

HERITAGE POSTING

MANITOBA
MENNONITE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



No. 53

July 2006

Local Historians at MMHS Workshop May 6

Almost 50 historians took in the spring history workshop of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society at Gretna, May 6. Bruce Wiebe's presentation on the Russian Mennonite settlements on Maple River in North Dakota was followed by an afternoon cemetery tour.

Wiebe, with early ancestors in North Dakota, told of his research into the settlement. Of Mennonites immigrating in 1874 from Russia to North America, many to the East Reserve, some were enticed to end their travel at a Fargo riverboat stop, and settle in the Maple River area.

A year or two earlier, said Wiebe, the land was investigated by some of the Russian delegates, but not by the Bergthal or Kleine Gemeinde delegates. The reports were very favourable, and the railroad companies in the USA worked hard to persuade arriving immigrants.

The land was declared to be good, and adapted to the needs of the Russian Mennonites. The railway companies offered reduced fees. And while a request for a block settlement was debated in Congress, it was really too late. The mass immigration to Manitoba had begun.

The immigrants, said Wiebe, all passed through Moorhead/Fargo on their way to Manitoba, a stop offering ample opportunity to be sidetracked. However the settlement was not in one block, as such a reservation of land for Mennonites didn't exist in the U.S.

As a result the settlement lasted less than 20 years. A few families also lived across the Red River in Clay County, Minnesota, with some "real characters" among them, added Wiebe.

Two published community histories were introduced. Committee chair Randall Pappel told about the 400-page Halbstadt book released last summer, and editor Hans



Edenburg memorial, erected 2004. — Photo by Bert Friesen

Werner said a new history "Living Between Worlds" endeavours to tell how Winkler people work at faith and life.

Local historian Mavis Dyck introduced historians to the afternoon cemetery tour, noting that cemeteries can reveal a great deal of genealogical and other information; and a restoration can bring about memorials, cairns and printed histories.

After a nice lunch in the MCI cafeteria, the tour group

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

met at the Gretna Cemetery. Here Marlene Plett told about prominent Mennonite pioneer businessman and humanitarian Erdman Penner, a supporter of high education who set up businesses at Neuanlage, and then Gretna.

Historian Adolf Ens said "progressive" Mennonites and the Manitoba department of education recruited Prussian-born H. H. Ewert, an educator in Kansas, to Manitoba to begin a "normal" school. Principal of the MEI, he was also Manitoba's Inspector of Mennonite schools.

Historian Peter D. Zacharias reflected on long-time MCI principal Paul J. Schaefer, who grew up a Lutheran, and then became a Mennonite, and was both a leader and minister. He was active in the community of Gnadenhal, and elected Bishop of the Blumenorter Mennonite Church.

Martha Martens recalled the life of Elizabeth "Isby" Bergen. Born in Saskatchewan, a graduate of the MCI, she

had an interest in music, community and people. During her life, she researched and wrote many historical articles for the *Red River Valley Echo*, which are a great resource today.

At the cairn stop, Ens told about Berghaler delegate and minister Heinrich Wiebe, buried at the corner where a monument also marks the 75th anniversary of Mennonites settling the West Reserve. A supporter of higher education, he moved to Edenburg area in 1879.

The touring group also made a stop at the Edenburg Cemetery, one of the oldest around.

For a final stop, the historians travelled to the Altona Eigengrund Cemetery on 12-2-1W. Eigengrund - "my own ground" - was so named by pioneer Johann Braun. It was begun in 1884 when three of Johann's nieces, all sisters, died of diphtheria inside of six days.

Joe Braun told how Susanna Moody grew up in the area and requested burial here. Her nephew Bill Braun and other Braun family members began working on the cemetery, and it is now a fine heritage cemetery - truly an inspiration!



Above, an introduction to the upcoming cemetery tour. Right, examining local monuments along the tour route.

— Photos by Bert Friesen



Editor — Colleen Epp

Managing Editor — Susan Brandt

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

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

Website: www.mmhs.org

ISSN 1491-2325

A Brief History of Bethania Personal Care Home

Nurse Maria Vogt started a small hospital in Steinbach together with her brother Abram. This was the forerunner of the Steinbach General Hospital.

