



Annual Meeting Hears Bergthal–Sommerfeld Church Stories

In four short presentations the March 20 audience followed the development of Sommerfeld Mennonite Church from its beginnings in the Flemish Mennonite Church of Chortitza Colony, south Russia to the present.

Bill Schroeder presented an overview of the founding of Bergthal Colony in 1836, the first “daughter colony” created by Chortitza to relieve its landless population. Schroeder is the “authority” on this settlement. When the first edition of his *The Bergthal Colony* was published in 1974, very little was known about this Mennonite settlement. The *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (1955) had one column about it. P.M. Friesen’s *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia* (published in German, 1911) contains only a few scattered references.

While Bergthal was always considered as a “daughter colony,” for almost 40% of the 1870s Mennonite immigrants arriving in Manitoba, it was the “mother colony.” Bill Schroeder was the first historian to look at all available sources and write the story of “his” people. He continued his research after the 1974 publication. When it sold out he revised and enlarged the first edition and republished it in 1984.

Those present at the Winkler Seniors’ Centre in March 2010, were impressed at the new information Schroeder presented about Bergthal. Impressed also that his gentle sense of humour was still intact, and glad that he could make this final (?) oral presentation. Age and disease, he says, may have made it his last.

Conrad Stoesz presented the transition from “Bergthal Gemeinde” to the Chortitzer and Sommerfelder in Manitoba, and Leonard Doell dealt with the parallel groups in Saskatchewan. Both young historians were able to highlight the developments more or less to the present.

Current Bishop of the Sommerfeld Mennonite church of Manitoba, David Wiebe, briefly described the most recent changes in leadership structure and then fielded questions in a frank and disarming manner.

That this church has managed to grow and continue its impressive ministry, despite several divisions (such as Rudnerweider, 1936; Reinländer, 1958) is testimony to the steadfastness of its ministerial leadership and the continuing relevance of the church for the daily lives of its members.



Presenters Leonard Doell and Bill Schroeder at the annual meeting

— Photos by Bert Friesen

MMHS Annual Meeting March 20, 2010 Winkler Senior Centre

The business portion of the gathering for the AGM heard and discussed reports from the Standing Committees and scrutinized the financial report. The Society is in good financial health, allowing committees to launch into another year of action.

In the election of Board members the results are as follows. Nine members are in the second year of their 2-year term (Garry Enns, Adolf Ens, Ed Hoepfner, Lawrence Klippenstein, Loren Koehler, Maria Lodge, Mary Neufeld, Ken Reddig and Hans Werner).

The current term of five others had expired, but all five were eligible for re-election to a further term and agreed to be elected (Eleanor Chornoboy, Abe Ens, Bert Friesen, and Alf Redekopp). Three new members were elected (Ron Dueck, Paul Friesen, and Judith Klassen) to form a board of seventeen.

The accepted budget foresees spending of some \$27,000. That includes a marking down of inventory and drawing on a couple of restricted funds. The scope of spending estimates indicates that a number of standing committees are working on larger projects.

“Excavating” History from Cemetery Stones

from news release by Arnie Neufeld.

A new project of the Winkler Heritage Society, dubbed the “Stones and Stories Project,” is spearheaded by Bruce Wiebe and Arnie Neufeld. Its premise is that cemeteries are very special places in our communities.

One can view a cemetery as an inviting place — an oasis of peace and quiet, suitable for reflective thought and meditation. In Ukraine families often built simple picnic tables close to the graves of loved ones for family members to gather to remember and celebrate the loved ones.

Grave stones are silent memorials, but they do more than designate a location and preserve basic human data. A grave stone is a testimony of the respect and esteem we continue to hold for those who enriched our human experiences and contributed to the building of our community.

The “Stones and Stories” project plans to create a photo inventory of all the grave markers in a cemetery. Owners of stones needing repairs will be contacted.

