

HERITAGE POSTING

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No. 50 October 2005

Pembina Threshermen's Reunion Days

by Elmer Heinrichs

History came alive this year at the Pembina Threshermen's Reunion, September 9-10, courtesy of a series of displays organized and coordinated by Mavis Dyck, Vice-Chair of the Local History Committee, a sub-committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

Dyck described her goal as being to provide "a location with an atmosphere to complement our story - the celebration of the 130 years of West Reserve history." I feel it was achieved, and it's recorded on video and in photos. "A secondary goal was to present research and publications our organization has produced to the general public. The building buzzed with excitement from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - we had a good turnout - with many visitors who never attend our spring or fall workshops," she said.

Several handouts prepared will have an impact beyond the immediate event. "With a free copy of *Heritage*



Stan Hiebert demonstrates plowing with horses at the Pembina Threshermen's Reunion Sat. This may well be how our forefathers broke the first sod when they settled here in the west. — Photos by Elmer Heinrichs



Sally Harms, editor of *Legacy Links*, and researcher is seen here with the church leaders section of a Reinfeld 1880-2005 display. She is currently working on a Reinfeld history book.

Posting, and an attached membership application, we were able to go beyond the regular workshop attendees", adds the co-ordinator.

The site for the new historical event "Village, Family and Church" was the new General Store, the latest addition to the ever-expanding Pembina Threshermen's Museum, which already has a school, church, CPR station, barn, home, and several buildings housing dated machinery.

A large colour-coded map showed the Mennonite West Reserve with its many villages and the renowned Post Road, fitting since this year marks the 130th year of settlement here. A complementary Mennonite Heritage Village display showed how the East and the West Reserves intertwine.

There were extensive village displays. Sally Harms was there with a Reinfeld display, and was still gathering information for a history she is writing of the community, entitled *The Village of Reinfeld: Fun, Frolic, Laughter and Tears 1880 - 2004*. The village is now celebrating its 125th

(Continued on page 2)



Mavis Dyck, co-ordinator of the history displays of Village, Family and Church, seen here with the Chortitz village display at the Pembina Threshermen's Reunion. With her here is the listing of homesteaders who settled the village, and brief family lineage of the Gerhard Dyck family. — Photo by Elmer Heinrichs

(Continued from page 1)
anniversary.

Among others: Alan Warkentin, Art Warkentine and Ernie Unrau are seeking to confirm information on Kronsfield, a village once near Haskett; fund-raising for a plaque will follow.

Mavis Dyck herself had several displays including a village settlement map and cemetery layout; and books on Chortitz, one of the original villages. A related display by Mary and Ernie Bueckert told about The Bueckerts of Chortitz.

Dyck also had a Waldheim village map with a record of homesteaders, and a register of those buried at the cemetery. She's still seeking further information to update the cemetery listing.

An extensive Burwalde display by Helen Dyck included a pioneer listing and a recent history by Marjorie Hildebrand - *Reflections of a Prairie Community*.

There were pictorial exhibits: Sommerfeld Church's 1993 Centennial celebrations, and several pleasingly displayed old-time photo arrangements, i.e. old barns, etc. by Martha Martens.

Adding interest and whetting people's appetite in Mennonite and family history, and genealogy were Ed Falk, with some old Hoepfner Letters, and in genealogy, Peter K. Reimer (Friday) and Martha Martens offered a free 10-minute family research.

The recently-published *Sommerfelder Gemeinde Buch* (its church registers of 1881-1935) were another important aspect of the MMHS displays during the Pembina Threshermen's Reunion.

Shirley Bergen sharing from her mother's diary about her teaching days at Valleyfield School provided a unique new perspective for the workshop.

John Bergen's *Vanderhoof Roots* - telling the story of Banman, Wiens, Voth, Suderman, Neufeld and Dick families who went to Vanderhoof, B.C. to make a new home was of specific interest. The settlement failed, many died from the Great Flu, and many returned to Manitoba.

CMU Course Offered

Canadian Mennonite University is offering a course that will explore the experience of several significant immigration periods that have shaped Mennonites in Manitoba over the course of the last 125 years.

Dates: Wednesdays Oct 26, November 2, 9, & 16
Time: 1:00-3:30 with a refreshment break.
Location: 600 Shaftsbury Blvd
Cost \$54.00
Ph. 487-3300

Topics:

- Oct 26: Stories from the 1870's immigration — Pioneers in Manitoba
Speakers- Adolf Enns and David Schroeder
- Nov 2: Stories from the 1920's immigration — Fleeing Communism
Speaker Abe Dueck
- Nov 9: Stories from the 1940's immigration — Post War Refugees
Speaker Waldemar Janzen
- Nov 10: Stories from recent immigrations — Newcomers in our day
Speaker John J. Friesen and guests

Name Scramble

How well do you know Mennonite towns and villages? See how long it takes you to figure these out. . .

1. eacnishbt
2. oenrsotr
3. rdolesfen
4. anrutlgh
5. ndhaczfeensl
6. zhhtiorc
7. elmrtonbu
8. oeaqrtrn
9. talnao
10. huleeaqrtrn
11. dsloemfmr
12. thdaaltbs
13. dinrnaie
14. fldkeel
15. lganhatdne

Answers on Page 9

Centre Appoints New Director

by Conrad Stoesz

Ken Reddig has been named the new director for the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. He started August 1, 2005 and fills the vacancy created by the resignation of Heinrich Loewen in June 2004. This will be Ken's second term with the Centre after a 12-year stint from 1979-1990. After leaving CMBS, he continued in the archival field with positions with the Provincial Archives of Manitoba 1990-1997 and the Mennonite Heritage Centre 1997-1999. Since 1999, Ken has taken on several fund development positions with MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) and St. Boniface Hospital.