She also saw a need for the care of chronically ill people, the infirm elderly with no next of kin, and the mentally disabled. She founded a home for these people in need of long term care. An urgent need for such a home was also in the Winnipeg area. Talks resulted in the forming of the "Mennonite Benevolent Society". In 1945, the Society purchased land north of Winnipeg in the area known as Parkdale, at 5203 Main Street.

This property had its own interesting history. In 1911, wealthy industrialist T. D. Robinson built an estate on 720 acres of land. He modeled the mansion after Baldwin's mansion in Pasadena California, a Greek style house built for \$86,000. In 1913, he built a smaller mansion for his son-in-law C. W. N. Kennedy. This estate needed 70 workers to be maintained. Robinson lived here for 15 years and then fell into debt. He sold most of the land to W. L. Parish, leaving 104 acres with the two mansions and several farm buildings. He was eventually forced to sell it all. The land and buildings were then further developed and served as a country club until it was disbanded several years later.

In 1928, the estate was purchased by The Workers Benevolent Association of Canada. It was operated as a senior citizens home and orphanage until 1938, when it was closed due to lack of funds.

By 1945, the buildings were empty and looked neglected. The deal with the Mennonite Benevolent Society was finalized on August 20, 1945 when it was purchased from the Workers Benevolent Association for \$20,000 - \$1,000 down and the \$19,000 payable by December 1945. The buildings needed extensive renovation due to neglect.

On March 1, 1946 Maria Vogt, together with 16 patients from Steinbach moved into Bethania. It had 68 beds for its patients. Bethania lay on the west bank of the Red River. The buildings were surrounded by green lawn and many trees. Sixty-five acres were under cultivation - potatoes, corn, wheat, and oats were grown for residents' consumption and also for the chickens and animals (cows, pigs and horses). They also had bees and used the honey. The farm managers were Abram Rogalsky (1946-1962); Ben Friesen (1962-1967) and Heinrich Hiebert. In 1966 it was decided to sell the property, and it was sold on June 27, 1968 for \$80,000. The last "Erntedankfest and Missionsfest" was held on November 2 1969.

On May 21, 1970 Bethania moved into its new quarters at 1045 Concordia Avenue in Winnipeg. It had 100 beds. Several new wings and a chapel have been added to the original building.

— Marianne Janzen

War and the Conscientious Objector:

A HISTORY CONFERENCE

October 20 and 21, 2006

During the Second World War, 10,000 Canadians sought alternatives to military service. Their story remains virtually untold, having been largely relegated to short print-run books and contributions to archival collections.

On October 21 - 22, 2006, a history conference will highlight the experience of Canadian conscientious objectors in the Second World War, when about 60% of Mennonite men who were called to military service refused to participate in active military service. Instead, they sought options for alternative service through a program negotiated by Mennonite leaders with the Canadian Federal Government.

Though their experience reflects Mennonite church teachings, many people know nothing or very little about the story and significance of the conscientious objectors, even within the Mennonite community.

This conference will take a critical look at the experience of the Canadian conscientious objector in the Second World War and interpret it in today's context, a time in which war is widely offered as a way to peace and democracy.

The *War and the Conscientious Objector* conference will feature speakers from a wide variety of backgrounds. Planners have invited speakers from B.C. to Quebec, from various Mennonite denominations as well as from the Jehovah's Witness, Doukhobor and Quaker denominations. In addition experts on pacifism in Canada, university students, peace activists and Second World War conscientious objectors will engage the topic.

The 65 year old story of the Second World War conscientious objectors offers one model of dealing with war in today's world and forces people to ask, "What is the right response today to war and violence?"

The Chair of Mennonite Studies will host the lectures at the University of Winnipeg's Eckardt Gramatte Hall. As in past years, the public is invited to attend all sessions for free. Selected lectures will be published in the peer-evaluated publication *Journal Of Mennonite Studies*. The planning committee for the conference includes, John Derksen, Esther Epp-Tiessen, Royden Loewen, Conrad Stoesz, and Hans Werner. The conference is sponsored by the Chair in Mennonite Studies, Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, D. F. Plett Historical Foundation, and Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

For more information on conscientious objectors visit www.alternativeservice.ca or on the conference visit www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies. For specific information contact Royden Loewen r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca or 204-786-9391.

Sam Martin Went To Prison

During World War II, over 10,000 young men from various backgrounds wanted to serve their country in ways that did not include bearing arms. These Conscientious Objectors (COs) worked on farms, in industry, as medics (some on or near the battle fronts), or in alternative service camps.

