



From Earth-Bound Guide Posts to Outer-Space Satellites

by Conrad Stoesz

In 1878, Mennonites planted wooden posts along the well-travelled route, running from Emerson, the economic hub on the edge of the former Mennonite West Reserve, to the western edge near Mountain City, south of Morden. The posts guided many travelers through zero-visibility snow storms on the treeless, flat prairie. Today, these posts are long gone, but a memorial trail with markers has been created and recently, geocaches have been added to help educate people about the Mennonite experience (see Conrad Stoesz, "Post Road," Mennonite Historian 26/2 [June 2000]:1-2, and "Post Road, part 2," MH 26/3 [September 2000]:4-5, 8).

Geocaching is a popular hobby — a kind of hide-and-seek game. Hand-held GPS units (and some smart phones) use triangulated satellite coordinates to help users locate positions on earth. A user can log onto www.geocaching.com and download coordinates for a prepared geocache route, and then use their GPS unit or smart phone to locate a geocache. A geocache is usually some sort of container that holds stories of visitors from the past, perhaps some local historical items, and a logbook for users to leave comments of their impressions. May, 2015 marks the 15th anniversary of geocaching. There are over 2.6 million caches around the world, and 6 million users.

On a warm, early spring day in 2014, I joined geocaching hobbyist Weldon Penner on a tour of the historic Post Road. As we traced the route through the former Mennonite West reserve, we traversed lands where our families used to live. Along the way we planted geocaches encouraging others to discover the history of the villages and landscapes along a path from Fort Dufferin, through the Rural Municipalities of Rhineland and Stanley, to Mountain City.

It's rewarding to read the feedback from visiting geocachers. User fmgail wrote: "Thanks for the road down history lane. . . enjoyed each site on your path. Thanks for placing these." NovaToba logged her 1,144th find and commented: "I originate from Nova Scotia so this was a great history lesson for me," and after visiting the former Browns Grand Central Hotel location, "met owner of the farm, chatted a bit & carried on my way." The Boundary Trail Heritage Region website offers this description of the hotel:

"March 1881 — Mr. Wm. Brown, previously manager of the Davis House in Winnipeg, took over management of



Weldon Penner standing next to the Post Road marker #9 at Hochfeld. Notice his GPS unit and screw driver as he looks for a place to locate the cache.

— Photo by Conrad Stoesz

this establishment and it soon became a great favorite among the more affluent travellers along the trail who did not care to partake of the hospitality offered in the nearby Mennonite homes."

Jean Déniche wrote: "Following the Mennonite series of caches gave us greater insight into that aspect of Manitoba history. Snowy owls, bald eagles, and deer put the finishing touch on a pleasant and productive day." A family travelling through the area from Iowa made one of the caches their 1,000th find. User tkblossom wrote: "We loved reading about the history of the Post Road, and thought that there wasn't a better milestone cache for us than this one. While our direct ancestors wouldn't have used the Post Road, it was meaningful to read and learn a little about our Mennonite ancestors."

The geocaches along the Post Road have allowed users to reflect on changes. At the Edenburg Cemetery,

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Looking for Connection(s)

by Korey Dyck

Director Mennonite Heritage Centre

According to a recent study, the second most popular search area on the internet is in genealogy and family studies. As someone relatively new to working with history and archives, this was a surprise. Why would so many people all over the world have such an interest in finding out where they lived or who their grandparents were? In short, I think it helps complete a picture of where we come from and more importantly, who we are.

Let me give you an example. Through using the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, I have learned that my maternal grandmother came to Canada at age 7 on the *Empress of France*, one of the first ships of refugees leaving Russia in the 1920's. Investigating a little further, I learned it took my great grandfather 20 years to pay off his family's *Reiseschuld* or travel debt to the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization (CMBoc), the precursor to the Mennonite Central Committee in Canada. Their CMBoc card number was # 18.

My father's family arrived in Canada in 1960, having cleared jungle for farm land in Paraguay from 1947 – 1960. Their CMBoc card was # 10122. During my search for family documents, I also found a picture of my paternal grandmother, Margarete Bergmann Dyck while she was in her thirties, travelling across Europe with 4 children under ten. This rare photo is from the *EWZ* files taken by the German government and confiscated by the U.S. army during World War Two. This microfilm file also lists a *Stammblatt* or family form which details my father's family tree and their journey across Europe.



