

# HERITAGE POSTING

MANITOBA  
MENNONITE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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November 2018

## Immigration Sheds Cairn Becomes Reality

On Oct 4th a five-ton rock arrived at the site of the 1874 immigration sheds two miles south of Niverville. The EastMenn Historical Committee has been working on this project for some time and is now ready to design the plaque that will be attached to this hunk of granite. The rock was a donation by Ron Andres of Friedenfeld and came from his gravel pit south of Steinbach. Diamond Construction & Gravel delivered the rock by flatbed and also brought their huge front-end loader to lift and place the rock onto a prepared base. We commend them for work well done.

When the weather permits, concrete will be poured around the stone to fix it into place permanently. Once the plaque is in place, the site will be another destination for those interested in the local history of Mennonite immigration in the 1870s. Two flagpoles will also be put in place, one flying the flag of Imperial Russia as it was in 1874 and the other possibly displaying the Red Ensign, Manitoba's flag or else a flag related to Indigenous occupation of the land. Thus both the source and destination of the immigrants will be honoured.



The stone faces west and has lots of room for the proposed plaque. Ernie Braun and Henry Fast from the EastMenn Committee were there to watch the historic event.



Orlando Hiebert watches as Diamond gently lowers the massive stone into place. He was in charge of the project, giving his time to negotiate with the municipality and the nearby property owners as well as contributing his surveying expertise.

— Photos by Glen Klassen

## News from the CTMS

by Aileen Friesen

This has been a busy time for the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies (CTMS) at the University of Winnipeg. Hans Werner, a well-respected professor and the executive director of the Plett Foundation, retired. His guiding hand has been instrumental in developing the study of Mennonite history at the university and within the broader community.

At the beginning of July, I started my position as the new executive director at the foundation and an assistant professor at the university. A few weeks later I was in Ukraine as the historian on board the Mennonite Heritage Cruise. This trip was unique in that we had a good representation of all the major Mennonite migratory groups from Russia: the 1870s, 1920, and 1940s. In the upcoming issue of *Preservings*, we will have an article entitled, "Chasing our Heritage in Borozenko," in which Grace Dueck, a descendant of 1870s Mennonites, searches for

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# Mennonite Landing Site

by Ernest N. Braun

The Mennonite Landing Site at the juncture of the Rat and the Red Rivers is a very busy place. It is a favourite fishing spot for people from the area as well as Winnipeg. The original sign placed in 1994 welcomes people to picnic, fish, and in general enjoy the site, noting that vehicles should be left on the parking lot, and garbage to be removed. Unfortunately, the Site is somewhat a victim of its own success, since the volume of traffic has resulted in significant damage both unintentional and deliberate. Littering is a problem as is erosion of the trail to the water. Despite the notice on the sign, vehicles have been driving down to the water, creating potholes on the path, and when those holes got too deep, last fall somebody cut down several mature trees to create a new roadway down to the water's edge. Consequently, practically every day vehicles drove down and parked near the water, creating a rutted road where only a footpath was intended by the Association. In view of the misuse of the site, Members of the Landing Site Association met with Mitch Duval of the RM of Ritchot to determine the terms of the long-term lease that grants the Crown Land to the Association. Conclusion: the payment of lease fees and taxes by the Association gives it the status of private property, with the Occupier being Orlando Hiebert.

Subsequently, the remaining Association members Dr. Royden Loewen and Orlando Hiebert together with a representative of EastMenn Historical Committee, recognized Libby Hanna of Niverville as a new member, and determined that greater presence needed to be asserted. As a result, more crushed rock was placed on the path, new signs were posted clarifying that NO VEHICLES PAST THIS POINT meant exactly that, and deadman concrete barriers were placed at the unauthorized entry as well as the gated entry, making it impossible for a vehicle to enter. Within a month of their placement, one 2000-pound concrete deadman was



**Bollards being installed in front of the deadman barriers by Daco Piling.**

— Photos by E. N Braun

dragged away to allow vehicles back down the path. At this point since proper signage did not seem to be effective, the Association approached Daco Piling for a different solution. Neil and Damon Friesen volunteered to install bollards in front of the deadman barriers. The RCMP was also alerted to the vandalism. A satellite camera is also being considered.

