



## MMHS Board of Directors 2009



### (L-R) Front Row:

**Ken Reddig**, Pinawa: retired archivist, works part time at for Eden Health Centre and for CMU at its Creation Care Centre at East Braintree.

**Loren Koehler**, Steinbach: researcher, working in computers in the health field; member of the archives committee of the EMC.

**Conrad Stoesz**, Winnipeg: archivist at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies and the Mennonite Heritage Centre.

**Marianne Janzen**, Winnipeg: assists Bert Friesen and Conrad Stoesz to prepare published genealogical data for the Grandma database.

**Maria Lodge**, Winnipeg: retired lawyer: studied history and records it as she recalls it; published numerous articles in *The Carillon* and a book: *Tales from the Gravel Ridge*.

### Second Row:

**Alf Redekopp**, Winnipeg: Director of Mennonite Heritage Centre; author/compiler of two books of genealogy; co-editor of the *Mennonite Historian*.

**Bert Friesen**, Winnipeg: overseeing transcription of Prussian Mennonite church registers; indexing *Mennonitische Rundschau*.

**Evelyn Friesen**, Steinbach: staff and volunteer at Mennonite Heritage Village; on genealogy committee.

**Mary Neufeld**, Winnipeg: became keenly interested in history through researching and writing the biography of Bishop William H. Falk, *A Prairie Pilgrim*.

### Back Row:

**Adolf Ens**, Winnipeg: retired professor; currently translating memoirs of Peter A. Elias; chair of Local History committee; book notes editor for *Mennonite Historian*.

**Eleanor Chornoboy**, Winnipeg: researches rural Mennonite life of the pioneer years; writes and publishes, the most recent book is *Faspa with Jast*.

**Ed Hoepfner**, Winnipeg: retired meteorologist; writes articles of historical nature; currently working on George von Trappe who accompanied Hoepfner and Bartsch to Russia.

**Lawrence Klippenstein**, Winnipeg: retired archivist; volunteers at the Mennonite Heritage Village museum since moving to Steinbach two years ago; continues to research, write and publish on historical themes; offers support and information and sometimes guides tours to historic sites.

**Missing:** **Hans Werner**, Winnipeg and **Garry Enns**, Aubigny.

## Historical Atlas Project

Back in 1988 and 1990 John Rempel and William Harms produced a pair of atlases, one for each of the two Mennonite Reserves (with the Scratching River settlement added as a supplement-appendix of the second volume). The intent was not only to locate the original villages but also to identify all the residents and the lands for which they obtained homestead patents. The atlases proved to be far more popular than anticipated and were soon out of print.

In late January an informal discussion was held to share ideas about what might go into a revised new edition. Participants were Dave Harms, Henry Fast and Adolf Ens of the Local History Committee of MMHS and Jacob Peters and Ernest Braun of the EastMenn Historical Committee. The consensus reached in the discussion was to proceed with work on both atlases.

## Impressions by a New Board Member

– January 20, 2010

As I sit in this, my third meeting on the Board of the MMHS, I realize that there is a great deal of “history” on this Board – members who recall decisions, structures and activities that the Board has had over many years. Although I haven’t yet met all that many members of the Society, from the reports I receive I understand that much activity goes on behind the scenes. Or perhaps I should say there seems to be a lot of activity on certain committees. In other cases, it appears that there are hardly enough members to keep those committees functioning.

I suppose that it is the nature of historical / genealogical research that it tends to draw those who may be older or have more time to devote to these interests. However, as a slightly younger person on the Board, I would like to encourage greater participation by younger members of the Society. If we wait too long to get involved, we will miss out on the richness of experience that those who have been involved for longer have to offer. — Loren Koehler

**Interim Editor** – Adolf Ens, assisted by Loren Koehler

**Layout Editor** – Ted Barg

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society newsletter, *Heritage Posting*, welcomes letters, reports and historical notes to society members and other readers.

Correspondence can be mailed to:

Heritage Posting,  
25 Coral Crescent,  
Steinbach, MB R5G 2C9

Or email: [heritage.posting@gmail.com](mailto:heritage.posting@gmail.com)

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

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## Another Research Tool Now Available

*Settlers of the East Reserve: Moving in--Moving out--Staying /* edited by Adolf Ens, Ernest N. Braun and Henry N. Fast (Winnipeg: MMHS, 2009) 328 pp. Volume 4 ERHS \$30.00.

