

# HERITAGE POSTING

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MCC 2006 auction at Morris.

— Photo by Bert Friesen

## Morris MCC 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sale “a BIG success”

Excellent fall weather and good attendance made the 25th anniversary of the Mennonite Central Committee relief auction Sept. 9 a resounding success. Money raised supports MCC employment and peace projects around the world.

It was a time to celebrate 25 years of working together and making a difference.

Chairman Dave Reimer says the sale results were very good, grossing \$135,000 for MCC, and “there was a real positive spirit in the air. Produce was a real good seller, and quilts enjoyed a resurgence; and two larger items at the auction raised \$17,000. It was a very good day.”

Feature items this year included a restored 1950 'B' John Deere tractor, donated by the Rosenort Tractor Club, and a 4,042 bushel grain bin donated by Vidir Bins of Morris.

This year marked the fund-raising sale's 25th anniversary and blended the produce of harvest, and socialization with delicious food served through the day into a unique sales event.

These auctions, held across North America, offer a little bit of everything - quilts, artwork, crafted woodwork, homemade foods and antiques and crafts, with proceeds sustaining MCC's work. It all began with breakfast at 7 a.m., followed by the giant farmer's market opening at 8.30 a.m.

There were also the bake and craft sales, a silent auction, pre-priced items area, and a country auction began at 9.30 a.m. The Mennonite meals of vereniki, farmer sausage, cabbage borscht and pie served from 10.30 a.m., and the afternoon quilt auction were other favourites.

— Elmer Heinrichs



Vidir Industries, owned by the Dueck family of Morweena, donated a bin for grain for MCC 2006 auction at Morris.

— Photo by Bert Friesen



Cam Regehr, (left) and Donovan Giesbrecht display their purchases at the MCC 2006 sale at Morris.

— Photo by Bert Friesen

## Catching the Spirit - Something for All at Plum Fest!

A community festival is the place to capture the character of the neighbourhood, and Plum Coulee's Plum Festival Aug. 18-20 was no exception! Saturday morning Coulee's famous traditional breakfast of waffles and crackles cheered festival-goers. And the Saturday morning parade is one event that demonstrates the best! Some 75-plus entries for the Plum Fest parade made it the show of the morning. Some sat in the sun, others in the shade of the trees, but everywhere along the route, families snacked on "knackzoat" while waiting for and watching the parade. Really it all began Friday night the opening ceremonies drew a large crowd to the big tent at the west end of Railway Avenue. Mitch Dick of Golden West Radio emceed the evening, and Plum Fest President, Allen Funk, expressed welcoming greetings.

— *Cleo Henrichs, Plum Coulee*



Plum Fest, 2006 in Plum Coulee.

— Photos by Elmer Heinrichs



Morden Corn and Apple Festival, 2006.

# Summer Events



Several thousand spectators on the outskirts of Winkler, Man. witnessed a world record-setting harvest Aug. 5th when 105 combines harvested 162 acres - over a quarter section of wheat, in 11 minutes and eight seconds, breaking a previous record by more than four minutes.

— Photo by Charles Allan



Sunflower festival 2006 float at Altona. — Photo by Elmer Heinrichs



MCC 2006 auction shuttle service at Morris. — Photo by Bert Friesen

## Haskett Homecoming 2007

On June 30 and July 1 2007 the community of Haskett Manitoba is having a homecoming and all interested are welcome! Plan your next year's summer vacation now. Haskett is located 12 miles south and 2 miles west of the junction of Highway 32 and Highway 14 at Winkler Manitoba. The two day event will include reminiscing, music, food, worship, walking and riding tours and much more. Haskett has seen many changes in its day and at one time had three stores, an International Harvester implement dealership, lumberyard, blacksmith shops, two grain elevators, two bulk fuel stations, repair shops and others. Being that it was a border town; the Canada Customs were there, located in the same building as the Great Northern railway station. The two room school house has had many pupils and teachers pass through its doors. The school was used for other functions also, and had Sunday School classes and various evening programs. The former villages of Eichenfeld, Kronsfield and Gruenfeld all are covered by the area called Haskett today

For more information go to the website [www.hasketthomecoming.com](http://www.hasketthomecoming.com) or call the chairman of the planning committee Abe Wieler @204-325-6957 or e-mail [hasketthomecoming@mts.net](mailto:hasketthomecoming@mts.net). If you have any items of historical interest of Haskett especially photos, stories, or information of past residence or residents of Haskett (or the former villages in its area of Kronsfield, Eichenfeld and Gruenfeld) please connect with Alan Warkentin of the history committee @ 204-325-8453 or at [haskett4me@hotmail.com](mailto:haskett4me@hotmail.com), so that they could be used in displays and even a book that is planned for the homecoming.

**General Editor (Interim)** — Bert Friesen

**Managing Editor** — Susan Brandt

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

**Layout Editor** — Ted Barg

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Correspondence can be mailed to Bert Friesen, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4, 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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## War and the Conscientious Objector: A History Conference

Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites.

