



Evangelical Mennonite Conference Celebrating 200

by Dr. Harvey Plett, Retired; Past Moderator of the Conference and Past Chairman of the Board of Missions

The theme for the Bicentennial year is “**Rooted in Christ, Growing in Him.**”

In 1812 in the colony of Molotschna, Ukraine, several people in the villages of Muensterberg and Petershagen requested Klaas Reimer and Cornelius Janzen to conduct Sunday morning worship services in the two villages on alternate Sundays. Without consulting Aeltester Enns, Reimer and Janzen began serving the two villages. Some villagers who opposed this, threatened Reimer but the meetings continued.

These separate services were the beginning of the Kleine Gemeinde (now EMC). The split was formalized by two key events. First, Reimer and Janzen refrained from attending the Communion service which Enns called, because he failed to clear up a serious misunderstanding with one of Enns's fellow ministers. The second incident was the election of Reimer in 1815, as Aeltester of the small group. No one was willing to ordain Reimer and so finally, finding precedence in the ordination of Menno Simons, Janzen ordained Reimer in 1817. With this, the separation was complete.

The cause for the ultimate division was due to Reimer taking issue with Enns's lack of taking a stand on various matters that Reimer felt violated the Biblical teaching of peace. Issues included, Enns referred a fist fight to the “Gebietsamt” rather than making it a church issue; tacitly supporting donations to the Russian military fighting Napoleon; a church member beating his servant; two members holding down a third member while the held man was given a severe beating; and the services in Muensterberg and Petershagen. Many meetings failed to bring resolution to the disputes.

In 1874 the whole Kleine Gemeinde migrated to North America. A smaller group, some 36 families moved to Nebraska and later to Kansas where ultimately they joined other church groups. Some 158 families moved to Manitoba settling in the East Reserve – Kleefeld (Guenfeld), Blumenort-Blumenhof and Steinbach. A smaller group settled on the Scratching River (Morris), Rosenhoff and Rosenort. The Canadian group consisted of 799 people. Today the EMC is composed of 62 churches with a membership of 7,200, with 7,668 attendees. Of



EMC convention attendees in July, 2008, held at the Steinbach Mennonite Church.

these 62 churches five are Hispanic and one is Aboriginal.

The Holdeman split in 1881, left a long term sentiment of isolation for the Kleine Gemeinde. That isolationist attitude began changing in the 1940's and '50's so that today the EMC is involved with other churches at a number of levels including Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite World Conference.

Some key developments within the EMC over the last 75 years include developing an active Mission program, consisting of having its own Mission Board and sending missionaries out under Associate Missions. The Kleine Gemeinde organized into a Conference in 1952 with a name change to Evangelical Mennonite Church. In 1960 that name was changed to Evangelical Mennonite Conference. Education, at differing levels of competence, has always been part of the church, for wherever they moved they built a church and a school. Higher education has been accepted and encouraged resulting in many people trained at the baccalaureate as well as at the graduate level in various fields. Nursing and teaching have been the leading areas. Advance theological education is also being encouraged.

The Conference churches are not immune to the various cultural and theological influences of the day. Now as then, these require continued diligent study of the Word and Spirit-guided discernment.

The EMC Statement of Faith reflects its Anabaptist stance. As reflected in a poll taken a few years ago,

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EMC ministerial, at Kleefeld EMC Church, Manitoba, in 1962.

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commitment to Anabaptist theology seems to be weaker today than what we find in the writings and practices of our founding father Klaas Reimer.

Women are involved at many levels of our churches and Conference. An issue that continues to be contentious in the Conference is the matter of ordaining women. To date our Constitution does not make room for it.

The aim of the EMC continues to be to seek to follow Jesus as taught in the Bible, especially the New

Testament. The torch is in our hands and our prayer is that we be found faithful.

The EMC is celebrating 200 years of existence and development. The major celebration will take place at our Annual Convention, July 6-8, at Providence University College and Theological Seminary in Otterburne, Manitoba. The public is invited to attend the inspirational sessions Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday morning and afternoon. As well, all are welcome to participate in a variety of celebrations Saturday afternoon.

William Yoder Speaks on the Church in Russia Today

by Peter H. Rempel

The future of Mennonite church life in Russia is precarious. Do we care? This was the primary message of William Yoder, a long-term observer of church life in Russia and Eastern Europe, in his presentations on February 3 and 4 in Winnipeg under the auspices of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

Yoder drew upon his personal visits to Mennonite churches in Siberia as an occasional liaison for Mennonite

Church Canada and his numerous encounters as media coordinator for the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians - Baptists and the Russian Evangelical Alliance to depict general conditions and church life in Russia with pictures, anecdotes and insights.

The vestiges of the main Mennonite church in Russia, the few *kirchliche* Mennonites in Siberia, are on the verge of extinction. For the Mennonite Brethren, now identifying themselves as independent Evangelical Christian Baptists in two larger conferences, the question is whether they have the desire and capacity to recover and reclaim their Mennonite heritage. The major challenges in the broader Evangelical scene are the divisions between the Charismatics and other Evangelicals and between conservatives and progressives in adapting to modern Russian culture.

Yoder gave his presentation, titled "The End of Mennonite Churches and the Future of Evangelicals in Russia," first in German at Kingsford Haus and then in English at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Hopefully he prompted renewed concern for our Russian brothers and sisters and then returned to his home base in Orscha, Byelorussia and his work base in Moscow with encouragement to continue his efforts for them.

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ISSN 1491-2325

The Carillon Celebrates 65 Years

The End Of An Era

by Doris Penner

For 65 years events across southeastern Manitoba have been recorded with word and photograph by the award-winning newspaper *The Carillon*. Founded by Gerhard S. Derksen in February of 1946 to fill the niche of an English language newspaper in the Southeast, it quickly became the anchor of Derksen Printers which had been established in 1936 and was already publishing the German *Steinbach Post*.