Reddig currently serves as chair of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, chair of the Jewish-Mennonite-Ukrainian Conference Committee and as member of the Mennonite Studies Advisory Council at the University of Winnipeg.

His vision includes "mentoring the next generation; speaking, writing and publishing; and the need to create methodology that helps people tell their stories. The goal is to move from *my* story to *our* story. We need to help congregations incorporate the faith stories of their members into the corporate culture of church and conference life . . ."



Devastating Winds at Neuberghthal

by Frieda Klippenstein WCS, June 21/05

It started about 6:30 one Sunday morning (June 19th, 2005) when the sunny sky turned completely dark. The wind storm that struck the village of Neuberghthal cut a path of destruction through the towns of Gretna, Emerson, Altona and Letellier in southwest Manitoba. With tornado sightings, lightning flashes and winds up to 140 km per hour, the storm downed hydro lines and relocated grain bins and sheds while water poured into homes through windows and cellars. But most eerie for the village residents was the booming sound as uprooted trees crashed to the ground.

Neuberghthal Village, a National Historic Site, is renowned for its housebarns, and for its lovely century-old cottonwood trees that line both sides of the single village street. A large number of these trees came down at one time on Sunday morning. In some cases one to two dozen trees came down on a single yard. Miraculously no one was injured during the storm, even though, instead of hiding in cellars or basements, many residents were feverishly bailing water during the storm. Also amazing was that not a single home was hit by a tree, even though, when comparing notes, many were in line for "the closest shave": within three feet of the house, within one foot of the house, so close that the hydro meter was knocked off of the house! Karen Friesen, resident and vice-chair of the Neuberghthal Heritage Foundation (NHF) gave that last report. NHF chair and resident artist in the village, Margruite Krahn, reports water damage to their housebarn/art studio as well as missing portions of the roof of the herdsman house, a level one resource, on their yard. Other heritage resources suffered damages as well, although the full reports are not yet in. Perhaps the heaviest damage was the huge tree that crashed through the roof of the barn on the Schmidt/Klippenstein housebarn, built in the late 1870s and recognized as the oldest barn in the village.

Tuesday afternoon, two and a half days after the storm, the hydro crews work to restore power to the residents, aiming for late in the day. Elizabeth Friesen, who estimated losing up to 30 trees on her yard, notes, "Lucky thing we're good at camping!" Some have bought generators. Many are helping each other with cleanup, donating their time, chain saws and other equipment and keeping the gas powered generators and the sump pumps running round the clock.

Mrs. Friesen describes her helplessness as the storm hit. "I looked outside and saw the trees all around our yard bent completely sideways in the wind, and there wasn't a thing that I could do about it." The hard-hit village will recover with time and hard work. But for the volunteers on the Neuberghthal Heritage Foundation, the storm interrupts the momentum of this year's heritage projects. And only time will tell whether the lovely canopy of trees that graced the village road will ever be recovered.

Invitation to an Open House

at the New Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies

*Tour the new facilities
Visit with our new/old director
– Ken Reddig.*

October 20, 2005

1:00-5:00 p.m.

1310 Taylor Ave., Winnipeg, MB.

For more information call Ken or Conrad at the Centre at 669-6575 or

E-mail: kreddig@mbconf.ca or

cstoesz@mbconf.ca

Refreshments will be served

Spotlight on... Werner Toews

How did you get interested in Mennonite history and genealogy?

My interest started when I was a young child. I was always fascinated by the family history stories or "Geschichte" told by my parents, grandparents and relatives. I was born in Winnipeg to Mennonite parents who had immigrated to Canada after World War II. The story of their lives and the lives of my ancestors was a direct parallel to the Mennonite experience in Russia. I remember listening to my grandmother as she told me stories about my ancestors who, before the Russian Revolution, were successful businessmen owning factories and large estates. Then came the sad stories about the drastic change in society following the revolution. I remember, in particular, the story of how my maternal grandfather, Nikolai Sudermann, along with his brother, were taken from their families in the middle of the night...never to be seen again. These stories prompted me, later in life, to investigate the history of my family. In doing so they made me aware of the entire history of the Mennonite people.

How did you get involved with MMHS?

During the course of research on my family history, I spent many hours at the Mennonite Heritage Center and Archives. There, I became acquainted with the staff members who were involved in the MMHS Genealogy Committee. One day, while I was conducting research at the center, I was asked by Alf Redekopp to sit in on a committee meeting. I then participated in the next Family Roots Day by creating and displaying a picture exhibit of my ancestors. Later, I was asked by Bert Friesen to be a Board member and about a year after that, I was asked to be the chair of the Genealogy Committee. It wasn't long after that I was also asked to be the vice president.

How long have you been a part of the organization, and what is your favourite part?

I have been involved with the MMHS for about two years. My favorite part is working with the Genealogy Committee. I enjoy being involved with the Plett awards and I like reading the family history stories submitted by the students. I am always impressed by the time and effort these students put into their projects. The Plett awards are one way that we, as a Society, can promote the research of Mennonite history to younger people. Hopefully these students will one day be members of the Society.

If you could meet one historical (preferably Mennonite) person, who would it be?

I would like to meet my great uncle, Jacob David Sudermann. I'm not sure if you would call him a historical person but he is someone whose life I admire greatly. He was my grandfather's older brother who was a talented artist and photographer. After completing his high school education he attended University in St. Petersburg, Russia

with ambitions of one day becoming an architect. Then, with the start of World War I, (then later the Russian Revolution) his life drastically changed. To support himself after the revolution he became a teacher and was well liked by all the students that he taught. Due to his education and his former position in society he became a target of the Soviet authorities who disliked educated people...especially former landowners. He was continually harassed by the Soviet authorities who wanted him to inform on his fellow teachers. Many times he refused to give in and betray his fellow colleagues. In an effort to avoid this harassment he worked at different schools. But each time that he changed employment the authorities located him. Then in 1933, he was arrested for some imaginary crime, sentenced to five years and transported to a Gulag camp in Siberia.