20 and 21 October 2006

*"I have fourteen grandchildren now, and I ask myself, 'What kind of world are they going to face?' . . . I have gone*

### Winkler Play Review

*"Miene Schtaudt Vinkla"* played to near capacity crowds and an appreciative audience on Sunday afternoon, with other performances held Saturday afternoon and Sunday evening. The new P. W. Enns Centennial Concert Hall provided a comfortable and appropriate venue for this mildly satiric look at the history of Winkler.

The audience was largely the older generation who still speaks and understands Low German. While there were English subtitles, they were a little low on the screen and were sometimes blocked by the sets. As usual, however, Low German humour loses a little in translation. The play was written by Richard Klassen, the director of the Passion Play, *The Carpenter*, at La Riviere. He is to be commended for a good effort at combining history with entertainment.

The play was generally a fictional historical family saga set against a backdrop of historical photographs of Winkler. The photo reproductions were labelled, varied, clear, and interesting. Such familiar names as Sirluck, Janzen, and Kroeker were featured in the photos. The actors presented well, and while the play was designed to amuse, it prompted reflection and stimulated thought about the varied aspects of Winkler's history, especially the diversity and evolution of its religious culture.

*"Miene Schtaudt Vinkla"* combines many interesting historical facts in a fun-filled comedy about two Mennonite couples. True-to-life events such as the difficulties surrounding the incorporating of Winkler as a town, the Old Colony Mennonites moving to Mexico, as well as the role of the Jewish and Russian settlers, were cleverly unveiled as they affected the lives of the first Mennonite pioneers. The script was a masterful merger of plot and character development combined with a picturesque glimpse into the proud Mennonite heritage of Southern Manitoba.

— *Edith Wiebe with contributions from Elmer Heinrich.*



Lorin Elias and Melissa Klassen as couple in wedding scene.

— Photo by Hinz-Photomoment

*back to the Bible to restudy what it says about the responsibilities we have as peacemakers. I have seen that we must seek the good of the whole human race, and not just of any one nation or race".*

Billy Graham in *Sojourners Magazine*, March 1979.

During the Second World War, over 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.

After 4 years of planning, a history conference on this topic will be held on October 20 - 21, 2006 at the University of Winnipeg. The conference will highlight the experience of Canadian conscientious objectors (COs) in the Second World War.

The COs came from all walks of life with the largest numbers coming from groups such as Mennonites, Doukhobors, Quakers, Hutterites, and Jehovah's Witnesses. These people were called to military service but refused to participate in active military service. Instead, they sought options for alternative service through a program negotiated with the Canadian Federal Government.

Manitoba had more COs than any other province totally over 3000 men. These men worked in hospitals, farms, in Riding Mountain National Park, industry, and in other provinces such as BC. Out of a day's wage the men received 50 cents and the rest went to the Red Cross.

John Bergen was a teacher in Homewood, Manitoba. In a letter to the department of education in 1943 he declared himself a conscientious objector and that "We are willing to help to sustain life, rather than to help to destroy life, believing in Christ's words 'Love thine enemy,' as well as 'Love thy neighbor.'" Responding to Bergen A. A. MacDonald wrote "The opinion expressed by you in this letter, in my opinion, should not be held by anyone teaching children in this province." After a hearing it was unanimously decided to revoke Bergen's teaching certificate. This happened to numerous teachers at this time. Bergen then voluntarily served as a conscientious objector in the dental corps.

In 1946 Bergen's teaching certificate was reinstated. Bergen went on to a long teaching career including 22 years at the University of Alberta.

However, this issue did not rest with him. In 1975 Bergen revisited the issue with the department of education. After a review the Manitoba Department of Education wrote "In view of the fact that Mr. Bergen did serve his country during the war, that society's attitudes have changed vastly in the last thirty years, and that Mr. Bergen's record as a certified teacher was unimpeachable, I wish to recommend to you that the cancellation of Mr. Bergen's certificate be expunged from the record and that retroactively he be considered certified during the period of cancellation."

This conference will take a critical look at the

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Esther (Hiebert) Horch: A Gifted and Generous Woman

Esther Horch was a unique gift to the church at a time when few women were involved in public forms of ministry in the Mennonite Brethren (MB) Church in North America. She left a rich legacy of involvement in teaching, counseling, writing, radio ministry, and many other areas. Esther and her husband, Ben, made a profound impact on generations of Mennonites in North America.

Esther was born in 1909 in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Her father was the well-known preacher and colporteur, C. N. Hiebert, and her uncle was the missionary, N. N. Hiebert. In 1925 C. N. Hiebert was invited by the Canadian MB Conference to become the city missionary in Winnipeg. A small Mennonite Brethren church had evolved in Winnipeg's North End, but in the 1920s the influx of Mennonite refugees from Russia began which drastically changed the community and made Winnipeg the Mennonite center for all of Canada.

Esther took a one-year course in teacher education (Normal School) after completing high school and then taught for three years, first in the country and then in the city. She was the first woman to teach public schools in Manitoba. In 1932 she married Ben Horch. This ended her teaching career because married women were not allowed to teach. She therefore began a kindergarten in the North End Church in order to earn a living during the difficult depression years.

