

# HERITAGE POSTING

MANITOBA  
MENNONITE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



No. 52

April 2006

## A Mix of Business and the Arts at MMHS Annual Meeting

Members of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society met at Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach for their annual meeting Saturday, March 4. Business sessions were augmented by a touch of Mennonite architecture and the arts, quartet singing, an author reading and snacks.

There was also historical significance in the meeting site, since MHV is an offshoot of the historical society. Curator Roland Sawatzky noted ongoing events at the Village, such as its May MCC theme, highlighting "quilts, war and women making a difference" in the Gallery.

Sawatzky also summarized his PhD dissertation entitled "The Control of Social Space in Mennonite House barns of

Manitoba, 1874-1940."

It was based on architectural studies, oral interviews and historical research of three villages: Neuberghthal, Reinland and Chortitz.

Author Eleanor Hildebrand Chornoboy read from her first children's book, entitled "Snow Angels."

Special guest James Urry, anthropologist and historian, and author of "Mennonites, Politics and Peoplehood" introduced the book by focusing on how early Manitoba Mennonites at first sought privilege, but



Author Eleanor Hildebrand Chornoboy reads "Snow Angels"



Author James Urry at book signing.

— Photos by Bert Friesen

then got involved in politics - both in voting and seeking office.

In committee reports, Genealogy and Family History chair Werner Toews reported on a recently held family history event, the upping of prize money for the Henry E. Plett Memorial essay award contest, and announced that the next Family Roots Day would be held March 25, 2006 at Winkler.

For Publications and Marketing, Jake Peters said he's quite hopeful that the new Manitoba Mennonite history will be published this year. He also reported on the lease agreement with Mennonite Heritage Centre, and provided a publication inventory of old and current stock.

For Local History, Adolf Ens reported on the MacGregor workshop, the Mennonite emphasis at the Pembina Museum last fall, publication projects, and meetings with the Flemish Society. Creating a new East local history group is a possibility, and a May 6 Gretna history meeting date has been set.

Ed Hoepfner, for Historical Sites and Monuments,

(Continued on page 2)



Winnipeg-based "Korpankennsberg" quartet entertain society members.

— Photos by Bert Friesen



Roland Sawatzky discussed housebarn research.

(Continued from page 1)

reported on progress on the Hespeler Memorial Plaque for Niverville, and repair and updating of some Post Road markers.

On behalf of Membership and Publicity, Elmer Heinrichs stressed a need to reverse a membership loss, noted publication of *Heritage Posting*, and is now seeking a redesign of MMHS's Web site.

In the executive report, president Gilbert Brandt noted ongoing work this year, and highlighted several projects which it is hoped the new executive might take on. These included fine-tuning of the Constitution, the beginning of an awards night to recognize Mennonite artists, broadening the focus of MMHS beyond Mennonites with roots in Europe, Russia and Ukraine, and appealing more to the youth.

For the Conscientious Objectors committee, Conrad Stoesz noted that the focus of the Chair of Mennonite Studies conference in fall will be on conscientious objectors (COs).

Oral history chair Donovan Giesbrecht reported on interviewer Katherine Martens' resignation, and the need to reactivate the body with new active members.

Vice-president Werner Toews reported on the involvement of MMHS with the Canadian Human Rights Museum. A letter has been written to the Honourable Vic Toews with a short history of the Mennonite communities' involvement and interest, and efforts to seek a coordinated advance.

For Finance, Treasurer Bert Friesen reported membership dues, donations and book sales remain the main sources of income. A deficit arose from two special projects - \$1,000 for a North American volume of the Global Mennonite history project, and \$2,932 to hire a summer student.

The meeting agreed to waive the MMHS by-law restriction on length of terms for committee members for 2006, and approved a review of the length of terms for directors, executive and committee members.

Lawrence Giesbrecht, John Giesbrecht, Royden Loewen, William Schroeder, Gilbert Brandt and Marianne Janzen were re-elected to two-year terms on the MMHS board. New board members elected: Janis Thiessen, Jake E Peters, Jacob Peters and Bert Friesen, all for one year.

— Elmer Heinrichs



Those in attendance carefully read the reports.

**Editor** — Colleen Epp

**Managing Editor** — Susan Brandt

**Editorial Committee** — Elmer Heinrichs (chair), Gilbert Brandt, Colleen Epp, Bert Friesen, Marianne Janzen, Sarah Schwab

**Layout** — Ted Barg

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter, *Heritage Posting*, welcomes letters and reports pertaining to the historical interests of society members.