It is a research tool par excellence for East Reserve family history and the settlement of the Hanover Municipality. (See review elsewhere in this issue.)

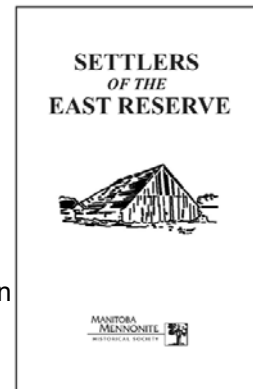
Order from Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 or purchase On-Line (through Mennonite Church Canada) to get member discount. Also available at Mennonite Heritage Village and *Die Mennonitische Post* in Steinbach, Friesen Stationers in Altona and Bible Book Shop in Winkler.

**Other MMHS Publications available:**

*Historical Sketches of the East Reserve 1874-1910 /* edited by John Dyck (Steinbach: HSHS, 1994) 722pp. Volume 3 ERHS \$15.00 Cdn

*Reinlaender (Old Colony) Gemeinde Buch /* second edition revised by Martha Martens, John Penner, and Mavis Dyck (Winnipeg: MMHS 2006) 502 pp. \$30.00 Cdn  
*Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch: Registers of the Church at West Lynne, 1881-1935 /* edited by Henry Unger, Martha Martens, and Adolf Ens (Winnipeg: MMHS 2004) 530 pp. \$30.00 Cdn

*Church, Family and Village /* edited by Adolf Ens, Jacob E. Peters and Otto Hamm (Winnipeg: MMHS 2001) 310 pp. \$20.00 Cdn



## Indexing of *Mennonitische Rundschau* Resumes

One of the most widely read newspapers among the earliest Mennonite settlers of Manitoba was *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*. Although it was published in the USA it contained broad coverage of developments in the Manitoba settlements, much of it in the form of letters to the editor.

An index for this valuable source for researchers of village and family history was begun in the 1980s at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg (CMBS). Students working in the summers completed a subject index for the years 1920-1939.

In the 1990s Bert Friesen produced a subject index and an author index for the earliest years, 1878-1909.

The current phase, to create indexes for the important decade 1910-1919, is done under the umbrella of CMBS and Mennonite Heritage Centre who provide copies of the periodical and an office with computer and software for the indexer. Bert Friesen has again taken that role, for now as a volunteer.

# The President's Corner

by Conrad Stoesz

What do you think about education? Now to be sure there is education and then there is education. There is formal style book education and then there is education you learn by hands-on doing. Either way, education is a central part of our lives. It has long been important to Mennonites. Our community members have been fined, jailed and felt forced to emigrate over formal education.

Starting with the early Anabaptists there was an emphasis on literacy so that all members could read the Bible for themselves. This supported important theological underpinnings. Education has been one of the reasons for emigration. The imposition of more Russian state control of education in Mennonite schools was a factor that prompted them to look for a new home in North America. In Canada some left for Latin America in large part because of school education.

We have long believed that it was the role of the church and the family to educate our children — not a job of the state. In Manitoba schools were running less than a year after settlement began. Acceptance of government funds and public schools was the “talk of the town” at one time. Some Mennonite groups refused both on principle.

These education values continue today. Mennonite schools such as Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary, Westgate, Mennonite Collegiate Institute, and Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute are all owned and operated by the Mennonite community alongside of the public school system. In past decades Mennonite Bible schools dotted the prairies. Today a few remain with others reinventing themselves into universities.

MMHS is also in the education “business.” We research, learn, write, document and then hold workshops or write books to disseminate knowledge and educate ourselves and others about the past.

For decades the one-room school was a standard educational feature in Manitoba regardless of its public or private nature. For generations this was a recognizable and important institution in our province. Many today owe a debt of thanks to the one room school and the teachers who taught as many as 60 kids in eight grades every day.

Today schools have gone the way of “bigger is better,” with large schools located in the denser population areas, complete with specialization for teachers, educational assistants, detailed curriculum, etc. On many levels this progression is good.

But the one-room school remains an important aspect of the progression of our communities. Today few remain.

The Alt-Bergthal School building was erected in 1904 and now needs a home or it will be demolished in spring. It now sits on the north-west side of the Town of Altona. One-room schools have been important to so many people in our history. Can we see the Alt-Bergthal school as representative of all those one-room schools that played such an important part in the life of our communities? Can we find time, energy, and a will to find a home for this building so that it can continue to educate us all about our past on behalf of those buildings that have disappeared? Can MMHS find ways of motivating people to get involved to do something before it is too late? I bet we can. What do you think?