Esther's husband, Ben, was a singer and conductor who eked out a meager living giving private music lessons at the Winnipeg Bible Institute (now Providence College). In 1939, however, the Horchs decided to attend the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA), where Ben studied music for four years. It was during this time (1942) that Esther was injured in an automobile accident while traveling to her mother's funeral. The car, which Esther was driving, overturned and her left arm was crushed. Several weeks later the arm had to be amputated near the shoulder. But Esther always managed to rise above her handicap.

On returning to Canada, Ben first taught at Winkler Bible Institute, but in 1944 he was invited to head the music department at the newly established Mennonite Brethren Bible College.

Esther, although not given full status as faculty, taught English at MBBC for seven years. She also soon established a solid reputation in music, teaching hymnology and singing soprano solos as well as joining the a Capella choir. In addition, she served as Dean of Women for several years.

Esther and Ben both became involved in the

production of the *Gesangbuch* which was published in 1952. Esther was researcher and consultant. Later she assisted in the production of the English version, called *The Hymn Book* (1960).

But Esther's gifts were also utilized in other areas. She became involved in social work at Logan Neighbourhood House and at Marymound in Winnipeg while taking several social work courses at the University of Manitoba. In the

1950s both Ben and Esther became involved in

radio work with CFAM in Altona. Esther

became a story-teller and was

affectionately known as "Tante Esther."

She was in charge of a ladies program and developed a six-year series of programs entitled, "The Story of our Hymns." In the meantime she also contributed many articles for Mennonite periodicals on hymnody. In later years she served as a deaconess in the First Mennonite Church.

Esther's literary gifts came to expression in another remarkable form with the publication of the biography of her father, entitled, *C. N. Hiebert was my Father* (1979). In it she states that like her father, "I am a systematic collector of dates, anecdotes and photographs. I find it difficult to discard a letter, especially when it comes from a member of our close-knit family."

Esther and Ben had their own close-knit family, with an only daughter, Viola, born in 1935. Viola also was a gifted musician and frequently sang solos for the Oratorio choir which her father conducted. In 1968 she was tragically killed in an automobile accident near Goshen, Indiana, where her husband, David Falk, was teaching. The loss of their only daughter dealt an almost unimaginable blow to Ben and Esther, but they tapped the deep resources of their faith and carried on with an effective ministry and showed profound love and care for the surviving grandchildren.

Esther's husband, Ben, predeceased her in 1992. Then, two years later, Esther also passed away after a rich life of service, not only to her own community, but to many others.

For Esther serving God meant serving people. Her obituary ended with her own reflection on her career, "I was probably conditioned as a people-helper because of my father's unbiased concern for people in need. . . helping people in need was the duty of every Christian."

— **Abe Dueck**



# GENEALOGY — The 1776 Census of Mennonites in West Prussia

## Part I

### Historical Background

Nearly all of the current day descendents of the so-called Low-German Mennonites can trace their ancestry to a group of people who lived some hundreds of years in northern Poland and the cities in that region (Danzig, Elbing and Marienburg). This territory was often referred to as Prussia, after the Preuzzen, the original people (an ancient Baltic tribe) who lived there. In 1772 Poland was partitioned between Russia, Austria and the Kingdom of Prussia, with a large part of the region where the Mennonites lived going to Prussia. After this point the territory became officially known as West Prussia. Shortly after the partition of Poland the Prussian government conducted two censuses that are extremely useful for those interested in Mennonite history and genealogy. The first was a total population census of the newly acquired province in 1772. The second was a census of Mennonites in West Prussia undertaken in 1776.

Both of these censuses were conducted in late autumn and named only the head of each household. In addition to this, both record the landholding status and the occupation of the household head. They count the numbers of sons, daughters, male servants and female servants. The 1776 census also provides an indication of the economic status of the household.

The original 1776 census is currently in the Berlin archives and a copy can be found on microfilm in the Mennonite Heritage Centre.<sup>1</sup> The official title of the census is "Special Consignation aller in West-Preussen befindlichen Mennonisten-Familien im Jahr 1776." The following is written in the bottom right hand side of the cover page "Aus den von den Mennonistischen Vermahnern eingelieferten Nachrichten gefertigt vom Intendanten Schlemmer". This implies that the census information was provided to the government official Schlemmer by the ministers (Vermahner) of the various Mennonite congregations. This becomes obvious when one looks at the original layout of the census. It is laid out congregation by congregation according to the following order: Danzig (suburbs; the city of Danzig did not become part of West Prussia until 1793), Tiegenhagen, Ladekopp, Rosenort, Bärwalde (Fürstenwerder), Heubuden, Thiensdorf/Marcushof, Elbing/Ellerwald, Orlofffeld, Elbing/Ellerwald (continued), Thiensdorf/Marcushof (continued), Tragheimerweide, Montau, Schönsee and Przechowka. In other words it is possible to deduce the congregation (Gemeinde) to which each family belonged from the original census.