Correspondence can be mailed to the *Heritage Posting* editors, 1310 Taylor Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6, or e-mailed to the editor at: [editor@mmhs.org](mailto:editor@mmhs.org)

Website: [www.mmhs.org](http://www.mmhs.org)

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# Family Roots Day 2006

Words used to describe this year's Family Roots Day included "tremendous," "great," and "a success." Held at the Winkler Senior Centre, the day began with over 100 attendees enjoying coffee and Martha Martens's fantastic cinnamon buns. The 17 family history displays were carefully examined and discussed then, and throughout the day.

The first presentation, by Henry Ens, discussed a group of approximately 600 Mennonites from Russia who moved to Mexico in the early to mid 1920s. These were people who had wanted to move to Canada, but were unable to as the Canadian government felt it had taken in its quota of immigrants. Also, Mennonites in Russia heard that Mennonites in Canada were beginning to move to Mexico, making it seem like a viable alternative. They sailed on cargo ships from Rotterdam, Holland, and settled in Rosario in the state of Chihuahua, some 30 miles west of the Kanadier Mennonite settlement; Paramo in the state of Guanajuto, El Trebol in Durango, Irapuato in the state of Guanajuto, and on the San Juan estate. This new life was one of challenge and change.

Following this, Mary Goertzen Toews read an excerpt from the journal of her father, Gerhard P. Goerzen. It described the arrival of his family in Mexico.

A delicious lunch of open faced sandwiches, noodle soup and lemon squares was provided by the Senior Centre's catering group. Many thanks to the ladies for accommodating our high attendance numbers!

After perusing the family displays and books available from Mennonite Books, the afternoon began with a presentation by Helen Ens, who talked about her 40 years in Mexico under the auspices of the General Conference



What the Committee will go through to get to Roots Day. — Photos by Bert Friesen

Mission Board. She had many interesting, and some harrowing stories to relate.

Bert Friesen discussed the resources available to those wishing to explore their own family histories. In particular, he mentioned

- a) websites ([timjanzen.com](http://timjanzen.com); [mmhs.com](http://mmhs.com))
- b) archival centres (Mennonite Heritage Centre, Centre for M.B. Studies, Mennonite Genealogy Inc.)
- c) periodicals (Mennonitische Rundschau, Der Bote, Mennonite Historian, etc.)
- d) GRANDMA, a compilation of family genealogies on CD
- e) Public Archives, and the Latter Day Saints.

Many thanks to the guest speakers, those with displays, the Winkler Senior Centre, the Genealogy Committee and everyone who attended, for making the day so enjoyable.



Listening and learning.



Enjoying a tasty lunch.

# The Joy of Storytelling

Who does not have a family story that simply should be recorded before it is too late? "I will do it someday," has a hollow ring to it after the person you wanted to record has died. For the past two years Margaret Neufeld and I have been recording the stories of a number of persons who immigrated to Canada or via Paraguay to Canada from Ukraine after World War II. We worked under the auspices of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. I can no longer give the necessary time to this project. I want to urge anyone who has ever regretted the loss of family stories to consider joining Margaret in this project.

"I would like to but I don't know how," was one of my first thoughts when I started collecting family stories a long time ago. Then I listened to a tape made by a seasoned interviewer and discovered that his role was more or less that of an engaged attentive listener. That means active listening and real responses. If you are lucky, you will have a person to interview who has been waiting for an opportunity to tell his/her story, and you will simply sit back and let them tell it. If not, try another time or person.

You can learn as you go. If necessary, practice on your ever-forgiving friends or family. Then listen to the tape you have produced and pay close attention to your questions to see if they are open-ended or will be answered by either yes or no. For example, it is more productive to say, "Tell me about that time, how was it for you" instead of "Was that a hard time for you?"

The rewards of listening to another person's story are many. First of all, the very act of telling requires a listener. Talk into a tape recorder with no listener and soon you hear yourself go wooden and expressionless. Each of us is unique, and this comes out in the way we tell our stories. The listener is as important a part of the story as the teller - there is an exchange of energy that enriches both of you. As I age, my memories begin to get a little dimmer with each passing season and I treasure the many stories that I have helped to record on tapes. If you are interested in discussing how to get involved, please contact Conrad Stoesz at the Heritage Centre (Tel: (204) 888-6781 Fax: (204) 831-5675 e-mail: [cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca)).