"Margarete Bergmann Dyck", *Along the Road to Freedom* exhibit, by artist Ray Dirks, Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg

Margarete Bergmann Dyck
October 8, 1911 - March 11, 1999
from Hutterite, Yablonsky Mennonite
Settlement, Zavelnitsa Oblast,
Ukraine (South Russia)

Margarete, her children and husband,
Isaac Dyck, had sought World
War II. Eventually they were
settled in Poland. Isaac was conscripted
into the German military on
August 11, 1941. The family fled west
the next day. They never saw Isaac
again.

Margarete and her children witnessed
the Holocaust. During the war, they
experienced a very hard time. From the
at that time, Margarete and her family
continued westward of advancing
Russian troops.

There was one surprise between the
first family members. They were two
sisters of clothing in their first
care, would be easy.

Eventually the family settled in a
refugee camp in Germany. In 1947 they
left on the Volendam ship for
Argentina and moved to Paraguay.

Life was difficult in Paraguay. Margarete
in Winnipeg. In 1950, Margarete
finally found a place to call home.
She cleared jungle, then worked at
Baptista Personal Care Home and
eventually at a MCC shelter home.

Margarete was a strong, resilient woman,
never loved by her family. And
she always loved them back.

Looking back at these institutional records, I see official dates, names, and debts owed and paid, carefully recorded. In their personal papers, I discover stories in letters and diaries, see family members familiar and new, and by reading Mennonite history, learn of faithful people striving to find a peaceful land. Staff at the Mennonite Heritage Centre is not only privileged to look after records like these, but we also ensure that the role of faith in these histories is recognized and understood. It is through faith that families persevered through separation, loss, trauma, and other difficulties. The connections we can help families make with missing family members and their histories make our jobs worthwhile. We look forward to helping make these connections, both faith and familial to anyone researching their family history.

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ISSN 1491-2325

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user tag cachers wrote: "It is interesting how many small graves are here. It is great to see that technology has come a long way since the old days and babies have a much better survival rate now than they did then!!"

Over two dozen bus tours have since travelled the route, at times modifying the route by including stops at the National Historic site of Neuberghthal, or heading further west into the Pembina Hills to see the leaves on the trees change colour.

To see what some of the locations looked like decades ago check out photos on the new Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID), such as "cairn corner" at <http://archives.mhsc.ca/cairn-corner-site>.

**Previously published in the Mennonite Historian, June 2015.*

Mennonite Food: Tastes in Transition

by Jessica McKague

The exhibit *Mennonite Food: Tastes in Transition* will be on display throughout 2015 as the centerpiece of Mennonite Heritage Village's (MHV) annual theme on Mennonite food. *Mennonite Food* will explore Russian Mennonite foodways, or the intersection of food in culture, traditions, and history. The history of food is the history of great historic events, such as immigration, and of daily life. Looking at Russian Mennonite history through the relatable lens of food, the exhibit will interpret significant concepts such as agrarian lifestyle, new geographies, famine, and urbanization. Mennonite food has undergone tremendous change over the past few centuries, reflecting an ever-adapting culture and identity.

The exhibit will include artifacts from the MHV collection and a few interactive stations such as one where visitors can read cookbooks and write their own recipes to share with others. The Steinbach Regional Secondary School advanced photography students are showing their exhibit *Food for Thought*, composed of photo essays about Mennonite foods and restaurants, on display in the museum auditorium.

Outside the galleries, the Livery Barn Restaurant on the museum grounds will offer visitors a chance to taste Russian Mennonite foods. As well, the food theme will be present in school programming, event days, and tours. Through this sensory and experiential approach, we aim to appeal to a broad audience while providing valuable insight into Russian Mennonite food history and what Russian Mennonite food means today, in Manitoba and across the globe.



Los Altos Food Products.
— Photo courtesy of Los Altos Food Products



Mennonite Heritage Village Vegetable Garden, with Anne Peters and Elsie Kaethler, volunteers.

— Photo courtesy of MHV archives

Upcoming Events at MHV:

Canada Day - July 1
Pioneer Days - July 31 - August 3
Fall on the Farm - September 7

Pioneer Day Camp
Ages 5 – 8: July 13-17
Ages 9 – 12: August 10 - 14



Family Toasting in Halbstadt - Mr. Hänsel, at left, Anna (Wiens) Rempel and her husband Dietrich Rempel, at an outdoor picnic in 1908. Daughters of Anna and Dietrich are Rita (Margarete) left and Herta right.