What made *The Carillon* a success right from the start was Derksen's genuine interest in people, his love for the written word and his understanding of the power behind a strong community spirit. These were characteristics he passed on to his five children, all of whom took on roles in the newspaper venture. Eugene became the editor, Bruno the advertising manager and daughter Irene Neufeld the office manager. George took on the job of typesetting with brothers-in-law Ernest Neufeld and Peter Rosenfeld (married to Anna).

When Gerhard Derksen died in 1957, Eugene and Bruno—with a decade of experience under their belts—valiantly carried on. The company received another jolt when Bruno passed away suddenly in 1967 but by that time Eugene's son, Rick was old enough to step into the void left by his uncle in the advertising department. In the early 1980s, Rick purchased the company from his father who, however, stayed on as a mentor and continued to write a weekly column until his death in 1994.

Under the editorship of Peter Dyck, *The Carillon* continued to follow "news that matters to people" with a team of reporters writing it up on a weekly basis,



Rick Derksen became sole owner of Derksen Printers in the mid-1980s when he bought the remaining shares from his father, Eugene Derksen.

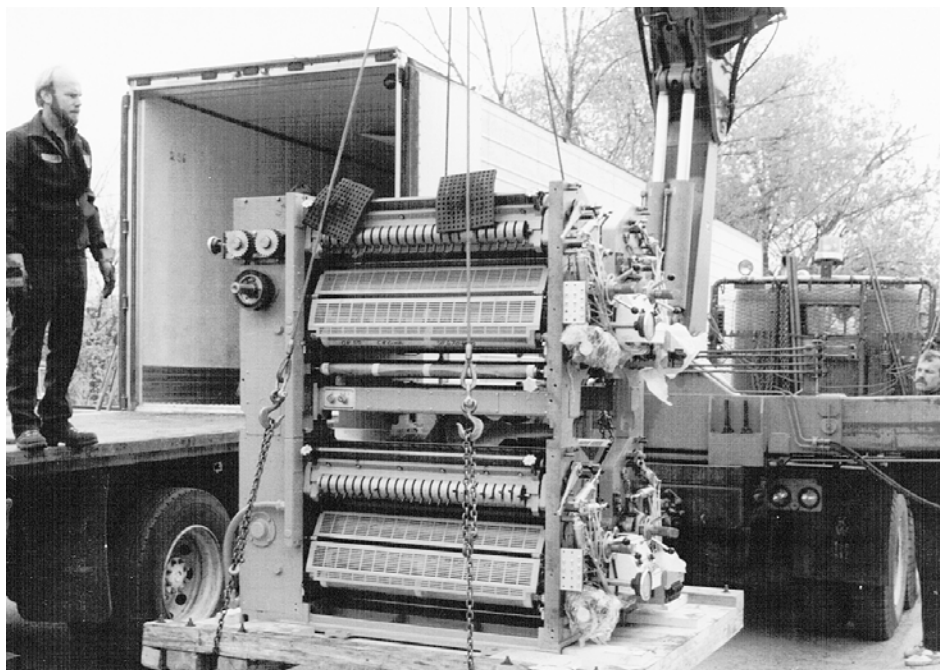
— Photos Carillon Archives

supplemented by photographs. The philosophy that "a picture is worth a thousand words" remained at the forefront, with the newspaper gradually changing from black-and-white to increasingly more colour photography. This meant camera equipment and printing presses were constantly being upgraded.

The challenge through the years was to make the newspaper one that would appeal to readers in all corners of the southeast region which spreads across a tract reaching to Ontario in the east and the U.S. border on the south. Reporters were sent to cover community fairs and picnics, sports games, school plays, auctions sales and accidents be it in Vita, Morris, Oakbank or Falcon Lake in addition to picking up on events in Steinbach and surrounding areas. This resulted in a large and loyal readership with people far and wide waiting for the newspaper every week for their news "fix."

With *The Carillon* being sold to the *Winnipeg Free Press* ownership passes out of family hands and thus signals the end of an era.

Doris Penner worked as a reporter and photographer at The Carillon for 25 years.



A crane lifts the first of two six-ton printing press components which would allow for more colour in *The Carillon* and other publications (1991).

Teacher Heinrich P. Wieler in a West Siberian Mennonite Classroom, 1916-1918

by *Lawrence Klippenstein*

My decision to attend a June, 2010, conference in Omsk on "The Germans of Siberia" is owed in part to Heinrich P. Wieler, a teacher in a Mennonite school of that region during World War I. We have had no personal contacts, to be sure. However, learning to know a Wieler descendent through marriage and Wieler's carefully preserved 1500-page five-volume journal, written in German calligraphic script helped us to get acquainted.

A portion of that journal, brought by the Wieler family as refugees to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1923, is lodged at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in an English translation provided by two local historians, Bert Friesen and Edward Enns, for the current holder of the originals, Arthur Pavlatos, a retired high school teacher living in Lancaster today.

With the help of these materials, and some related documents, I could take a look at the final years of Wieler's Siberian teaching career which lasted in total from 1913-1918. With that came a somewhat clearer picture of Siberian Mennonite education, and specifically the experience of a family living and working in that system.

Wieler was born on 12 February 1891, in the Alt Samara Russian Mennonite village of Neuhoftnung, to Peter and Mary Bestvater Wieler. A remarriage (Peter's second) in that family led to his adoption by a Johann Reimer family who moved to the Molotschna settlement when he was still a boy. Here Heinrich obtained his elementary education, and ultimately, some teacher training at Halbstadt in 1907-1909. He taught at several schools after completion of these studies, but always only for brief terms.

