HERITAGE POSTING

MANITOBA MENNONITE

HISTORICAL SOCIETY



No. 57

July 2007

MBs celebrate 100 years in the city

by Gilbert G. Brandt and Bert Friesen

(taken from a report by Ken Reddig, and from The Grapevine Newsletter report by Connie Epp) On the weekend of June 1-3, 2007, the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren celebrated the 100th anniversary of the MB Church in Winnipeg. The first congregation was a small house church of four families, and the first services on record took place at Easter 1906.

The fledgling group's zeal and vision were bolstered by the assistance of Winkler MB Church, a mission-minded rural congregation, which had been established in 1888.



Bill Baerg leads the choir

- Photo by John C. Klassen

The city was considered a place of sin and spiritual danger, but the Winkler congregation, by supporting this city church, was embarking on a new strategy in home missions.

The celebrations were guided by Ken Reddig, director of the Centre for MB Studies, and Dan Block, administrator for the Manitoba MB Conference. Connie Epp, pastor at River East MB Church, wrote and participated in a number of dramatic presentations which brought to life some of the historic individuals who helped root and form who the Mennonite Brethren are today.

One of these dedicated individuals was Johann Warkentin, pastor of the MB Church in Winkler. He made regular trips to Winnipeg to preach and assist in building up the fledgling congregation. In 1909, the city church took on a more formal structure and at some point, Warkentin purchased a small chapel with his own money and had it moved to a corner lot at Burrows and Andrews St., where it formed the early nucleus of the North End MB congregation.

Another key figure was Anna Thiessen, always connected with the Maedchen Heim in Winnipeg. Thiessen dedicated her life to helping immigrants, especially young women in search of employment, faith, companionship and fellowship.

The early church community was not shy about its faith as it worked with the poor. Set in an area populated largely by immigrants, the Winnipeg mission church reached out with visitation, Sunday school classes, sewing classes, and social assistance. The church grew, over time spawning some 19 MB congregations throughout Winnipeg.

The anniversary event's Friday evening service was held in the old North End Church, now the Heritage Baptist Church. Hundreds attended the service as groups and individuals remembered the past. A historical sketch by Lawrence Warkentin provided the setting for celebration. Bill Baerg led the congregation and a choir in a meaningful time of singing and connecting of the hymns with the history of the Manitoba congregations.

Saturday was filled with a tour of numerous Mennonite-connected locations, as Ken Reddig and Abe Dueck led a busload of "tourists" around Winnipeg. Then Saturday evening, the Manitoba MB Board of Church Extension under the leadership of Russ Toews, presented a banquet and forward-looking program to a packed dining room/gymnasium at the North Kildonan MB Church. Philip Vallely, current pastor at Winkler, gave a challenging message, while Rachel Boyce and Harvey Rempel gave insights into the ongoing work now happening in the North End. Fred Stoesz was introduced as the person responsible for coordinating the plan for ministries to the

Reverend Gerhard Wiebe 1847-1934 The first resident minister of the first MB Church in Canada¹

Gerhard Wiebe was born in the village of Waldorf, West Prussia (Germany) on March 2,1847, one of two sons and three daughters of Johann Wiebe and Sahra nee Martens Wiebe. Gerhard grew up under severe hardship. He lost his father at the age of four and lived with foster parents till 14 years of age. He received a thorough education and was gifted with a keen memory. After age 14 he worked as an apprentice



Reverend Gerhard Wiebe

in different trades including carpentry and baking. In 1871, at 25 years of age, he, his wife, and son Gerhard moved to Russia where he lived for 16 years. At age 33, he found salvation, was baptized upon confession of his faith, was accepted into the Einlage Mennonite Brethren Church, and was ordained into the ministry. He believed the Bible was a book that condemned sin, but was also a book of God's grace and forgiveness. He held firmly to his religious convictions in the face of opposition. For the next six years he served as church leader in two villages, one of them being Ebenfeld. Gerhard Wiebe's mother and sisters moved from Russia to Canada in 1876, and his intention was to follow them.

Gerhard Wiebe had been in correspondence with Brother Heinrich Voth, an itinerant minister to southern Manitoba who was active in missionary work and evangelism teaching. Heinrich Voth's pastoral work had laid the foundation for a small group of baptized believers in the Burwalde district. Voth, seeing the need for a Mennonite Brethren minister, invited Rev. Gerhard Wiebe of Ebenfeld, Russia to come to minister to the young Mennonite Brethren Church in Burwalde. Gerhard Wiebe (age 41) accepted the offer and arrived April, 1888 with his wife and five children, and a small group of Mennonite Brethren immigrants from Russia.5 He took over the leadership of the church in 1888, and the Burwalde group was formally chartered in 1888 as the first Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada, and organized as a congregation with sixteen members. 6.7 "With enthusiasm the early members proceeded 'to encourage one another and build each other up' (1 Thess.5:11). The early members were active in witnessing to others, and many neighbours were attracted by the happy and joyous life of the new converts. Their love and their cheerful singing induced many to attend their worship services and Bible study sessions. The greatest attraction was their joyous assurance of salvation." Over the next few years Heinrich Voth came occasionally to encourage, counsel, and help

them with any special problems.⁸ One year later, in 1889 a meetinghouse was erected in Burwalde⁹ on land donated by Jacob Banman,¹⁰ beside the Dead Horse Creek, about one mile east of Highway 3.