The project committee also hopes to build a “memories bank,” which will contain a photo of the person buried in each cemetery site, a copy of the person’s obituary, and the location of each grave on the cemetery map. The Society is asking that individuals and families loan copies of obituaries and photos of deceased family members to the “Stones and Stories” for this purpose.

MMHS encourages its members to consider undertaking a similar project in their home communities. Bruce and Arnie can be contacted at: stonesandstories@yahoo.ca, or directly at arnieneufeld@mts.net or fraunzwieb@hotmail.com.

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 from society members and other readers.

Correspondence can be mailed to:

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Steinbach, MB R5G 2C9

Or email: heritage.posting@gmail.com

Website: www.mmhs.org

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Historical Calendar Project

The MMHS Membership and Publicity committee is embarking on a calendar project and is in the process of compiling relevant materials for a historic calendar to be released in 2011. The calendar will feature photos from our Mennonite archives along with significant dates in Mennonite history and information about the Society (membership, mandate, etc.).

Our hope is that in addition to raising funds for the Society the calendar will prove useful and informative, creating new awareness of the MMHS and tweaking interest in its activities among those not currently involved.

Please assist us in compiling “dates of historical interest” to include in the calendar (e.g. migrations, sod-turnings, first electricity, etc.). The broadly conceived theme of the 2011 calendar is Manitoba. However the dates of interest need not be bound by this focus and can refer to significant events in Mennonite history more generally.

To participate, simply respond to Judith Klassen h39jmk@mun.ca and submit your ideas for some of the following categories:

Date of interest: Day, Month, Year

Event: Who, What, When, Where, etc.

We would be delighted if you would send us your dates by August 1, 2010, in order that we have ample time to prepare the calendar for printing.

Thank you in advance for sharing your wisdom, and don’t hesitate to contact us with any questions that you may have!

The Committee consists of Judith Klassen, Erika Rodine, Conrad Stoesz.

Neubergthal receives conservation grant

As a Street Village National Historic Site of Canada, Neubergthal recently received a grant of up to \$20,895 to support the preparation of a conservation plan for the Eddie Schmidt house barn. The award comes from the Government of Canada via Parks Canada National Historic Sites Cost-sharing Program. Candice Hoepfner, M.P. for Portage-Lisgar was in Neubergthal on May 26 to make the announcement.

The barn was apparently dismantled at its original location on the East Reserve and reassembled in its current place. Schmidt willed the property to the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation when he died in 2006. Plans are to turn the place into an education centre.

The President's Corner

by Conrad Stoesz

I am privileged to be part of MMHS and participate on the board and committees alongside people with unique gifts, education and insight. It is a good experience. From time to time I hear laments that our membership is shrinking and younger men and women are not becoming involved with MMHS. I agree that it is important to continue to attract new people and increase the number of people involved on our committees and board. However, targeting only "younger" people, those under 50, I believe to be a difficult task.

I know we all lead busy lives, but it seems to me that the new reality is that young people feel locked into their careers, kids, commitments at church, work, and community. The message of saying "no" that comes from stress management experts and family life advocates is being heard. If MMHS wants to spend its energy wisely at increasing involvement, I believe we need to look past those under 50 and towards the baby boomer demographic. As this large group of people moves towards retirement age there is an opportunity for MMHS. Baby boomers generally are relatively well off, and starting to retire. This means they will be more likely to have time to volunteer with organizations such as ours. It is also around the age of 50, that many people develop an interest in their own history. This is the group we need to target.

There are various roles to play within MMHS. Some include committee work, other tasks are more hands on. People do not need to be avid researchers, historians or even lovers of history to be involved. Our committees would do well to include people who have little or no interest in history but who have a talent they are willing to share. Some shoulder tapping needs to be employed. Asking people to give of their talents, be they photography, carpentry, web design, layout, research, writing, interviewing, storytelling, singing, organizing, or baking would grow our base, support and project capabilities.