### Completeness and Region covered by the Census

Like any census the 1776 census is not 100% complete and there certainly were a few errors made along the way. It is not known exactly how the census was conducted. We do know that the Mennonite Vermahner did not extract the information from family registers. During these years Mennonite congregations maintained registers of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths. The first Mennonite family register was not started until 1789 (in the Danzig

Flemish congregation). It seems most likely that the information was collected by going from village to village or by having family heads provide the information when they attended church. A comparison of Mennonite church registers, land records and family records shows that not all families were counted in the 1776 census. This could have been due to sloppiness on the part of those reporting or recording the family information. Another possibility is that younger families were staying with their parents or older, more economically established, siblings and were counted under those family heads. Either way I would estimate that several dozen families were missed in the census, accounting for as many as a few hundred people. The census accounts for 12,032 Mennonites in 2638 families. There was also a census of Mennonites in East Prussia in 1777. According to this census there were 167 in the Königsberg region and 404 in Lithuania, which was part of East Prussia at the time. There was also the region to the north. The area directly to the north was often referred to as the Scharpau. The northernmost region, along the coast, was referred to as the Nehrung (or Nährung). Most of the Mennonites in the Scharpau belonged to the Bärwalde/Fürstenwerder or Tiegenhagen congregations. Those in the Nehrung belonged to the Bärwalde/Fürstenwerder or Danzig congregations. This region became part of West Prussia in 1793. That year a census counted 467 Mennonites. The 1776 census also does not include the city of Danzig (those within the city walls). There were about 200 to 400 Mennonites living in the city of Danzig around 1776. There were also Mennonites who had moved from the Schönsee and Przechowka congregations to a region called Neumark near Driesen in the province of Brandenburg. A census for 1767 of that region counts 157 Mennonites. Therefore in 1776 there were about 14,000 Low-German Mennonites.

The census appears in two published books. That of Karl-Heinz Ludwig (1961) is a very close reproduction of the original in its format.<sup>2</sup> The version that appears in one of Horst Penner's books was an alphabetical list originally compiled by Gustav Reimer.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately both of these books are out of print. I have placed an electronic version of the census on the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society web site.<sup>4</sup> This is presented alphabetically. Bert Friesen has also constructed a shorter version which lists the household heads by village.<sup>5</sup> This can also be found on the MMHS web site.

### Breakdown of Given Names

The breakdown of the 63 given names for the household heads is as follows: Hans/Johann (348), Jacob (316), Peter (268), Heinrich (222), Abraham (166), Cornelius/Knels (109), Isaac (89), Gert/Gerth/Goerth/Gerhard (84), Frantz(82), Claas/Nicholas (71), David (65), Derk/Dirk/Diedrich (62), Behrend/Berend/Bernhard (44), Martin (44), Arend (Aron) (43), Harm/Herman (42), Wilhelm/Willm (35), Andreas (29), Paul (28), Daniel (25), Isebrand (19), Michael (18), Siemon/Simon (18), Georg/

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George (16), Absolon (14), Anthon/Anton (14), Gillis/Gills/Julius (12), Elias (11), Philip (10), Conrad/Cohnert (9), Esau (8), Samuel (8), Thomas/Tomas (8), Erdman (7), Tobias (7), Salomon (6), Stephan (6), Adrian (5), Melchior (5), Siebert/Siewert (5), Albrecht (4), Jonas (4), Leonhard (4), Nathaniel (4), Adam (3), Fridrich/Friedrich (3), Zacharias (3), Barthel (2), Carl (2), Christian (2), Dau (2), Gabriel (2), Giesbrecht (2) Christoph (1), Dionisius (1), Ernst (1), Jost (1), Lorentz (1), Ott (1), Riediger (1), Reinhard (1), Sebastian (1), Thiemon (Timon) (1). There are also 215 widows, 13 unnamed family heads and 3 sets of siblings who are listed as Brüder, Gebrüder, or Erben.

One can easily see that a majority of men shared a few given names. In fact the 5 most common names are shared by over one-half of all named Mennonite household heads in the census. This must have led to a significant amount of confusion when identifying Mennonite men. It was not uncommon for one village to have two or more men with the same name (both first and last). This situation continues in many Mennonite communities to this day and has led to the use of some often amusing Low-German nicknames to be used in order to distinguish between men of the same name.

An interesting aspect of first names is what form of the name is used. For example, the German versions of the names dominate. Hans and Johann are used exclusively whereas the Dutch version Jan is not found. This is also the case for Heinrich and Jacob, which were used instead of the Dutch Hendrik and Jab. There is only one Knels and only one Willm whereas Cornelius is used 108 times and Wilhelm is used 34 times. On the other hand the name Gills or Gillis is used 11 time but Julius is only used once.

Another striking feature of the list of first names is how unusual some of these names are (with reference to what are considered traditional Mennonite names) and how some first names, commonly found in 1776, have essentially disappeared among the Russian and North American Mennonites.

Some first names are found exclusively in villages where the Mennonite population was Flemish or Frisian. For example all of the men named Absolon, Erdmann, Esau, Melchior, Steffan or Tobias are found in Frisian villages. Those named Anthon, Elias, Isebrandt or Philip are found in Flemish villages. The names Thomas, Gillis (Julius) and Leonhard are predominantly Flemish and the names Samuel, Soloman and Siebert were predominantly Frisian.