Wieler's search for greener pastures took him to Neuhoftnung, his birth community, in 1911. Here he obtained a few short teaching terms, and also became a member of a Mennonite Brethren congregation. Not long afterward an invitation from a relative in western Siberia brought him in 1913 to an elementary school in the Omsk area village of Alexandrovka. This community was one of many others that had originated as a new settlement after 1900 not far from the city of Issyl Kul on the Trans-Siberian Railway.

At his new school he was asked almost immediately by an administrator, "Where is your wife?" When Heinrich informed him that he was not married, he was told, "We have someone living near here that would be suitable for you. Her name is Suse Nickel, from Neu Samara, not too far from where you come from." Heinrich followed up on this suggestion. By 1914 he and Suse were married. Their first child, Lily, joined the family a year later.

Heinrich's first journal entries date back to 1912, seemingly begun with his decision to move to Siberia. Educational facilities in Alexandrovka resembled those of other schools in these pioneer parts early on - no school buildings, a scarcity of teachers and a lack of other essentials. For this particular community that had changed

in part in 1910 when a wealthy landowner, Jakob Janzen, provided a loan of 2000 rubles so a regular schoolhouse could be constructed, and organized classes begun. Wieler served as one of the first teachers in the new school.

The journal entries for this study began with entries for the spring months of 1916. These first pages record the final work year of Wieler's four-year teaching term in Alexandrovka. He was released from his job at that point. Wieler found the general circumstances of the times very challenging and even depressing at times.

Pondering the heavy events of the time he wrote, "It is at once a serious and a wonderful time. For nearly two years a disastrous war has been raging which daily demands its sacrifices. Blood flows on the battlefields....we also, a very tiny part of the population of Russia (meaning the Mennonites - ed.) have very little good ahead of us..."

In a March entry of 1916 he noted his desire to leave his classroom early one afternoon. That was the day the inspector chose to make an unannounced visit. "I invited him in," he wrote, "and he saw our woodpile in the aisle. We talked about wood and I gave him some advice on how to acquire wood, and then he entered the classroom. He asked questions, had the students do some writing, looked at their copy books and after a half hour, he was gone."

Another inspection followed five days later when several local persons, Bergen and Huebert, probably from the local school council showed up. They listened for an hour to religious instruction, and then hurried on to make another visit. Wieler added, "They will probably now make these visits annually, the beginning of a new custom for us."

The area inspector ordered classes closed for Easter on 10 April. On 15 April Wieler got his full salary for the first time during his four years at Alexandrovka. Shortage of funds for salaries appears to have been chronic in this community. That had put a lot of pressure on the teacher when it came to support of his family. To help along with income Wieler had established a small photography studio business, and Suse had needed to keep up a heavy schedule of medical-related assistance, largely centered on midwifery assistance where needed.

In Alexandrovka the fall term of 1916 began on 1 October. Christmas program preparation began already in November. They all enjoyed the usual celebrations, and Wieler also had increased demand for another aspect of his business, creating painted plaques. Right after Christmas Suse was called away to her duties. Wieler had experienced difficulty getting supplies for his extra-curricular jobs. The community held a special "Christmas Eve" collection to help needy families of the Mennonite Slavgorod settlement several hundred miles southeast of Alexandrovka.

The year 1917 included much that was routine for classroom work but brought some changes as well. Modest alterations in his classroom reduced its teaching space

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Anabaptism's appeal beyond its historic roots

by John J. Friesen, Professor Emeritus, CMU

Two books that explore the relevance of Anabaptist theology for today are C. Arnold Snyder's *From Anabaptist Seed: Exploring the Centre of Anabaptist Teachings and Practices* and Stuart Murray's *The Naked Anabaptist*. Both books have been used extensively by Mennonites to re-examine their own faith heritage. However, the motivation for both authors to write their books was to emphasize that the Anabaptist faith heritage is of relevance to people outside of the historic Anabaptist Mennonite churches.

Snyder's argument is that Anabaptist theology, which has shaped Mennonite identity in North America and Europe for almost 500 years, can serve equally well to shape a theological identity for Mennonite churches in the developing world. Anabaptist Mennonite theology, Snyder claims, is not ethnically or culturally based, but is a theology for people everywhere. Its emphases on the Bible, community, discipleship, peace and reconciliation can serve as guides for faith and life among "new Mennonites" around the world.

Murray's book also begins with the argument that Anabaptist theology is not bound to ethnicity and culture, and then makes the case that Anabaptist theology can be a helpful guide for renewal and direction for a western society in which Christendom is crumbling.

Many people in the western world, Murray observes, lament the demise of Christendom, and the guidance, order and moral framework it provided for Europe and North America for centuries. Instead of speaking from the perspective of power and entitlement, churches in this post-Christendom era have lost control and moved from the centre to the margins of society. Instead of being the majority, they now speak from the perspective of minorities.

Rather than seeing this situation as a negative, Murray says, it can be viewed as a positive. Churches have been freed to be the church – to express their identity apart from the need to be in charge. They find themselves in a situation not unlike that of the Anabaptist Mennonites through the centuries who also were at the margins of society. He suggests that in a post-Christendom era, Anabaptist theology can provide a model to western Christianity about how to be church.

The term "naked" in the title of his book expresses Murray's conviction that Anabaptist theology can be stripped of its cultural and ethnic clothes, to reveal its "naked" essentials. These biblically based essentials Murray identifies as community, discipleship, justice, and peace.

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though intended primarily to cut heating costs. Wieler was able to overcome some of the friction he had experienced with parents and school officials in earlier years. Some difficulties about retaining his position developed and a special teachers' meeting at the nearby village of Margenau took up the issue. The matter was resolved in Wieler's favour.

On 26 April Wieler dismissed the students for the current school term, realizing by then he would likely be terminating his work in Alexandrovka also. He had handed in his resignation earlier. In related discussions with higher authorities, he learned that contrary to what he had assumed, he would not have had to resign. Since the Alexandrovka situation had included numerous difficulties for him, he decided simply to move on.