— Katherine Martens

## Remember to maintain your membership in the MMHS

Membership is only \$25.00 per year  
Send your application to the MMHS,  
1310 Taylor Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3M 3Z6  
Or e-mail: [editor@mmhs.org](mailto:editor@mmhs.org)

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- In 1928 a group called the "Concordia Society" began to discuss the possibility of establishing a maternity hospital in Winnipeg. In June of 1928, a suitable home at 291 Machray was rented and two sisters, Sara and Tina Koop, were hired as matrons to look after the 5-bed hospital. The first male born here was Peter Unger on July 30, 1928, and the first female was Hedwig Peters on August 15, 1928. The house is now gone, and an apartment block stands in its place.
- In February of 1930, Magdalena Wiebe of Beatrice, Nebraska served as matron or Superintendent of the Maternity Hospital. The society's name changed to become the "Mennonite Hospital Society Concordia".
- On March 26, 1931, a legislative bill granted official incorporation to the hospital. On July 13 a house at 720 Beverly was officially dedicated as a new 9-bed hospital. Patients were charged \$1.75 per day for hospital care, and \$5-10 as an added charge for surgical operations for people who were not members of the Society.
- By 1934, another site was being looked into at 400 Desalaberry. It was a 40-year-old building, unoccupied, which had been the Winnipeg Sanitorium, and before that a bath house which had been built near the Red River when salt springs were discovered there. The price was \$18,000, with \$1,000 down payment, and an estimated \$15,000 to be spent in repairs. The official opening of this 50-bed facility was on June 17, 1934.
- In 1942, a private house was purchased on Nairn Avenue, and used as a nurses residence for those who had lived in the hospital itself.
- In the spring of 1950 the hospital was spared any major flooding, but some damage was done because of the diking which had been done near the hospital. Although the water level was above basement height, Concordia was spared because its sewer system was linked to the St. Boniface system which was still functional. The army ordered the patients evacuated, transported in army vehicles across the Redwood Bridge to the General Hospital.
- In 1953, a 23-bed west wing was added, and the old building was renovated. In 1960, the Concordia Hospital developed the "Concordia Hospital School for Practical Nurses." Four graduated in 1960, and 18 more by 1966.
- By 1962 the government regarded Concordia as an area hospital. In 1964 the name was changed to "Concordia General Hospital," and people were considering building a new hospital on another site, which was purchased in 1965.
- In 1971 the name was changed to "Concordia Hospital," and in December 1974 the new Concordia Hospital began operations at 1095 Concordia Avenue.

— Marianne Janzen

## Manitoba summer events

# Rich rewards within 100 kilometres of home

Communities in Manitoba are again celebrating the year and highlighting their past through events, programs and celebrations marking their rich, often vibrant history. Mennonites, now in Manitoba over 130 years, are marking their heritage with historic anniversary events.

The community of Winkler began its centennial celebrations December 29. The City of Winkler has become the largest urban centre in a region that began its history 130 years ago as the so-called West Reserve of Mennonite settlement in Manitoba. Winkler has grown to a community of approximately 8000 persons during this period.

The Winkler Heritage Society is very involved in the celebrations that will continue through 2006. For further information on the plans of centennial celebrations, contact Sally Harms at [sharms@mts.net](mailto:sharms@mts.net)

**Halbstadt**, comprised of the former school districts of Halbstadt, Strassberg and Blumenthal (Houston), will be the site of ongoing touring as past residents return again after last year's successful history book dedication and monument unveiling.

Throughout summer **Neubergthal**, now a national historic site, is open to individual and group tours. The renovation of a typical Mennonite house-barn combination continues, a number of **summer events** are being planned, and a summer brick bake-oven is in operation. For information, contact chairperson Margruite Krahn, 204-324-1612 or Karen Martens, 204-324-1756.

**April 7** – In **Winkler**, an official Centennial history **book launch** takes place at the Civic Centre.

**April 23** - In Winnipeg, **Canadian Mennonite University** will hold its **Convocation** exercises in the Portage Ave. MB Church.

**April 23** - A Low German production of "My Big Fat German Wedding" in **Gretna**.

**May 6** - The local history committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society has planned a spring **history workshop** for Gretna. Main topic: Bruce Wiebe's research on Mennonites in Cass County, North Dakota focusses on the settlement around Maple River. Several shorter presentations on the use of cemeteries as a source of historical records will set the stage for a tour of the Gretna cemetery, where several brief biographies will be given.

**May 22** – **Mennonite Heritage Village** hosts **Spring on the Farm**

**June 10** - An Antique Farm Equipment Show at the **Mennonite Heritage Village**.

**June 11** - **Mennonite Collegiate Institute's** annual **Saengerfest** in its new Buhler Hall.

**July 28-30** - **Altona** will be hosting the **Manitoba Sunflower Festival**. It attracts thousands to a queen pageant, garden tours, strongman competition, and more.

Also at Altona, take a look at the newly-relocated super size replica of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, supported on a seven and a half storey easel commemorating Altona as Canada's Sunflower Capital. Buffalo Creek Nature Park and the Schwartz Heritage House are other sights.

The **Altona and District Research Centre** is supervising the translation of old records of Rhineland Municipality, and the indexing of genealogical materials found in *The Altona Echo* and its successor publication. These genealogical records are now accessible through the Town of Altona website. For further info, contact [aschmidt@mb.sympatico.ca](mailto:aschmidt@mb.sympatico.ca).