"Gerhard Wiebe's sincerity and dedication to the church cannot be questioned." He also knew the meaning of confession, forgiveness and God's grace. During his years of service, Wiebe made a very significant contribution to the life of his church and community. He faithfully served as his church's leader during its most crucial time. The membership grew from 16 to 84 under Wiebe's leadership. "Gerhard Wiebe reported in the September, 1894 Zionsbote that he had baptized 21 people aged 13 to 60, and in the same month another 13." He was actively involved in the annual conferences in speaking and as a delegate.

New programs of outreach had been launched in Saskatchewan and Manitoba's East Reserve. 13 "Many individuals in the community had been personally contacted and brought into the church, and many services in schools and homes had also been conducted. His contribution to the church has not been forgotten and his memory is remembered and cherished."14 Gerhard Wiebe ministered in this church for seven years until the summer of 1895 when Elder David Dyck come to assume the leadership. 15 After 1895 Rev. Wiebe remained an active participant in the church affairs - missionary work in the East Reserve; serving as a conference delegate; serving on a committee making preparations for the church's annual thanksgiving festival (Erntedankfest), and serving on a committee given the responsibility of relocating the Burwalde church to Winkler. 16 He also served as church secretary, trustee, and as a delegate to the 1907 General Conference in Minnesota.17

In 1889 Gerhard Wiebe moved to Winkler and opened a lumber business in which trade he remained until 1912. In the village of Winkler his industry was rewarded when fellow citizens chose him as school trustee, school secretary treasurer, and as mayor in 1910. He was a public minded citizen and as such tried to make worthy improvements.

In 1916 he engaged in pioneer farming in a Mennonite settlement in Littlefield, Texas for a period of eight years. He lived for a time in Hillsboro, Kansas and after his wife passed away, he and his daughter visited family, church friends, and went sightseeing in California; Dallas, Oregon; Herbert, Sask.; Winkler, and back to Kansas.

In 1931 Rev. Wiebe moved back to Winkler to live with his oldest son Gerhard G Wiebe on the farm he had himself acquired in 1888. In 1932 his 85th birthday was celebrated with a good number of his descendants being present. On July 12,1934 at the age of 87 Rev. Wiebe became ill and died. His remains were laid to rest in the Winkler cemetery. ¹⁸

(Continued from page 2)

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Cairn unveiling

Cairn unveiling ceremony commemorating Gerhard Wiebe, first resident minister (1888-1895) of the first Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada (now Winkler MB Church).

Date: August 4, 2007. Time: 2:00 PM.

For more information call: 204-774-0176.

Directions to cairn site: From Winkler go one mile west of Highway 14 to Dickens Road. Turn north

onto Dickens Road for 21/2 miles.



Lawrence Warkentin

- Photo by John C. Klassen

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poor of the inner city.

On Sunday, 3 June, the 100th anniversary of the MBs in Winnipeg ended with a service and fellowship meal in Elmwood MB Church.

The service included vignettes about the Mary Martha Home directed for many years by Anna Thiessen (1892-1977). These depicted the services she rendered for young females giving domestic service in Winnipeg homes. The Home was a place of social interaction and spiritual nourishment. Thiessen also provided employment hunting services and resolution of employer/employee problems.

Lawrence Warkentin, a direct descendant of one of the original MB leaders in the city, reviewed the history and gave the challenge to continue to be the kingdom of God in the city.

The congregational hymns were chosen from the mostoften sung hymns at Manitoba MB Conference conventions in the last 100 years. These were chosen and led by Christine Longhurst.

The fellowship meal included individuals sharing their experiences at the North End church. Particularly, the stories were about the College Ave. meeting house experiences. Individuals, like Herman Willms, related how much it had meant to him to begin his congregational experiences there.

The anniversary celebrations also provide an occasion for questions and reflection, says Ken Reddig, director of the Centre for MB Studies. The North End of Winnipeg is still one of the poorest areas in Winnipeg but there is no longer an MB church there. "Why did we not retain a presence in the area?"



Manitoba Day Award Recognizes Users of Archives

Nine individuals have been presented with the Manitoba Day Award 2007 by the Association for Manitoba Archives. The award recognizes users of archives who have completed original work of excellence that contributes to the understanding and celebration of Manitoba history.



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In making the presentation, Chair of the Board Carole Pelchat stated: "The Manitoba Day Award celebrates the fact that Manitoba's documentary heritage is used. Thousands of people use archives in Manitoba every year. As archivists, users of archives are our reason for being.

Without them there would be little point in keeping records."

The award takes the form of a glass sheaf of wheat to symbolize Manitoba as a prairie province. "Wheat sheaves are symbols of the successful harvest associated with all that is nourishing and life-affirming," says Ms. Pelchat. "Wheat also provides the metaphor that we reap what we sow, reminding us that hard work has its rewards."

Founded in 1981, the Association for Manitoba Archives represents 35 institutional archives. The Association's principle objectives are to enhance the quality of service provided by archives and archivists and to promote a better understanding and increased public awareness of the role and uses of archives.