Blatant disregard for existing signage has created a proliferation of new signs at the Site in an effort to communicate both its historical significance, and terms of access. The Site has been listed as an access point for the TransCanada Trail by the local Crow Wing Trail committee, which on its own placed a large sign at the gate. Unfortunately, interesting historical information on the back side is not accessible for viewing.

The Association has also posted a new sign that bids the public "Welcome" and encourages us all to **reflect; respect; remember; enjoy the river**. It clearly identifies the Site as **Leased by (the) Mennonite Landing Site Association**.



**The newly secured front entrance to the Mennonite Landing Site**

## **Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society**

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

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her family roots in the region.

In mid-November (15-17), the Chair in Mennonite Studies, Royden Loewen, will host the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference for the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada at the University of Winnipeg. The conference program for 'A People of Diversity: Mennonites in Canada since 1970,' includes a variety of presenters and a keynote address by Marlene Epp. The conference will explore how the increased diversity of Mennonites has encouraged the development of new ethnic identities and new ways of thinking about faith, culture, and socio-political issues. All are welcome to attend this multi-day event.

Fundraising for the Paul Toews Professorship in Russian Mennonite history at the University of Winnipeg is on-going with a second printing of the book, *The Russian Mennonite Story: The Heritage Cruise Lectures*, which offers a glimpse into the prosperity, sorrow, and rebirth of the Mennonite story in Russia and Ukraine through text and nearly 100 historic pictures. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, an event was hosted at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church to remember the tragedy of the Russian Revolution and the prosperity created after Mennonite immigration to Canada. This event raised money in support of KGB archival research in Ukraine, a project under the Paul Toews Professorship. The program included performances by Russell Braun and a large choir, as well as a presentation by Senator Peter Harder, entitled, "Doors closed--Doors opened" and one by me, entitled, "Out of the Ashes of Revolution — Into the Promise of Canada."

The Plett Foundation continues its work to encourage the study of the history of the Mennonites who came to Manitoba in the 1870s and their descendants, and in particular to promote a respectful understanding and appreciation of the contributions made by so-called Low German-speaking conservative Mennonite groups of the Americas. One of the major ways that the foundation supports the study of this history is through our grant program. This year, the foundation granted funds to a number of applications, including to Dr. Susie Fisher who is producing a book that explores the creative work of three



The back of the *Maedchenschule* in *Khortitsa*.

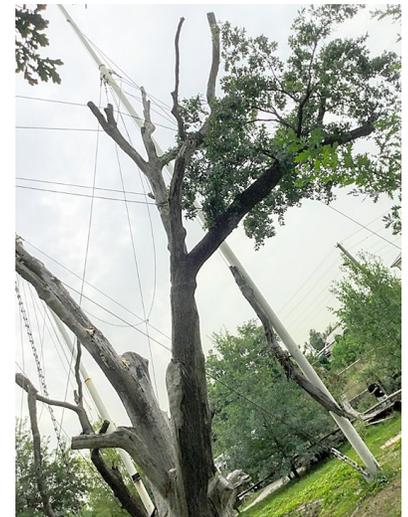
— Photos by Aileen Friesen

photographers who lived in Manitoba Mennonite villages in the early twentieth century: Peter G. Hamm (1883–1965) of Neuberghthal (West Reserve), Peter H. Klippenstein (1878–1960) of Altbergthal (West Reserve), and Johann E. Funk (1876–1968) of Schönwiese (East Reserve).

The foundation also continues to publish its annual journal, *Preservings*. This year's issue will focus on the theme of family life. We have a full slate of articles including contributions from Hans Werner, Glenn Penner, Julie McNeice, and many others. The recent presentation at the Mennonite Heritage Village on revivalism in Steinbach by Ralph Friesen will also be included in this issue. Readers can look forward to a "new look" for *Preservings* as we have redesigned the journal.