In the camp Jacob found work as a draftsman which allowed him access to paint and paper. During his free time he would paint small pictures of the surrounding area, pictures of animals for the children and make birthday cards for the adults. Some of these pictures were not much bigger than a postage stamp. He would write letters on the backs of these paintings and send them to his extended family some 9,000 km. away. In 1937, the letters stopped. He was never heard from again. While researching my family history I decided to find out what had happened to my great uncle. After seeking the help of several organizations I learned that he had been executed in October 1937.

What I admire most about him is that, even though he was incarcerated in a camp far away from his family, he had a positive outlook on life which was reflected in the messages of love, hope and understanding that he sent home to his family. Many of his paintings and photographs were brought to Canada by his family. . . tucked safely away in their suitcases. Some of his photographs, probably the only ones of the interior of the Chortitza Church, have been published in books and articles about Russian Mennonite History.

Here's what everyone wants to know – where is your family from, and are you related to anyone in MMHS?

My parents were both born in the former USSR which is now known as the country of the Ukraine. My mother was born in the village of Chortitza and my father was born in the city of Dnipropetrovsk. As far as I know I am not related to anyone in the MMHS.

Halbstadt Community Erects Heritage Monument

by Elmer Heinrichs

The rural community of Halbstadt between Altona and Emerson, Manitoba marked its place this year with a community reunion, heritage book dedication and the unveiling of a monument.

Today a large stone cairn stands at the community centre, marking the Halbstadt Area Historical Site, and the community incorporating the former rural school districts of Houston (Blumenthal), Halbstadt and Strassberg first settled in 1879.

The wording inscribed on the stone describes its history briefly - "In the late 19th century our ancestors settled this land with the promise of freedom to worship God, and the hope of owning their own land.

"With a great faith in God and a strong determination, the prairie soon became a garden of neat farmsteads and fields of lush crops.

"Churches and schools were built for worship and learning. A store, post office, blacksmith shop, garage, and transfer were established to fulfill their material needs, and a credit union was organized in 1943 for financial needs."

Furthermore, it states "To provide entertainment for both young and old, this community centre including baseball, skating and curling facilities was built.

"But as the years passed, fewer farmers with large equipment were able to work the land, and many left the area to seek their fortune elsewhere.

"Better vehicles and roads made travel much easier, so more business was being done in the larger centres and the Halbstadt businesses were gradually shut down."

It concludes with this wish "We hope this monument will be part of keeping the Spirit of Halbstadt alive in our memories."

The stone's wording concludes with a Scripture verse "The times are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." *Psalms 16:6*.



Altbergthal 125th Anniversary Update

by Lawrence Klippenstein

The community of Altbergthal, on the former West Reserve (and three miles west of Altona), continues to celebrate its 125th anniversary, 1880 - 2005. The new **Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch** includes the church register entries of a large number of early Altbergthal families, and the **1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve** includes a listing for the families of 1880 in Altbergthal and Lichtfeld, which are believed to have become one school district before 1900. Much of this data is now included in an Altbergthal families album which has been prepared by Martha Martens of Winkler, MB.

Significant funding progress has been made in the past year. Two former residents, Diedrich Reimer, now of Florida, who was born in Altbergthal during the time of his father's teaching term there (Peter D. Reimer, 1914 - 1918) and Walter Koop, a student during the time of his father's teaching term there (Jacob Koop, 1939 - 1942), have recently contributed a total of \$1150.00 USD to boost the fund to approximately \$3000.00 CND. We are thankful for the receipting arrangement with MMHS which helps to provide tax deductible acknowledgements to our donors (Bert Friesen has details).

We have had several important anniversary events at the present site of the school, and elsewhere in Altona. One was the gathering of former pupils of Jakob Koop for a reunion to host Walter Koop, his wife Barbara and others of his family at a supper at the Emerald Restaurant in Altona on September 21, 2004. A group of nearly two dozen people gathered for the occasion. Items on the program included a commentary by Helen Koop Johnson on the life and work of her father as teacher of Altbergthal, and elsewhere in the West Reserve. Another event was a "history day", during which Myrna Reimer of Altona, a teacher at the New Hope S.D., took her class to the building in Altona to experience the days of the one-room school.

It is also significant for the anniversary that Martha Dyck Martens of Winkler was invited to share stories of Altbergthal at one of the History Seekers lecture evenings held in Altona in March and April of this year. Adolf Ens was in charge of the evening. Lawrence Klippenstein and Martha Martens continue to gather historical material for further writing on the history of the community. Harold Sudermann has been writing about the life and work of his father, Jacob Sudermann, who taught at Altbergthal from 1930 - 1934.

Alvin Klippenstein, a current Altbergthal resident, has been working hard on keeping the old Altbergthal cemetery cleaned up and has prepared a map of all known burials at the site (on Buffalo Creek at the north end of the village). He is looking for more information on burials not noted on the remaining headstones. The headstones of Aeltester Johann Funk and his wife, Louise Dueck Funk, have been located, and are still visible on the cemetery grounds. The 90th anniversary of the death of Aeltester Johann Funk will take place in 2007, two years from now.

Discussions with the town of Altona are underway regarding the relocation of the school building to a site elsewhere in town, or perhaps in another community. No decision is forthcoming so far. The idea of a larger Altbergthal community reunion is also being kept alive.

Further information about these items and others related to the Altbergthal projects and the anniversary may be obtained through contacting klippensteinL@aol.com or Ray Klippenstein, at 1-204-324-6026.

GENEALOGY — The Early Mennonite Selesky/Delesky Family

by Glenn Penner

Some traditional Low German family names have always had only one or two spellings (e.g. Penner), while others have had many. The family name most commonly referred to these days as Delesky or Selesky definitely fits into the latter category. Census records, village lists, church records, etc. show at least a dozen different spellings for this name. In some records several versions of the name are used interchangeably. Since I am most familiar with Delesky I will use that form.