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

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ISSN 1491-2325

Winnipeg MB congregational history

The Mennonite presence in Winnipeg began in 1907 with a baptism of individuals who had met in homes for Bible study. A church building was obtained for this group in 1913 and moved to the North End. This group moved a number of times in the next 20 years, settling at McGregor and College in 1929 and at Elmwood on Henderson in 1954. Another group at Springstein began a building project for a meeting place in 1938. The North Kildonan congregation began in 1928 and built its first meeting place in 1929. This building was enlarged but in 1957 a new meeting place was built. The South End congregation began in 1928 on 95 Macdonald Street, then moved to Princess Street, then in 1933 to Ross Avenue, and officially organized as a congregation in 1936. A larger meeting place was purchased in 1940 on William Avenue. This congregation divided in 1960 and formed the Portage Avenue and Central congregations. The Gospel

Light Mission, begun in 1949, became the Logan Avenue congregation in 1960 and later became the Salem congregation. At the same time, this mission spawned the Fort Rouge congregation in the 1950s and then in the 1960s the Fort Garry congregation. The River East congregation grew out of the North Kildonan congregation in the 1960s. The Brooklands congregation grew out of the South End congregation in 1957. The leaders of the North Kildonan congregation were: Herman Klassen (1930-1933), H.M. Janzen (1933-1937), Gerhard Epp (1938-1942), A. Heinrich Toews (1942-1950), I. W. Redekopp (1950-1953), William Falk (1953-1964), Victor Toews (1965), Wm. Neufeld (1966-1978), Roland Marsch (1979-1986), Victor Toews (1987), John Epp (1988-1993), Alvin Enns (1994), Johannes Stolz (1995-1998), Bob Marsch (1999), George Klassen (2000-2007). The leaders of the North End congregation were: F. C. Thiessen (1941-1943), B. B. Fast (1944-1949), and D. D. Dürksen (1950-1953). The leaders of the South End congregation were: P. Kornelsen (1936-1946), H. H. Janzen (1947-1949), J. P. Neufeld (1950-1961), H. R. Baerg (1962).

In 1907, German immigrants met in Winnipeg in private homes for prayer and fellowship. When they heard of the Winkler MB Church, they called for some help and the ministers there began visiting Winnipeg four times annually. Johann Warkentin, one of the ministers, bought a small chapel for the congregation. The church asked the Northern District Conference to find permanent leadership for the church. Wilhelm J. Bestvater came to assume leadership in 1913. The congregation needed more room so they moved into a hall temporarily. When this became



N.E. MB Church now Heritage Baptist.

- Photo by John C. Klassen

too small, the congregation started to build a church but got only as far as the basement with an improvised roof. The new leader, C. N. Hiebert, spent many hours a day at the train station during the 1920s supplying food and clothing to the many Russians who came to Winnipeg daily. Because of the many new immigrants, the basement was not big enough. In 1930, a new building was completed at 621 College Avenue. This congregation was known as the North End MB Church. The church became a city mission as well as the MB Church. The task became too much for one person so in 1936, Franz Isaac became the leading minister and Rev. Hiebert concentrated on the city mission. Need for a bigger church prompted C. A. DeFehr to donate a plot of land to the congregation in the Elmwood area in 1951. On February 7, 1954 the new church at 155 Kelvin (later Henderson Highway) was dedicated and the church became known as the Elmwood MB Church, I. W. Redekop became the first full time

The leaders of the church included: Wilhelm J. Bestvater (1913–1921), Erdman Nikkel (1921–1925), C. N. Hiebert (1925–1936), Franz Isaac (1936–1939), Franz Thiessen (1939–1943), B. B. Fast (1943–1949), David K. Dürksen (1949–1953), I. W. Redekop (1954–1967), W. J. Schmidt (1968–1971), Eugene Gerbrandt (1972–1975), Peter R. Toews (1977–1979), Henry Brucks (1981), Jay Neufeld (1983–1987), Abe Klassen (1989–1997), Keith Poysti (1998-2005). Current pastor is Victor Kliewer.

GENEALOGY — The Mennonite Teichroebs

by Glenn Penner

A. The origin of the family name and the early Teichroebs.

There are numerous variations of the Teichroeb family name. These include Teichgraew, Dickgraew, Dueckgroeb, and many, many others. Since Teichroeb is the most commonly used variation in North America, I will refer to this family as the Teichroeb family.

The origin of the family name Teichgroeb (and its variations) is fairly straightforward. It is derived from the position of Deichgraf. A large part of what was once known as West Prussia, now part of northern Poland, was known as the Gross Werder. The Werder was originally divided into five Winkel (German - corners). Each Winkel elected a Deichgeschwornen. The 5 Deichgeschwornen elected a Deichgraf (German - Dike-count). The Deichgraf was ultimately responsible for maintaining the dike system. This responsibility was originally that of the Vogt (or Bailiff), who appears to have been appointed, and was also responsible for tax collection and was in charge of the upper (criminal) court in the Werder. This system was originally put into place by the order of the Teutonic Knights in the 14th century.1 It is interesting that these two positions of responsibility were held by men whose titles (Deichgraf and Vogt) became well known, but rare, Mennonite family names.

The earliest mention of a family name related to Teichroeb in West Prussia that I am aware of is found in the Lutheran marriage register of Reichenberg near Danzig.² On Jan. 29, 1623 Christoph Teiggraeber married a Miss Nollenschleger of the Marienwerder Nederung. It is not know if this man is in any way related to the Mennonite Teichroebs

The earliest mention of a Mennonite Teichroeb is in the burial records of the Lutheran church of Gross Mausdorf.³ A series of burials are recorded between 1739 and 1752. The following entries can be found:

1739 March 31 A Teichgraew daughter was buried.
1744 Feb. 26 Dickgraebers son of Krebsfeld was buried.
1747 Jan. -- Gerth Dikgraff of Krebsfeld was buried.

1750 Dec. 11 A wi.... named Dikgraeb aged 12 was

buried

1752 --- A Dickgraw child was buried.

Evidently there was a Mennonite Teichroeb family (that of Gerth/Gerhard Teichroeb) living in the area of Krebsfeld, West Prussia by the 1740s.