January 13, 2010



Mennonite Historical Society of Canada held its annual meeting at Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach on January 23. Participants pictured above are: (L-R) *Front row:* Connie Braun (BC), Alf Redekopp (Man.), Richard Thiessen (BC), Sam Steiner (Ont.), Lucille Marr (Quebec), Royden Loewen (Man.) *Back row:* Conrad Stoesz (Man.), Barb Draper (Ont.), Richard Loughheed (Quebec), Leonard Chester (Ont.), Robert Goertzen (Man.), Wesley Berg (Alberta), Bert Friesen (Man.), Jake Buhler (Sask.), Laureen Harder-Gissing (Ont.), Victor Wiebe (Sask.), Linda Huebert Hecht (Ont.)

## Conscientious Objectors Reunion in Winkler

Eighty people from as far away as Steinbach, Winnipeg, and Cartwright met at the Winkler Friendship Centre on Saturday, November 21, 2009 to spend a couple of hours together.

The Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship (EAF) sponsored this coffee time for former COs and their spouses. Following a short opening and prayer by Jerry Hildebrand, Bernie Loeppky explained the purpose of the EAF. An organization of representatives from a group of

Mennonite Churches, the EAF seeks to help people understand what it means to be radical followers of Jesus Christ. This discipleship includes taking a strong peace position, which many young men did during WWII.

Canada provided the choice of alternative service instead of joining the military, although some were denied CO status by their presiding judge and sentenced to prison. Others were stripped of their professional teaching certificates.

Conrad Stoesz spoke on what it means to be a CO. He recounted the story of the killing of five young girls in Nickel Mines, an Amish community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

When the floor was opened up to talk of recollections, many were eager to share experiences they had during their time of service in CO camps.

After coffee the group gathered at the Bethel Heritage Park to view the Wall of Remembrance, a brick wall containing 3,021 bricks, one for each CO in Manitoba. A large rock in the centre of the wall has several Scripture verses on peace engraved on it. (*Jerry Hildebrand*)

### Remembering Dick Epp 1927-2009

The October 2009 issue of *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian* was dedicated to a founding member of our sister organization, the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan. Not only was Epp one of the core group of dedicated individuals who came together in 1973 to found the Society, he also later served as its president for 16 years, 1980–1996.

Many of us got to know Dick through his work as editor of the *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian*. For 11 years, after his term as President, Epp applied his skills in photography, story-telling and computer usage to editing the Society's newsletter, developing it into its current 30-page format.

HP and the MMHS join our sister Society in honouring the late Dietrich Helmut Epp.



COs viewing the new Wall of Remembrance.

— Photo by Marj Hildebrand

### Historic survey maps obtained by EastMenn Historical Committee

Eric Rempel recently donated a well preserved set of full colour 1872-1873 survey maps of the R.M. of Hanover area to the EastMenn committee. These maps formed part of the work that J. J. Rempel, Eric's grandfather, did on behalf of the Intercontinental Company during the 1930s. These have been digitized and the originals lodged with the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum.

The Intercontinental Company was organized in Winnipeg by New York financier, Samuel McRoberts, to buy and resell lands of Mennonites leaving the East Reserve for Paraguay in the 1920s. The Museum plans to create an exhibit around these maps in due time. (*Ernest Braun*)

### Barkfield Plaque

This plaque, located on the north fence-line near the junction of Roads 32E and 21N, identifies the location of one of many one-room public schools in the former Mennonite East Reserve. The Barkfield school building was moved to the grounds of Mennonite Heritage Village museum some time after it closed in the late 1960s.

Under the auspices of the EastMenn Historical Committee, Orlando Hiebert has gathered GPS locations for all former District Schools in today's RM of Hanover. A draft map showing these locations has been made with assistance from the RM of Hanover, and work is underway to mark them in some tangible way.