Are there people you know who have talents they could share with MMHS? Are you on a committee looking for help with a project? Why not seek to involve someone new who has a talent that fits your project. This approach I believe will help MMHS flourish into the future.

Local Archives in southern Manitoba

The **Altona & District Heritage Research Centre** receives archival paper material about persons, institutions and governments, and business within the boundaries of Rhineland Municipality.

Three larger collections are from Rhineland Municipality, papers from its early years till well into the 20th century; a materials collection by Elizabeth Bergen, and personal papers from the founder of the D. W. Friesen firm in 1907 and his son David K. Friesen, along with some company materials.

Smaller collections are from local service and sports clubs, a refugee committee, Sunflower Festival, and the Altona Mall. Many small files are also held here.

The Centre has recently begun accessioning (copying) photographs. Long-time plans to form an index of the *Altona (Red River Valley) Echo* are on hold until other options are explored.

The Centre is open to the public on Tuesday afternoons and by direct arrangement for research. Archivist Al Schmidt can be reached at 204-324-5442, at Box 862, Altona, Manitoba, R0G 0B0 or at aschmidt@mts.net. — Elmer Heinrichs

The mandate of the **Winkler Heritage Society Archives** is to collect and preserve historical material relative to the City of Winkler and the surrounding area. It also accepts material which would provide historical background to people of our broader community. For example many of our citizens are immigrants from Russia (1870s, 1920s, 1950s, etc.); others are relatives, even descendants, of those who migrated to Mexico or Paraguay in the 1920s and 1950s.

Since the City does not have a museum the Archives accepts some artifacts. For example the K. H. Neufeld collection includes not only his cantatas and other musical compositions, but also his violin, mandolin and clarinet and the type hammer used in setting press in his print shop.

A growing collection of photographs are catalogued as they come in. When the Archives opened the local public library donated its newspaper clippings collection. Other larger collections include the records of the Winkler Co-op Creamery, much of the Burwalde School papers, and materials about the churches and community life generally.

Although the Archives is not a library, it has copies of many songbooks once used in the community both in church or school, community and family history books.

The Archives are open to the public on Wednesday afternoons and by appointment. For further information contact Ed Falk at 325-8929 or edfalk@mts.net. — Ed Falk

(Continued on page 4)

Junior Historians Get Set for another Season

by Ellie Reimer

The Emerado School History Club (Winkler) held its first meeting of the new season on January 15. Of the dozen or so on the membership list from last year, eight students returned for another season of talking and learning about old things, and discovering family and community history and heritage. In addition, four new members have indicated their interest.

The eight returnees are all boys in Gr. 7. Two of the four new members are girls. Various heritages represented make for an interesting mix: one of the students claims Aboriginal heritage, one, German, and one, Philippine. The rest bear what we have come to call 'Mennonite' names.

After some discussion, a list of potential activities was developed. It includes delving further into their family lineage through the Brother's Keeper software, playing old-fashioned games (specifically games kids played before there were computers!), field trips to the cemetery to find their ancestors' graves, to the library to see what kinds of history books they can find, and to the archives to see what they can see there. An added point of interest is that the grandfather of one of the boys is a local historian and writer whose books we should be able to find in the library.

I also want to show them excerpts of the movie "And When They Shall Ask," to give them a background in Mennonite history since they all live in a community whose main ethnic group shares this tradition.

We are also encouraging the students to bring in family stories, with the intention of sharing them with the group and making them into a book.

At our second meeting on March 26, I recalled the fun a button jar could give on a cold winter day, and so I found several large buttons and some string, and the boys and Mr. Doerksen set themselves to make 'hummers'.

I also remembered the fun we had with Grandma learning to crochet a chain, so I took along several large crochet hooks and a ball of yarn and - presto! - fun was in the making, with the girls only reluctantly stopping their chains when our club time was over.

Whoever said youngsters are not interested in history and heritage and old things has certainly not talked with these youngsters. They are a delight to spend time with, and I'm already looking forward to the next meeting.