When he learned about a vacancy at the nearby village of Hoffnungstal, he offered his services and obtained a new position there. He wrote, "O, God, to you be praise. Away from Alexandrovka! The joy was great on both sides." It had been four years since he came to Alexandrovka, and eight since he began his teaching career in south Russia.

Hoffnungstal was not smooth sailing all the way either. School books did not arrive on time. Some students were difficult to manage. In January, 1918, he got word that he would be welcome for another year. Not much later Russia was given a new calendar under the new Bolshevik- Soviet regime. Among other effects resulting from this change, Wieler observed that his birthday would no longer be celebrated on 12 February but on 25 February. He was 27

by now.

Wieler's terms for accepting the position another year were clear but possibly somewhat daunting for the Hoffnungstal community. He suspected that his conditions would not be accepted. He had in any case decided, as he considered his future under a pending Communist government that he and his wife would go back to Neu Samara, the home community of Suse, and look for work there. When they got there he found an opening for teaching religion in the high school at Lugovsk.

At this point Wieler learned that the new Communist government planned to take his family away from their home. Almost immediately he began to plan his departure, with family, from Soviet Russia, and made secret plans to emigrate, first to Germany, and finally to the USA. His family, now including also young Harry and by 1920 John as well, got to Lancaster, PA, by 1924. Here Heinrich and Suse (now Susanna) found new ways of making a living by language teaching, some medical work for Susanna, manufacture of plaques, etc. Susanna passed away in 1967 at the age of 81, and Heinrich in 1984 at the age of 93.

The journal had remained in their possession all this time. In the early 1990s Harry brought it to light and with the new Pavlatos ownership mentioned above, discussions about translation and publication could begin. At this point new materials from the journal, this time including all of Part I, have begun to arrive in duplicate, translation is continuing, and it is expected that more of the journal will appear in published form shortly.

Edward Reimer and Steve Jobs

by Art and Marge Hildebrand

How many Jobs are there in this world? How many Reimers? There may be many people with those last names, but not many are like Edward or Steve.

Steve Jobs graduated from a U.S. high school with a mediocre 2.65 GPA, despite his intelligence. His professional interest was in electronics and his designs were greatly influenced by Buddhism. He was both admired and criticized for his skills. Socially, he was erratic and explosively temperamental, known to be arrogant and difficult at times. Sometimes he engaged in power struggles. And he was rich, filthy rich. Jobs was a modern-day pioneer in the world of computers – he used his talents to create circuit boards that culminated in the iPad, iPhone, and a user-friendly operating system.

Edward Reimer has only a seventh-grade education yet speaks four languages; German, Low German, English and Spanish. He reads German well, along with some English. He was on the local school board for some fourteen years in his community's schools. His profession is farming, but his avocation is astronomy. Christianity, Mennonite-style, has influenced his life. Socially, he is soft-spoken, humble, kind, and easy to love. He understands service and servant-hood. Reimer is not wealthy. He has a modest house, a chicken barn, and a seed dealership, farm machinery and a shop. Edward is also a modern-day pioneer – he helped establish the Spanish Lookout Mennonite community in Belize when his family moved from the Quellen Colony in Mexico in 1958, using his talents to build a farm. He constructed a planetarium in his machine shop. He does not own a computer nor does he know how to operate one.

Edward is a wonder, an amazing person. His farm has become home for uncountable demonstrations of God's heavenly majesties. Besides his planetarium, he has built a small, mobile constellation projector, a holder for his binoculars so that he can lie on his back and watch the stars with no wobbles, and a two-dimensional model of our solar system, where the position of each planet and our moon can be adjusted to the day of the year. In the year Edward reached the age his father was when he died, Edward built a to-scale model of the solar system, with a one-inch Earth and a sun over eight feet in diameter. He placed this model on the road with the planets at the appropriate relative distances from the sun, and then conducted tours for community members "into the solar system."

Edward's unique astronomical observatory has been devised from his own observations, his creative mind and his readings and intuition. He has built his astronomy materials over the course of some 26 years. With a simple astronomy book, binoculars and some self-made instruments, he has gazed at the heavens since Halley's comet appeared in the sky in 1986. He spent many nights lying on his lawn observing the sky – just as Greeks, Arabs



and many others have done watching the sky for thousands of years. Today, the study of astronomy requires a deep understanding of mathematics and physics. In spite of this, and with no formal training in these disciplines, Edward has studied the sky and built an accurate planetarium.

For many years Edward has received a special group of fortunate students from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio - cultural anthropologists, biologists and astronomers - students, teachers and professors – who are eager to learn about the cultures and ecology of Belize. The

group's original leader, Carl Jantzen, had been visiting and writing about Spanish Lookout for decades. Each class comes to listen to and be inspired by Reimer, the man with no textbook but with an amazing inquisitiveness, passion and desire to learn more about the heavens above. The 2011 students were so impressed with Edward's planetarium and demonstrations, they raised funds to allow the International Star Registry to name a star after him. . . next time you are stargazing, check out "the ice cream cone" near the Big Dipper. The star, now named Edward Reimer, is about 6 degrees south of the bright star, Arcturus, the tip of the ice cream cone. The star twinkles and sparkles.

The world is immeasurably improved because of both Steve and Edward. They both were given extraordinary gifts - passion, creativity, intuition and amazing intellect. Each has worked with his hands, mind and heart. Both are/were perfectionists. Both have experienced highs and unimaginable lows. Both have known poverty, although in different ways. Both have admirers and are/were charming – they're not nerds. Both have inspired people. Both are enigmas. Both can give you an experience, one with an iPad the other with a planetarium. One is our friend.