The first *Mennonite* Delesky was Jacob Doloeski who is found in the 1776 census of Mennonites in West Prussia.¹ He was recorded as living in the village of Gartenkamp together with his wife, one son and one daughter. His occupation and status was given as a laborer who rented his property (Arbeits Mann/Mieths Mann). The Mennonites of Gartenkamp, which was also known as Neugartenkamp or Neulanghorst, belonged to the Rosenort (Flemish) congregation. Unfortunately the church records of Rosenort, started in 1772, were destroyed in a fire in 1812; the next set of registers were again destroyed in a flood around 1856. The only early Mennonite records we have for this congregation are the baptismal register for the Gross Werder Gemeinde (which was made up of the congregations of Rosenort, Tiegenhagen, Ladekopp and Bärwalde) started by the Ältester Dirk Thiessen. The baptisms for the Rosenort congregation cover the years 1782 – 1795 and 1814 – 1840.² This register contains the baptisms of two children of Jacob Soleske of Neugartenkamp: son Jacob on June 10, 1787 and surviving daughter Maria on June 26, 1791. These, no doubt, were the son and daughter of the Jacob Doloeski in the 1776 census. There is a general census of West Prussia for the year 1772.³ This family is not included in the 1772 census of the village of Neulanghorst (which was referred to as Neulanghorsterweide in the census) which implies that they moved to Neulanghorst sometime between 1772 and 1776. Considering the many various spellings of the family name it is not possible to positively identify this family in the 1772 census. The 1789 census of Mennonite landowners includes Jacob Dolski of Neulanghorst, who owned 15 Ruten (about one-fifteenth of an acre) of land.⁴ This is most likely the senior Jacob. Evidently he acquired a small plot of land sometime between 1776 and 1789. One can conclude that Jacob Sr. died sometime between 1789 and 1791. The family of Jacob Delesky can be constructed as follows:

Jacob Delesky	b. before 1745
m. before 1770	d. 1789 – 1791 Neulanghorst, West Prussia
wife unknown	b. before 1750 d. after 1776 Neulanghorst, West Prussia
Jacob	b. ca. 1767
Maria	b. ca. 1771

From 1800 on the Prussian state church (Evangelical Lutheran) was required to keep records of all Mennonite births, marriages and deaths. The Mennonites of Neulanghorst were in the jurisdiction of the Jungfer Lutheran church. The Jungfer records, which appear to be rather incomplete with respect to the Mennonites, have the following entries of interest:⁵

1) Death of Peter the 1 year old son of Jacob Delleske and Catharina Mathies of Neulanghorst on July 8, 1803.

2) The death of Agnetha Penner, wife of Jacob Deleske, an Eigenthumer in Neulanghorst, on Feb. 13, 1810. The heirs to her estate are listed and it is obvious that she never had any children. She was probably Jacob's second wife. Unfortunately the death of Catharina Mathies and the remarriage of Jacob to Agnetha Penner are not found in the Jungfer records.

3) The marriage of Maria Saleske, age 24, the oldest daughter of Jacob Saleske of Neulanghorst to Hermann Friese, age 20, oldest son of Hermann Friese of Stobbendorf on Dec. 26, 1813.

The 1811 census of Mennonites in the Elbing region of West Prussia has the following entry for Neulanghorst:⁶

Jacob Dolsky age 42, wife age 41, sons are 15 and 13, and daughter age 8.

The Gross Werder baptisms for the Rosenort congregation records the baptism of Jacob, son of Jacob Soleske of Neugartenkamp on June 7, 1816.² I have not been able to find any record of a Mennonite Selesky/Delesky in West Prussia after 1816. It is obvious to me that the Jacob who appears in various records in Neugartenkampe/Neulanghorst between 1802 and 1816 is the son who was baptized in 1787.

Jacob Delesky Jr. emigrated to Russia and there seems to be some confusion regarding the year that they left West Prussia. According to B. H. Unruh's *Auswanderung Liste*⁷ Jacob Doleski of Neulanghorst also known as Gartenkampe, age 37, together with his wife Catharina Martens and children Maria, 14, Jacob, 12, Heinrich, 7, Gerhard, 5, and an unnamed daughter, age 1 ½ moved to Russia in 1806. The entry in Unruh's book indicates that the family had already applied for emigration on Oct. 25, 1803. It goes on to state that the ages of the parents did not change between the records of 1803 and 1806 but those of the children did and that the mother was not named in the 1806 document. This and many other so-called immigration records found in Unruh's book are actually records of either applications to leave Prussia, interviews with Prussian authorities (Vernehmungen) or church transfers (Attesten) given by the Ältesters in West Prussia. None of these mean that the family actually emigrated to Russia! This appears to be the case for Jacob Delesky in 1803 and 1806. It is obvious from the various West Prussian records that Jacob Delesky of Neulanghorst was in West Prussia after 1806 and that he did not move to Russia until after June of 1816 (baptism of his son Jacob).

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

According to the 1835 Molotschna Colony census (microfilm of the original census) the family did not arrive in Russia until 1816, after the 1816 census.⁸ This is in accord with the entry in the 1835 census for his daughter and her husband Hermann Friesen, who also came to Russia in 1816, after the 1816 census. The immigration of Hermann Friesen and Maria Delesky does not appear in Unruh's book. There is no record of the immigration of the Jacob Delesky or Hermann Friesen families into Russia in the book by Peter Rempel.