The Emerado School History Club is in its second year. It was the brainchild of the Winkler Heritage Society, an attempt to put local history and heritage on the front burner of the younger generation in Winkler. This is a long-term goal. Results may not be visible for another generation. However, a small group of Winkler junior historians are having a great time in the process!

(edited by ae)

Promoting History through Geocaching

by Loren Koehler

If you have not heard about geocaching before, it is a fairly recent pastime where you use a GPS receiver to locate hidden treasures. A geocacher will hide a container with a logbook and sometimes other trinkets and record the location using their GPS receiver. These are then published on the geocaching.com website where anyone else can get the coordinates and try to find the hidden cache.

In the past year I have hidden caches in various locations to promote the history of these areas. For example, one cache helps the geocacher learn some history of water in Steinbach, including the location of the Stony Brook and the location of the former swimming pool. Another cache promotes the Chortitza church near Randolph where Gerhard Wiebe, an early Manitoba Mennonite leader, is buried. Still another cache I hid promotes the housebarns of Neubergthal.

I have received some very positive feedback through the website from those who have discovered these geocaches. A common comment is "I would not have known about this location if I hadn't found it through geocaching."

If you have not already gone geocaching, give it a try. You may be pleasantly surprised at all the interesting locations around you, some of which you may not even know exist!

(Continued from page 3)

The **Evangelical Mennonite Conference Archives** document the history of the Conference formerly known as the Kleine Gemeinde. The main part of the collection consists of approximately 350 archive boxes classified according to subject and donor. The Archives also contain copies of periodicals and other publications from the Conference as well as a categorized photo collection. The collection began around 1980 and grew primarily through the efforts of the late Rev. David K. Schellenberg.

Some common items found in the main collection are: diaries, sermons, church records, correspondence and minutes. Although space in the vault is limited, archival donations are always welcome.

The Archives are available to researchers by contacting the EMC office at 204-326-6401 during regular office hours. Online resources from the EMC Archives are available at the Conference website <http://www.emconf.ca> by clicking on Resources > For Historians.

— Loren Koehler.

Coming Events

June 27- Oct. 27: New Exhibit in Neuberghthal

"Decorative arts in the Mennonite home: Mennonite heritage furniture and floor patterns" is the title of a new exhibit at Friesen Housebarn Interpretive Centre in Neuberghthal. Curators are Ron and Sandi Mielitz. Make one of your summer trips to visit the exhibit and tour the village, a National Historic Site.

July 9-10: Linden School Reunion

A reunion of former students of the Linden School District will be held on the grounds of the Prairie Rose Evangelical Mennonite Church (west of Landmark on PR 210) on July 9th and 10th. This is where the school was located when it was started in 1920.

Several years later it was moved two miles west, where a new building was subsequently constructed. After the 1968 Hanover School Division consolidation, Linden continued as an elementary school until the official closing in 1981. Past board members and teachers will report and there will be opportunity to reminisce and share experiences and memories. Former students are encouraged to bring old school photos and other memorabilia to display. To register contact John G. Reimer at 355-4073 or e-mail lindenschoolreunion@gmail.com.

July 16-18: Valleyfield School Reunion

Everyone who has lived in the Valleyfield School District southeast of Morden or attended the Valleyfield School is invited to a reunion. Registrations requested by June 15th. Registration forms available through:

Contact: Joyce (Pauls) Suderman. **Phone:** 204-783-6012

Email: valleyfield@mts.net

Location: Norman and Lydia Hildebrand's farm one mile north of the school yard.