**August 4-7** - **Mennonite Heritage Village** will hold its feature summer event, **Pioneer Days** - "*Unforgettable Memories- re-living the past, creating the future.*" Four full days of pioneer activity, steam power, threshing, horse shows, concerts, food and more!

**August 10-13** - the **Winkler Harvest festival & exhibition**,

**August 18-20** - The town of **Plum Coulee** dates back to the 1880s when commercial grain farming flourished and it was one of the early trade centres. Today it's active with revitalization plans, and this forward-looking community stages its 5th annual **Plum Festival**.

**August 25-27** - Summer winds down with **Morden's** 40th annual **Corn & Apple Festival**

**September 9-10** - **Gretna** will be the site of the 2006 "**Hot Spot**" Festival.

**September 9-10** - Farming and harvesting practices of long by-gone days come back to life this fall at the Pembina Threshermen's Museum as it holds its **Pembina Threshermen's Reunion**.

— Elmer Heinrichs

# GENEALOGY — The Bergthall Colony Schroeders Part III

by Glenn Penner

(Part III Continued)

## D. The Schroeders of Klein Lubin

It is interesting to note that members of the Schroeder family continued to live in the village of Klein Lubin until the end of the Second World War. The chronology of the Schroeder household heads who are known to have lived in Klein Lubin is:

- |    |          |                  |
|----|----------|------------------|
| 1) | Isaac    | 1679 – 1723      |
| 2) | Jan      | <1715 – ca. 1760 |
| 3) | Isaac    | 1738 – 1789      |
| 4) | Timon    | 1779 – 1829      |
| 5) | Heinrich | 1807 – 1878      |
| 6) | Gerhard  | 1853 – 1907      |
| 7) | Robert   | 1882 – 1945      |

Robert Schroeder and his family are listed as part of the Montau congregation in the 1936 "Mennonitische Adressbuch".<sup>49</sup> They were living in Klein Lubin at the time. According to the GRANDMA database Robert Schroeder died in Karbow, Mecklenburg, Germany on June 7, 1945.<sup>21</sup> He and his family probably fled west a few months earlier. Therefore we have documentation showing that the Schroeder family lived in Klein Lubin from before 1706 until 1945; 7 generations and at least 239 years!

The Berlin archives has a excellent collection of old village maps from the former West Prussia. One of these is a detailed 1:5000 74 x 28 cm colour map of the village of Klein Lubin from the year 1769. The landowners listed at that time were Baltzer, Block, Goertz, Rosenfeld and Schroeder. See figure 1. Unfortunately the map does not show who owned what land in the village. Fortunately the Hypotkenakten and Grundakten do state who lived next to whom. According to these records the plots, going from North to South are ordered as follows:

## NORTH

- Village of Gross Lubin
- #5 Hans Geddert ( ???? – 1769) /Conrad Rosenfeld (1769 – 1794)
  - #4 Isaac Schroeder ( ???? – 1789)
  - #3 Christian Block
  - #2 Abraham Goertz
  - #1 Hans Baltzer

Village of Dragass

## SOUTH

By comparing this list to the map we can see that Isaac Schroeder owned the strip of land indicated by the letter B. It is bordered to the east by the Vistula river and to the west by the Montau stream. A more recent (1936) 1:25,000 scale map is shown in figure 2.

## E. Recent DNA Studies

Descendents of both Simon Schroeder (1751 – 1808) and Isaac Schroeder (1738 – 1789) are found throughout North and South America. Members of these two families have occasionally asked if they were in some way related. It seems unlikely that Simon and Isaak were closely related. Simon belonged to the Baerwalde Flemish Mennonite church and lived in the northern region of the Gross Werder in West Prussia whereas Isaac belonged to the Frisian Mennonite church and lived in the more southern part of the Vistula delta (Marienwerder). One way to investigate whether these two families share a common ancestor is through DNA testing, which has become a popular tool for those doing genealogical research. Such tests have been performed on a male descendent of each family. The results, which can be found on the Mennonite DNA Project web page<sup>50</sup>, clearly show that these two families are not even distantly related. A test was also performed on a descendent of Wilhelm Schroeder (1760 –

(Continued on page 7)