I invite contributions for next year's issue of *Preservings* which will explore how Mennonite communities were shaped by their encounter with railways in Russia, Canada, the United States, and Latin America. We are interested in the significance of railways to the development of Mennonite industry, communal life, travel, employment, and immigration. In some cases, Mennonites deliberately rejected the building of the railway in their communities. If you have an interest in contributing an article on this theme, please contact the foundation. We also encourage articles, biographies, local histories, reflections, and archival materials on other topics in Mennonite history.

Finally, the foundation published the fourth volume in its Mennonite History for Young People series. *Leaving Russia: The Journey to Canada* tells the story of how Mennonites left Russia in the 1870s and travelled to Canada. The volume presents stories and other information about early Mennonite settlers as they encountered new people and environments in Manitoba. All the volumes can be purchased at the Mennonite Heritage Village, the Mennonite Heritage Archives or *Die Mennonitische Post*.



The *Khortitsa* Oak.

### Book Sale

Ralph Friesen's *Between Earth and Sky: Steinbach the First 50 Years* is now available at the Mennonite Heritage Village Book Shop for \$7 (soft cover) and \$10 (hard cover).

### Book Launch

*Rosenfeld, Manitoba and other Neighboring Communities, 1875-1975*, Sunday, Nov. 18th at 2:00 p.m. at Rosenfeld Good Neighbor Centre, 262 Main St. For information call 204-324-6534.

# A Siberian Situation: Too Little but Not Too Late

by Lawrence Klippenstein

A special visit during our Moscow MCC assignment took LaVerna, my wife and me to a new situation not long before we returned to Canada. The year was 1993. We planned to fly home in late September.

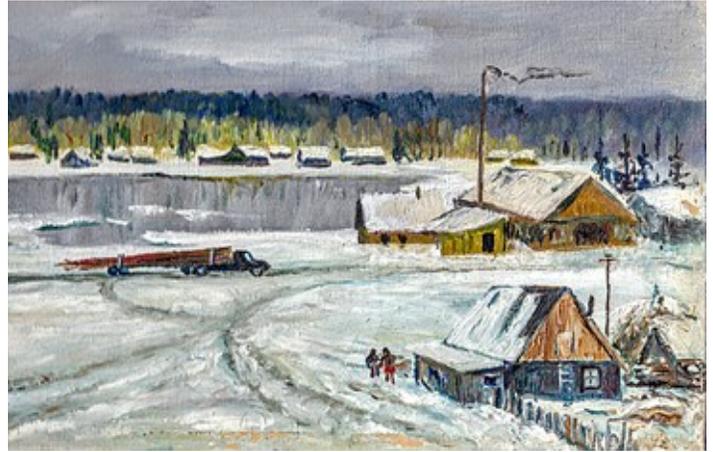
Some months before the planned departure we received three guests who introduced themselves as Germans from Siberia, in Moscow for a few weeks of language study. One of them was Kornelius Unrau who, as I judged it, spoke a flawless Low German hence communication was really very simple. He went on to tell us they had come to invite us as foreign guests in the country (not sure if he knew about MCC) to attend a special occasion in their home city of Barnaul in Siberia. They gave a date late in August. And, said Kornelius, they were hoping I could say a few words at this planned gathering.

When I asked if he had a topic in mind, he said, "Tell us something about Canada." We told him the time would suit and the topic would be fine. It would have to be spoken in High German, he added. I said, that could be done. He mentioned also that the occasion out there in the city was the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Germans being exiled from the Volga region to Siberia, including this city and its surroundings in the early 1940s. I said I knew a little about that history.

It sounded like a potentially very interesting upcoming experience. We had never been to Siberia together, although I had made a trip earlier in the year to help settle in another Canadian couple, the Ben and Erna Falks of Virgil, Ontario, for their two- year MCC assignment as community workers in the Mennonite village of Neudachino (trans. No Hope). It had taken us two days and nights to get there along the Transsiberian Railway from Moscow, with temperatures (this was February) around – 25 Celsius, but this time, we agreed, we would fly.