B. The First Generation

Names in **bold** are men who lived to maturity and are known to have had children of their own. Further generations of Teichroebs are well documented in the GRANDMA database.*

Michael Teichroeb b. before 1740

West Prussia

d. 1798 - 1803 West Prussia

1st m. before 1760

Unknown b. before 1740 West Prussia

d. before 1774 West Prussia

Children:

Peter b. 1761 m. Helena Dyck (1785)⁵

Bapt. 1781⁵

2nd m. 1774/75 in Tralau, WP⁶

Helena Dyck b. before 1755 West Prussia

d. Oct. 9, 1778⁶ Kalthof, WP

Children:

Gertruda b. Oct. 8, 1778⁶ d. young Kornelius b. Oct. 8, 1778⁶ d. young

3rd m. 1780/81 in Usenitz, WP⁶

Anna Dyck b. before 1760 West Prussia

d. 1808 - 1835 Muntau, Molotschna, Russia⁷

Children:

Heinrich b. Feb. 19, 1783⁶ d. Feb. 28, 1785⁶ **Johann** b. Feb. 6, 1784⁶ m. Katharina

Heinrich b. Nov. 11, 1786⁶ m. Margaretha Hooge⁶

Daniel b. Feb. 22, 1789⁶ m. Maria

Anganetha b. 1792 d. Oct. 12, 18128

Agatha b. 1794 David b. 1797

Isaac b. 1799

Michael Teichgroeb is found in the village of Kalthof in the 1776 West Prussian Mennonite census with his wife and one daughter. He was a "Schneider" (tailor) and an Eigenthümer (owned his residence). He is not found in Kalthof in the 1772 West Prussian census. 10

He lived in Kalthof until his marriage in 1780/81. After that he lived in Usenitz until at least 1789 (the birth of son Daniel). This is probably Gross Usenitz. There is no mention of him or his family in the Heubuden church records after 1785.

He died sometime between the conception of his son Isaac (1798/99) and the immigration of his widow and their children to Russia (1803).

According to B. H. Unruh (p. 307, 338)⁸ and Peter Rempel (p. 63)¹¹ his widow's name was Anganetha or Agnetha. This does not agree with the Heubuden marriage record which gives her name as Anna Dyck. Either Michael Teichroeb married for the 4th time (to someone named Anganetha or Agnetha) or the Heubuden register has the incorrect first name.

(Continued from page 6)

Johann Teichroeb

b. ca 1744 West Prussia

d. Nov. 1801 Schoenhorst, Chortitza,

Russia

1st m. before 1771

Margaretha Wiebe b. ca 1736 West Prussia

d. Dec. 17, 1781 Krebsfeld, WP³

Children:

Margaretha

b. Aug. 10, 1773¹³ m. Peter Rempel¹³

Heinrich

b. 1777

m. Katharina Dyck

2nd m. 1782 – 1784

Katharina

b. ca 1762 West Prussia

d.

Children:

Johann

b. ca 1784b. ca 1791

d. Apr. 23. 1806

Katharina Peter

b. ca 1794

m. Jacob Harder m. Justina Friesen

Jacob

b. Apr. 25, 1797¹³ m. Katherina Neudorf

He is listed in Krebsfeld in the 1772 West Prussian census with his wife, 2 sons under 12 and 1 daughter under 12. He was not a landowner.¹⁰

He is listed in the 1776 census of Mennonites in West Prussia with his wife, one son and one daughter. His occupation is give as Weber (weaver).⁹

He appears to have moved to Schoenhorst, Chortitza, Russia in 1789. See B. H. Unruh p. 210 (1793 list of household heads) and 242 (1795 census).⁸ See P. Rempel p. 48.¹¹

The death of his first wife is recorded in the Lutheran burial records of Gross Mausdorf, West Prussia. She was 45 years old at the time. His occupation is given in the register but is not readable.³

After Johann's death his widow married Peter Hiebert (B. H. Unruh p. 248).8

Abraham Teichroeb

b. before 1740

West Prussia

d. before 1795

Chortitza Colony,

Russia

m. Helena

b. ca 1737

West Prussia

d. Sep. 8, 1782 Laakendorf, WP

Children:

Anna

b. ca 1760

m. Aron Weiss (1780)

Abraham

b. 1776

d. Aug. 17, 1776

In the 1772 West Prussian census he is listed as a "Mietsgaertne", a man who rented a small plot of land, and was living with his wife 2 sons under 12 years and 1 daughter under 12 years. His name is given as Dickgrow.¹⁰

In the 1776 census of Mennonites in West Prussia he is listed as a "Weber" (weaver) with 2 daughters. He is listed as an "Eigenthümer". 9

The death of his wife was recorded in the Lutheran burial register of Fuerstenau, West Prussia. She died in Laakendorf at the age of 45. 14

The death of his son was recorded in the Lutheran burial register of Gross Mausdorf, West Prussia. He died in Krebsfeld at the age of 6 weeks.³

See B. H. Unruh p. 248. This is the only record we have that he immigrated to Russia. We do not know when he made the move or how many family members came over with him. After his death his homestead in Schoenhorst, Chortitza Colony was given to Isebrandt Friesen.

It seems likely that this line of the Teichroeb family died out.

Peter Teichroeb b. ca 1751/1753 West Prussia

d. 1828 Muensterberg, Molotschna, Russia⁷

1st m. 1774 - 1776

Anna

d. 1808 - 1835 Blumstein, Molotschna,

Russia⁷

Children:

Peter

Heinrich b. ca 1777 m. Margaretha Klingenberg (1798)

Bapt. 1795¹⁵

b. ca 1740

b. 1783

m. Katharina

Johann k

b. Sep. 18, 1784⁶ d. young or stayed in Prussia.