The following are comments of some of the rarest names found in the census:

**Thiemon Boll** (1732 – 1782) of Marcushof was probably Timon Bolt. Interestingly the Thiensdorf/Marcushof church records give his name and that of his widow as Boll in the death register. He or his parents were likely from the Montau region where there were several Timon Bolts going back to Timon Bolt, who was married to Eva Bartel in 1694.

**Sebastian Esau** of Pletzendorf (1735 – 1804). He lived in Pletzendorf until after 1789. It appears as if he retired to Klein Lichtenau. It's possible that one of his children was

living there. The 1727 Brandordnung lists 3 Bastian Esaus in Altebabke, Petershagen and Tiegenhagen. These may actually be just one or two men who owned and insured multiple properties in different villages. There is also a Sebastian Klaassen (1738 – 1794) of Kunzendorf/Gnojau whose death is recorded in the Heubuden Mennonite church records. He is one of the men missing from the 1776 census.

**Reinhard Willms** (1737 – 1778) of Laakendorf. His death is found in the Mennonite burial register of the Fürstenau Lutheran church. The name Reinhard was exceptionally rare among the Low-German Mennonites.

**Riediger Martens** (1724 – 1805) of Rosenort. He is mentioned several times in the Lutheran records of Fürstenau. His name does not appear in any other census lists of Mennonite church registers. The name Riediger is a very old Germanic first name and is often found in the form Rüdiger. The Mennonite last name Riediger derives from this first name. The Fürstenau register uses the Dutch version of the name, Rutger. We do not know if he had any descendants. He likely belonged to the Rosenort Flemish Mennonite church.

**Ott Olwitz** of Hohenwald is also found in the 1772 census and the 1789 land census. Ott is likely short for Otto. Ott (or Otto) is also a rare family name found among the Prussian Mennonites.

**Lorentz Sparling** of Dorposch (1718 - ?) is found in the Przechowka church records. He is also found in Dorposch in the 1772 census.

**Jost Leben** of Tiegenhof is Jost Loewen (1742-1786). He is not found in the 1772 census. Jost (or Joost) is of Dutch origin and is also a rare family name found among the Prussia Mennonites.

**Ernst Vodt** of Montauerweide. The Mennonites of Montauerweide belonged to the Frisian Mennonite church of Tragheimerweide but Ernst Vodt is not found in the Tragheimerweide church records. He may be the Ehrenst Voht who was born in West Prussia but married Maria Wedel (b. 1749) in Brenkenhofswalde, Brandenburg.

**Dionisius Nickel** (1717 – 1794) of Bärwalde was a member of the Orlofffeld Frisian church. He is referred to as Tens Nikkel in the 1772 census. He is not found in the 1789 land census.

**Christoph Hag** of Klein Montau may also be the Christoph Haage of Rothhof in the Weissshof district who is found in the 1789 land census.

Part 2 of this series will look at the family names, occupations and economic status of the families found in the 1776 census. A list of corrections and additions to the census will be presented. Any suggestions for the names of the 13 unnamed household heads would be greatly appreciated and should be sent directly to the author.

The electronic version of the 1776 census of Mennonites in West Prussia can be found at:

[http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/1776\\_West\\_Prussia\\_Census.htm](http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/1776_West_Prussia_Census.htm)

Footnotes and references will also appear at the end of Part 2.

— **Glenn Penner** ([gpenner@uoguelph.ca](mailto:gpenner@uoguelph.ca))



Neubergthal historic site house-barn restoration project of the former Friesen residence there.

— Photos by Elmer Heinrichs



Threshing in progress at the Pembina Threshermen's Reunion in Sept. Another of the main highlights here are the meals prepared by the Valley Harvest Maids, who dished out favourite old-time meals. Once again excellent weather brought out large crowds for two days of festivities.

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experience of the Canadian conscientious objectors such as Bergen in the Second World War and interpret it in today's context.

The *War and the Conscientious Objector* conference will feature speakers from a wide variety of backgrounds. Planners have invited speakers from BC to Quebec. 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, Royden Loewen, 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 free of charge. Selected lectures will be published in the peer-evaluated publication *Journal Of Mennonite Studies*.

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](http://www.alternativeservice.ca) or on the conference visit [www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies).

— **News release from MHSC**

# Amish Moving to Manitoba

The Amish have arrived in Manitoba, along with their horse-drawn buggies, head-coverings, gas-lit lanterns, and shunning of modern ways and the modern pace. They plan to settle near Gladstone which will be the first Amish settlement in Canada outside Ontario.

What they stand for is a life in imitation of Jesus Christ. In their interpretation of that life, they reject modern conveniences such as motor vehicles, electricity (living off-grid), television and similar entertainment, telephones, computers, and indoor plumbing. The short explanation of their beliefs is that labour-saving devices lead to idleness, which leads to temptation.

Rather they rely on hand tools, gas lanterns, wood stoves, outhouses, and horse-drawn buggies. They recently had to get permission from the fire commissioner's office in Brandon to build their outhouses.

Construction of new homes began only last month. The Amish have bought 11 quarter-sections (65-hectare lots) and plan to put a home and family on each quarter – the same as it was for European settlers 150 years ago. The sale of another eight quarter-sections for eight more families is in the paperwork stage.