The 1835 Molotschna census for the village of Blumenort lists Jacob Zelesky, age 66, and wife Margaretha age 53. Son Jacob (38), wife Elisabeth (37) and their children Jacob (5), Elisabeth (16) and Maria (14); son Heinrich (37), wife Maria (35) and their children Heinrich (10), Anna (14), Maria (7) and Katharina (2); son Gerhard (33) his wife Elisabeth (38) and their children Gerhard (6), Jacob (1) and Margaretha (10).; daughters Agnetha (22), Margaretha (17), Helena (14) and Justina (10). The 3 sons are listed as being from Jacob Delesky's first wife and the 4 daughters were from his second wife. It is stated that the family came to Russia in the year 1816 and that son Jacob and his family moved to Landskrone in the year 1837.

With all of this information we can attempt to reconstruct the family of Jacob Jr. There are a few discrepancies between the various records that must first be mentioned. One record states that the first wife of Jacob Jr. was Katharina Mathies and another has her as Katharina Martens. Anyone who knows Plautdietsch will understand the possible confusion. Jacob Delesky's first and second wives died before the 1811 census and the wife enumerated in this census should be Margaretha, but the age of the wife is given as 41, which does not agree with the 1835 census where Margaretha is listed as 53 years old.

Jacob Delesky	b. ca 1769	West Prussia
I m. 1787-1789	d. Dec. 24, 1847 ¹⁰	Blumenort, Molotschna
Catharina Mathias /Martens	b. ca 1769	West Russia
	d. Nov. 24, 1807 ¹⁰	Neulanghorst, WP
Maria	b. ca 1789	m. Hermann Friesen
Jacob	b. ca 1791	m. Elisabeth
Heinrich	b. ca 1796	m. Maria
Gerhard	b. ca 1798	m. Elisabeth
Peter	b. ca 1802	d. July 8, 1803

II m. 1806 - 1809

Agnetha Penner	b. ca. 1777	West Prussia
	d. Feb. 13, 1810	Neulanghorst, WP

no children

III m. 1810 - 1811

Margaretha	b. ca 1782 (or 1770)	West Prussia
	d. June 24, 1843 ¹⁰	Russia

Agnetha	b. ca 1813
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Margaretha	b. ca 1818
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Helena	b. ca 1821
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Justina	b. ca 1825
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Since it seems very unlikely that Jacob Delesky had any more sons after the 1835 census we can conclude that all Mennonite Deleskys are descended from his sons Jacob, Heinrich and Gerhard. Information on these 3 families is still not complete.

I would like to conclude with a brief look at the ancestry of Jacob Delesky Sr. (b. bef. 1745; d. 1789-91). The family name Delesky, Selesky, etc. is very likely of Polish origin and it is likely that Jacob or possibly his father became a Mennonite. The Grandma database¹¹ gives his father as Jacob Soleske who was listed in the Brandordenung (fire insurance register) of 1727 in the village of Fürstenau, owning 1 Hufen of land.¹² Although the Brandordenung was originally started by Mennonites in 1623 it was not an exclusively Mennonite institution by 1727. The vast majority of people listed in the 1727 Brandordenung were of Germanic origin, with a few Polish sounding names. Therefore one should suspect that someone listed in the Brandordenung would be part of this Germanic community. This is very likely for the Sawatzkys in the register and could also be true for Jacob Soleske. Unfortunately there is no available documentation to confirm this suspected link and one must keep in mind that the link between the two Jacobs is based purely on circumstantial evidence.

I would like to thank Richard Thiessen of Abbotsford, BC for his valuable input.

1. Glenn Penner. *The Complete 1776 Census of Mennonite in West Prussia*. http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/1776_West_Prussia_Census.htm
2. 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. 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
3. West Prussian Land Census of 1772. For an index by family name see: <http://pixel.cs.vt.edu/library/land/wprussia>
4. Adalbert Goertz. *The 1789 Land Census/General-Nachweisung of West Prussian Mennonites*. <http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/1789cens.htm>
5. Lutheran Church Records of Jungfer, West Prussia. LDS #208168.
6. Adalbert Goertz, *Mennonites in the Elbing Territory: Census of 1811*. <http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/elbing2.htm>
7. Benjamin H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der Mennonitischen Ostwanderung im 16. 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*. Karlsruhe, 1955.

(Continued on page 8)

West Reserve Community Heritage Events

ALTBERGTHAL

The recent gifts of \$1500.00 by persons once connected with the school (built, we believe, in 1904) have helped launch a broader fundraising campaign which we hope can make possible the moving of the old school building to a more permanent location, and its renovation for community uses of various kinds. If you wish to send a gift, make your cheque out to MMHS (Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society), and send it to Altbergthal School Project, 584 Berkley St., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3R 1J9. A tax deductible receipt will be issued for full amounts of such gifts.

ALTONA

The town of Altona is working on developing a heritage area, perhaps located along the railway tracks that run through town. The town council and the town heritage committee have been invited to consider how the Altbergthal school might fit into such plans.

The Altona and District Research Centre is supervising the translation of some documents donated recently, and also the indexing of genealogical materials found in **The Altona Echo** and its successor publications. For further info on this contact aschmidt@mts.net

Friesens of Altona are selling the book **Altona: The Story of a Prairie Town** (1982), written by Esther Epp Tiessen, at a greatly discounted price. Call 1-204- 324 9725 or 324 5406.

GRETNA

The Heritage Gallery of the newly constructed Buhler Concert Hall was opened to the public this past June. It includes a number of items related to the history of Gretna and the MCI. Peter Zacharias, minister of the Blumenort Mennonite Church, chaired the supervising committee for erecting this gallery. **Correction:** An earlier note mentioning the dismantling of the old H.H. Ewert residence in Gretna was an error. It is believed now that building was a former residence of the late Gerhard H. Peters, long-time principal of the MCI.