The Aeroflot trip to Barnaul, begun at the tumbledown airport of Domodedovo not far from Moscow in what seemed like a rather aged aircraft, went well on the whole. We were met at the Barnaul airport by Kornelius Unrau and first taken to their home for an evening snack, and then settled into a rather pleasant apartment of a house they said we could use while in Barnaul (I believe someone generously moved out for the few days we would be around). He asked to excuse his wife who did not speak Low German as he did (she was of Jewish extraction and she did not like it so well when he spoke Low German with their guests because then she could not understand what was said, or add to the conversation, to be part of the visiting). But she spoke High German, and of course Russian well, he said. Her name was Svetlana. They were a very pleasant couple with a warmly welcoming home.

He said the program would take place the next day at the German Cultural Centre in Barnaul. Quite a few people would be attending he thought and he knew that I would be one speaker on the program. That time came quickly. We



**Winter in Siberia by N. Graff, a German-Russian artist living in the Barnaul community. An oil painting presented to Lawrence and Laverna Klippenstein in 1993 by Cornelius and Svetlana Unrau at Barnaul, Siberia. The notes on the back suggest that the painting was done at Veronikha.**

had met a Mr. Jacob Toews and his wife Lydia by then (good Low German speakers also) as well as a well-known Russian German historian whose name was Lev Malinovskii whose writings I was somewhat acquainted with – not sure now if we had him for an English conversation, or High German (not Low, I am sure!).

Our program director for the afternoon next day at the Cultural Centre was one Johann Schellenberg whom I had not heard, though there was a Peter Klassen around, I knew, who was also a writer, in High German, and who had a fairly clear Communist line of ideology showing through in his writing. We never did get to see him. I was sorry about that.

But Johann, a long-time resident there, knew all the languages we needed. He took us aside a few minutes before the program (with several hundred people waiting to see what was next). A bit formally he turned to me and said, And Mr. Klippenstein, the program says you are to bring the sermon here today. I asked, a bit diminished, does it say "sermon?" He said, Yes, indeed, in a voice that he hoped I would be okay with. I told him, Yes, I think so – what else could be said, and wondering inwardly how "a few words about Canada" could at this crucial moment be turned into a sermon – a bit like turning water into wine, when I think of it now.... But we were only a few minutes away from proceeding to the platform. The Germans have a saying for such moments: *Yezt hilft kein Maul spitzen, es muss gepfiffen werden*, meaning "now just opening your mouth will not do, one must say something."

I was given then, I think literally, the idea that I could go over a theme we had spoken much about in seminary (35 years ago). In our Bible studies at seminary we had done

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quite a bit of study on a theme something like “the plan of Salvation in the Old Testament.” I remembered highlights quite well, or at any rate soon would need to if I went for that, and since we had done several semesters of study, I felt that I could probably draw a half hour presentation out of that. Might work, I thought, although Mary was not around to reassure me as she had been for the Cana wedding ushers long ago! Come to think of it now, LaVerna, my wife, was there to do her part, and I know she did — all she could do was pray!

God was there, to be sure, and people in the pews have never been more attentive for any of my pulpit appearances as they were that afternoon. I felt quite sure many of them had not had a sermon for a long, long time so we would surely be doing some good. We had some excellent music with the program, other speeches, and more items, announcements for which Mr. Schellenberg switched very easily to Russian. After that there was a very delicious German Russian lunch, visiting, more introductions, welcomes, etc. Quite unforgettable, even after 25 years. Was I thankful and relieved? LaVerna later told me the sermon was better than when I prepared for hours — and that was because I did not have a major stumbling block to deal with (as far as she was concerned) — namely fumbling with notes. I had none, of course.

It was a splendid experience all around. There was more visiting with Kornelius and Svetlana when we got home. Kornelius talked about his army experience where he had been given a special assignment in the music department because he was a musician — so never did need a gun. He gave me a small hand-produced song book he had authored. He also made arrangements for us to visit a dacha (country garden cabin) the next day, etc, and soon notified us that we would be getting a river cruise (the Ob River flowing beautifully through the city), and in two days a bus would take us to Novosibirsk and then by train we would get to Tatarsk, and by then Ben Falk would have found us to visit them in Neudachino and head for home (Moscow, that is).

