htm
 Bärwalde: http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/Baerwalde_Baptisms.htm
 The later, combined, register can be found at:
http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/Gross_Werder_Gemeinde_Baptisms_1814-1823.htm
 9. Lutheran Church Records of Neuteich, West Prussia. LDS #208232.
 10. Mennonite Church Records of Fürstenwerder (Bärwalde), West Prussia. LDS #555789.
 11. Glenn Penner. The Complete 1776 Census of Mennonites in West Prussia. http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/1776_West_Prussia_Census.htm
 12. Adalbert Goertz. The 1789 Land Census/General-Nachweisung of West Prussian Mennonites.

- <http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/1789cens.htm>
 13. Adalbert Goertz, Mennonites in the Elbing Territory: Census of 1811. <http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/elbing2.htm>
 14. Lutheran Church Records of Fürstenau, West Prussia. LDS #208100-208104.
 15. Mennonite Church Records of Tiegenhagen, West Prussia. LDS #555796.
 16. The Lutheran Church Records of Baarenhof, West Prussia. LDS #208031.
 17. Grandma database version 4.11. Available from the Mennonite Historical Society of California.
 18. Odessa Regional State Archives, Fond 6, Inventory 3, file 15751. Also see the translation by Ed Ens and Tim Janzen: Register of persons living outside the Chortitza Colony in 1852. <http://www.mmhs.org/russia/1852.htm>
 19. Mennonite Church Records of Lithuania (East Prussia). LDS #1858908.
 20. Henry Schapansky. The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia. Rosenort, 2001.

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Lynne," after the postal address of the villages.

Later on, when the eastern and western parts of the Chortitzer Church became separate bodies, these registers became the first membership record of the new Sommerfeld Mennoniten Gemeinde. After Bishop Gerhard Wiebe's resignation in 1882, David Stoesz became the Bishop.

Bishop Stoesz now led the West Lynne group in the election of a second Bishop, Johann Funk, of the West Reserve village of (Alt) Bergthal. But differences developed between the two, the Fuerstenlanders tried to enforce village life, while the Bergthaler often moved to homesteads. Then the railway and businesses came to Gretna, Rosenfeld and also to Altona. The question was "how do we deal with all these influences?" The supply of teachers was also quite inadequate, and there was a desire for a secondary teacher-training school.

With Bishop Funk's progressive attitude, and support of a secondary school, he gradually lost the confidence of a majority in the church. In new elections Abram Doerksen became Bishop and by 1894 the group was known as the Sommerfelder as he lived in the village of Sommerfeld.

Introducing the book, Ens said it has reproduced church records as accurately as possible. He also noted that the book has easy to follow tabbed sections, and pointed out the integrated index, one by surname and one by the maiden name of the spouse. "It's important to know where we came from, to know who we are, and to meditate on these things."

The Sommerfeld Church mass choir sang, and Jake Peters, chair of MMHS publications and marketing, presented books to Bishop Peter Heppner, deacon Diedrich Schroeder and minister John I. Peters, representing the Sommerfeld church leadership, and to the book committee.

After a lunch by the Altona Sommerfeld ladies, Alf Redekopp, director of Mennonite Heritage Centre, discussed how to use the book for family research, and answered questions.

In a tour of Sommerfeld village, the group met in the village's Sommerfeld church - built in 1893 - heard a quartet sing, a meditation, and a brief history of the church. A lunch was served.



Jake Peters recognizes the work of the leaders in the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church. Standing with Peters are Bishop Peter Heppner, Deacon Dietrich Schroeder and Minister John I. Peters. — Photo by Bert Friesen

Plett Awards



The Henry E. Plett Memorial Award for Family Histories were awarded recently. The first prize was awarded to **Ted Klassen** for his paper entitled "Lena Martha Pries, 1908-1992". The winner of the 2nd prize was **Erika Enns** for her paper entitled "Frank A. Enns, 1911-1979."

The contest, aimed at Manitoba high school students, seeks to encourage research and writing on a family history subject. The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society "Genealogy Committee" administer the competition.

REVIEW NOTES

BENT BY GRACE:

The Real Life Journey of Martin T. Friesen

by Agnes Dyck

"I contemplate the part history plays in our lives" quote from the author, Elma Friesen, who wrote this biography about her husband. (Winnipeg: Squeaky Cheese Publications, 2004, 561 pages)

Initially, since this is a biography, readers expect to be informed about Martin's early years. Instead, we are treated to a crash course in Mennonite history. The first Manitoba Mennonites arrived in Manitoba in the 1870s. Elma Friesen reflects on the hardships and

subsistence level conditions under which the early pioneers here survived. Speculating about and imagining their mindset and ways of coping, results in endless possibilities. The author makes clear that these early pioneers lived out their faith as they understood it.

Elma Friesen has invested a great deal of energy in researching for this book. This included delving imaginatively into the emotional experiences of a neglected and abused child. The author always views events through the lenses of her Christian commitment: in going back to places that have memories for Martin; in using her imaginative powers to reconstruct events of the past, and in ruminating about the inner experiences of the characters involved. By reflecting on a certain time and place in Mennonite history, Elma and Martin have made themselves vulnerable by highlighting Martin's personal story.