(Continued from page 7)

8. *English Translation of the Russian 1835 Census of the Molotschna Villages*. Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1995.
9. Peter Rempel. *Mennonite Migrations to Russia (1788-1828)*. Winnipeg, 2000.
10. Menn. Rundschau. May 10, 1893.
11. Grandma database version 4.2. Available from the Mennonite Historical Society of California.
12. Glenn Penner. *The Complete Brandregister of 1727*. http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/Brandregister_1727.htm

Part 3 of *The Bergthal Colony Schroeders* will appear in the next issue of *Heritage Posting*.

HALBSTADT

The community launched its new community history, **The Halbstadt Heritage: Strassberg, Houston and Halbstadt S.D.**, on July 2-3. A second somewhat revised printing of the book is off the press. For further information on the book and how to obtain it, contact researcher Elmer Heinrichs at eahein@mb.sympatico.ca, or the editor David Sawatzky, both of Altona, at dsawatzk@mts.net

NEUBERGTHAL

Current projects of the National Sites program include the renovation of a house-barn located in the village. Chairperson of the local heritage board, Margruite Krahn, completed her exhibit at the Mennonite Heritage Village, but remains active in directing the board in other activities. For further info on Neuberghthal events and heritage programs, or to obtain its newsletter, contact Margruite at krahnp@borderland.ca or phone 1-204-324-1567.

Dr Roland Sawatzky of Winnipeg, now head curator at Mennonite Heritage Village at Steinbach, recently completed his PhD dissertation entitled **The Control of Social Space in Mennonite Housebarns: Southern Manitoba, 1874 - 1940**, at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C. This dissertation highlights a comparison of architectural and other materials in the West Reserve villages of Neuberghthal, Chortitz (near Winkler) and Reinland. It is hoped that Dr. Sawatzky may be able to deliver lectures on the themes of his research, in these communities.

REINFELD

A history of the community is being written by Sally Harms, editor of **Legacy Links**. The book is entitled **The Village of Reinfeld: Fun, Frolic, Laughter and Tears 1880 - 2004**. The village is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. You can reach Sally (she is still looking for much information) at sharms@mts.net

SCHOENDORF

Few people know this village once existed not too many miles southeast of Morden. It was homesteaded ca 1875 by Mennonite settlers, probably from the Reinlaender Mennoniten Gemeinde. Sometimes the Great Northern Railway wintered mules in the village. It seems the dam built to create a reservoir for cattle for these farmers also led to flooding on neighbouring Anglo Saxon farmers' land. They went to see town lawyers to complain and, it is said, got the suggestion that a few shovels would surely fix the problem. The dam did soon wash away, and the farmers all decided to relocate, selling their land to one Jack Pieper and before long, the village was almost entirely forgotten (but current former West Reserve maps show exactly where it was located). This information is attributed to the memoirs of one Bill Jessiman of the Morden area, and information published in **The Pembina Times** on July 7, 1982.

Exerpted from *Windows on the West Reserve*

Low Farm Bergthaler marks 100 years

by Elmer Heinrichs

About 320 worshippers attended centennial programming events at the Low Farm Bergthaler Mennonite Church when it marked 100 years, July 2-3 2005.

In a Sunday highlight, three generations of the Paetkau family - Cornie Paetkau, son Russell and grandson Corey Paetkau unveiled the stone Centennial plaque. Church council chair Randy Schroeder and Pastor Art Hiebert also participated.

The wording on the plaque reads as follows: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place for all generations." Psalm 90:1. Low Farm Bergthaler Mennonite Church 1905 - 2005.

Celebration events began Sat. with the launch of the church's new 33-page history book, Henry Neufeld's introduction to the Cross Lake Church mission project, Margaret Harms' historical children's story, and reflections and sharing by a long-time minister, Peter G. Dueck.

As more Mennonites moved into the Low Farm area in the early 1900's, ministers from the Bergthaler churches at Altona and Winkler were invited to hold services in the school. Names like John Funk, John Peters, Jacob Heppner and John Hiebert appear in early records.

Henry Gerbrandt in *Adventure in Faith* wrote "the Bergthaler Church began to show signs of life shortly after the turn of the century. The Henry Heinrichs family, Rudnerweide, an original member of the Bergthaler group in 1892, moved to a farm near Low Farm in 1900.

"Another thrust came through Marie Heppner's interest in music. Her father, Jacob Heppner, a later immigrant from Minnesota and friend to H. H. Ewert, allowed his daughter to spend several winters in Gretna studying piano and organ under Mrs. Benjamin Ewert."

At Sunday morning's worship, church chairman Randy Schroeder noted the church began with members meeting in school buildings, and listening to itinerant speakers, and reportedly also H. H. Ewert. The Sunday School was a forerunner to the establishment of the church itself.

The Low Farm church has a membership of 60, with an average of 80-plus worshippers Sunday mornings. Organized in 1914, the first church was built in 1928, and Low Farm got its first minister when William P. Heinrichs was ordained on the third holiday of Pentecost, 1929.

Other ministers (pastors) who led the church were Peter P. Heinrichs, brother to Wm. Heinrichs, Peter G. Dueck, Peter Nickel, Glenn Nickerson, Henry Paetkau and Glen Klassen.

Three other ministers were elected in Low Farm, but served elsewhere. They were: Ernest Wiebe, George Groening and Ed Funk. Two others, Art Hiebert and Sig Polle, served here on an interim basis.

A new church (main sanctuary of current church) was built in 1964, with the basement renovated and a new foyer added in 1995



Centennial plaque unveiled. — Photo by Elmer Heinrichs

At Sunday morning's service, Tony and Joyce Dyck sang, Tony rendered a children's item, and a former minister, Peter Nickel (1975-1983), presented the message.

Nickel noted that Low Farm had an important role in the history of the Bergthaler Church. He also referred to the church as "a dwelling place for our God." He suggested that the placing of a memorial stone was a reminder connecting us with God's involvement in the past.

Schroeder also led the church in a memorial service, and members shared in communion with Pastor Art Hiebert. Former pastor Glenn Nickerson (1984-1990) led in the closing.