The families will be large. Amish average seven children per family. When construction is completed, close to 200 Amish will settle here, north of Gladstone and 160 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg.

"That's a boom," said Ed Stroeder, reeve of the RM of Westbourne.

Is it ever. The Amish will represent almost a 10 per cent increase on the RM's population of 2,000, perhaps the largest influx since Quakers settled the area in the 1870s. Interestingly, it was Quaker William Penn who first persuaded the Amish to leave Europe and settle in North America, starting in Pennsylvania, in the early 18th century.

The newcomers will also provide various services. They will have a blacksmith, a farrier to shoe horses, a couple of furniture makers, a window maker, people to do custom killing and processing of chickens, and some canning, said Stroeder. They plan to operate mixed farms, growing cereal grains and keeping cows, chickens and hogs.

"It's going to be a real benefit to the community," the reeve said.

Drivers are already having to watch for horse-drawn wagons on secondary highways, even on the Yellowhead Highway. "You'll be driving along and all of a sudden you see either a hayrack or buggy being pulled by horses," said Jody James, who lives near the settlement. "As far as I know, a horse and buggy still have the right of way over motor vehicles."

Well, not quite the "right of way," but horses can travel highways so long as they obey traffic laws, according to old laws in the Manitoba Highways Act. However, they must have a red triangle on the back of the buggy to indicate a slow-moving vehicle.

Amish will often travel on highway shoulders as much as space allows. On the Yellowhead, there is not enough room for a buggy to be completely off the road, one motorist reported.

The province will soon erect signs warning drivers to watch for horse-and-buggies on some stretches. The Town of Gladstone, the largest nearby centre, has even installed a hitching post to accommodate Amish-owned horses. The newcomers willingly clean up any horse dung.

"I think it's great," said Carol Wright, who lives just down the road in Plumas.

The Amish will also attract tourists, a benefit for business owners like the Wrights. For example, the Amish plan to open one of their famous furniture stores. They have already been scouting the area for old-stand birch, oak and ash trees.

"They build fantastic furniture," said Peter Albrecht, who farms near Boissevain with wife Linda, and who operates Walkinshaw Place Bed & Breakfast. The Albrechts have visited Amish communities six times in the United States, and even bought an entire bedroom suite from the Amish. Amish communities in the U.S. attract 10 million tourists per year.

"If they get a furniture store, then Linda and I would drive up. It's worth the drive," Albrecht said.

As a farmer, Albrecht is also curious about the old farming ways. "I just respect the way they farm. They are very environmentally friendly," he said.

The Amish began as a reform movement within the Mennonite church. Led by Jacob Ammon, they broke from the mainstream Mennonite church in 1693 because they felt the church was becoming too liberal, and, in particular, too lenient in its enforcement of shunning transgressor members.

The Amish hold the same core beliefs as Mennonites in that they are Anabaptist -- meaning they believe baptism should be a choice made in adulthood -- and pacifists.

There are two main denominations of Amish: Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites. They are very similar but there are some differences. One is that Old Order Amish worship in their homes, while Old Order Mennonites worship in a church. The latter denomination is settling in Manitoba.

Among Amish rules is their refusal to pose for photographs. Amish believe photographs violate the Second Commandment by placing an idol, in this case an image, in the place of God (Exodus 20:4).

They aren't crazy about interviews, either. "We don't pose for pictures. Putting an article in the paper is kind of the same thing," explained a bearded Amish man, as he stood on a ladder leaning against the church the newcomers are building.

However, the man reluctantly listened to a few reporter questions, trying to straddle a line between Christian

*(Continued on page 10)*

## COMING EVENTS

**Symposium:** War and the Conscientious Objector: A History Conference to be held at the University of Winnipeg, 20-21 October 2006. For details see the URL [www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies/events/conscientious.html](http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/academic/as/mennstudies/events/conscientious.html)

**Book Launch: *Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch*** (Second Ed.) November 4, 2006 at the Reinland Community Centre. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m.—cost is \$15.00 including lunch. The presentation at 10:00 a.m. includes Peter D. Zacharias who will provide some background on the gemeinde and the making of this book. Alf Redekopp will present a survey of the contents and details concerning the revisions from the first edition. After lunch Alf Redekopp and Bert Friesen will illustrate potential uses for family research.

The book, *Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch* (2nd ed.) will sell for \$30.00.

**Roots Days:** The Genealogy Committee is planning two workshops for the winter and spring. One will be in the Winkler area and the other in the Steinbach area. Details will be coming.

**GAMEO planning meetings** are scheduled for Thursday and Friday, January 18 and 19. In Calgary, AB.

(Continued from page 9)

politeness and vigilance against self-promotion.

They moved from a settlement 35 kilometres west of Walkerton in southern Ontario because their community is growing, and because land is becoming very expensive in Ontario, he said. They did not travel the 2,400 kilometres distance by buggy, but are allowed to hire non-Amish drivers to transport them.

Power tools are generally not used but the newcomers make exceptions, like using gas generators to power two table saws. That's not unusual among the religious group. But much of the work is done by hand, like one man who was hacksawing rebar during the brief interview.