Abraham b. 1785

The births of sons Peter and Johann in Kalthof, West Prussia are recorded in the Mennonite church register of Heubuden, West Prussia. The baptism of Heinrich in 1795 is found in the Heubuden baptismal register.

Peter Teichroeb is likely the Peter Dickgrew of Schoenau who was baptized into the Heubuden church in 1774 (father's name not given).¹⁵

According to the 1808 Molotschna colony census this family came from Koldau (Kalthof), West Prussia in 1804.8 According to this list he was living in Blumstein, Molotschna colony and his age is given as 57. According to Peter Rempel's immigration lists they left Grodno in Aug.

1803 (p. 67).¹¹ In the Rempel list his age is given as 50. In the 1835 census he is said to have died in 1828 in Muensterberg.⁷ He is listed as "Peter Michael Teichrieb". Could he be the younger brother of Michael Teichroeb, who was also part of the Heubuden Gemeinde? If so they

were both sons of an earlier Michael Teichroeb.

Katharina Teichroeb b. ca 1730 West Prussia

m. _____ Enz b. Unknown

Children:

Peter b. ca 1754

m. Maria Willms

According to B. H. Unruh (p. 349) Katharina Enz (born

d. unknown

(Continued from page 7)

"Teichgraeb") immigrated to Russia in 1804 with her son Peter Enz. They came from Krebsfeld, West Prussia. This family can not be found in any subsequent Russian records. This family is also not found in any of the lists in Peter Rempel's book. They are also not found in the 1808 Molotschna colony census or the 1816 Chortitza colony census. It is quite possible that they did not immigrate.

C. Putting it all together

It appears as if there were four Mennonite Teichroeb families in West Prussia by the 1780s; two were located in the Heubuden congregation (Michael and Peter) and lived at one time or another in Kalthof, and two (Abraham and Johann) were located in the Rosenort congregation and lived at one time or another in Krebsfeld. If the first name of Peter's father was indeed Michael, as indicated by the

1835 Molotschna colony census, there is a good possibility that he was the younger brother of Michael and that they were sons of the elder Michael. So far there is no direct record of Michael Teichroeb Sr. It also seems likely that Abraham and Johann were related (possibly brothers) and were probably descended (sons or grandsons) from Gerth of Krebsfeld. It is unlikely that we will ever know exactly how these four Teichroebs are related. One way to determine whether or not the Kalthof Teichroebs and the Krebsfeld Teichroebs belong to the same family is to perform genealogical DNA tests on male descendents of both lines.¹⁷ Any Teichroeb men who are interested in participating in DNA testing should contact the author.

It is also interesting to note that the Mennonite family name Teichroeb (or its variations) seems to have disappeared from West Prussia with the 1803/04 immigration of Peter Teichroeb and the surviving family of Michael Teichroeb to Russia.

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- 6. Mennonite Church Records of Heubuden, West Prussia. Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, microfilms # 78 & 284. For the early births, marriages, deaths see: http://www.bethelks.edu/ithiesen/prussian/heubuden.html
- 7. English Translation of the Russian 1835 Census of the Molotschna Villages. Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1995.
- 8. Benjamin H. Unruh. Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der Mennonitischen Ostwanderung im 16. 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Karlsruhe, 1955.
- 9. Glenn Penner. The Complete 1776 Census of Mennonites in West Prussia. http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/1776_West_Prussia_Census.htm
- 10. West Prussian Land Census of 1772. For an index by family name see: http://www.odessa3.org/collections/land/wprussia/
- 11. Peter Rempel. Mennonite Migrations to Russia (1788-1828). Winnipeg, 2000.
- 12. Tim Janzen. Vital Records for the Chortitza Colony 1801 1814. http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/vital.htm
- 13. Village Church Records for Schoenhorst, Chortitza, Russia. For Richard Thiessen's index see: http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/schoen2.htm
- 14. Lutheran Church Records of Fürstenau, West Prussia. LDS # 208100-208104.
- 15. Baptismal Records of the Mennonite Church of Heubuden, West Prussia. http://www.mmhs.org/prussia/Heubuden_Baptisms_1770-1799.htm
- 16. Dnepropetrovsk Archives, Fund 149, File 498, which contains a October 1816 Census for the Chortitza Colony.
- 17. See the Low-German Mennonite DNA Project website at: www.mennonitedna.com

To contact the writer, e-mail: gpenner@uoguelph.ca

The Mennonite Wieler Family will be continued in the next issue of HP.

History Workshop

Combined Local History and Genealogy Committees event

by Bert Friesen

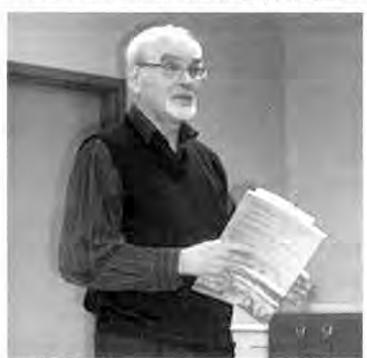
About 50 registrants gathered at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, on Saturday, 14 April 2007.

Exhibitors set up their material. The first hour of the day was spent networking with these people for information about genealogy; facts, ideas, and methodologies were discussed.