— Photo courtesy of Mennonite Archives of Ontario

Exhibit Opening Notice “Mennonite Food: Tastes in Transition”

Please note that the exhibit opening for “Mennonite Food: Tastes in Transition” will be held at the Mennonite Heritage Village on Thursday, July 9th, 2015, at 7pm, with a curatorial talk and tour of the exhibit, and snacks to follow.

Oldest Mennonite Church Building in S.E. Manitoba

by Ernest N. Braun

History:

The oldest Mennonite church building in southeastern Manitoba was constructed in 1896-7 to replace an earlier one built in 1876-77 on the same site. It was commissioned in 1897 and was in continuous use by the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference (CMC) until 2010, when reduced attendance led to the decommissioning of the building by the CMC. The Conference offered to move the building to the Mennonite Heritage Museum (MHV) but since the museum already had two churches, one almost identical to this one, the offer was not accepted.

The Conference then advertised the sale of the property to the general public. When the ad appeared, it became evident that the site would not be preserved in any way, and steps were soon taken to examine the building to establish its eligibility for restoration, its significance to the community, and the possibility of Provincial Heritage Site designation. Provincial representatives who were invited to visit the site concluded in the affirmative for all of the above.

A group of interested individuals approached three potential stakeholders: Chortitzer Mennonite Church, Rural Municipality of Hanover, and Mennonite Heritage Village to propose a three-way partnership, with each party benefiting in specific ways. A proposal was developed to create interim ownership by the RM of Hanover, to allow a five-year window of time to begin repair and awareness-raising with the intent that the site would become a permanent heritage holding, possibly as a satellite site of the Mennonite Heritage Village.

After some unexpected legal delays, the CMC graciously relinquished the property title to the RM of Hanover for a token consideration in June 2013. That same month a formal committee was established: Dr. Corneil Blatz, as chair; Ernest N. Braun, as secretary; Jacob Harder, as rentals coordinator; Ben Doerksen as maintenance coordinator; Orlando Hiebert as member at large, with the intent of enlarging that group as more interest developed. *Ex officio* members represent the RM of Hanover [Travis Vandenbrand, then Lisa Baldwin], Chortitzer Mennonite Conference [Rev. Sam Doerksen], Mennonite Heritage Village [initially Roland Sawatzky, then Barry Dyck].

In January 8, 2014, under by-law 2333-13 the RM of Hanover declared the building a Municipal Heritage Site.

Restoration:

As soon as ownership was transferred to the Municipality in June 2013, work to repair the building began. The exterior siding was peeling badly: the first task then was to prepare the walls for painting, and then apply a high quality primer one-coat by brush in late summer, with a second coat applied by sprayer in spring of 2014. Trim was then painted grey matching the original trim colour.

The second priority was the roof. After exploring the cost of cedar shingles and finding that cost prohibitive, the issue was forced by freak winds which tore off patches of



Roofing as part of the restoration project.

— Photo courtesy of Ernest N. Braun

shingles on the south side in 2013, necessitating roof repair by a contractor. Then another wind storm tore more shingles off in 2014 and since the shingles were brittle, more shingles were lost with every wind. Under the RM insurance policy, the roof was re-shingled with asphalt shingles at the end of August 2014.

The floor of the church became the next priority. A structural engineer examined the building to explore options to remedy the situation. Examination of the perimeter grade-beam revealed that it is in very good condition, but has sunk into the gumbo over time. Seasonally the foundation rises and sinks as the moisture around it dictates. Benchmark sightlines have been taken to see how much movement there is. Various options may need to be explored.

Vision

The Chortitz Church Heritage Committee has a vision for the historic site, one that includes its restoration, development, and long term preservation/promotion as a concrete symbol of the immigration story of the Mennonite people, of the faith of that people, and of the early history of their pioneer life on the East Reserve, while making the building available for rent to a small church group, and also for casual use for weddings and funerals. The vision includes enhancement of the site with signage and landscaping. In fall that will include the transplanting of a grandson of the famous Chortitz Oak of Russia. Some consideration may be given to create a native grass patch, featuring the original tall grass prairie that covered the site before the Mennonites arrived. Further development may consist of a collection of artifacts peculiar to this church and region, to be displayed here. Since the Chortitzer Conference officially changed its name this spring, the name Chortitz will now attach mainly to this building and the cemetery across the road.