Others, like Samuel V. Martin, were sentenced to jail time. Sam Martin Went To Prison is the moving account of a young man who stayed true to his beliefs through adversity and with the support of his community. The complete story can be found in the book by William Janzen and Frances Greaser or on line at www.alternativeservice.ca

The young man stood before the elevated judge's bench, trying to convince Justice Harvey that he was sincere in his beliefs. He explained that he was a member of a historic peace church – Duchess Mennonite Church in Alberta. He explained that he attended regularly, that he agreed with his church and the Bible that killing was wrong. But after questioning, Judge Harvey was not convinced. He sentenced Sam Martin to 30 days in the Lethbridge jail, after which he would be handed over to the military. However Sam was given a chance out – a chance of avoiding jail time. If he joined the Merchant Marines he would remain a free man. Martin said no – his convictions would not allow it.

Sam was able to get a postponement for his jail time because he was needed in his home community with his skills as a mechanic. Before the postponement was finished, several family members and friends wrote asking for an extension, stating that Sam's skills were important to the community. Sam also wrote trying again to show his convictions were sincere and that he was willing to serve in alternative service. It was to no avail. If he did not report for military training, he was told he would be arrested.

On April 4, 1944 Sam was arrested and taken to Brooks, Alberta where he was sentenced to 30 days in the provincial jail in Lethbridge. He was handcuffed and walked across town to the train station. Once on the train he remained shackled and under guard. He was placed in a jail in Calgary where he was photographed, finger printed, and searched. A few days later he was taken to Lethbridge. Here he did various jobs but was lonely and worried about what would happen after the 30 days were over.

Before the 30 days were finished he was sent to the Currie Military Barracks. He was met by the Regimental Sergeant Major who instructed him to wear a military uniform.

Sam declined. The sergeant snarled and shouted, "You will wear a uniform! I am in charge here, and there has never been a person under my control whom I haven't been able to break! Take off your clothes and put on an army uniform or go naked!"

Sam replied quietly and respectfully that he was a

conscientious objector and that he would not put on the uniform. Sam knew that putting on the uniform was the first step in coming under military authority, and so he felt he had to resist.

Sam was given an internal sentence of solitary confinement and a diet of bread and water - three days bread and water, three days regular food. The cell was brightly lit all the time and bare except for a pail for a toilet. When he wanted to sleep, he was given blankets. The only clothes he had were his underwear.

Sam was determined to remain steadfast; his faith in God would carry him through. When the guards noticed that he did not put on the uniform they turned off the heat in his cell. When there was still no change in Sam's actions, the guards opened the window to the cell, allowing in the cool spring air. Sam closed the window. The guards stormed in, yelling, swearing and threatening him. They opened the window, and when they left Sam closed it again. After a number of attempts the guards gave up trying to keep the window open, but kept the heat in the cell off.

At the end of his sentence, guards forcibly put the uniform on Sam. He was so weak he could not put up much resistance. They led him away in handcuffs and took him to the Mewata barracks in Calgary. Once alone, and with much fear, he took off the uniform. Again he was charged with disobeying an order. While Sam remained strong in his convictions, the poor diet, the chill, lack of clothing, poor sleeping conditions, and worry about the future were taking their toll.

He was again sentenced to solitary confinement in a 5 x 7 foot cell, with a drinking cup and a pail for a toilet. He wore only his underwear but could have put on the uniform at any time. At 10 p.m. he was given three blankets which were taken away each morning at six. For hours he would sit in a corner with his arms wrapped around his legs. Or he would pace, three steps forward and three steps back. He wondered if his friends and family had forgotten about him; as he received no news from the outside.

His friends and family had not forgotten about him. They prayed and wrote letters to him and to the officials on his behalf. One day the guards decided to give Sam his mail. They threw 45 letters into his cell. Sam was overjoyed and wept. Reading the letters gave him strength and hope.

At the end of his second 28-day sentence he again was asked to put on his uniform; again he refused. This time he was taken before a tribunal where his pastor served as his character witness. In the end he was sentenced to another 90 days in the dreaded Currie Army Barracks. He was again mistreated but due to pressure from his community, Mennonite and non-Mennonite clergy, and a doctor who had deep concerns about his long-term health, he was treated more favourably in the latter portion of his

(Continued on page 5)

Reclaiming a cemetery

Family and District Cemeteries - One Key to Our Past

A discussion of cemeteries, and a historical tour of several were part of the annual spring workshop sponsored by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Local History committee in Gretna on May 6, 2006.