Further information on these schools is available in *Schools – Our Heritage* by John K. Schellenberg, published by Hanover School Division in 1985. (*Ernest Braun*)



# Coming Events

## Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

invites you to celebrate the  
135<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
Mennonite Settlement on the West Reserve

**Theme:** Living at the Edges (Geographic, Social, Communal)

**Presentations:** The Lure and the Pitfalls of Living at the Edge – John J. Friesen, Winnipeg  
East: French Canadian / Mennonite Relations – Joe Braun and panel

### Lunch

West: Anglo-Canadian and Scandinavian Neighbours – Ed Hoepfner

North of the Tracks: Expansion into Lowe's Farm territory

Registration and Coffee: 9:30 – 10:00 am; \$15, includes lunch

**April 17, 10:00 a.m.**  
**Rosenfeld Community Centre**  
**262 Main Street**

Contact: Joe Braun, Altona, 324-6259 or  
Marlene Plett, 324-6827

Film night at **Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach**. On February 23 the MHV Auxiliary will be showing Dr. Otto Klassen's latest DVD set called *Pioneers of the Chaco*. Part 1 is sub-titled *Canadian Mennonites looking for freedom in Paraguay* and Part 2, *Canadian Mennonites conquer the Green Hell*. Showtime will be at 7:30 PM in the Village Centre Auditorium.

Annual **Roots Day** at Mennonite Heritage Village, April 24, 9:30 to 3:30. Details to follow.

**Valleyfield Reunion.** A Valleyfield School District reunion is planned for July 16 to 18, 2010. For more information contact: valleyfield@mts.net. This district is south of Morden.

March 23, 2010, MHV Annual General Meeting

April 24, 2010, Family History Day at Mennonite Heritage Village

May 1, 2010, MHV opens for the summer season

## Open Invitation

An Overview of the  
Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba  
from Bergthal Colony, South Russia,  
to the Present

**March 20, 9 am to 4 pm**  
**Winkler Seniors Centre**

### Presenters:

William Schroeder: *Bergthal Colony origins of early Sommerfeld Church members*

Conrad Stoesz: *Sommerfeld Mennonite Church developments in Manitoba*

### Lunch

Leonard Doell: Saskatchewan connections with Manitoba Sommerfeld Church

Bishop David Wiebe: Present state of the Sommerfeld Church in Manitoba

Also on the agenda: **Annual general meeting of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society**

Registration of \$15 includes lunch.

Contact: Conrad Stoesz, Chair, MMHS at:

cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca or cstoesz@mbconf.ca

## Chortitz cemetery upgrade planned

The Randolph area Chortitz Mennonite Heritage Cemetery will be seeing some restoration thanks to a group of local residents who, with the support of the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, plan to make repairs and erect a plaque giving some of the history of the church and cemetery.

The cemetery is across the road from the Chortitz church, which was built in the mid-1890s and is still in operation today. The original church building was erected on this spot in 1877, but replaced when fire destroyed it. The current building is thought to be the oldest Mennonite meeting place in southeastern Manitoba, and the group which meets there may be the oldest Mennonite congregation to meet in the same location in all of Western Canada.

Leonard Hiebert, who is directing the restoration project, hopes to even out low spots in the cemetery and pour seven concrete slabs for the head stones. Although there are about 400 grave markers visible, the earliest going back to 1901, up to 800 people may be buried there. Perhaps the most notable marker is that of Bishop Gerhard Wiebe, who was one of the driving forces behind the Mennonite migration to Manitoba in the 1870s.



# Mennonites and the Apocrypha

by Adolf Ens

I was reading in Henry Fast's book, *Gruenfeld (now Kleefeld)*, about the dividing of an estate on the death of a spouse. When Gerhard Schellenberg of Rosenfeld contacted "Dear sister Mrs. Loewen" on 14 May 1883, shortly after the death of her husband, Johann, to make arrangements for the *Teilung*, he wrote as follows: "We can help you with the *Teilung* as prescribed in our *Teilungs Verordnung*. . . Also get one or two trustees for yourself, so that when I come I can confirm these according to Isaiah 1:17 and Sirach 4:10." Schellenberg wrote in his official capacity as administrator (*Waisenvorsteher*) on behalf of the *Waisenamt*.<sup>1</sup>

I think it is safe to say that most of the Bibles in your house do not include the Apocrypha. Although the Greek and Latin versions of the Bible contain these obscure writings, neither the Jewish nor Protestant faiths consider them authoritative (canonical).

When I first discovered that 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptist writers, especially the Dutch, quoted them, seemingly with almost the same authority as the books of the Old and New Testament, I wondered about this. Dirk Philips, for example, the early Dutch bishop who served the church in the Netherlands and Prussia, quotes 160 times from 11 of the apocryphal books. By comparison the south German Anabaptist, Pilgram Marpeck, refers to only 6 apocryphal books, with a total of 17 quotations.