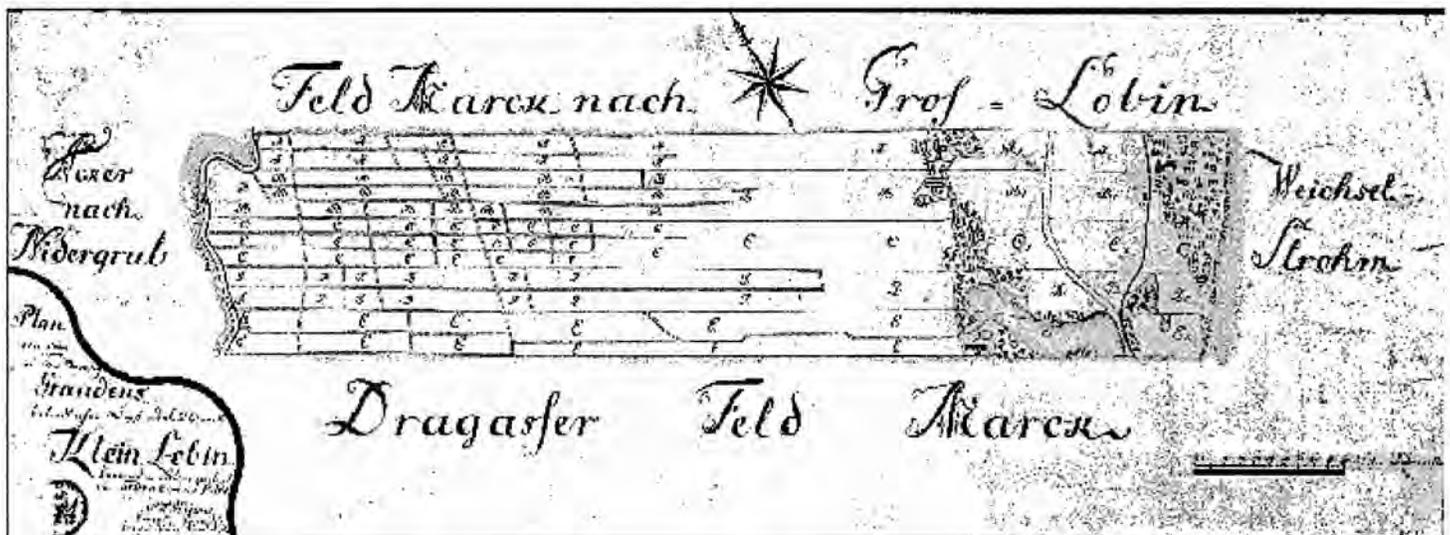
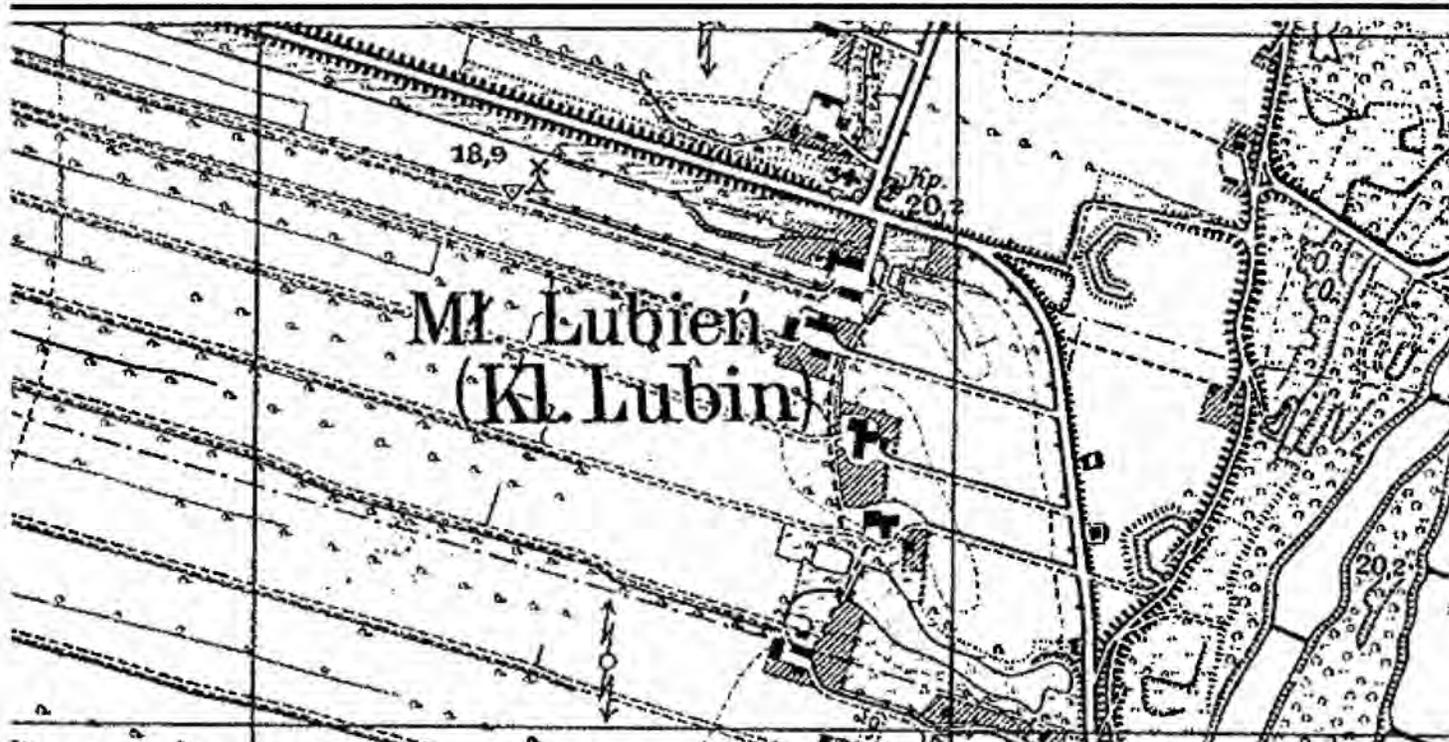