Local resident and historian Joe Braun told how descendants of five families of the Eigengrund district east of Altona were convinced of the need to hold family cemeteries as sacred ground and to restore and preserve them.

He credited one individual, Bill Braun, with spearheading an effort to restore and preserve the Eigengrund Cemetery, and historians touring the site came away impressed. On its completion years later, Lois Braun wrote "it is a pleasing spot - quiet, natural, full of history."

At the Gretna workshop, historian Mavis Dyck suggested that cemeteries are a source of answers for our basic questions, the "who, when, where, what and why".

"The name often provides the ethnic background, denotes male or female; birth and death dates indicate age and point to a time period in history; location of early settlers, where they grew up, and at times there are indicators of community trauma, accidents, disease such as the 1918 flu."

"Many of us here," said Dyck, "share a curiosity, and a fascination with our heritage and history, as well as a strong desire to preserve our past. Cemeteries mirror our society and culture. I feel our generation has a responsibility to build the bridge to connect past with the future."

But, she asked, how can this be done? "This afternoon we will hear oral biographies," she continued. "I would like to share ways of leaving a historical record. Let's make a quick mental stop at Waldheim Cemetery. For sixty years, a burial site had no marker - only the caretaker's map had the information. In 1997, I found this was my great-grandfather's gravesite. Our family reunion of 500

descendants decided to set up a memorial. History unfolded on a plaque; it included his father's name, birth and death, two marriages, and names of all 13 children, their births and deaths, spouses and maiden names."

"Besides genealogical information", said Dyck, "we also included the date of immigration to Canada, location in Manitoba, as well as the year of homesteading in Saskatchewan."

"Another idea you might use if you are recognizing a particular family is the one we used in the year 2000. Although the Hoepfner reunion was held in Steinbach, many family members stayed over for Monday to go to the Waldheim Cemetery, the burial site of many Hoepfners."

"George, my husband, has prepared stakes with a coloured ribbon to mark the 80 Hoepfner descendants. Ed Hoepfner gave an informative presentation, followed by a lunch and many oral stories. Point of interest was the burial sites of three grandsons of delegate Jacob Hoepfner."

East of Waldheim, noted Dyck, sits Chortitz. "An old cemetery here used from 1875 to 1969 received a facelift. After three years of research, a total of 292 names showed some startling facts: 153 were children under 4 (20 died in 1908 alone), and 30 youth or young adults."

A 40,000-pound stone was selected for a cairn to display five plaques of historical information. At a 2002 dedication ceremony, a 39-page Chortitz memory booklet was distributed. Memorials, cairns, printed histories are all ways to hold a story for future generations, said Dyck.

Looking back on Eigengrund, Joe Braun said "Here's what it takes to restore a landmark such as a family cemetery. You need an individual with a vision, great persuasiveness, profound appreciation of family history, who thrives on details and persuades family members to get involved."

"Today you approach Eigengrund, marked against the prairie sky by a tall cottonwood, driving along a straight, narrow lane. New trees and a modest fence enclose the cemetery itself." A fine stone pays homage to the past, and appropriate wording recognizes all those who are buried here.

— Elmer Heinrichs

(Continued from page 4)

third sentence and in his subsequent terms.

Sam Martin endured several more prison terms. On May 8, 1945 Canada ceased to be at war in Europe. On November 8, 1945 Sam was given an industrial leave to work in his brother's garage and on April 12, 1946 he was formally discharged from the military. In total, Sam served over 18 months in prison, at times in very difficult circumstances, but remained true to his convictions throughout his entire experience.

— summarized by Conrad Stoesz March 3, 2006

Gretna Theatre Curtain Centre Piece of Heritage Gallery in MCI's Buhler Hall

The dust jacket of Gretna's 1987 history book *Gretna, Window on the Northwest* is a photographic reproduction of the theatre curtain which hung in the Gretna Theatre in the early decades of this century.

In 1915-16, the movie theatre in Gretna contracted a company in Minneapolis to paint a theatre curtain that would include various company logos.

It was a large canvass, approximately 11' high by 19' wide, and hand-painted with a water-based paint. It featured various Gretna company names (presumably the theatre's sponsors), and would be raised at the start of the show.