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Snyder points out that in many third world countries, Anabaptist theology is welcome because it connects with people's experience of powerlessness, persecution, injustice, and minority status. Murray spent extensive efforts in England communicating Anabaptist theology to urban, modern sceptics. He says many people are drawn to Anabaptism because of its sense of community, and for its emphases on peace and justice in a society in which war and inequality are all too common. Both Snyder and Murray make the case that, in two quite different parts of the world, and for different reasons, the Anabaptist Mennonite theological heritage has a strong appeal to people who are not from within the historic Anabaptist Mennonite communities.

Hildebrandt ancestors honored after 100+ years in obscurity

A new point of interest rises above the Manitoba farm-scape this year. Near Reinland on Road 15, just north of Route 243, a new stone monument marks the location of the old cemetery of the Village of Neuendorf, one of the 25 original villages established in 1875 by settlers of the Mennonite West Reserve. Sometime after 1917 the village disappeared, leaving the remains of loved ones in the cemetery's unmarked graves to be farmed over and forgotten. But, thanks to the work of John Rempel and William Harms in their *"Atlas of Original Mennonite Villages,"* names of three villagers buried there were recorded: Helena (Martens) Hildebrandt (1838 - 1896), wife of Heinrich Hildebrandt (1834-1910), and two infants born to their son Peter and his wife Maria, Frans and Anna Hildebrandt.

The general area of the burial ground was identified with the help of a succession of owners of the property and the Hildebrandt descendants arranged for a monument to be placed near the site. Funds were raised and a four-foot, rose granite cairn was installed and unveiled at a special memorial event on August 6, 2011.

Forty descendants of Heinrich and Helena Hildebrandt from across Canada and the U.S. gathered for the dedication ceremony commemorating Helena and her two infant grandchildren, Frans and Anna. Abe Ens of Winkler, well known to the family as a friend and tour guide for their reunion in 2008, served as master of ceremonies. Speaking in behalf of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, he thanked the Hildebrandt family for honoring their forebears by installing this monument and thereby preserving their Mennonite heritage.



Author, historian, and retired Mennonite pastor, Rev. Peter D. Zacharias, dedicated the monument and delivered a moving tribute to Helena (Martens) Hildebrandt and her two grandchildren. As a long-time friend of the Hildebrandt family, his address was particularly effective in bringing to life the context in which Helena and Heinrich Hildebrandt lived. He painted a vivid picture of their early lives in the village of Burwalde, Russia, their heart-wrenching departure from home in 1875 on the treacherous journey to Canada, the loss of their children, and their struggles to start a new life in the unbroken soil of the treeless prairie. Noting that the history books have been largely silent about the stories and contributions of women pioneers, such as Helena, he asked that this memorial stone might serve as a reminder of all pioneer grandmothers across the country who sacrificed so

much to find a better life and future for their children and grandchildren. He concluded with the challenge to remember their labors, hardships, endurance, courage, faith, humor, and the ultimate fruit of their efforts in the far reaching successes of the generation they raised.

Inscribed on the backside of the cairn are names of villagers who died while Neuendorf Village existed and are likely buried in this cemetery. For inquiries about these individuals or their families, please contact: hreunion2008@earthlink.net. - Pauline Hildebrandt, April, 2012. - Photographs by Delmar Rempel.

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Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and Family And Local History Day

by Bert Friesen

The Mennonite Heritage Village hosted its annual Family and Local History Day on April 14th, 2012. The morning session was devoted to family histories, with some 15 exhibitors providing relevant information. These exhibits dealt with various family histories including the Hamm, Hiebert, and Klippenstein families. Other displays dealt with Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization Registration forms, 1923-1930, GRANDMA 6.10, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Publication Series, Mennonite Heritage Portraits, obituary database, Land Titles Office records, maps of villages and cemeteries, and other interests such as tours to Russia. All of these attracted many participants who discussed matters of interest and did some research with the data being exhibited. This was one of the first times the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization records were displayed in the online format. This means that they will be accessible to a much wider research community. These are displayed as images of the original records and an index of the names included in these records.

The theme of the Mennonite Heritage Village for 2012 is *A Child's World: From Slate to Tablet*. The afternoon session began with three lectures presented by Henry Fast, Glen Klassen, and Roland Sawatzky, all of them focusing on children.

Henry Fast's topic dealt with children growing up in a Kleine Gemeinde village on the East Reserve, highlighting the fact that the experiences of children growing up in the nineteenth century were very different from those of children living in the twenty-first century.

Glen Klassen's topic was about the survival of children on the East Reserve before vaccines and antibiotics. There were various epidemics on a fairly regular basis beginning in the 1880s, resulting in large numbers of deaths among pre-school children. Klassen's conclusion was that many of these children, although generally healthy, died because of the water quality in that the water supply carried waterborne diseases. Once the water quality improved, the survival rates improved much more than when vaccines and antibiotics became available.

Roland Sawatzky's topic on "Using Artefacts to tell a Family Story," focused on objects children left behind. Very few of these were produced by the children from their own ideas or initiatives; but rather were generally items given to them by adults. Whatever their origins, the artefacts inform us about the lives of these children.

The afternoon session ended with the annual general meeting (AGM) of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. A new governance model was proposed for discussion. The activity reports of the Society were presented, including financial activity and the projection for the coming fiscal year. A budget was also approved. Additional reports included the activities of the Altberghal school project, Mennonite Heritage Village, and some

plans for projects in Altona and Steinbach.

The event was well attended, with about 60 to 70 people for the morning and afternoon sessions, and about 20 for the AGM. Lunch was served by the MHV Ladies Auxiliary.

Die 90-jährige Feier der Mennoniten in Mexiko – und wie!