Figure 1: Reproduction of a 1:5000 scale map of Klein Lubin hand-drawn in 1769.



**Figure 2:** A section of a 1: 25000 map (1936) extracted and expanded to show the north-eastern part of Klein Lubin.

(Continued from page 6)

1829) of Rosenort in the Gross Werder of West Prussia, who was a member of the Rosenort Flemish Mennonite church and the 1<sup>st</sup> in a long line of Wilhelm Schroeders. These test results matched those for the descendent of Simon Schroeder exactly. This implies that Wilhelm and Simon were very closely related; probably brothers, cousins or uncle/nephew. A DNA test was also performed on a descendent of Peter Schroeder (1718 – 1802) who was a minister in the Orlofferfelde Frisian Mennonite church. The test results indicate that this is a third, unrelated Schroeder family. Hence the Mennonite Schroeders appear to be descended from at least 3 unrelated families. This is in contrast to the 20 Penners who have been tested and all belong to the same family.

#### F. Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Elfriede Schroeder for providing valuable information on David Schroeder (1776 – 1834), Alf Redekop for arranging the translation of the Odessa archives documents on Johann Schroeder (b. 1783), Ed Ens for doing the translation and Adalbert Goertz for transcribing the Klein Lubin court records and translating the section on the Schroeder family.

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50. Montau extraction by Adalbert Goertz can be found at: <http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/1935mon2.htm>
51. The results for the Schroeders and dozens of other descendents of Mennonite families can be seen at <http://www.familytreedna.com/public/menno/> .

# Our Churches

## Bethel Mennonite Church (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Mennonites moved in great numbers to the city of Winnipeg in the 1930s, mostly students and young women finding employment there. These people made the transition to the English language very quickly and therefore did not relate to the established immigrant-dominated congregations. Benjamin Ewert was asked to find these people and start a congregation with them. Their first meeting was in late 1937. In early 1938, they used rented facilities on Sargent Avenue and soon purchased and renovated the building for their own meeting house.

Ewert sought but did not get much support from his Bergthaler Gemeinde nor from the city Schönwieser Gemeinde. In 1940, the name was changed from Winnipeg Mission to Bethel Mission. In the early 1940s, there was pressure from the young people attracted to this congregation to have English language services. This occurred in 1943 under the leadership of Ewert and I. I. Friesen. They moved to a new meeting house with the purchase of a building on Furby Street in 1945. The membership stood at 139 in 1949. In 1955 they built a new meeting house on Carter Avenue. In 1957, it changed its name to Bethel Mennonite Church. In 1958 the membership was 379. By 1980 the membership had risen to 459. In 1991, a larger meeting house was built on this site. The membership in 1991 stood at 522. A number of other congregations grew out of this congregation: Elmwood Bethel (1960), Charleswood Mennonite (1963), Hope Mennonite (1987), as well as Bethel Place on the same site, and Carter Day Care. In 2000, the membership was 587.

Leaders of the congregation were: Benjamin Ewert (1937-1958), I. I. Friesen (1973-1951), Heinrich Wall (1948-1964), Benno Toews (1950-1956), Arnold Regier (1947-1954), Hugo Hildebrandt (1951-1956), David Schroeder (1952-1956, 1959-1963), George Groening (1955-1965), Henry Poettker (1955-1977), David Janzen (1957-1962), David P. Neufeld (1963-1966), William Block (1966-1975), Don Friesen (1976-1977), Jake F. Pauls (1977-1993), Peter Janzen (1994-1995), David Epp-Stobbe (1996-).