It is for this reason, I think, that Mennonites in Russia continued to use the Apocrypha and brought this usage with them to Canada. Their *Gesangbuch*, which went through at least six printings in Russia and is still used by many of the conservative groups, includes a "*Biblisches Spruchregister*" which correlates hymns with the biblical texts that undergird the hymn text. This index identifies 20 hymns based on passages from 5 different apocryphal books.

The most frequently used apocryphal passages in both the *Gesangbuch* and the writings of Dirk Philips come from *The Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach* (Ecclesiasticus). Indeed, the passage quoted immediately after the title page of the "*fünfte Ausgabe in Russland*" of the *Gesangbuch* is Sirach 47:9-12. It is not surprising that Sirach's "wisdom literature" is also probably the most used apocryphal book by Mennonites in the early years of settlement in Canada. Old Order Amish traditionally use(d) the book of Tobit as basis for a wedding sermon. Hutterite sermons still in use also quote texts from the Apocrypha.

The following incident from the memoirs of retired blacksmith Peter A. Elias illustrates a layman's use of a text from the Apocrypha. In his description of the death of his son Jacob from tuberculosis in 1918, Elias found an answer for his son's deathbed questions in Sirach.

The doctor had prescribed medicine for use in the latter stages of the illness to reduce suffering when the coughing spells became severe and also to help the patient sleep more restfully. When Jacob's illness reached that stage he desperately longed for some relief, "especially during

coughing spells, in which he was often in danger of suffocating," his questions came.

Elias describes the scene as follows:

*At such times the struggle not to take the medication was very difficult. However, he feared that taking it might put him to sleep, and that death in those circumstances might rob him of his eternal bliss. He wanted to alleviate his pain, but did not want to begin to sin again. That was a hard dilemma, and he wavered between the two options. The struggle was so severe that he almost despaired, and wanted advice from me. That placed me in a difficult situation. He formulated the dilemma as follows: "Will God not justifiably reproach me, saying, 'I have suffered so much for you and you don't want to suffer this small privation for me?'"*

*"Alright, Jacob, if taking medicine is so repugnant for you, then resist it."*

*"But Father, it is so difficult. I cannot resist it; it is almost impossible for me."*

*"But my child, what can we do?" From my perspective I would think that God has allowed the medicine to grow in the earth. Sirach says: 'The Lord creates medicine from the earth and a sensible person should not scorn it, for with it He heals and drives out pain.'<sup>2</sup> That is what I think as well; it can serve to ease the pain or it can restore health."*

*Alright, then administer a dose to me. I cannot resist it any longer." Since the doctor had prescribed 20 drops with water as one dose, I gave him only five drops and thought that this would satisfy him. But since they had little effect, I gave him another four drops a while later. Then he was satisfied. This happened at two o'clock at night. Before daylight broke he wanted to go home. No, he insisted, he was not at home. I then took a light and shone it on his surroundings. "Well yes," he said, "I am at home." And he looked at me in such a friendly manner as we had not seen in some time, as though he wanted to affirm something with this gesture.*

*In the morning I asked him how matters stood with respect to medication. He thought it was quite good. Did he have any pain? No, he said, he felt quite good. Did he have bedsores? No, he was resting comfortably. What did he think of the medicine now? "I think it doesn't harm me in any way," he replied.<sup>3</sup>*

Perhaps one of our historians should research this topic. How did Anabaptists and their descendants (Mennonites, Amish, Hutterites) come to use the apocryphal books as part of their "biblical" reading? How and why did many groups discontinue this practice?

<sup>1</sup>Henry Fast, *Gruenfeld (now Kleefeld): First Mennonite Village in Western Canada* (Steinbach: by the author, 2006), 244.

<sup>2</sup>Sirach 38:4, 7.

<sup>3</sup>Elias memoir #1, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, vol. 1079, after p. 126. Excerpt from an English translation which MMHS plans to publish in the near future.

# Book Reviews

Adolf Ens, Ernest N. Braun and Henry N. Fast, eds. *Settlers of the East Reserve: Moving in – Moving out – Staying* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2009), 328 pages.

**Reviewed by Ronald Friesen, Winnipeg**

This attractively designed book, the fourth volume of a series begun in 1990 by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, deals with a subject that elicits keen interest among people with personal connections to the Mennonite East Reserve. Considerable space has been allotted to historical maps, homestead lists and church records, thereby conferring on the book the gravitas of a scholarly reference work.