Registration begins Friday, July 16, 5:30pm

July 25: Reimer Tombstone Unveiling

In 2006 Gerd and Katherine Martens, Winnipeg (members of MMHS) discovered the tombstone of Gerd's great-great-grandparents, Jacob D. (1818-1891) and Wilhelmine Reimer (1818-1889) in Wiesenfeld, Dniepropetrovsk Oblast, Ukraine. Jacob served as a minister in the Mennonite Brethren congregation in Wiesenfeld, a village about 28 km east of Chortitza. Canadian descendants of the Reimers were able to obtain clearance from Russian authorities to ship the tombstone to Canada. (See *Canadian Mennonite*, 31 May 2010, 6-7 for more details or e-mail marigild@mhv.ca) The tombstone is to be formally unveiled at Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach on July 25.

October 15-16: Mennonites, Melancholy and Mental Health.

The theme (above) of the annual Mennonite history symposium sponsored by the Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg falls on the centennial of the first Mennonite mental institution, "Bethania," founded in 1910 by the Allgemeine Bundeskonferenz of the Mennonites of Russia, and located near Alt-Kronsweide in the Chorititza district.

The Local History Committee of the MMHS has cancelled its annual fall workshop and invites its members to participate in some or all of the sessions of the above conference.

East Reserve Historical Atlas Project

Research is taking place in several areas to advance this project.

Glen Klassen is seeking to locate all **cemeteries** and determining GPS coordinates for each. At this point he has about 140 sites including registered and unregistered cemeteries and family plots.

Henry Fast has done considerable work on **trails** in T6-R5E and will be working with the aerial photos to continue in other townships.

Henry and Ernest Braun have completed phase one of the **aerial photo** project in hard copy and are in phase two, finishing the collation of these in digital form, with the intent to provide some form of public access.

Ernest has done some work on locating **early ER maps** not previously published in Mennonite research, and David Harms has designed a new ER map upon which further layers of information can be imposed.

Orlando Hiebert has obtained GPS coordinates for all **former district schools**, and RM of Hanover has created a map to reflect those data. Further work on cairns, waterways, and village plans is ongoing.

Jake Peters has shepherded the process of clearing "rights" from Jake Rempel and Dave Harms, the copyright holders for the Rempel and Harms Atlases, the final memo of understanding to be signed shortly.

Timeline for publication will be several years. There will be cooperation with West Reserve researchers who are also planning a new atlas.

— Reported by Ernest N. Braun

Eigenhoff Schools: Private and Public

Written by Jacob J. Penner, Altona, in 1983

In 1875 Mr. Johann Friesen homesteaded SE15-1-2W quarter. He had named this district Johannesruh. I was told and I have documents with Johannesruh to prove it. He built a log house on this land. The logs were hauled from the woods of North Dakota just across the United States border and at the time of writing May 25, 1983 the walls are still standing. I have a picture of the log house but it does not have a straw roof like it would have been.

Where did the name Eigenhoff come in? I was told a Mr. Johann Klassen who had been in debt had made his final payment and was debt free so he said, "Nü es daut mien Hoff. Dit es nü Eigenhoff, (my Place)." Then he had gone to the neighbours and rejoiced and told them he was debt free and from now on it was the Eigenhoff district.¹

Now some statistics about the first school in the Eigenhoff district. In the year 1900 classes were held in the house (summer building) of David Zacharias on SW15-1-2W quarter but their farmyard was in the northeast corner of the quarter. Then the kitchen on this yard was used with the old fashioned oven made of brick and lime and heated with good old manure, no gas heating!

In 1900 Mr. Abe Enns was the teacher and in 1901 Mr. John Funk.² In 1902 they had classes in Jacob Toews' house and a Miss Reimer was the teacher.

In 1903 they had classes again at David Zacharias. That's when they started using the summer kitchen, a separate building on the yard. The teacher was Mr. Peter Giesbrecht who also served in 1904. John B. Falk served in 1905 and 1906.

In 1907 a new school house was built about a quarter mile south of the David Zacharias place with the understanding that it could stand on his land only as long as it was a private school. I understand the people in the district built this school without government help. Teachers in the new school (Private School) were: David W. Harder in 1907 and 1908, and Frank (or Franz) Wieler in 1909. (I am not quite sure about 1910; the school was moved.)