The many advertisements, which appear on the curtain, underscore the fact that Gretna was the business centre of the era.

In the early 1940's the theatre was purchased by A.B. Klassen who renovated the interior to convert it to a confectionery/general store. The curtain was destined for the garbage dump, but was rescued by H. P. Hildebrandt, who recognized its historical and sentimental value and happened to be at the right place at the right time.

He took it home and put it in a granary on the family farm, where it stayed, rolled up and forgotten, until the early 1970's. Thirty-two years later, his son Peter E. Hildebrandt, now living on the family farm re-discovered it when the granary was being demolished.

The love of historical artifacts proved to be a family trait, and again the curtain was plucked from the rubble and given a new resting place in the barn.

In the 1980's it resurfaced again when Gretna was planning for its centennial with a history book and homecoming celebrations. That's when it was photographed and wound up on the dust jacket of Gretna's large impressive history book.

Another element to the theater curtain story revolves around the fact that theatre attendance was considered an unwholesome activity by MCI's early administration, and was firmly prohibited by Principal H. H. Ewert.

"Ist nicht gestattet!" It's not allowed. Students who were found attending the Gretna theatre were duly punished.

More recently when the MCI was planning a heritage gallery as part of Buhler Hall, Peter Hildebrandt and his son Ed and grandson Jeremy brought it to MCI in order to see it become part of a permanent display in the heritage gallery.



The Gretna theatre curtain, as displayed at MCI.

— Photo by Bert Friesen

Because of the fragile nature of this curtain (almost a century old), a digital reproduction has been put on display. It was one of the early items and on display at the November 28, 2004 opening.

It may seem a little ironic that the curtain's home is now at the MCI.

— Elmer Heinrichs

Quiz - Popular First Names

As found in the 1880 West Reserve Census

1. haarbma
2. armai
3. nleucriso
4. haatnega
5. njohna
6. hinicehr
7. lanhee
8. sauanns
9. hliitcedr
10. hrrgaed
11. hlwlmei
12. hsaetbile
13. haaartnic
14. sjntiau

See answers on Page 10

Winkler's centennial history released

Author Hans Werner, *Living Between Worlds, A History of Winkler, Manitoba* (Winkler Heritage Society, 2006), 8 1/2 x 11 h.c., 226 pages, \$50.

The City of Winkler is marking its centennial and publicly launched its new history book, *Living Between Worlds*, marking Winkler's 100th year, on April 8th. One hundred years earlier, on April 7, 1906, Winkler was officially incorporated as a village.

The Winkler Heritage Society has published a 226-page hard-cover book, on which a collage of past and present photos frame the beautiful glossy dust jacket telling of the village's early days, its thriving growth into a city, and a rich history.

The Society chose Hans Werner, a graduate of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna, Manitoba, to be its editor. Working with research assistants and doing extensive interviewing, Werner has produced a large size book, which will be interesting to read for younger and older residents, as well as historians.

At the launch, Werner said the book tries to explain Winkler and the communities. "It's all tied together - it's where our life is. It tries to tell our story of everyday life - it's now 100 years since residents voted to form a village, its incorporation and election of the first council."

Ken H. Loewen, chair of the Winkler Heritage Society, explains the book's title *Living Between Worlds* saying "one look at the book's dust jacket provides a visual answer: Winkler began as a place on the field where the railroad and the water ran through.

"The people changed it, from a simple, self-entertaining, subsistent endeavour to a thriving, complex inter-dependent, international city."

It's about a remarkable railroad town, a place that didn't "fade away when the railway and agriculture were replaced in the prairie economy by oil, the automobile and the truck."

"For most of its history, Winkler was known as a Mennonite place. Winkler's merchants and businessmen had to find their way in between the commercial and industrial worlds of mainstream North America and the village world of their more separation-conscious customers and workers."

Loewen adds "The one dimensional view held by many Manitobans of what it was to be a Mennonite and a Winklerite were in fact much more diverse and with many more shades . . ."

"The pages that follow outline how they negotiated the worlds of faith, culture and social life on the way to



A beautiful quilt, created in honour of Winkler's centennial celebrations.

— Photo by Elmer Heinrichs

becoming a thriving small city," concludes the book's preface.