A mass choir sang at an afternoon service, followed by reminiscing and greetings from former ministers and conference leaders: Henry Patkau, Glen Klassen, Sig Polle, Jake Pauls, John Klassen and Lan and Vicki Chau.

Further good wishes came from John Schmidt, Irene Kroeker, Henry Gerbrandt, Jake Loewen and Dorothy Earl. A traditional Mennonite Faspa concluded Low Farm's centennial.

Mennonite Name Scramble – answers

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Steinbach | 6. Chortitz | 11. Sommerfeld |
| 2. Rosenort | 7. Blumenort | 12. Halstadt |
| 3. Rosenfeld | 8. Rosengart | 13. Reinland |
| 4. Grunthal | 9. Altona | 14. Kleefteld |
| 5. Schanzenfeld | 10. Neubergthaler | 15. Gnadenenthal |

Congregations in the Lena Area

by Bert Friesen

This is the story of the Peter Martens family, who immigrated to Manitoba from Kleefeld, Molotschna, Russia in June 1926 and settled in the Lena region.

Mennonites had come to settle in this part of Manitoba from Russia in the 1920s. In 1926, four families purchased farms in the area. They were the Johann Janzen family, the Abram Weier family including the Diederich Penner family (a son-in-law of Weier), the Jacob Giesbrecht family, and the Peter Martens family. The Peter Martens family consisted of 6 individuals: Peter Martens (1859-1927), Peter Martens (1885-1946), his wife Agnes Martens (nee Reimer) (1886-1959), and their three sons, Peter (1909-1990), Jacob (1911-2000), and Gerhard (1917-1998). A neighbour, Abraham H. Martens (1903-1992) also travelled with this family to Manitoba from Russia.

These families met for the first worship service at the residence of Johann Janzen on September 5, 1926. This service was led by Ältester Franz Enns. His family had settled in this area as well, with two sons-in-law, Johann Neufeld and family, and Johann Dyck and family.

By the end of 1927, 17 families had settled in an area about 4 km. by 15 km. along the international border south of Lena. Many of them had purchased land from or through the land agent, A.B. Langenfeld. These families were affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren Conference (MB) and the General Conference (GC). It was mainly kinship as well as happenstance of meeting a land agent like Langenfeld who could converse in the



Site of the original homestead of the Peter Martens family. The two descendants are: L-R Maragaret Martens, Esther Penner

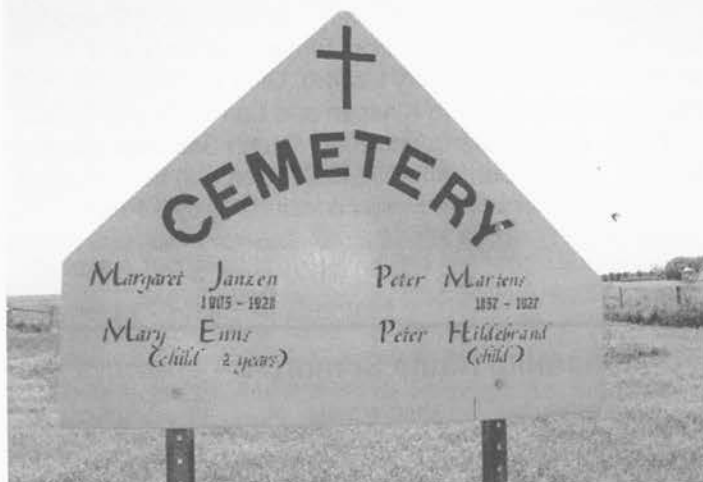
— Photos by Bert Friesen

German language that brought these families together. Some families had investigated land in other parts of Manitoba but found it was on financial terms which they found not able to meet or of too poor agricultural quality.

Since that first worship service in 1926, these families and others who arrived subsequently worshipped in homes and farm buildings in rotation. Since Ältester Enns could not always be present, sermon readers were appointed in 1927. In 1928, the group split into three groups. The GC families met separately, and the MB families formed two groups, one in the Lena area and one in the Holmfield area, north-east of Lena. The Martens family was part of the Lena MB group.

The leader of the MB group was Henry Unger for Holmfield and Abram Wiebe for Lena. They met to organize in 1928 at the home of Johann Wiens. Previously, the MB group had invited Anton Baerg from Manitou to make house visitations. Baerg was present at this organizational meeting as moderator. The first baptism occurred in the same year at the Unger farm in Holmfield. Both MB groups looked for a more permanent arrangement for meetings houses. The Holmfield group began using the Hazeldell school and the Lena group purchased a farm home and converted it into a 'Kapelle' for worship near the Rose Valley school. They met jointly for worship once a month to celebrate communion. The Lena MB congregation built a new

(Continued on page 11)



Cemetery site on the original Janzen farm. It holds the four individuals listed on the sign.

(Continued from page 10)

meeting place in 1944 in close proximity to the 'Kapelle'. In 1950, the Holmfield MB congregation purchased a church building from the Manitou MB congregation, which that congregation had outgrown. The Holmfield congregation had it moved to Holmfield.

It was still referred to as the Holmfield and Lena MB Church (according to the congregational minutes from November 27 1932 to November 14 1937 and again from July 30 1944 to June 27 1945), and sometimes even the Holmfield and Smith Hill MB Church (according to the congregational minutes from March 27 1938 to May 21 1944). During the war years, many families moved away from the area. In 1959, the Holmfield congregation became too small to be self-sustaining and they joined the Lena congregation. From 1959 to 1967, only the Lena MB Church existed. It was this congregation that outgrew its facilities and decided to build a meeting place in Killarney in 1967. The group moved to this new location, with travel not being an issue by this time. This new meeting house, of the now Lakeview MB Church in Killarney, was dedicated in 1968. In 2000 it was renamed as the Lakeview Community Church. They enlarged their facilities in 2003. In 1930 there were 56 members in the Holmfield MB Church. In 1967, there were 70 members in the Lena MB Church. Presently, there are 118 members in

the Lakeview Community Church.