The morning sessions centred on local history topics. Henry Fast gave a history of Grünfeld. It was one of the first villages formed on the East Reserve. Yet it did not become a major centre of the settlement. He suggested it was because the village was the centre of church life with church leaders having the prominent decision-making role in the village. Steinbach, on the other hand, started later but became the major centre of the settlement because, he suggested, it was the centre for entrepreneurs. This attracted people and capital, the synergy needed to make it the thriving economic and church centre it is today.

Ernest Braun gave a presentation to encourage people to become village historians and to write the village histories. A resource listing materials such as historians could use, as well as a list of villages which yet needed research and writing, both on the East and West Reserves of Manitoba, was distributed. Braun stated: "The hurdles to overcome are to start, to write a draft, and to finally publish. For each hurdle, help is available within our society."

John J. Friesen described his work on the history of the Mennonites in Manitoba. The work is largely a compilation



John Friesen discusses his new book, Building Communities: The Changing Face of Manitoba Mennonites, at the Steinbach workshop

- Photo by Bert Friesen

of primary research and primary sources. Much work has been done by others but this was the first such publication in nearly half a century. Over the lunch hour he was available to autograph newly purchased volumes.

Also during the lunch hour there was a tour of the Peters barn, now on the Heritage Village site. Built in 1885 and used for nearly 100 years, it was moved onto the site in 2006. It was constructed from local tamarack lumber, has a thatched roof, and some curved-beam joints.

The afternoon session centred on genealogy. Alf Redekopp described the works published to date in Manitoba. These included the East Reserve and West Reserve Historical Series and the Profile series of the Kleine Gemeinde. There were three groups who came to Manitoba in the 1870s: Bergthal, Kleine Gemeinde, and Old Colony. He then walked us through using the Bergthal Gemeinde Buch. This generated some discussion.

The evaluation forms returned indicated that there is a continuing interest in these workshops with suggestions for topics to address.

It was an informative day for all attendees.

DID YOU KNOW

that in 1896 educators could teach German together with English and also offer religious instruction after regular classes?

That with the Flag Act of 1906 some Mennonite Schools reverted back to "private schools" and lost their government funding?

That with the Public School Act of 1916 -there was compulsory attendance for children 7 to 14

-they would punish parents who did not send their children to school regularly

-that English was the only official language of instruction

That in 1919 the government appointed an official trustee for Mennonite Schools. They were empowered to buy lands and to erect schools on them. They would enter teaching contracts. They would transact business in the interest of public education.

Book Review

by Royden Loewen - University of Winnipeg

John J. Friesen. <u>Building Communities: The Changing Face of Manitoba Mennonites</u>. Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2007.

John Friesen, the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society (MMHS) and CMU Press staff and consultants, require our profound thanks for producing a book that is thorough in scope, generous in interpretation and consistent in argument. It is especially successful in identifying and linking the diverse strands of Mennonite life in Manitoba.

The book's three part structure may be well known to even the casual student: Part One outlines the coming of conservative groups during the 1870s and subsequent fragmentation among Reinlaender, Bergthaler and Kleine Gemeinde groups. Part Two considers emigration to Latin America, the arrival of the so-called Russlaender newcomers, the rise of the Mennonite Brethren and General Conference church structures, and then conscientious objection and post-war immigration. Part Three describes urban cultures, especially developments in education, medicine, art and communications, and the increasingly diverse church landscape.

But the book is much more than a solid, descriptive history. It pursues a specific methodology and interpretation. The book intentionally gives space to each church conference, no matter how minor, how conservative or liberal, and does so in a remarkably even, and even clever, hand. Notably, few leaders (either men or women) are left unmentioned. Friesen is generous, to a fault perhaps, in suggesting that all Mennonites in Manitoba possess elements of evangelical, conserving and anabaptist impulses. He even uses, without editorial asides, each of the church bodies' respective linguistic codes – "assurance of salvation" (132) for evangelical wings, "nurture [of] the faith," (32) for more "conserving" branches.

Friesen also emphasizes that the Mennonite world was and is a "profoundly religious" one. Religious values directed the first immigrants, shaped the very life of subsequent waves and directed urban acculturation. These people might revel in Low German, visit the Mennonite Heritage Village, or love genealogical research, but they are not seen as "ethnic." Despite liberal references to everyday life, church denominations and church leaders constitute the backbone of this narrative.

The book bears a significant didactic quality. It is dedicated to Friesen's grandchildren and its illustration-friendly seems to have young adults in mind. It links the Mennonite story to Canadian and Manitoba history, guideposts to those unacquainted with Mennonites. It is inclusive, arguing that the future of Manitoba Mennonitism lies in an open, multicultural and expanding church.

All reviewers pine for fuller reference to specific topics. Personally I wished for analysis of hard issues that conferences have faced: the intensely draining debate on issues of homosexuality and worship style; the real pain felt by women disenfranchised in ecclesiastical patriarchal; the disturbing drift to 'big box' evangelical churches and pre-millennialist end-times scenarios.

For a relatively short book, however, this one certainly leaves few stones unturned. It is clearly presented, nicely crafted, prophetic and even-handed. In its conceptualization and production, <u>Building Communities</u>, is also an account of "building bridges."