Towards this end, the committee hosted three events last year: Easter at Chortitz in April, the 140th Anniversary celebration in August, and a German Christmas Carol event in December. A further three events are planned for this year, beginning with a ForeFather's Day on June 20th.

Altbergthal School House Reconstruction Update

by *Lawrence Klippenstein*

We in the Bergthal School Committee are now approximately five years into the Altbergthal School reconstruction project. Our discussion concerning moving the building from Altona to a new location took approximately two years before the present site at Neuberghthal could be obtained and the building moved in 2012. In Neuberghthal, the place where the school now stands is often spoken of as the former Eddy Schmidt property. It is close to an old house-barn which is also currently undergoing reconstruction.

It was a rewarding moment when we could place the building on a new foundation in the fall of 2012, which enabled Wilf Hiebert of Altona to continue reconstruction begun at the Altona site the previous year. Installing almost a complete set of new windows, repainting the entire exterior in white, reshingling the roof and beginning work on floor repairs took a lot of time and energy (and, of course, funding) to basically finish up in 2013 and 2014.

Decisions made at a recent Bergthal School Committee meeting laid the groundwork for adding a small porch at the front door, closing off a second door now on the west end of the building, replacing it with a regular window, and reinstalling the door on the south side of the building. It has also been agreed that exterior stairs to the upstairs space, dry walling, painting, and floor finishing, as well as bringing in electricity and plumbing will be other targets for the building schedule in 2015. Painting of certain exterior parts of the building is being planned as well, possibly in red, which research shows may have been part of the original finish work on the building.

Jim Dyck and Joe Braun are redesigning a fund raising brochure, and with the help of the committee are attempting to recruit donors who will augment the approximately \$200.00 currently in our Access Credit Union account. About \$62,000.00 has been collected and spent on the project to date. Completion of the entire project could require again as much or more to complete the indoor renovations. More donations will be warmly welcomed in the months, indeed, years to come.

We are planning to make the building an interesting stopping place for the "Open Village Tour of Neuberghthal", which is on the drawing board for later this year. We are hopeful that the celebrations highlighting the 140th anniversary of the former West Reserve (1875-2015) can be enhanced in this way as well.

Consultations with Manitoba Museum staff (among them Dr. Roland Sawatzky, formerly of Mennonite Heritage Village) regarding ways in which the teacherage end of the building can be developed properly, are now in progress.

Perhaps we can also assist those who are interested in travelling the Memorial Post Road Trail passing by only a few miles to the south of the school and village. We understand that a tour of the Trail is currently on the drawing board. One of the points of interest on this Trail is the village of Neuhorst west of Gretna, with historical research being done on this topic by Evelyn Heide of

Steinbach, formerly of Horndean. We hope this project goes well.

Finally, thank you to Allen Falk of Gretna for keeping the Cairn Corner Park at the former village of Neuanlage maintained during recent years.

Reinland/West Reserve 140th Anniversary.

by *Abe E. Ens*

In the last few years members of the community of Reinland have made some major improvements to the local cemetery and purchased additional land. Those in charge felt it worthwhile to have a dedication/thanksgiving event to celebrate those who went before us and found their final resting place here, and to thank all those who take part in maintaining the cemetery throughout the summer.

When the Board of the Community Centre at Reinland Inc were advised that this is also the 140th year of the Mennonite West Reserve, they were willing to share a few hours of the dedication/thanksgiving event with the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society (MMHS). For our part of the program we have asked Peter D. Zacharias to speak on the establishment and progress/changes of the villages in the last 140 years. Eleanor Chornoboy will speak on the role of women during pioneering times. Also being planned is some singing, possibly a male group. We anticipate being able to show the plaque that is in the making for the Cairn that is to be erected at Fort Dufferin, celebrating it as an immigration station, 1875 – 1879, where more than 7,000 Mennonites and another 11,000+ other immigrants landed.