Editor Hans Werner, an engineering graduate, joined his wife's family farm, and Hans and Diana farmed and raised a family in Schanzenfeld just south of Winkler. While they lived in the Winkler area, Hans was involved in farm, community and church organizations.

After farming for about 20 years, Hans returned to studies and completed his PhD in History in 2002. They now live in Winnipeg where he teaches Canadian history and Mennonite studies at the University of Winnipeg.

Werner noted that in the decade of the 1950s, Winkler found the key to non-agricultural growth. "It used a vast labour resource to stimulate industry, and today the village, which began as a Mennonite place, is a much more mixed society," added the book's writer.

Winkler began with a struggle for community. Businesses began to flourish, schools and churches were established, but then survival was threatened with groups of people coming and going: the Jewish community arrived, some Mennonites left for Mexico, and the Russlaenders arrived. Finally, Winkler began to thrive, moving towards prosperity and growth.

"Although never able to escape the tension between the worlds of faith and enterprise, the fledgling village that began as a collection of storefronts along a railroad track defied the odds and grew to become a small city," concludes the book.

— Elmer Heinrichs

Our Churches



Griswold M.B. Church

Griswold Mennonite Brethren Church was founded on June 5, 1926 with Henry Penner of Alexander as its leader. There were 22 members which met in homes until 1929, when a church building was bought in Griswold with a seating capacity of 150 people. In 1954, the congregation built a new church in Alexander. Their dedication service was held on September 19, 1954. The name was changed to Alexander MB Church. On April 16, 1973, there was a unanimous decision to close the church. All memberships were transferred to the Brandon MB Church. The church's leaders included: Jacob Abrahams (1930), J. J. Friesen (1931-1932), P. J. Heide (1933), J. N. Wittenberg (1934-1937), Peter Mandtler (1938-1944), Abraham Friesen (1945-1951), Abe L. Klassen (1952), John J. Krueger (1953-1960), H. C. Schroeder (1961-1964), and Peter J. Doerksen (1966-1971).

Gnadenthal M.B. Church

The Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church was organized on June 14, 1929, with Wilhelm J. Dueck in leadership. In 1943, an old house was used as the church. When it was remodeled, the building was able to seat 200 people. In 1953, the membership was 28 people. During the church's existence, Helen Harder was the one missionary that went from this church to the foreign field. In 1955, the remaining members of the church joined Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church. The leaders were: Johann H. Retzlaff (1927), Wilhelm Dyck (1928), G. A. Conrad (1929-1938), and Heinrich P. Harder (1939-1955).



Dr. Peter Brock Passes Away

Dr. Peter Brock, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Toronto, and "the world's foremost scholar of pacifist history", died in Toronto on 28 May 2006, at the age of 86.

Dr. Brock was a CO in Britain during World War II, was briefly imprisoned and then performed alternative service. He followed this with volunteer work in postwar Poland. He was read and admired by many Mennonite scholars and other readers who learned much about themselves and other pacifist movements in his thirty books and many articles. Among these are: *A Brief History of Pacifism from Jesus to Tolstoy*, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century*, *Sectarian Non-resistance from*

the Middle Ages to the Great War, and his most recent book, *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Reformation to the Second World War* (2006).

It was said about Dr. Brock, "No ideology owes more to one academic than pacifism owes to Peter Brock, whose scholarship on the topic began when pacifism was an unfashionable subject"

Dr. Brock was married to Quaker Carmen Williamson, who died in 1998.

— Reprinted from the Mennonite Historian



l-r: Alf Redekopp, John J. Friesen, Gerald Gerbrandt, Ron Boese, John R. Friesen.

Planting of an Oak Tree on the CMU Campus

On June 8, 2006, an oak tree was planted on the south CMU campus next to the Heritage Centre. This oak is a result of an acorn from the original Chortitza Insel oak tree being brought to Canada by Abe Epp of Niagara-on-the-Lake. He planted the acorn, nurtured the sapling, until it became a sturdy young tree two metres in height. This tree was donated by him for this purpose and transported to Winnipeg for this planting.

Gerald Gerbrandt, the president of CMU welcomed all present. He introduced the speakers, John J. Friesen, John R. Friesen, and Alf Redekopp.