COMING EVENTS

- July 25-28 Manitoba Threshermen's Reunion and Stampede, Manitoba Agricultural Museum, Austin. 204-637-2354.
- July 27-29 Manitoba Sunflower Festival. Free pancake breakfast, great Mennonite food, lots to see and hear in the arts, and plenty of sports. Altona Centennial Park, Altona. 204-324-9005.
- Aug. 3-6 Pioneer Days, Mennonite Heritage Village, 231 PTH 12 North, Steinbach. 866-280-8741.
- Aug. 10-12 Harvest Festival and Exhibition, Winkler. Free family fun. Stanley Agricultural Exhibition begins Aug. 9 and runs simultaneously with Winkler Festival.
- Aug. 17-19 Plum Festival, Plum Coulee. Cracklings and waffles breakfast, water activities, tours of Prairieview Elevator. 204-829-2317 (June Letkeman).
- Aug 17-19 Hanover Agricultural Society Parade & Fair (Rodeo begins Aug. 16). Grunthal Fair Grounds. 204-326-2724 (Coun. Henry Funk).
- Aug. 25 Kleefeld Honey Festival, Kleefeld Sports Grounds. 204-377-4296 or 204-377-4014 (Coun. Clif Bakx).
- Aug. 25-26 Altona Bergthaler Mennonite congregation celebrates its 125 anniversary. Jake Sawatzky at 204-324-5469 or email Al Schmidt at aschmidt@mts.net.
- Aug. 25-27 Morden Corn and Apple Festival, Morden. Free stage entertainment, corn on the cob, apple cider. 204-822-5630; www.Mordenmb.com; E-mail: chamber@mordenmb.com.
- Sept. 3 "Fall on the farm" at Mennonite Heritage Village, 231 PTH 12 North, Steinbach. 866-280-8741.
- Sept. 7-8 Pembina Threshermen's Reunion, west of Winkler. Farming and harvesting practices of bygone years. Old-Tyme Meals by Valley Harvest Maids. 204-325-7497.
- **Sept. 8-9** "HotSpot" Festival at Gretna Park. 204-327-5825 or 204-327-5578.
- Sept. 15-16 Winkler EMMC celebrates its 70th anniversary. Contact wiebhil1@mts.net.
- Nov. 8 Heritage Memorial Banquet Bergthaler Church, Winkler. "Nurses of Bethel Hospital."
- Friesens Corporation is celebrating 100 years in 2007. To commemorate they will convert the Schwartz House, north of Centennial Park, to an art gallery with a sculpture garden on the grounds of the building.

Altona History Seekers study Mennonites in villages centre of winter meetings

by Elmer Heinrichs

The Mennonite practice of living in villages was the theme of Altona History Seekers' well-attended series of study meetings held in Dave and Grace Harms's cozy barn in March 2007. Almost 30 heard local historians tell about West Reserve districts they studied.

Historian Adolf Ens opened session 1 with background to the beginning of Mennonite villages, first in Prussia, in Russia, and then in Canada, along with the dissolution of many, and a more recent revival of village life with the arrival of immigrants from the USSR via Germany.

Ens also gave local historians a basic tool sheet outlining places to look and things to look for in researching local villages and districts. Noting East Reserve research is in progress, he encouraged historians to choose a village to aid in compiling a complete record of West Reserve.

In session 2 Marlene Plett provided a brief history of Edenthal SD bordering on the U.S. between Halbstadt and Edenburg. It was not an organized village, but a private and a public school worked side by side, and residents worshipped in the Sommerfeld, Edenburg or Halbstadt churches.

Dave Harms offered a "work in progress" on Kronsthal, one of the earlier villages settled about 1876-77, and an 1881 property list shows 21 landowners. In the 1920s, it suffered quite a setback with settlers emigrating to Mexico, and others moving their buildings to farm sites. Former village resident Abe F. Kehler added to the report with personal memories of Kronsthal.

Doc David Schroeder, who grew up in Weidenfeld, presented some background on the district. He recalls that Peter B. Wiebe took his children, a son Dr. C.W. Wiebe was one, to Rosenfeld public school. Weidenfeld's public school No. 988, est. 1898, was closed in 1966.

Along with Dr. Wiebe, a few other outstanding alumni are: Bernhard Toews, a champion of the private school; two grandchildren of Bernhard, the children of Erdman Toews, work in Winnipeg--Otto as a teacher and principal, and Esther Matz as a lawyer; John Nickel, a well-to-do farmer, and his granddaughter, Lois Braun a well known Altona writer, and Aeltester David Schulz.

Jake Rempel told session 3 that the first settlers arrived at Blumenort in 1875, spending the first winter in Semlins (sod houses) at the west end of the village. "My great-great grandfather, Wilhelm Rempel (1820) came to Blumenort a bit later in 1878, and acquired a partially developed farm."

Rempel added that the early private schools used to operate in winter, sometimes for as little as 90 school days. It seems some American families of German descent also sent their children here. A newer private school then became a public school, South Park No. 2141, in 1925.

Former Grossweide resident, Jim Dyck, said the name means "large meadow (or pasture)." The district was set two-and a quarter miles from the north border of the West Reserve near Dead Horse Creek, and settled by residents

from further south at Kronsthal and by others.

Grossweide SD No. 786 opened in 1893 and after 77 years it was dissolved in 1970. But, adds Dyck, it was much more than a school district; it was also the site of two churches, a Sommerfelder church, and an early MB church, formed after an evangelistic movement.

Dick Hildebrand and others reported on Silberfeld, a district placed east of Highway 30 between Altona and Gretna. It was described as "densely populated with school student counts ranging from 40-50 in the 1930s and '40s. A Sommerfeld church also served residents to 1960."

Marlene Plett told of talking to former Silberfeld resident Susie Martens, 100, who had described daily district and the life in the Jacob and Maria Voth family. She recalled, among other things, a low-lying pretty meadow with early spring flowers, and the coming of Hydro in 1950.