Several themes are developed here. These include the fact that modeling a spiritual lifestyle has repercussions and that Godly living and prayer reach into future generations. A beautiful example of peacemaking and forgiveness is illustrated by Martin's later relationship with his father. In speaking of his early years, Martin says, "I didn't know who I was." In fact, he was forced to mature very quickly — he had no childhood.

Celebrating Martin's healing process gives due honour to God who is the great physician. We all need to remember the past — each story is unique.



NOTES FROM THE BOARD

Excerpted from the Minutes

The last MMHS Board meeting was held November 4, 2004 at the MCI, Gretna, Manitoba. MCI Principal, Paul Kroeker, accompanied by staff members Peter Epp and Tim Wiebe, gave an informative, interesting and much appreciated tour of the new arts centre prior to the meeting.

Several key items were raised.

1. Russell Giesbrecht spoke on behalf of a group of print, visual and other artists who are working on a one hour documentary entitled "Mennonites: Rebels with a Cause." Rights to this have been purchased by the BRAVO cable channel which has also given some monetary support. The group wants to extend its activities to creating a website and also doing a book. What the artists (e.g. Rudy Wiebe, Sandra Birdsell, Diane Brandt, Patrick Friesen, David Bergen, Miriam Toews, etc.) are trying to convey is that the stories they are telling and the ideas they are pursuing grow out of their Mennonite upbringing and have a connection to our Mennonite heritage. The response the group would like from the MMHS is that the Society endorse their project/s. The group's timeline for the documentary is open-ended and depends on funding. They would like to get it going by spring 2005, with about six months for production. No actual decision was made.

2. MMHS Logo was unveiled. It was designed by Aniko Szabo, Winnipeg. Copies were circulated and the meaning of the symbolism presented. This logo is now to be used on all MMHS materials.

3. The inventory of the MMHS, earlier stored at CMBS, will now be stored at MHC. The latter, which is owned by Mennonite Church Canada, now becomes the shipper and will do the invoicing. MMHS' identity could thus get lost in the process, although in future the MMHS books will be identified by the logo. **It was suggested**, and seen as good to address the issue and serve as promotional, to place an insert containing the Society logo and a list of the Society's books into every book order.

4. The Annual General Meeting date and time was discussed. No definite decision was made, except that the AGM will be in Winnipeg, possibly in one of the churches. Please watch for further details.

Book Notes

by Sarah Schwab

P. James Giffen's *Rural Life: Portraits of the Prairie Town, 1946* examines social life in three small Manitoba towns at the close of the Second World War. Edited with an afterword by Gerald Friesen, this book offers a fascinating portrait of the small prairie town on the brink of tremendous change (University of Manitoba Press, 2004).



For years, Eaton's Department Store in Winnipeg was the shopping and social gathering place for many Mennonites. In *A Store Like No Other: Eaton's of Winnipeg*, author Russ Gourluk chronicles the unique relationship between Eaton's and the city of Winnipeg. This is a useful reference for those interested in learning more about an important aspect of Mennonite life in Winnipeg (Great Plains Publications, 2004).



Folk Furniture of Canada's Doukhobors, Hutterites, Mennonites and Ukrainians details the importance of folk furniture and its connection to people's values and beliefs. Stunning photography records a wide array of artifacts, from large furniture to smaller tools and kitchen items (University of Alberta Press, 2004).



In *Forever Home: Gold Old Days on the Farm*, author Victor Carl Friesen recounts life on a prairie farm during the 1930s and 1940s. (Fifth House Publishers, 2004).



Manitoba author and broadcaster Tim Wiebe has assembled a collection of inspirational reflections, which have aired, on Golden West Radio since 1993. These readings appear in *The Timsights Treasury: 365 Devotionals and Delights*, which is compiled as a daily devotional book (Mennonite Collegiate Institute, 2004).



Wally Kroeker's *An Introduction to the Russian Mennonites* will be available early in 2005. In this book, Kroeker tells the story of the Mennonites of Polish Prussia and the Netherlands who made their home in Russia. Included are dozens of historic and contemporary photographs (Good Books, forthcoming).

Gretna Author Launches scholarship fund

by Sandra Doell

Before an appreciative crowd of fans, friends and family, Mennonite Collegiate Institute teacher and local author, Tim Wiebe, launched his new book, *The Timsights Treasury: 365 Daily Devotionals and Delights*, yesterday at the school. The book features some of Wiebe's finest writing from 11 years of broadcasting a daily dose of wit and wisdom on Golden West Radio.

The book, now available in stores throughout Southern Manitoba, is a fundraiser for the Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI), with all proceeds going to the high school's "Come and Learn" scholarship fund.

Elmer Hildebrand, president and CEO of Golden West Broadcasting, said that before Wiebe began writing "Timsights" his company had been looking for someone who was "a mix of Paul Harvey and Lloyd Robertson."

The MCI teacher came highly recommended, having caught the attention of Phil Ens Sr. while Wiebe was writing dispatches from a Faith & Life Choir tour of Russia back in 1991.

Ens, chairman of Triple E Canada, praised Wiebe for his ability to "take the ordinary and intertwine the spiritual," to produce "focussed tidbits."

MCI Principal Paul Kroeker spoke of Wiebe's "tremendous creativity" and commended the author for his generosity in contributing to the support of students with financial needs.

The *Timsights Treasury*, which will sell for \$20 a copy, could net almost \$50,000 for the "Come and Learn" scholarship fund.