Eine begeisterte Gruppe versammelte sich gestern Abend im Museum bei Kilometer 10 und machte mehr konkrete Pläne für das 90. Jubiläum der Mennoniten in Mexiko. Personen waren bereit in mehreren Komitees zu dienen und die Verantwortung für das vielseitige Programm zu übernehmen, für das Essen, die Logistik (Organisierung) und so weiter. Eine Gruppe wird eine Parade planen, die immer vielen interessiert. Die Mennoniten haben die Alten Sachen und neuen Ideen, um eine Parade lustig und wertvoll zu erstatten.

Ein Höhepunkt soll die Enthüllung der Büste vom Präsidenten Alvaro Obregon sein, der damalige Präsident, der die Mennoniten hier willkommen hieß. Die Büste ist ein Geschenk von Obregons Nachkommenschaft, und die Enthüllung soll von Obregons Enkel und dem Ehrengast Herrn Hector Obregon vollzogen werden. Damit wird die Feier eröffnet sein.

Diese Woche bekam der Präsident des Museums die Genehmigung, ein besonderes Programm bei der Hacienda de Bustillos anzustellen, wo Beamte und verschiedene eingeladene Leiter ein Abendessen-Bankett unter anderem genießen würden.

Die Feier findet am 22. und 23. Juni statt. Alle sind zu dieser historischen Feier eingeladen.

90th Anniversary Celebration of Mennonites in Mexico (22 – 23 June 2012)

A bust of Alvaro Obregon, president of Mexico in the 1920s when Mennonites settled there, is to be unveiled at the opening of the celebration. The bust is a gift of Obregon's descendants.

The above notice from *Kurze Nachricht* was provided by Adolf Ens, as was the English note.

The program for the 90th anniversary celebration of Mennonites in Mexico on June 22nd and 23rd 2012, looks like an event not to be missed. We anticipate having a report on this momentous occasion in our October, 2012 issue of Heritage Posting.

Mennonite History Seekers Engage In 13th Study

by Elmer Heinrichs

Nearly 30 attentive historians attended the opening session of *Mennonite History Seekers* at Altona as it began its 13th annual series of studies in March, 2012. Historians, meeting in “the Barn that Harms Built,” were welcomed by Joe Braun to the four-week session which explored various aspects of Mennonite history.

Amateur historians heard from Mary Neufeld about her research into the Mennonite village of Schoenthal, situated north of Altona. She told about her research methods, the different sources she explored, and a bit about the history of the village, including a number of stories of early Schoenthal. Neufeld also noted the influence of the church on village life, and the larger Mennonite community. She pointed out as well that several renewal leaders had lived here.

Neufeld, a daughter of Bishop Wilhelm H. Falk, and author of *A Prairie Pilgrim*, says about 20 residents settled the village of Schoenthal in September, 1879. Soon a school was built, followed by a church in 1888. The first service was held on April 22, and it remained active for 71 years.

The evening concluded with Art Wiebe’s pictorials of early Rosenfeld, also spelled Rosenfeldt and Rosenfelt, with Acheson as the first school. Recently the first minute book of the Acheson School District, which later became Rosenfeld, was presented to Altona & District Heritage Centre archivist Al Schmidt by former Rosenfeld resident Martin Friesen.

Wiebe’s pictures showed the first Lutheran Church built in about 1900 and the renovated Lutheran Church in 1922. They also showed that the village had experienced many flood times through the years. By June 1910, Rosenfeld had a population of about 300.

In session two Rose Hildebrand told about Mennonite settlements in Prussia, where people worked hard to survive, built windmills and drainage, worshipped in houses, and then re-settled in Russia beginning in 1788, where they flourished as they made the steppes bloom.

In the 1870s, these people of the land, a people of peace, migrated from the Bergthal Colony in Russia to the junction of the Rat and Red Rivers in the East Reserve in Manitoba.

Hildebrand related that based on oral history Neubergthal’s roots were put down at the crossroads (near the Meridian) where they settled on 320 acres on both sides of the street, with pasture land designated south of the village, and a school placed at the centre of the village.

More recently the village was designated a national historic site of successful settlement on the open prairie. Here trees were planted, farmers practiced summer fallowing, a blacksmith shop operated, and people worshipped in local district churches, later also in the local EMMC Church.

Margrute Krahn updated historians on Neubergthal’s Heritage Foundation’s renovation of the Eddie Schmidt house barn transforming it into a resource centre and library.

The Foundation will be working in the Red River area in a high school program teaching agriculture, sustainability and preservation. The Altberghal School will highlight the use of solar and wind power.

In session three Principal Daryl Loewen spoke about the Mennonite Collegiate Institute’s beginnings in 1889. Early Mennonites from the Bergthal, Chortitz, and Fuerstenland colonies, wanted to sidestep modernization, and small schools taught the Bible, and arithmetic.

Bishop Johann Funk and others were however concerned about education and began to form a teacher preparatory school. And so the Mennonite Educational Institute (MCI) was formed at Gretna, and H. H. Ewert was hired by the provincial Department of Education as inspector of schools.

Loewen also told how the current MCI is now initiating a Grade 7-8 program, noting that educational choices are being made at younger and younger ages, “so we need students earlier.”

The 2012 *Mennonite History Seekers* sessions concluded with participants viewing videos of Mennonite life in Siberian villages. These villages marked their Centennial recently. When borders opened, many migrated to Germany.

Trekkers on the Move



Mennonite Heritage Village continues to provide unique and educational programming and events. It is also a remarkably well suited venue for other occasions such as fund raisers. One such recent event was the Mennonite Heritage Village/Eden East Tractor Trek fundraiser. Although part of the Trek had to be cancelled due to thunder showers, it was nevertheless a success in numerous ways, including a send-off with an energy filled breakfast of “Jreeve,” scrambled eggs, hash-browns, and home-made bread with jam, served at the Livery Barn Restaurant. After a prayer for safety and a song to send the *Trekkers* on their way, the event got underway in earnest. Fifty-five drivers took up the challenge, raising a total of \$39,000.