The leaders of the congregation were: Heinrich Unger [Holmfield] (1928-1936), H. Derksen [Holmfield] (1937-1938), Peter P. Schulz [Holmfield] (1939-1945) and [Holmfield and Lena] (1946-1950), G. Hildebrand [Holmfield and Smith Hill] (1938-1945), P. F. Sawatzky [Holmfield] (1952), Peter P. Schulz [Holmfield] (1953-1957), J.D. Froese [Holmfield] (1958), J. F. Poetker [Lena] (1944-1962), P.F. Sawatzky [Lena] (1963- 1966), G. P. Martens [Lena] (1966), Harry Martens [Lena and Lakeview MB Church] (1967-1972), Abram J. Neufeld (1973-1975), Nick Sawatzky (1976), Ernie Bergen (1976-1985), Walter Janzen (1985- 1990), John Duerksen (1990-1991), Dan Stobbe (1991 - 2003), Stephen Bauer (2003 - present).

The Lena Mennonite church (GC) dissolved in 1968. They reconstituted a new congregation in Killarney. Some families chose to join the Whitewater group which met to worship in Boissevain. The decision as to which group to join was mainly a family decision.

Now, back to the Martens family. The elder Peter Martens died shortly after the family arrived in the Lena area. His son, Peter, and his three grandsons, Peter, Jacob, and Gerhard began farming with a small holding of less than a section. From this modest beginning the family land holdings have increased substantially. Many of the descendants of this Martens family are still involved in farming and other agricultural pursuits today. They are into production of grain and oil seeds along with other crops. Many family members are still living in the area of the original settlement of the family and they are still active in the now Lakeview Community Church in Killarney. They are indeed a remarkable family and testament to the faith of their ancestors to come to Canada in the 1920s and begin anew.



Site of the original Lena MB Church near the site of the farm building called the Kapelle. The plaque reads: Site of Mennonite Brethren Church, Lena 1944-1967 In Praise to God Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Holmfield, Lena & Killarney area. July 8th, 1978. — Photo by Bert Friesen

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editors,

I am looking for the location of Sparau, Manitoba, which was located in southern (western) Manitoba at the turn of the 20th century. It is listed in the Sommerfeld Mennonite History as being visited on a Sunday by Bishop Abraham Doerksen in 1894. Would you or your readership know where this is? I am drawing a map and trying to include the location.

Thanks

Don Stoesz

Bowden, Alberta

dstoesz@telusplanet.net

Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

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Book Notes

by Lawrence Klippenstein

As part of their centennial celebrations in 2005, C.P. Loewen Enterprises of Steinbach have published a book to provide a short history of their local operations. The book is entitled **Loewen Centennial: 1905 - 2005: Reflections on the past. Looking into the future** (pb., 36 pp., 2005, saddle-stitches in an 11 x 15 format). Its story is the successful move from a sawmill begun in 1905 by Cornelius .T. Loewen, growing into C.T. Loewen and Sons to become Loewen Millwork with a specialty in producing windows (Loewen Windows), now one of the largest Mennonite firms in Western Canada.

* * *

A popular presentation on the life of Mennonites in Russia has been provided by Wally Kroeker in his book **An Introduction to the Russian Mennonites** (pb., 122 pp., 2005, \$7.95 (U.S.), \$10.95 (CND), published by Good Books of Intercourse, PA., USA. Kroeker provides a panoramic view in a well-written and appealing style, including many photos, with a survey that covers not only the Russian experience but also the contemporary Mennonite scene in North America and elsewhere in areas where Russian Mennonite descendants made their home. Kroeker is editor of *The Marketplace*, published in Winnipeg.

* * *

The recently-published Russian volume entitled **The Quest for An Ideal: Essays on the History of Peacemaking and the Intelligentsia** (Moscow: IGH RAS, 2005) and edited by Dr. Daniel Heinz and Dr. Denis A Sdvizkhov includes essays by Dr. Walter Sawatzky, Professor of Church History at AMBS, Elkhart, Indiana, Dr. Peter Brock, Professor of History emeritus of the University of Toronto, and Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, retired historian-archivist of the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg. Klippenstein's essay appeared earlier as "Mennonites and Military Service in the Soviet Union to 1939", in Peter Brock and Thomas P. Socknat, eds. *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918 - 1945* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

* * *

An article on "Early Mennonite Education on the West Reserve, 1974 - 1925" will be appearing in the upcoming 2005 issue of *Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch/German*

Canadian Yearbook, edited by Dr. Lothar Zimmerman of the University of P.E.I., Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Marjorie and Jerry Hildebrand are researching and writing a history of the EMM congregation of Winkler. Marjorie recently compiled and edited a history of the community of Burwalde northwest of Winkler in the former West Reserve, and Jerry wrote a history of the Steinbach Bible College several years ago.

* * *

A volume on Gruenfeld/Kleefeld, southwest of Steinbach, of the former East Reserve, written by Henry Fast of Steinbach, is scheduled for publication later this year.

New book June 2005

The Halbstadt Heritage

Editor is Dave Sawatzky

400 pgs., hard cover, 945 photographs, \$48.

This is quite a comprehensive book about the Mennonite people who arrived here more than 125 years ago to establish homes and to farm in Halbstadt, Blumenthal and Strassberg. This book tells about how they settled, built homes and farms, and broke the Prairie sod, and how they worshipped. It's a story of struggle and hardships, work and play, and the extensive families that grew up here. To order: Dave Sawatzky, PO Box 921, Altona, Man. R0G 0B0 204 324-5281.

Co-editors

Colleen Epp and Sarah Schwab

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Website: www.mmhs.org

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