They will also build and operate their own school, but Amish children are only educated to Grade 8.

The Amish want to be friendly but also want to live outside the world, explained reeve Stroeder. "My feeling is they just want to be left on their own," he said.

Manitoba winters are much harsher than Ontario's, and the land the newcomers purchased will make it difficult to make a living farming, especially in today's tough economy competing against industrial farms.

Plumas resident Jim Parsons wonders if they can make it. "I sure hope they know what they're getting themselves into," he said.

*Excerpted from an article by Bill Redekop of the Winnipeg Free Press*

The meetings will be in the MCC Boardroom, 32nd Street NE, the same location as the MHSA Library and Archives.

**The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada will hold its AGM** Friday and Saturday, January 19 and 20, 2007. These will be held after the GAMEO meetings, in the MCC Boardroom, 32nd Street NE, Calgary.

**MMHS AGM** in Spring: It will likely be on the first weekend in March, 2007. Details are still being planned.

## COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

### PUBLICATIONS AND MARKETING

1. We participated in Ron Plett's *Koop enn Bua opp Reise* CD release at the Mennonite Heritage Village on May 22nd. I introduced Al Reimer, editor of the volume, who provided an introduction to Arnold Dyck. Ron read selected passages from the book. The story is available on a set of four CDs or cassettes that may be purchased at the Library Cafe at MHV, at the Mennonitische Post in Steinbach and through Mennonite Books at: [www.mennonitebooks.com](http://www.mennonitebooks.com)

2. The long awaited, *Mennonites in Manitoba*, is continuing towards publication. CMU Press reports that the material is in the layout/design stage. Part one is almost completed and looks really good. Parts two and three should go much faster. There is no firm projection for a publication date but hopes are to have it out by end of the year.

— *Jake Peters*

### MEMBERSHIP AND PUBLICITY

1. The quarterly schedule for the Heritage Posting was affirmed, with efforts being made to get the materials to the printer in a consistent manner and time schedule. The committee hopes that writers will come forward and submit articles of interest to the membership. Also, efforts are being made to have committees report on activities to keep the membership informed.

2. Increasing Membership is an on-going task. The committee wants to pursue the idea of connecting with Seniors' groups in the various churches and help them learn more Manitoba Mennonite history. Bert Friesen, of this committee, is travelling with the River East/McIvor Seniors to tour the Mennonite hotspots in Winnipeg. The tour is being led by Abe Dueck. The Seniors seem to have renewed interest in their roots, and the MMHS wants to encourage this through increased membership activities designed for this age group.

— *From Committee Notes*

## Book Review

William Schroeder. *Mennonite Historical Atlas*  
(Winnipeg: A.D.Schroeder Typesetting, 2004), hdc., 239 pp.

Preparation for this collection of maps began in 1963.

The work has progressed through very simple equipment—a small manual typewriter with a bulky opaque projector, and progressed to completion with the help of overhead projectors, photocopiers and computers attached to versatile, high-resolution printers. Sources include many individual smaller contributions along with professional military topographical maps and operational charts.

A large number of the maps first became public in the work of Schroeder and Helmut Huebert in the first edition of *Mennonite Historical Atlas* which came out, with extensive notes, in 1990. They reappeared with additions in a second expanded edition of that Atlas published by Springfield Publishers in 1996.

This current volume brings together the entire corpus of Schroeder's maps, meaning that a large number of maps hitherto not published anywhere are now available for use also. Researchers will need to take a good look at this complete collection to discover which ones they have not ever seen in print before. These would include a number of village maps from the the major Russian Mennonite settlements particularly, but also other regional and thematic items not available for the earlier two published versions.

An index, also found here, will therefore include many new names of places now to be found here. This reviewer is still hoping that the name "Puchtin" will make it in sometime - to be found, we know somewhere in the Schoenfeld region just north of the Molotschna settlement but not yet fully documented (though some maps venture a guess) as to its exact location in the proximity of other known localities.

A complete listing of errata cannot be undertaken here although it could be mentioned that the spelling of Huffnungsfeld (p.171) is usually given as Hoffnungsfeld, and Yasekovo is usually transliterated Yazykovo (p.99). Many items remain to be entered, of course, as this work proceeds. The village of Neudachino, founded in 1907, for instance, has recently found a place on the map also, south of the Transiberian rail line quite near Tatarsk at the junction with the Slavgorod rail line (p.145). The next edition of the Schroeder-Huebert *Atlas* may well have it in its proper current place, even though it is no longer the completely 600-member Mennonite village it once was.

The new Schroeder volume is out in only one regularly printed volume, but the entire collection is accessible also on the website of Mennonite Heritage Centre at [http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives/holdings/Schroeder\\_maps](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives/holdings/Schroeder_maps). This is a significant addition to the map resources of global Mennonite studies, and, in this reviewer's opinion, it would be worth printing the hardcopy volume in a larger quantity.