1910 Miss Maria Suderman was the teacher. This is the year when school house was moved a short distance east onto the John B. Penner farm as the school was to be made into a District School No. 1591, Eigenhoff School District.³ The next year it was moved to south west corner of SE15-1-2W. A Mr. Enns had moved the school using one horse and (*Umgang*). It had been very slow but they got it there.

Other teachers were Sarah Neufeld, 1917 Helen Enns, Caroline Moore only till Christmas (fired), Sylvia Olson, William Toews (bachelor) Kate Klassen, Elizabeth Klassen, Mary Klassen, all sisters from near Gretna where the golf course is now located.⁴

I should mention Mr. Johann Friesen sold this land to a Henry Loeppky and he sold it to Bernhard Penner and he sold it to his son John B. Penner.

Endnotes added by the editor

¹See John Rempel and William Harms, *Atlas of Original Villages, Homesteaders and some Burial Plots of the Mennonite West Reserve, Manitoba* (Altona: by the authors, 1990), 30-31, 37.

²J.C. Fehr in "Johannesruh becomes Eigenhof," *Red River Valley Echo*, 14 March 1984, mentions that the R.M. of Douglas by-law #5 on 6 November 1888 created a public school district but that there was no record of it being in operation before 1900.

³Government records indicate that it became a public school in 1911.

⁴From August 30, 1918 to December 22, 1925 the school was under the authority of Official Trustee John F. Greenaway. Adolf Ens, *Subjects of Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870-1925* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 219.

(Thanks to Martha Martens, former secretary of the Local History Committee, for sending in this brief historical item. It is presented here as a primary source document with minimal editing. —ed.)

Village history writer-researchers workshop

A long-range goal of the MMHS is to get a published historical account for each Mennonite village or place of settlement founded by 1870s immigrants in the two Mennonite reserves.

According to Settlers of the East Reserve, 19 of its 62 locations still lack a published history. For the West Reserve the number is considerably higher.

The format of the community histories published to date range from large books to articles in periodicals, to short chapters of books, to fairly brief sketches in a book whose focus is on a larger nearby community.

This fall with a workshop for persons who have begun research on such a project or are interested in doing so are invited to a workshop hosted by the EastMenn Historical Committee and the Local History Committee of the MMHS.

This will be a "hands-on" workshop. Participants will be invited to report briefly on which community they are (or would like to be) working. Organizers will present resources, tips on researching, broad outlines for organizing information found, as well as ideas on writing and publishing.

Persons interested in a Saturday workshop, probably in September, please contact Ernest Braun (erbraun@nolimitsinternet.com) or Adolf Ens (aaens@mymts.net).

Book Review

Ralph Friesen, *Between Earth & Sky: Steinbach, the First 50 Years* (Steinbach: City of Steinbach, 2009), 548 pages.

Reviewed by Abe Warkentin

Ralph Friesen is uniquely qualified to write about Steinbach. As pointed out in the foreword by Dr. Royden Loewen, Ralph's great grandmother delivered the village's first babies, his great grandfather built the famous village windmill and his father ran a small business and was a minister in the local Evangelical Mennonite Conference church.

Mr. Friesen writes with the special knowledge of an insider — an exceptionally alert insider — but in truth he would be better defined as a native son who left Steinbach as a young adult likely realizing he could never fit comfortably into his home church and community as they existed even as late as the early 1960s.

He has taken the time and done his research well. While one notes an obvious pride in the achievements of his forefathers, he maintains his objectivity though his personal sentiments regarding the success of the powerful business element overflow in a most interesting final chapter entitled: "The Years To Come." Here, in the introduction, he quotes the late Dr. Roy Vogt with this passage about his home town: "With all their achievements — and they are very real — there's something very sad. They want to be humble, yet they are materialistic in the crassest sense of the word."