Remember William Hespeler? One Should

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Everyone in Steinbach has heard of William (earlier Wilhelm) Hespeler. After all, we have a street of growing importance named after him. On Manitoba Day a local group felt it should help to make sure Hespeler will be remembered for significant things he did for this community and the whole area in the early days of Mennonite settlement before 1900.

Accordingly, half a dozen lay historians and others met on May 10, 2012 for a luncheon-workshop at the Mennonite Heritage Village restaurant to celebrate the work of this helpful government immigration agent, truly a "founding father" of the East Reserve. The kick-off had come from a large deposit of Hespeler's personal papers donated to the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg some weeks earlier. After a lunch, a list of these documents was reviewed at this gathering.

We recalled that Mr Hespeler had come to Ontario, Canada, around 1850, as a young man from south Germany, set on making his fortune, and having become quite successful before many years had passed.

Not long after his arrival in Canada he returned to Germany for a visit to friends and family. There he somehow heard that many Mennonites in Ukraine wanted to emigrate to another country.

Around 1872, Hespeler, having checked with his contacts in the Canadian government, got an assignment as newly-appointed immigration agent, to go to Ukraine to convince these Mennonites to move to Canada.

Hespeler met with Mennonite leaders living in Ukraine, and despite being chased by Russian police, managed on behalf of the Canadian government, to invite the Mennonites to make this move. He also suggested sending a delegation to check matters out for themselves, and promised payment of expenses by the government. All this happened as planned, in 1873. When the delegation came to Winnipeg, Hespeler, as well as another immigration agent, Jacob Y. Shantz, were around to serve as guides.

When the first Mennonite families began to arrive in Manitoba in 1874, Hespeler continued to provide various services to make pioneer life a little easier, to get schools started properly (as the government wished for), and to make needed other arrangements for permanent settlement in the province.

As the first railroads developed in the region around 1881, Hespeler helped to found a new town on the railway running east of and south along the Red River right past the Mennonite (East Reserve) settlement. Initially named Hespeler, the town later became Niverville. Here he helped to build the first grain elevator of Western Canada to ship export grain from the region.

There is much more to this memorable story, which none of us should forget.



From left to right: Evelyn Heide, Al Hamm, Ernie Braun, Harvey Plett and Lawrence Klippenstein. Missing: Jared Nickel.

— Photo courtesy of Ernie Braun, Niverville.



Restoration of various buildings at the Mennonite Heritage Village has occurred as part of the Facilities Restoration Project, thanks in large measure to donations/pledges by local individuals and businesses.

New events and programs are in the offing, including the opening of the *Kleine Gemeinde/EMC* exhibit in the Gerhard Ens Gallery on June 21st, 2012.

And, of course, let's not forget to celebrate Canada Day at the Village on July 1st, from 10:00 – 6:00!



MHV Senior Curator, Dr. Roland Sawatzky spoke on the theme chosen for 2012, *A Child's World: From Slate to Tablet*, during Family and Local History Day.

Book Review

Nichols, Gregory L., *A Study of Ivan V. Kargel (1849-1937) The Development of Russian Evangelical Spirituality*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), pb., xiv +381 pp, 44.00 USD.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

Till now Johann G. (Ivan Veniaminovich) Kargel frequently shows up in the annals of Russian Christianity, more particularly Protestantism but with a somewhat sketchy personal and career profile. Nichols has changed that situation dramatically. There is a great deal more clarity now about Kargel's total ministry as well as his personality and character, making it much easier to assess his spiritual and church-related importance.

Born in the Russian Caucasus region in 1849, likely of a German father, and an Armenian mother, originally from Bulgaria, Kargel converted to the Christian faith as a young man of 20. After baptism he was joined to the eleven-member two-year old Baptist church in Tiflis, Georgia. He and Anna Semenova whom he married in Tultscha, Romania in 1880, had four daughters. One of them died early and the others, as they grew to adulthood, actively involved themselves in their father's work. None of them were married.

Kargel's call to ministry emerged early, owing much to contacts with Johann Wieler, a Mennonite Brethren teacher and minister from the Molotschna colony in Ukraine, with whom he stayed while visiting Odessa in 1872-73, and another slightly more senior Baptist minister, Karl Ondra, whom he met in the same Odessa setting during this time. Eager to begin his life's work, Kargel, not yet ordained, briefly took over a pastorate in the Russian Polish village of Sorotschin, previously pastored by Ondra, and also became a student for a year at the Hamburg Mission School, established by the German Baptists in 1849. Also in 1873, Ondra, Kargel and Wieler joined a number of other church leaders, at a Mennonite Brethren missions conference held in the village of Klippenfeld, Molotschna.

After these biographical comments, Nichols provides a portrait of Kargel's ongoing work, pastoral and other ministries. The chronology of Appendix II very helpfully outlines Kargel's related activities from birth until his death in 1937, and present-day influences of his legacy among evangelicals.

Nichols designates five periods following the years of beginnings and laying of ministry foundations from 1849-1874. These include, further, the first period of 1875-1880 in St. Petersburg. Most of Kargel's work at this point focused on ministry to people of German extraction (Baptist connections). This time also provided ample opportunities for improving his use of the Russian language and getting to know the larger spectrum of Russian churches,

Most importantly, for what was to come, it brought him and his wife into much closer contact with another emerging evangelical leader, Vasily Alexandrovich

Pashkov, and his wife Alexandra Ivanovna Pashkova. Both would become strong influences in reshaping (widening, Anna would call it) some of the Kargel's theological thinking toward greater inclusivity of other than their earlier more strict Baptist interpretations regarding church structures and practices.

Then came the second period of work, now centred in Bulgaria (1880-1884) during which the extensive correspondence of Anna with Alexandra played a key role in the redirection noted above. Here Nichols draws heavily on the Pashkov personal papers which have recently found their way to numerous North American and other libraries.