A book launch of "The Outsiders' Gaze: Life and Labour on the Mennonite West Reserve 1874-1922" is also contemplated. The book, one of the MMHS series, was compiled and edited by Jacob E. Peters, Eleanor Chornoboy and Adolf Ens. This book is a collection of essays published by people from outside the Reserve.

The celebrations, planned for July 18, 2015, will begin with a "Parade of Innovations" at 11:00 followed by a Watermelon & Roll-Kuchen lunch. Formalities will begin at 2:00 in a large tent. There will be ample quantities of *Knacksoat* to be enjoyed while visiting during intermissions. Supper will consist of "Pork on a Bun" and fries. There will be no registration fee and food is available for a donation.

The evening will consist of a Stage Show with Low German Skits and singing by Dennis Reimer, former teacher, accompanied by his wife, Phyllis, and "Heishracjken en willa Honig Saenja,".

At dusk the celebrations will close off with fireworks.

Neubergthal Street Village - a National Historic Site of Canada

by Ray Hamm, longtime resident and descendent of the first settlers of Neubergthal.

The Neubergthal Heritage Foundation (NHF) was formed after villagers heard that the Historic Sites and Monuments Board (HSMB) in Ottawa had recommended that Neubergthal be named a National Heritage Site.

Throughout the 1980's Parks Canada was looking for ways to commemorate settlement and development of the Canadian Prairies. There were many other national sites and parks, but what about the prairies? Parks Canada, in conjunction with provincial agencies, looked across western Canada for potential sites. At the end of the process Neubergthal, MB and Sterllng, AB (for bringing irrigation to the prairies) were chosen. The HSMB motion was passed in 1989. (Federal policies have changed since then. No local people knew anything about this.) At the time there were still 8 housebarns in the village; it was a still a single street village.

Eventually Parks Canada contacted Lawrence Klippenstein and a small group came to the village for an informational, introductory meeting. "We think you have something special here, we are not buying you out, we are not making rules for you, we want to work with you to preserve and present your heritage, your story, as part of the Canadian story" was the message from Parks to the village. The village said "we are willing to share but we do not want to become a zoo."

A heritage committee was created to work with all this, formally accepted the designation, and fairly quickly the NHF received charitable status to enable writing receipts for income tax benefits.

Parks Canada worked at documentation and an inventory of heritage resources. The first major project for the NHF was the restoration of a housebarn - the present Friesen Housebarn Interpretive Centre. The current project is the reworking of the Eddie Schmidt Heritage Education and Research Centre. A separate working group recently published a village history/story book. Individuals and groups come for tours, special theme events or culture days continue to draw visitors to the village.

Neubergthal and the NHF can be a significant place to tell stories of agriculture and prairie settlement and also stories of faith and freedom. The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society (MMHS) can assist the village with educational material and with extra publicity (to the extent that villagers want more traffic).

For more information go to www.neubergthalheritagefoundation.com or send an email to neubergthalheritagefoundation@gmail.com

*Susie Fisher advises that she is part of an international study on Mennonite villages being conducted by Dr. Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies Program University of Winnipeg, and that Neubergthal is part of the study.

Membership notice

Just to remind you, if you have not renewed your 2015 membership in the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society (MMHS), would you please consider doing so. We value your participation. Our fees are as follows:

Regular (annual) - \$40.00

Student (annual) - \$15.00

Couples (annual) - \$65.00

Please also consider making a donation to our Society.

Remittances should be sent to:

Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society,
600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4
OR

1310 Taylor Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6

We wish to remind you that the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society serves a vital function in the Mennonite community in Manitoba, given that its aim is to foster an understanding of, and respect for the history and beliefs of the Mennonite people.

Two projects in which MMHS is currently engaged are:

- East reserve atlas
- West reserve village histories

In addition, The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada which includes board members from provincially-based Mennonite historical societies also has ongoing projects, among them:

- Photo database for access on the web which has just been launched, (see: <http://archives.mhsc.ca/>)
- Genealogy database (which is in the development stage)

Heritage Posting To Your E-mail!

You now have the choice of receiving your copy of *Heritage Posting* by e-mail in PDF form, thereby giving you the advantage of speedier arrival and full colour. At the same time you would save MMHS postage and handling.

Many subscribers have chosen this option. If you want to receive your next copy in electronic format, please respond by e-mail to our address in the box on page 2. Thank you.

— The editors.