John J. Friesen gave a brief history of the Mennonite association with the Chortitza oak tree. It was likely already over 600 years old when the Mennonites arrived there in 1789. In that case, he stated, it likely was a young tree at the time when Ghengis Khan (1162-1227) invaded Russia around 1220s. The Mennonite era near this tree lasted about 150 years until the 1940s. Since the 1980s, Mennonites have regularly traveled back to their Russian homeland and have brought back acorns from this tree. These have been planted in many parts of North America.

John R. Friesen related how this tree came to Winnipeg. He had known Abe Epp for many years and knew that Epp had successfully planted some of these Chortitza oak acorns. He arranged, then, for this Epp tree to be brought to Winnipeg for this particular planting.

Alf Redekopp, director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, spoke the dedicatory prayer. He prayed that the seed which has produced this tree would be a reminder for us of our history and God's provision for us and our future. May we also continue to plant the seed of God's mercy and grace in our world.

Book Launch at McNally Robinson

Abraham Friesen's book, *In Defense of Privilege: Russian Mennonites and the State Before and During World War I* (Winnipeg, MB : Kindred Productions xvii, 520 p., 2006) was launched on Thursday, June 8, 2006. The launch took place at McNally Robinson Booksellers, Winnipeg.

Abe Dueck introduced the author, now retired from the history department of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Friesen currently resides in Fresno, California.

The author gave a brief overview of the book. The project was triggered by a reading of Peter Braun's book on who the Mennonites are, *Wer Sind Die Mennoniten?: Zur Frage Der Liquidierung Des Deutschen Landbesitzes In Russland*. The core of his book are two sections dealing with:

- a) the issue of proselytizing
- b) the land liquidation issue which revolved around whether the Mennonites were Germans or Dutch.

On the first point, Friesen stated that since 1905, the Mennonites had interpreted new laws as allowing them to proselytize, with the Mennonite Brethren taking the lead in this interpretation and acting accordingly. In 1910, the Mennonite publishing house, Raduga Press, was investigated. Friesen's view is that this was the pivotal point when the Mennonite sojourn in Russia became untenable and would inevitably lead to a crisis and likely departure.

On the second point, Braun's thesis in his book was that Mennonites were Dutch. This the Russian government disputed, saying by ethnicity and culture they were German. Braun as much as concurred with this when the German support of the White Army made it prudent to be German. In other words, they were whatever it was prudent to be because they could claim both, having begun in the Netherlands but living for many generations under the Prussian influence, before establishing an essentially German life in Russia. Friesen suggested he would lean toward the Dutch origin.

This presentation was followed by a brief discussion. A range of opinions on these points were expressed.

The evening ended with refreshments, personal interaction, and with the author autographing copies of his book.

— Bert Friesen

Winkler Opens a New Concert Hall

The P. W. Enns Centennial Concert Hall will be officially opened June 11, 2006.

The concert hall is a renovated building which was originally the Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church. Since then, it has been used by others. It was recently purchased by the City of Winkler with the help of a major donation from the P. W. Enns Foundation. A city management team has overseen the renovation and will hire a manager for the facility.

The MMHS board was given a tour of the building on May 10, 2006 by Walter Siemens, Winkler's Economic Development Officer. He reported that the total cost of the renovation will be about \$2 million. It will seat 510 patrons on two levels. It has superb acoustic technology, very similar to the Buhler Hall in Gretna. The seats are very comfortable, and have generous leg room at all levels of the hall. Additional features of the hall are areas for teaching and dressing rooms for performers.

The facility will host two organizations. One is a theatre school to teach children various aspects of the theatre. Another is a music conservatory to teach instrumentalists



The P. W. Enns Centennial Concert Hall in Winkler

— Photo by Bert Friesen

and vocalists. These organizations will then also use the facility for their performances.

Another educational component is a co-operation with Red River College. Credit will be given for courses in audio and video technology, stage lighting technology, and back stage management. The audio and video technology will be especially helpful for the many congregational volunteers who operate each meeting house's audio system. Additionally, high school students will be able to learn about ushering, ticket sales, food & beverage sales in addition to the technologies mentioned above.

Siemens indicated that there are already 40 events booked for the facility in 2006.

Winkler has a good deal of local talent and a strong population base to sustain the facility. It is indeed an impressive addition to the southern Manitoba cultural scene.