The book is attractively presented and written in a journalistic style that holds the reader.

Between Earth & Sky begins with the origins of the first settlers who arrived in Manitoba in 1874. Nearly all were from Dutch-Flemish origins. They fled the Netherlands in the 16th and 17th centuries because of religious persecution, settled in West Prussia and then moved on to Russia.

The Mennonites prospered in Russia, but around 1870 noticed a change in the political climate. The more conservative Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites, who later settled in Steinbach, Blumenort and Gruenfeld, were particularly concerned about their special privileges regarding private schools and exemption from military service. Delegates were consequently sent to Manitoba in 1873 and in 1874 the bulk of the 158 families (799 persons) who made up the Kleine Gemeinde in Borosenko Colony, Russia, left for Canada. The first settlers arrived in Steinbach in fall, 1874.

The author goes into considerable detail about the founding first families and that will be of particular interest to people who can trace their roots to these pioneers, less so to those who are not. Much of this information is not entirely new but the author has much additional material to add to that already having appeared in other publications.

There is a wealth of detail in *Between Earth & Sky* regarding nearly every facet of early village life in Steinbach and the author generously sprinkles little nuggets of fascinating history into every chapter.

There were tremendous trials and struggles, crop failures and epidemics. Friesen makes a special point of mentioning the hospitality of the Métis and First Nations connection and the fact that a buffalo trail ran alongside the creek flowing through the village. He also gives due to the Clearsprings settlers. He notes 80 bobsleighs loaded with lumber at a local sawmill in early February, 1908. And who would have known that 19 members were banned or resigned from the local church over the issue of car ownership between 1911 and 1913?

The author divides the book into chapters covering ten years of history so that a reader wanting to learn about education, as one example, will need to follow the thread from one chapter to another. He also summarizes each ten year period at the end of the chapter.

Friesen notes, as other authors have, that it was unheard of for Canadian Prairie communities to thrive, or even exist, without a railroad link. And yet, Steinbach did thrive and the stories of pioneers with inventive and entrepreneurial gifts abound and amaze.

But by far the greatest strength of this history is the author's understanding of the tension between church and business — the struggle of the Kleine Gemeinde Church leadership to "restrain the ever more powerful secular-commercial engine of village entrepreneurship."

That struggle is to some considerable extent the essence of Steinbach's history. It is the story within the larger story. As related by the author, it documents how the church of the founding families was assaulted not only by the pressures of the secular business interests but by a never-ending array of aggressive evangelists from the USA. The KG Church took a direct hit in 1881 when the Ältester (bishop) of the Kleine Gemeinde let himself be baptized by John Holdeman. Nearly half of the Manitoba Kleine Gemeinde members followed his example. Other splits followed.

Ältester Peter Dueck's "opposition to worldly influences," writes Friesen, "was positively heroic but his cause was lost."

In his last chapter the author steps well outside the parameters of his "first 50 years" time frame and states that "the spirit of simplicity and separation from the world gradually ebbed out...economic growth is still the great expectation and the goal for Steinbach...In today's Steinbach, the "progressives" have long ago won the old battle against the traditionalists...Now that there is scarcely any separation between Steinbach and the world... new energy and vision for dealing with these struggles is required."

Between Earth and Sky is recipient of the 2009 Margaret McWilliams Award for excellence in writing about Manitoba history, in the Local History category. Hearty congratulations to Ralph on winning this recognition from the Manitoba Historical Society. The book is available at Derksen Printers and Die Mennonitische Post in Steinbach

The reviewer is well-known as editor of various periodicals and author of an earlier history of Steinbach and surroundings.

Book Review

SILBERFELD BOOK LAUNCH

Reviewed by Jim Dyck

Why did a hundred plus people meet at Nora's Diner in Gretna on April 12? Had Jeff and Kathy Dyck advertised a free all-you-can-eat Mennonite buffet? No! These restaurant patrons did not even come for lunch--although finger food was available. They came to partake in the launching of the book *Silberfeld: One Hundred and Thirty Years of Change*, and nobody complained about the \$50 price.