Book Reviews

Roland M. Sawatzky and Andrea M. Dyck, *A Collected History: Mennonite Heritage Village* (Steinbach: Mennonite Heritage Village (Canada) Inc., 2014), pb., 68 pp, \$20.00.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

This review may seem unduly delayed for the already very well received *A Collected History* subtitled *Mennonite Heritage Village* published as a tribute to the 50th anniversary of MHV. Then again, Heritage Posting readers may still be trying to keep up with recent Mennonite literature and only come to this piece of work now.

And what a piece it is! It is an item, if a coffee table publication can become that, which needs to be “experienced” and then discussed, and as reviewers do, analyzed with comments and notes.

This 68-page *tour de force* is a case in point. Actually it intrigues already with its title. What exactly is a “collected” history? It is not oral, it is not political, it is not social. It is not ancient, it is not modern. Or is it all of these perhaps?

Citing its purpose helps. . . . *is meant to provide a quick look at the diverse collections, activities and architectural heritage that make the Mennonite Heritage Village unique in seeking to preserve and interpret the Russian Mennonite story* (almost a quote, p.7). There is more.... *To do this through the lens of material culture. . . using artifacts demonstrations and buildings to illustrate/interpret events that have shaped the life of this community over the past five centuries* (also not quite a quote, but to the point, p.7).

And right away you get into a collage of marvellous photos, of the highest quality, well formed and mostly “bigger than life”, and with meaningful data to carry out the intent of a slim, very stylish and quite exciting volume that will hold its place of purpose a long time, for visualizing what Mennonite Heritage Village is all about.

The 16,000 artifacts of the museum have only begun to tell their full story. The curators may over the years have seen and touched them all. No visitor and probably no other staff members have. Tours and visits are inevitably very short and require something to go back and get more – *A Collected History* is there for you to do just that.

For enjoying this history, you will need to leave quibbles aside – the book may not tell you if Blumenort as mentioned (p. 32) was in the West reserve or the East reserve. There were (and are still two villages/towns by that name, one in each reserve). Someone may notice that the Reinlaender church was seemingly not formally established on the West reserve in 1875 but in 1880 (p.13) There was a little to-do about the date of incorporation for MHV– was it in fact 1964 when the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society did have an incorporation but MHV which had begun development some years earlier did not seem to have its own then?

And then there will be some people looking for sources of historical photos; e.g. where did the photo of the Friesen business (p.66) come from? Was the first paper established in Altona not *The Altona Echo* and not *The Red River Valley Echo* - belongs to quibbles really!

Just do it – buy the book and take it from there – make your own judgments, draw your own conclusions, bring more information that seems to fit in but was not available and tell others it is a “must” purchase and read.

President's Corner

by Hans Werner

The stories we tell about the past almost always revolve around the idea that things change over time. The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society also has a story, and a history of the Society would have its own sense of how things changed over time. The last two or three years, particularly have been a period of rethinking and restructuring how the Society is organized.

We can see looking back over the last ten or twenty years that the ways in which we think the stories of the experience of Mennonites in Manitoba should be told has changed. There is increasing focus on the local story, on specific themes and interest areas. There has been a proliferation of local history groups, groups organized to preserve a building, write a history of a village, and so on. The result has been a wonderful quilt of all kinds of ways of preserving and making known the Mennonite past in the province.

The Society has had to adapt to these changes. There is less interest in working on committees that look at the larger picture. In response to these changes the Society has now created a structure that allows organizations to become affiliated with the Society, to nominate members to the Board, and to participate in those events and projects that we need to do at a provincial level. Working together in this way allows the specific interest to flourish, while providing a framework for us all to work together.

Your membership as individuals remains important to the organization, and individual members still elect the Board. The MMHS remains an important part of the mosaic of Manitoba Mennonites and we all need to work together to keep alive the rich history of ‘our people.’

We invite you:

- To give us your thoughts and ideas on material you would consider important to readers of Heritage Posting, the newsletter of The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society;
- Submit your own reports, articles, memoirs, book reviews, or the like, for us to consider including in our newsletter;
- Please send your thoughts or queries in this regard to the following email address <mmhshp@gmail.com>

Thank you. We look forward to hearing from you.