— Lawrence Klippenstein

## Our Churches



Altona Bergthaler Church, 1963

### Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church

The Bergthaler Mennonites first came to the West Reserve area from the East Reserve in 1877. These settlers formed four villages over the next decade. They first began worshipping together in 1880 in Rudnerweide. The education question caused these settlers to divide into two groups, the Sommerfelder and Bergthaler. Johann Funk was the leader of the Bergthaler and Abram Doerksen the leader of the Sommerfelder. In 1895 the Bergthaler built a new meeting house in Hochstadt. However, the centre for worship shifted in 1907 when the new Mennonite Educational Institute was built in Altona. In 1912 it was decided to build a new meeting house in Altona. In 1919 this building was expanded and again in 1944. With the Bible School expanding in Altona it was decided to build a new building to accommodate the large gatherings in connection with the Bible School. A larger building was completed in 1954. The language transition occurred over the next two decades. The congregation has been affiliated with the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and the General Conference Mennonite Church since 1968. The language of worship was originally German and the transition to English occurred in the 1960s. The leaders of this congregation were: Johann Funk (1892-1911), Johann Friesen (1895-1909), H. Hamm (1906-[19-?]), P. Epp (1911-1925), David Schulz (1920-1950), Henry Gerbrandt (1950-1971), D. F. Friesen (1971-1979), Walter Franz (1979-1991), Randy Klaassen (1991-1997), Jake F. Pauls (1998), Peter Penner (1999-)

— Taken from Internet File

## Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4  
1310 Taylor Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6

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# Book Notes

Dr. Hans Werner has joined Dr. John J. Friesen to become a co-editor of **Preservings** which is continuing after many years of leadership by the late Delbert Plett. The next issue is due to appear in late fall of this year. Persons needing the December, 2005, volume (most recent published issue) may contact the Mennonite Heritage Centre by email at aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca

Dr. Leo Driedger, professor of sociology at the University of Manitoba, has just completed an extensive manuscript for publication titled **At the Forks: Mennonites in Winnipeg**. It will be published by the University of Manitoba Press.

Henry Schapansky, of Vancouver, B.C. has just released an expanded and revised edition of his book **The Old Colony Chortitza of Russia** (2001). The second version is called **The Mennonite Migrations (and the Old Colony)**, pb., 813 pp. \$39.00, plus shipping of \$9.00. For further information, and to order, contact the Mennonite Heritage Centre at: cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca or at Mennonite Books at: www.mennonitebooks.com

Pandora Press of Kitchener, Ontario, will be publishing a re-issue of Dr. James Urry's work **None but Saints. The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789 - 1889** (1989). It will include a new introduction and is listed as a September release. A German translation of the book titled **Nur Heilige: Mennoniten in Russland 1789 - 1889**, was published some time ago. For further details contact the author at James.Urry@vuw.ac.nz. Pandora Press can be reached at karl@pandorapress.com

Dr. Harry Loewen, formerly of the Chair of Mennonite Studies in Winnipeg, now living in Kelowna, has just had his autobiography published, under the title **Between Worlds: Reflections of a Soviet-born Canadian Mennonite**. The publisher is Pandora Press. The book encompasses 358 pages, is out in paperback and costs \$35.00 Cdn. or \$31.50 U.S.

The latest issue of **Legacy Links**, newsletter of the Winkler Heritage Society features the story of the late Dr.



C. W. Wiebe, well known and much loved physician of the community, and various aspects of the Winkler Centennial celebrations. For information and sample copies of the newsletter contact Sally Harms at sharms@mts.net

Volume 24, 2006, of **Journal of Mennonite Studies**, edited by Dr. Royden Loewen, features "JMS Forum: Refugee Newcomers and Mennonites Hosts", and reviews of Manitoba writers Ray Dirks (*In God's Image: A Global Anabaptist Family*), Helmut T. Huebert (*Mennonite Estates in Imperial Russia*), Wally Kroeker (*An Introduction to the Russian Mennonites*), Katherine Martens, ed and trans. (*They Came from Wiesenfeld: Ukraine to Canada: Family Stories*), and Doreen Reimer Peters (*One Who Dared: Life Story of Ben D Reimer*).

Irmgard Epp, of Kelowna, B.C. is the compiler and editor of **Constantinople: Escape from Bolshevism**, which has been published in cooperation with Trafford Publishers of Victoria, B.C. It is in paperback, has 364 pages and sells for \$29.95 plus shipping (ca. \$9.00 per book). Orders should be directed to the editor at 648 Thorneloe Rd., Kelowna, B.C. V1W 4P6, or ph. 250-764-4110 or email lanerubens@silk.net. The volume brings together memoirs of dozens of individuals who were part of the flight of White Army soldiers (including many Mennonite young men who had been with the Selbstschutz earlier) to Constantinople from Crimea when the Bolsheviks took over that area in 1920.

Heinz Bergen from Regina, Saskatchewan, is looking for a publisher for his volume of collected materials titled **Verbannung: Unschuldig nach Sibirien ins Verderben 1935-1955** (Exiled: Innocents Sent to Siberia to Destruction 1935 - 1955). Bergen published **Chortitza Colony Atlas- Altkolonie** in 2004, and is hoping to publish a work on the village of Einlage, Old Colony, also. He can be reached at hbergen@accesscomm.ca or phone 1-306-586-4982.

— Lawrence Klippenstein