— Bert Friesen

Centennial Celebrations

The community of Winkler began its centennial celebrations December 29, 2005. 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

Answers - Popular First Names

As found in the 1880 West Reserve Census

1. Abraham	8. Susanna
2. Maria	9. Dietrich
3. Cornelius	10. Gerhard
4. Aganetha	11. Wilhelm
5. Johann	12. Elisabeth
6. Heinrich	13. Catharina
7. Helena	14. Justina

Manitoba Summer Events Calendar

June 17 – Rosenort – Rosenort Days

July 23 – Winkler – Yard and Garden Tours

July 26-29 – Austin – Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede

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

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 - Winkler Harvest Festival & Exhibition

August 12 – Landmark – Friendship Festival

August 17-20 – Grunthal – Agricultural Fair

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 active forward-looking community stages its 5th annual **Plum Festival**.

August 26 – Kleeefeld – The Kleeefeld Honey 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

Plett Awards

The annual Henry E. Plett Memorial Award for Family Histories were awarded in June. One dozen entries vied for first and second place, giving those reading the essays a very difficult decision to make. After much thought, the first prize was awarded to **Lisa Wiebe**, for her essay entitled *Biography of Susanna Wiebe*. Second prize was claimed by **Greg Penner**, for his essay on *Martin M. Giesbrecht*.

The contest, aimed at Manitoba high school students, seeks to encourage research and writing on the subject of family history. The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Genealogy Committee administers the competition. The Plett Award papers are on file at the Mennonite Heritage Centre for those wishing to read them.

Book Notes

MHV Village Review, a newsletter of Mennonite Heritage Village at Steinbach, Manitoba edited by Doris Penner, is off the press in its third issue. To get your latest copy, or earlier ones, contact the editor at info@mennoniteheritagevillage.com or 1-204-326-9661.

Two books have had a recent second printing. One is **David Toews was Here 1870 - 1947**, written by Dr. Helmut Harder, first published in 2002 by Canadian Mennonite University, now by Pandora Press, Kitchener, ON, and the other is **Reflections of a Prairie Community: Collection of Stories and Memories of Burwalde S.D. #529**, compiled and edited by Marjorie Hildebrandt, and first published by a Burwalde Reunion Committee in 2004. To obtain copies contact aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca for the Toews volume, and wiebhil1@mts.net for the Burwalde volume.

Dr. Helmut Huebert of Winnipeg is preparing a volume on Mennonites residing in Russian cities during the time of the tsars. Chapters on Barwenkovo, Melitopol, and others are completed already. Huebert published **Molotschna Historical Atlas** in 2003. For further information on both contact huebertz@mts.net

Heinz Bergen of Regina, SK, has prepared a volume of memoirs entitled **Verbannung**, dealing with exile and prison experiences in the former Soviet Union. It is ready for printing and awaiting final arrangements with a publisher. For further information contact Heinz at hbergen@accesscomm.ca. Bergen published **Chortitza Old Colony Atlas** in 2004.

The U of T Press of Toronto has recently published **Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Reformation to the Second World War** (2006), edited by Dr. Peter Brock, xii, 462 pp., 80.00. The most recent issue (June) of **Mennonite Historian** carried a review, and notice of Dr. Brock's passing in late May earlier this year.



Dr. Peter Pauls of Winnipeg is the editor of **The Stone House Memoirs: The Story of the J.M. Pauls Family** (Winnipeg: the Family, 2005), hdc., 281 pp. For further information contact the editor at pmpauls@mts.net

The Winkler Heritage Society has published a centennial book for the city of Winkler titled **Living Between Worlds: A History of Winkler** (2006), written by Dr Hans Werner of the University of Winnipeg, hdc., 226 pp., 50.00. For further information contact Ken Loewen at khloewen@mts.net

Just off the press - a second edition of a novel first published in 2001, **Breaking Ground: Three Generations of Mennonite Women in the Canadian West** written by Josephine Friesen Chipman (Surrey, BC : Ocean Park Publications, 2006), pb. 183 pp. For further information contact aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca Josephine did research on the Mennonite **Selbstschutz** at the Heritage Centre a number of years ago.

The Spring, 2006, No. 12 issue of **Rhubarb** is now off the press. It is published occasionally by the Mennonite Literary Society which used to publish **Mennonite Mirror**. The editors of **Rhubarb** are Victor Enns of Winnipeg and Garry Enns of Aubigny on the Red. For further information contact Garry at garryenns@genesisnetworks.ca

— Lawrence Klippenstein