Alchemy in the Hands of an Artist

by Margruite Krahn

I spent many hours at Gallery in the Park (Altona) recently, trying to create the right lighting effect required for the five 4'x 8' paintings, which are based on transformation symbolism within alchemy. While assisting me with my lighting frustrations, one of the summer employees at Gallery in the Park asked if I dream at night about what I am going to paint. I do. I also lie awake at night imagining, working. I guess like a vision. These are some of the romantic notions around the artist life.

I wrestle. Ideas can come fast and furious in the day, but at night, whether awake or sleeping, my mind works ceaselessly to perfect a composition that reflects the thoughts and ideas I want to convey, and the story I want to tell. If the vision says that I need to work on a larger body of work, I typically spend a year or two jotting down ideas, poetry, lyrics, making exploratory sketches, and writing letters to my muse. It's cliché to say it I suppose, but though I give guidance to the brush and the paint, as soon as I try to control the medium, the message loses its impact. I think my wrestling is all about control. I am a vehicle, a messenger, but sometimes I cry "Lord, take this cup from me."

I didn't choose to be an artist. There is little monetary gain in it for most of us, and like Jonah and the whale, we flee, only to be confronted for not being responsible with our gifts.

I didn't choose my Mennonite heritage, though I am shaped by its beliefs and culture. Much like climbing a tree as a child I see my heritage as an allegory of my life that has offered me paths as a person and as an artist. The tree is rooted in a belief system, family and friends. Being on the tree offers me many branches to explore and the freedom to choose, and even see beyond the confines of the tree, while also permitting me to return to preferred places until I am comfortable and at home.

This spring I completed five large paintings that required much of my body, soul, and mind. Within the paintings lies the story of spiritual transformation. A lifelong transformation that can only happen through the hard work of continual climbing.

Note: The Hermetic Ode opened May 8, 2015 at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in collaboration with Camerata Nova (Winnipeg based choral ensemble). Several compositions were written for Margruite's paintings. June 6th- August 8th these pieces will be showing at Gallery in the Park, Altona; January 2016 at the Mennonite Heritage Gallery, CMU

Margruite Krahn, whose work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, has lived and worked in her current studio in Neuberghthal, Manitoba since 1998.

Book Notes

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Elizabeth Reimer Bartel is known to Mennonite Heritage Village bookstore readers, having published two novels and an autobiography, *About Those Reimers*. This year, 2015, she has added another title to her list. This new book, *The Yellow House Poems of Life and Love*, is a modest volume, but has many well-worded thoughts on her theme. It is self-published in a paperback format of 155 pages and sells for \$18.00. The MHV bookstore in all likelihood can procure her other titles for you also. The author resides in Victoria, B.C. but recalls her earlier years in Steinbach very well.

Mennonite Heritage Village holds in its artifact collection the memorial cairn for a well-known personage out of the Russian Mennonite story. We refer here to Johann Bartsch, who went with Jakob Hoepfner and their emigration guide, Georg Trappe, to investigate settlement options in the area known as New Russia during a famous trip taken in 1786-87. The story of this and other aspects of Johann's life are reviewed briefly in another new book published in 2015 by Artur Kroeger of Winnipeg, assisted by his daughter, Lisa, resident in Germany. The book gives it all to us in a very readable 49-page paperback, titled *The Story of Johann Bartsch. A Mennonite Land Scout and Delegate*. A number of significant historical photos are included in this slim volume, all packaged to provide the story in a brief full compass survey. Sources of information are also acknowledged. The MHV bookstore has it selling for \$10.00 per copy.

From Windsor, Ontario, has arrived Barbara J. Tiessen's 2015 *The Schoenfelder Russlaender: A Mennonite Family's History*. It is a 170-page, well-illustrated paperback volume, slightly more academically packaged than the others mentioned here. The title explains its contents, while the availability of other related literature about the Schoenfelder community in south Russia allows readers to quickly enlarge their knowledge about the topic. Barbara's parents emigrated to Canada in 1925 and found their way to Leamington, Ontario, which for a time was home to the author also. It was self-published in Windsor, ON, and is on the market for \$25.00.

Keep an eye out for the upcoming publication of Abraham Friesen's *Menno Simons: Dutch Reformer Between Luther, Erasmus and the Holy Spirit* (Indianapolis, IN: Xlibris, 2015). Dr. Friesen resides in Fresno, California. His wife, Gerry, passed away only weeks ago.