Benno and Mary Loewen, life-long residents and historians, said that the village (while dissolved) is active even today. It had a farm improvement club in the 1940s, and Mary Loewen said "it was a community that very much worked together," and socializing continues to this day.

Can You Help Us!

Dear Readers!

A group of former and present Gnadenthal residents is planning to upgrade the village cemetery. If you had ancestors living in Gnadenthal, Manitoba prior to the early 1920s, you may have relatives interred in one or more of the unmarked graves that comprise the older section of the cemetery. The group is looking for names and dates to assist in establishing a memorial in memory of these deceased residents of Gnadenthal.

Please contact:

Ruth Bock

811 Green Oaks Lane, Headingley, MB R4H 1C5

Phone: 204 888 6532 E-mail: jrbock@mts.net

Or:

Mary Ellen Neufeld Box 367 Winkler MB R6W 4A6

Phone: 204 325 8746

Book Notes

A new book by **Henry Fast**, *Gruenfeld* (now Kleefeld): First Mennonite Village in Western Canada, 1874-1910, relates the story of the early homesteading of four Altbergthal families who came to Manitoba in 1874, and then first settled near Gruenfeld on the East Reserve. These families included Jacob and Elizabeth Derksen Dyck (Dueck), Peter and Elizabeth Sawatzky Dyck, Jacob and Elizabeth Dyck Sawatzky, and Thomas and Elizabeth Harder Sawatzky. It seems that all these families were closely related.

Reflections on a Prairie Community: A Collection of Stories of Burwalde S.D. 529 (2004), edited by Marjorie Hildebrand of Winkler has been reprinted. To order a copy contact the editor at wiebhil1@mts.net

The new history of Winkler, written by **Dr. Hans Werner**, professor of history at the University of Winnipeg, is now in print. It is entitled *Living between Worlds: A History of Winkler* (cloth, 226 pp., 50.00). You can order a copy by contacting Ken Loewen at khloewen@mts.net in Winkler.

Sally Harms has just completed a family study entitled Legends and Legacy: Klaas Heide 1740-2007 (cloth, 300 pp, many photos). Heide was one of the main delegates that headed the emigration to Mexico in 1922. For more on the book contact Sally at sharms@mts.net

Dr. Peter Pauls of Winnipeg is the editor of *The Stone House Memoirs: The Story of the J.M. Pauls Family* (2005, cloth, 281 pp). Rev. Jacob. M. Pauls was a minister and assistant *Aeltester* of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in southern Manitoba for many years. For further information contact the editor: pmpauls@shaw.ca

The history of Halbstadt, The Halbstadt Heritage:
Strassberg, Blumental (Houston) and Halbstadt S.D 1879
– 2005, was recently reprinted. To order contact David
Sawatzky at dsawatzk@mts.net or the Altona website
www.townofaltona.com

Speaking of Power: The Poetry of Di Brandt introduces the reader to the lyric power and political urgency of the poetry of **Di Brandt**, providing an overview of her poetry written during a prolific and revolutionary 20-year period. Editor **Tanis MacDonald's** introduction outlines the major movements of Brandt's work, emphasizing the relationship of language to power and the value of a dissenting voice in a forceful cultural poetics. (ISBN: 0-88920-506-X, Paper, 72 pp. 2006, \$14.95)

Watermelon Syrup is the story of Lexi, a young Mennonite woman from Saskatchewan, who comes to work as housekeeper and nanny for a doctor's family in Kitchener, Ontario, during the Depression. The novel is written by Annie Jacobsen, born in Luseland, Saskatchewan, to a Mennonite mother and Lutheran father, and Jane Finlay-Young, born in England and immigrated to Canada in 1963. Aside from Watermelon Syrup, Jacobsen is the author of short stories, poetry, and an unpublished novel. In the later years she lived in Toronto with her two children. She died in May 2005. Jane and Annie met in 1999 and at Annie's request, Jane rewrote Watermelon Syrup with the help of Di Brandt's editorial feedback.

Sarah Klassen's a feast of Longing, published by Coteau Books is a book of short fiction. Armin Wiebe says it "displays an impressive range of contemporary characters in pensive, sometimes elegiac stories that meet life head on without reaching for extremes or losing a sense of hope." The book contains fourteen different stories. (Paperback, ISBN: 978-1-55050-357-9, sells for \$18.95).

Lois Braun, who lives in Altona, MB, has a new collection of short stories which start off as mythical prairie stories, but quickly move into a present as current as today's newspaper. The collection, *The Penance Drummer and Other Stories*, is published by Winnipeg's Turnstone Press. (ISBN: 978-0-88801-327-9, paperback at \$19.95).

Four Years Less a Day: A WWII Refugee Story relates the experiences of Henry Bergen. He writes from a young boy's perspective, beginning the story in Stalin's Ukraine and continuing with the flight to escape persecution. After four years of avoiding bombs, bullets and repatriation, the family arrived in Canada. Bergen, a former teacher in Canada, Africa and China, lives in Winnipeg with his wife, Bettie. (Published by Trafford Publishing, ISBN: 1-4120-9931-5, paperback at \$24.95)

I Am Hutterite, written by Mary-Ann Kirkby, is the fascinating true story of a young woman's journey to reclaim her heritage. In 1969, the Ann-Marie Dornn's parents left a Hutterite colony near Portage la Prairie, MB with their seven children to start a new life. This is the story of how Ann-Marie came to terms with the painful circumstances that led her family to leave the community life of the Hutterites. Published by Polka Dot Press. (ISBN: 978-0-9783405-1-3, paperback at \$21.95)