Interspersed with the tables and maps are essays and articles by a number of recognized authors. The late John Dyck has narrated the movement of Frisian and Flemish Mennonites from the Chortitza Colony to the Bergthal Colony in southern Russia, providing details about the families and their origins. Such historical information is sometimes evocative of Mennonite cultural traits, embodied in the following sentence. "He, Peter Sawatzky, was a 76 year old farmer with enough influence to bring all his married children to Bergthal when he migrated there in 1836."

An essay by G.G. Kornelson from 1945 serves as an introduction to the book and to the East Reserve. His writing about the early years of settlement reflects a journalist's wide perspective, covering the immigration of the Mennonites in 1874, the coming of the German-Lutherans in 1890 and the arrival of the Galicians in 1897. Kornelson describes the role and importance of the church, the school and business in the development of the communities of the East Reserve.

Writer John Dyck also devotes significant attention, 21 pages, to the subject of mutual fire insurance, a traditional form of economic security among Mennonites for hundreds of years. Quite secondary to the matter of insurance are the records generated by the enterprise, records which are a resource for current researchers of Mennonite history. In his study Dyck cites a number of scriptures as theological support for mutual insurance. These calls to practise charity, however, abut sharply against the imperatives of practical insurance plans. The role of premiums, exclusions, contributory negligence and even denial of claims adds a layer of complexity to the issue, something which is implicit in the article but not directly examined.

From an issue of potential debate the reader is transported into a world of imaginative writing by William Schroeder as he provides a description of Rosengard, the village of his youth. His essay brings animation to the history of the community. The "wild roses in grand profusion" of which he writes soften the stony eskers of Rosengard's last Ice Age and perhaps the discourse of its inhabitants.

In the chapter of biography and family history the Erdman Penner story, written by daughter Helen, conveys the experiences of an educated and cultured family which

moves between the old world and the new, between advantage and penury, but retains the values under pioneering duress. Other biographical essays by Ernest Braun and Loren Koehler are replete with new research and genealogical information about Bergthaler families in Friedrichsthal and Schoenwiese.

An interesting article, written by Bruce Wiebe and Adolf Ens, raises up images of the wild American frontier when a Mennonite saloon owner is charged and convicted of bribing voters in an election with hard liquor. The Cass County settlement in the Dakota Territory, circa 1882, does not survive the rigours of its geography and isolation.

Lawrence Klippenstein provides another example of mass migration in his discourse of the Bergthaler resettlement to the West Reserve in the period 1878-1882. This transit of 2500 Mennonites is accorded an analytical review by an historian who is uniquely qualified to do so. He explains the reasons for the move and states that "... it reconfigured the entire Mennonite settlement ... in significant ways." Not only did the move provide much first class agricultural land but it released creative new energies as well.

In a concluding chapter Adolf Ens and Ernest Braun collaborate to review the emigration of conservative Mennonites to Paraguay in 1926, a move which exposed the fault lines within the Mennonite churches but also laid the foundation for future growth, renewal and fraternal connection. The full dynamics of the subtitle take effect in the writings of Klippenstein, Ens and Braun in the second half of the book.

This publication qualifies as an excellent resource for history researchers but also serves readers interested in the drama of pioneer life.

*Ronald Friesen, author of Gruenfeld Chronicles, is a researcher and writer in retirement.*

*When War Came to Kleindarp and more Kleindarp stories.* Al Reimer. Rosetta Projects, 2008. 192 pages.

**Reviewed by Dora Dueck**

Most of the stories in this collection by Al Reimer, author of the novel *My Harp Is Turned to Mourning*, are set in Kleindarp, a fictional version of his hometown, Steinbach, Man. Most have a historical Mennonite context, and some have overtones of memoir.

They will be of huge interest, therefore, to all who know Steinbach, or Mennonite history, or Al Reimer. For these readers the question may be: how does he treat the place (compared to other ex-Steinbachers Miriam Toews and Patrick Friesen, for example), its religious past, and his own life?