CMBC graduation outside Bethel Mission Church. (1948)

## Lichtenau Mennonite Church (Ste. Elizabeth, Manitoba)

Mennonite immigrants from Russia settled in the Ste. Elizabeth area in 1925. More families followed in subsequent years. Worship services began in homes and then rented facilities in 1926. In the first few years both "Kirchliche" and "Brüdergemeinde" background families worshipped together. A similar settling occurred in the Arnaud area. In 1929, they completed their own meeting house at Ste. Elizabeth. In 1944, another meeting house was built in the Arnaud area. The families in the Ste. Elizabeth and Arnaud areas who had formed the Lichtenauer Mennoniten Gemeinde, named so in part because many were members of this Gemeinde in Molotschna, now became two independent congregations. They co-operated in some programs such as the Jugendverein. The village served the needs of the families in the area until the late 1960s when the village disappeared except for a few residences and the Roman Catholic church building. The membership in 1966 was 99. In 1980, the membership stood at 78. At the time of dissolution there were only a handful of members, perhaps 10 to 12.



Lichtenauer Church in 1966 flood.

The leaders of the congregation were: Johann Enns (1927-1932), Peter Enns (1930-1942), Nikolai Unruh (1933-1935, 1950-1990), Heinrich Friesen (1934-1967), P. Dirks (1935-1936), P. Heinrichs (1935-1948, 1951-1971), H. Warkentin (1935-1943), Arndt Lehn (1950-1967), Victor Enns (1968-1978), Jack Loepf (1974-1990).

## 2006 MMHS Board Members

Gilbert Brandt	Winnipeg
Mavis Dyck	Morden
Anna Ens	Winnipeg
Colleen Epp	Winnipeg
Bert Friesen	Winnipeg
John Giesbrecht	Altona
Lawrence Giesbrecht	Altona
Marianne Janzen	Winnipeg
Royden Loewen	Steinbach
Jacob Peters	Winnipeg
Jake E. Peters	Winnipeg
William Schroeder	Winnipeg
Janis Thiessen	Winnipeg

## MMHS Executive and Board Meetings — 2006- 2007

EXECUTIVE 2006	BOARD 2006
10 January	4 March AGM
8 February	21 March
12 April	10 May
7 June	18 October
20 September	
22 November	
EXECUTIVE 2007	BOARD 2007
10 January	17 January
7 February	3 March AGM

## MMHS Representatives and Liaison Appointments 2006

### Representatives

Jewish, Mennonite, Ukrainian Committee  
Ken Reddig, Bert Friesen

*Journal of Mennonite Studies*  
Roland Sawatzky

Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites  
Ken Reddig, Royden Loewen

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada  
Gilbert Brandt, appointee by exec.

### Liaison

Manitoba Historical Society  
Gilbert Brandt

Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach  
Bert Friesen

Neubergthal Heritage Foundation  
John Giesbrecht

Winkler Heritage Society  
Martha Martens

Post Road Heritage Group, Emerson  
Ed Hoepfner

Altona & District Heritage and Research Centre  
Lawrence Giesbrecht

Mennonite Memorial Landing Site  
Royden Loewen

Steinbach Heritage Committee  
Royden Loewen

Museo Y Centro Cultural Menonita, A.C.  
George Rempel, Adolf Ens, Henry Ens

D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation  
Executive Director (to be named)

# State of the Society

by Gilbert G. Brandt

Greetings to each of you. We hope that the past year has been meaningful for you, and that the Society has provided benefits that have added to your experiences. Personally, I learned much from the many hard-working members of the Society, especially the past Executive and Board. I want to express great appreciation and thanks to each one.



*Let me highlight a number of items from the past year.*

1. The Privacy Task Force worked hard at providing policies to keep the Society members personal information from reaching beyond the intended scope.
2. The preservation of MMHS records is an on-going project. With the continuing work of our Secretary, Anna Ens, and the assistance of a student during the summer, our records are getting organized so that researchers are able to access them more easily. This is an on-going project, and will need continued attention.
3. The Canadian Human Rights Museum is moving ahead slowly. A very informative meeting was held with Ms Kim Jasper, Communications Director, The Canadian Museum for Human Rights. A committee is being formed under the MMHS banner, chaired presently by Werner Toews of the Society.
4. The publication of the history volume on the Manitoba Mennonites, written by John Friesen, is slowly making its way through to completion. We look forward to seeing a finished book.
5. We appreciate the work of the ad hoc committee regarding Conscientious Objectors, and look forward to participating in the Symposium scheduled for this coming fall at the University of Winnipeg.

*Let me highlight a number of items that we hope the new Executive and Board will address during this coming year*

1. The Constitution has been used for several years now, and could possibly use some fine-tuning. The executive is charged with looking at the sections related to "terms" for officers, and may study the constitution further to suggest improvements.
2. We appreciate that a number of awards are given out—to students, to long-time members, etc.—but we would suggest that a variety of other recognition awards be given out each year. The executive has discussed briefly the concept of a major "Awards Night" to recognize individuals in the arts, music and other history ventures. This needs further discussion and decision-making.