The book is written and compiled by Benno and Mary Loewen, both longtime residents of Silberfeld (West Reserve Manitoba). The event had the appearance of a love-in — a long anticipated community reunion; and to finish the dining analogy, "they ate it up." Wherever one looked, people, almost all present or former Silberfelders, were excitedly engrossed in discussing some photo or written detail that was in some way a part of their past life.

Both Benno and Mary (Martens) Loewen have ancestors dating back to Silberfeld's earliest homesteaders. It quickly becomes obvious that they care deeply for their community. It is this love that caused them to collect stories of events about the neighbourhood and research in archives, church and municipal, and records in order to confirm dates and details. But what do you do with all that stuff that many might consider to be trivial? As they state in their acknowledgements; "It was with his (Dick Hildebrand of Altona History Seekers) prompting and encouragement that we put this material into a book."

It was also of help that Mary's mother, Susanna Martens, had a wealth of community memories that they had recorded. With this book they and other contributors can answer some questions that descendents may have about their ancestors' lives in the Silberfeld area from 1878-2008. The book is a handsome glossy eight and a half by eleven, covered with a collage of photos depicting scenes of Silberfeld life in the 1920s to 1950s, be it school, agriculture or entertainment scenes. Major sections are about homesteaders, schools, churches, life on the farm and submissions by families. All sections contain many appropriate photographs, including documents and farm records. The "Family Submissions" section takes up about 60% of the 271 pages.

It appears that anybody who has ever lived in Silberfeld area is mentioned in this book. This thoroughness is both commendable and historically valuable. The older reader can relive the hog butchering or a typical school day, or what it took to heat the home or do the laundry. To the younger reader these may seem quaint but interesting. That this information was ever put into book form is a great credit to the authors. Benno and Mary had no previous writing experience. They admit that proofreading and

editing were tough. Granted, if one looked for spelling and other usage errors, one could find them, but if English grammar usage had been an intimidation, this book would never have been written. Their attitude of "it can be done" obviously rubbed off on other contributors.

As one reads the book, it becomes apparent that Silberfeld was, and still is, a real community — one noted for hard work, cooperation and a good balance between humility and pride. In writing, compiling and editing this book, Benno and Mary have rallied the community, just as it met challenges in decades past.

The reviewer is a retired teacher and a member of Altona History Seekers.

Book Notes

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Nathan Dirks, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, recently completed an MA thesis entitled "War Without, Struggle Within: Canadian Mennonite Enlistments During the Second World War". His work was done at McMasters Divinity College in Hamilton, ON. The study attempts to present a more balanced discussion on the topic of Mennonites and the military question, noting not only conscientious objector service, but as well the views of enlistees in the military forces, almost half of the Mennonite men called up to serve. The work may be consulted at several institutions, including Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

Elizabeth Reimer Bartel, who published her first novel, based on Steinbach, in 2002, has now published *About Those Reimers: A Memoir* (Rosetta Projects, 2010, pb., 220 pp, \$15.00). It focuses on the Reimer family which built up and for fifty years till the early 1960s operated H.W. Reimer Ltd. At its peak in 1925 it was one of the largest retailing stores in rural Manitoba. The author tells her story from childhood on through her family experiences till the time of her marriage to Bruno Derksen, who with his brother Eugene and his nephew Rick, have published *The Carillon News* in Steinbach till present times.

A celebration of the Canadian MB conference centennial this year includes the publication of *Leaders Who Shaped Us: Canadian Mennonite Brethren 1910 – 2010* (Goessel, KS, and Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2010, pb., 323 pp., \$ 29.95), edited by well-known writer and publisher, Harold Jantz, of Winnipeg. Twenty five men and women have been discerned here as "shapers" whose contribution to the conference and its churches have left their mark for the years to come.