The shortest answer is: from many angles. There's a story of a child's grief over a loss in the earliest days of the community, of a boy's adventures at a hockey game, of a teen's resistance to the high pressure tactics of revival meetings. There are stories of true-to-life characters – the

*(Continued on page 8)*

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## Book Notes

### by Lawrence Klippenstein and Adolf Ens

*Lindas gluecklicher Tag* in paperback, is a 2006 publication of the Hutterian Brethren Book Centre at Macgregor. It has 22 pages and retails for 14.99 CND. The writer is Linda Maendel and the illustrator is Sonia Maendel. It is an interesting book for children, perhaps aimed especially at Hutterite school uses.

Rhoda Janzen, *Mennonite in a Little Black Dress: A Memoir of Coming Home* is a 241-page hard-cover 2009 publication by Henry Holt and Co., N.Y. It is the sharing of a journey of much pain and sorrow in the life of a professional person who found, literally, that going home could be a wonderful healing experience.

Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) pb., 257 pp. Mennonites, and references to a number of Mennonite researchers are found in this study. Theoretical questions raised and dealt with offer insightful ways of continuing that aspect of the research.

The 2009 issue of *Preservings* (No.29) now available from the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation (\$20) has a strong focus on Latin America since the co-editors visited Mexico (John Friesen) and Paraguay (Hans Werner) last year. A second focus is on early 20th century developments among Mennonites in Saskatchewan.

Ralph Friesen's new history of Steinbach was launched late last year. *Between Earth & Sky: Steinbach, the first 50 Years* (Steinbach, Derksen Printers, 2009), has 548 pages, allowing the author to examine the community in considerable detail. A review is scheduled for the next issue.

*The Polish Review* (Vol. LIV, No. 1, 2009, 31-60), New York, carried the article "Four Letters to Susanna, from Johann Bartsch, a Danzig Land Scout, 1786-87." An earlier, less-developed version was published by *Preservings* in 2006 (No. 26). The materials are drawn from the papers of the late Diedrich H Epp of Rosthern, Sask.

Dennis Fast, teacher, naturalist and photographer from Kleefeld, Manitoba, has recently released a coffee table volume *Wild West: Nature Living on the Edge*, in collaboration with Heather Beattie and Barbara Huck (Winnipeg: Heartland Associates, 2009), 360 pages. An exhibition of some of Fast's photography was recently featured at Mennonite Heritage Village.

Jacob Davenport Deorksen's family history, entitled *The barbed wire threshold* (Vancouver: by the author, 2002; 406 pages) is out of print, but deserves a note. The family first settled in Schoensee on the East Reserve, relocated to Schoenhorst (West Reserve) in 1880, then farmed in the Langevin area before moving to Lowe Farm. The family was Sommerfelder but some of the author and some of his siblings ventured past the "threshold." The meticulous attention to detail and the frankness with which any topic is treated provides a unique window into agricultural, church and community life from the 1920s into the '50s.

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(Continued from page 7)

obese but zesty Eva, the scandalous Duck Janz and Gumshoe Ike Isaac. Plenty of tension and ugliness come through, but so does the author's affection for many of his characters.

What needs to be said in addition, however, speaking as someone with no particular connection to Steinbach and thus unable to defend or criticize his portrayals, is that these are simply wonderful stories. While culturally and religiously specific, their ultimate power resides in Reimer's skill and insights as storyteller. They are tales for anyone coming to terms with "Kleindarps" of their own, tales of what one might otherwise fail to see.

Seeing, in fact, is something of a theme throughout the collection. In "A Face in the Mud," for example, the despairing 14-year-old Liese reaches "a strange serenity" because of the vision she sees within the face of evil.

The young protagonists of other stories see that Kleindarp is, as Mel Plett ("A Pocketful of Sugar Cubes") puts it, an "inbred, narcissistic, backbiting, sober-sided, religion-obsessed dump." But, returning for a funeral many years later, Mel notes as he views his uncle's body, "I feel that I'm on the verge of something important here." And indeed he is, as he discovers aspects of both his uncle and the town that he has not seen before.

Similarly, the teen narrator who watches Duck Janz and Gumshoe Ike Isaac brilliantly assesses their differences only to find there's still more to be known about them. And Wilhelm Fast ("Mennonite Firebirds") needs to find "new eyes" to succeed in the Kleindarp environment.

And then there's Groosmame Brandt ("Opening and Closing the Door to Life"), a remarkable woman with a "remarkable" face. It's the eyes that define her: "both intensely personal and faraway, as though with a double perspective," eyes that "have seen everything worth seeing... and express sympathy and pity for everything and everybody in God's world." Such seeing is an ideal, but it's what this fine book of stories reaches toward.

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