3. The Society has focused on the Manitoba Mennonites who have roots in Europe (Russia, Ukraine, etc.). We need to work on highlighting the experiences of the many other Manitobans who are Mennonite but have a completely different ethnicity (Aboriginal, Chinese, East Indian, Vietnamese, and others). How can the Society draw these into its fold?
4. In order for the Society to grow, and to continue being a significant voice, we need to expand our membership into the younger set. We trust that the new executive will find ways of exploring connections with students—whether in high school, college or university.
5. May the new Executive, Board and the various committees all have renewed vision and creativity for the coming year.

Thanks go to you as members for your continued input. We need your on-going support, both in continued membership and in continued work in committees, on special projects and as part of the general encouragement for historical research related to Mennonites in Manitoba. Let me remind you—you are the Society; you make the Society function effectively.

## Conscientious Objectors Conference

The CO conference, tentatively named "War and Conscientious Objection," will be taking place October 20-21, 2006 at the University of Winnipeg, hosted by the Chair of Mennonite Studies. While the focus will be on the Mennonite experience, there will also be speakers representing Quakers, Doukhobors, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Speakers will be coming from across Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

The conference is rooted in the experience in World War, although other themes such as American conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War, Christian Peacemaker Teams, theology of peace, etc. will also be explored. MMHS is considering hosting a separate event connected to the conference on the same theme.

If you are interested in hosting one of the speakers in your home during the conference, contact Conrad Stoesz at [cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca). If you have any questions or comments, contact one of the planning committee members: Royden Loewen, Esther Epp-Tiessen, John Derksen, Hans Werner, or Conrad Stoesz.

— Conrad Stoesz

## Book Notes

by Gilbert G. Brandt

A number of new titles have come onto my desk in the recent months. Several are significant for Manitobans and need highlighting. If you are aware of other books — family histories, church histories, biographies, novels, etc. — do not hesitate to inform the editors of Heritage Posting so that the book notes can include most of the writing and publishing done in Manitoba.



*Getting in the Way, Stories from Christian Peacemaker Teams* is edited by Tricia Gates Brown. This book is very timely in light of the recent hostage takings in Iraq. It recounts the thrilling stories about important developments in nonviolent peacemaking. The work of CPT is often at the cutting edge of conflict and brings Christ's way of peace into a world wracked by violence. Published by Herald Press, 2005.

Winnipeg poet, Sarah Klassen has a new collection available. *A Curious Beatitude*, is published by J. Gordon Shillingford, 2006. Klassen is presently working on a collection of short stories, to be published this fall by Couteau Books.

Abraham Friesen, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has a new book entitled *In Defense of Privilege, Russian Mennonites and the State Before and During World War I*. "The transition from being a severely persecuted religious minority in the Reformation era to becoming a privileged ethnic minority in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian empire makes the Dutch-Polish-Russian Mennonite story a very intriguing one. Yet the privileges granted these Mennonites by Russia in 1800 — permanent exemption from military service, freedom of religion, self-government, and control of their own schools — came under attack by imperial authorities with the government's decision to implement russification policies in the 1860s." This 520-page volume is published by Kindred Productions, 2006.

As noted elsewhere in this Newsletter, James Urry's new book, *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood: Europe - Russia - Canada, 1525 to 1980*, has been released by University of Manitoba Press, 2006. Urry, from Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand, has a great interest in Manitoba Mennonites, and has spent much time doing research in southern Manitoba.

Rudy Wiebe, noted Canadian novelist, has a new book, published through Knopf (2006). This is a moving memoir of a boy's coming of age, set in the Prairies, a land Wiebe loves deeply. The book, *Of This Earth: A Mennonite Boyhood in the Boreal Forest* provides great insights into Rudy Wiebe's growing up years and the formation of his literary thought.

## Local History Workshop in Gretna

The Local History committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society is holding its spring workshop in Gretna on **May 6, beginning at 10 a.m.**, says committee chair Adolf Ens.

The main topic for the morning is Bruce Wiebe's research on Mennonites in Cass County, North Dakota, focusing on the settlement around Maple River.

Wiebe may also be making observations on the "timber lots" which Shantz, an Ontario Swiss Mennonite, reserved for Mennonites, in North Dakota close to the Manitoba border.

The second topic of the day is the use of cemeteries as a source of historical information. The usefulness of headstone information for genealogical research is not always measurable. Several shorter presentations will set the stage for a tour of the Gretna cemetery and perhaps the Alt-Bergthal cemetery. Brief biographies of several persons buried at these will be given.

— Elmer Heinrichs