A second period of work in St. Petersburg came in 1884-1887, at the end of which Pashkov was exiled from Russia, and the way cleared, as it turned out, for Kargel to greatly increase his scope of leadership among the evangelicals of the Russian capital. Eleven years of wider ministry in Russia, much of it in company with a German itinerant preacher, Dr Friedrich Baedeker, visiting prisons, preceded a third period of work in St. Petersburg in which Kargel further extended his influence and organizational and institutional work especially in education, among St. Petersburg evangelicals.

Kargel is interpreted as having two objectives beyond his basic calling to preach Good News and fulfill local pastoral responsibilities in Bulgaria, Russian territories like Finland, where he established its first Baptist church, and elsewhere. Firstly Kargel hoped to unify evangelical Protestant groups in Russian-held lands. His other objective was to amplify their traditional theological spectrum by giving a more privileged place to the teaching of sanctification or holiness (in Russian, *osvya(e?) shchenie*, translit. with a "c", as the text does not).

The author does not attempt to analyze in depth the degree to which Kargel achieved these objectives. Evidence abounds to suggest that unifying disparate groups of Russian evangelicals was then, as it is still, a daunting task. Similarly the teaching of sanctification likely generated non-unifying controversy (though not highlighted in this study), as it did among those from the Keswick Convention disciples in Britain and other adherents who were Kargel's mentors/champions for this theological distinctive.

Space limits prevent a treatment of other significant features of what is really a most important and indeed even exciting study of someone who rose to the forefront of Russian evangelical leadership, far from forgotten among fellow believers in Russia even today. The book is attractively produced with features like helpful appendices and maps, photos of Kargel (perhaps Anna's will show up one day), and a fine index with updated bibliography. Technical problems such as some text portions obviously omitted (e.g. p 190, line 4 ff), white space where not appropriate, proof reading problems (spelling errors) especially with German words, etc, do not distract unduly

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Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

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from reading through, but will be noticed by some.

Nichols' disclaimer about writing a definitive Kargel volume is reflected in a very useful, brief section putting forth themes for further research (pp. 306-307). For this reviewer the suggestion of looking more closely at the Mennonite (Brethren) connection is apropos. It is possible that the extensive Wieler correspondence in the Pashkov papers needs more exploration, and there may be German-language sources pertinent here also.

Another reviewer's judgment that from now on the author "deserves to be heard" on this topic is to the point. He deserves commendation indeed for making available an important new source for the study of Russian evangelical spirituality (perhaps beyond that) as the book's subtitle aptly claims.

Dr. Gregory L. Nichols is Lecturer in Baptist and Anabaptist Studies and Church History at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic.

Dr. Klippenstein is a retired professor of Bible, and historian-archivist with the Mennonite Heritage Centre. He now resides with his wife, LaVerna, in Steinbach, Manitoba.

Homecoming News

According to the Neuenburg Birkenhead website, the Neuenburg Birkenhead Homecoming will be held July 27 – July 29, 2012 at the Neuenburg Community Center, 5 miles south of Winkler, Manitoba on Hwy 32, then 1 mile east.

Everyone with roots in the village of Neuenburg and Birkenhead School District is invited to the Homecoming. Come to enjoy the fellowship, the food, the sites and the worship service.

For more information: check www.neuenburgbirkenhead.com or call 204-325-9963

Henry Unger has completed a history of Neuenburg and the Birkenhead School District. His book will be released at the homecoming.

Heritage Posting is looking forward to providing a review of Unger's book in a future issue.

Book Notes

by Lawrence Klippenstein

The literary magazine *Rhubarb*, edited by Victor Enns of Winnipeg, MB, released its No. 30 issue earlier this year, featuring Manitoba Mennonite writing. Another issue is projected for December. Contact information for the magazine is as follows: *Rhubarb* Magazine, 606-100 Arthur St. Winnipeg, MB R3B 1H3 or by e-mailing: info@rhubarbmag.com or by accessing their website: www.rhubarbmag.com

Ron and Anna Plett, of Steinbach, MB, recently released another set of CDs with readings from the Low German writing of Arnold Dyck. This set features Dyck's book *Koop enn Bua en Dietschlaund* (Koop and Bua in Germany). It contains seven hours of Ron's reading. For further info contact info@emchurch.ca or Marigold at marigoldp@mhv.ca who manages the bookstore at Mennonite Heritage Village which sells the CDs. It is also available at Mennonite Heritage Centre – contact Connie Wiebe at cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca. The CD was launched at MHV during "Spring on the Farm" on May 21, 2012.

Celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Kleingemeinde/Evangelical Mennonite Conference!
Buy a Delbert Plett historical volume. You can get these titles at a discount from:

aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca
History and Events (1982), 166 pp. @8.00; *Leaders of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Russia 1812-1874* (1993), 932 pp. @20.00; *Storm and Triumph* (1986), 337 pp @10.00, and *The Golden Years* (1985), 211 pp.@10.00

Lewis Carroll's *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland* can now be read in Low German in *Dee Erläwnisse von Alice em Wundalaund*, thanks to the hard work of Dr. Jack Thiessen, retired from the U of Winnipeg and now living in New Bothwell, MB. The paperback volume, with 140 pp. is published by Cathair na Mart, Eire: Everttype, 2012, a Michael Everson publication. It sells for \$16.95 at the MHV bookstore – email marigoldp@mhv.ca

Pete and Tillie: A Real Life Novel: (Almost) Everything I Need to Know I Learned From My Parents was written by a retired physician in Steinbach, Dr. Dennis Giesbrecht. It is autobiographical, and they say it is "hilarious." This 388-page paperback was self-published in 2012, and is available for \$24.95 at the MHV bookstore.