Our stopover in Novosibirsk allowed us to meet the local pastor, Willi Peters, and his son Andre, who were leaders in the small Mennonite church carrying on there (and still is). Ben was with him at the railway station when we boarded well after midnight to get to Tatarsk. Pastor Peters has recently passed away. A word of tribute and an obituary has been prepared to share with our churches which we should be able to read soon in our church papers. Andre is committed to take up the task of this

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— The editors.

father, who was one of the last Mennonite church leaders active in Russia. He coveted our prayers for him and his ministry in the years ahead.

The visit which followed with the Falks in Neudachino would provide another story, but the conclusion was really that after we had left the local police (still the KGB) had called Ben in and peppered him with questions about those foreign visitors he had had, who they were, and why he had not reported that they were coming, etc., etc. It all went fairly smoothly but did add more notes to the record being kept by local authorities on everything he did and everywhere he went. He never did find out how that information could get to the police office as quickly as it did. Near the end of his term of work, and official showed him that register — quite a volume.

We made it in time for departure at the Omsk airport, after being tractor-towed to the rail siding in Neudachino, because it rained so hard the night before we left. A small celebration on our behalf by the local church there, created on the spot when they learned it was our wedding anniversary that day, made up for hitches and anything one could easily call “hoops” to get through before we were fully relaxed to enjoy the time in Barnaul. Too little, all that, but (we hoped) not too late!

## **Field Trip to Fort Dufferin**

Students from West Park School in Altona were treated to a field trip to Fort Dufferin on Friday, Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>. The Post Road Heritage Group was on site to demonstrate many activities for the kids. There were 80 kids in two groups. As well as the corn sheller in the picture above, there was butter making, bannock baking over an open fire and a tour of the buildings. The students toured the site and the walking trail and in general had a great time outside on a nice fall day.

(Taken from the *Southeast Journal* with permission. Thanks!)



**A student turns the crank and watches a corn shelling machine.**

# Steinbach Then and Now

by Ken Klassen

I suppose you could say I am “bred in the bone” when it comes to the East Reserve and Steinbach. My great-great-grandfather David Klassen was one of the original delegates to the East Reserve before settling his large family in Scratching River. Fortunately, my great-grandfather Peter came back to “*dit sied*” and my grandfather John moved us from Heuboden, near Kleefeld to Neaunlaug/Twin Creek. Finally, my father, C.U. (telephone) Klassen, picked up his family and the house itself and moved the whole kit and kaboodle to 107 Mill

Street in Steinbach. I was born there a few years later, and aside from a year or two of study and travel, I have lived in Steinbach my whole life.

So my interest was more than piqued when my brother Glen announced that the Third Annual History Lectures of the EastMenn Historical Committee would take a look at Steinbach, Then and Now — with a brief history of the revivalist tradition in Steinbach, a slide show featuring original photographs of early Steinbach collected, annotated and many taken by the well-known Walt Barkman — and wrapping up with Glen’s look at the impact of volunteerism and non-profit organizations in Steinbach today. I was pleasantly surprised when I rolled up to the MHV Museum on Saturday night and could hardly find a parking spot — “Could this many people really be this interested in local history?” I asked myself.

The evening did not disappoint — starting with a survey of the revivalism that certainly paralleled a big part of my formative years in this town. Born only eight months before

*(Continued on page 7)*

**Revival Meetings**

at the  
**Steinbach Gospel Tabernacle**

Sunday Oct. 2 to Oct. 7 inclusive  
Sunday Service 11 A.M. and 7:30 P.M.  
Weekdays 8.00 P.M.

Rev. C. B. Dircks of Nipawin, Sask.,  
will conduct the services

Good singing and Special Music at all sessions.

Everybody welcome

SPONSORED BY THE EMMANUEL MISSION



The Gospel Tabernacle in Steinbach, built to host revival meetings. (credit: unknown)



Steinbach Flour Mill destroyed by fire in 1931 (credit Jacob D. Barkman)



Young attendees at the Brunk tent campaign in Steinbach (credit: Jack Ablett)



Jacob D. Barkman with his EMB Sunday School class (credit: Jacob Barkman)

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the big Brunk tent crusade of 1957, I missed my opportunity to start my lifelong religious journey there — but I certainly heard so much about his legend from my older siblings that for many years I thought I might have actually been there. I also missed the glory years of the “Tabernacle” that I knew only as a tire depot for a local tire shop. But I was there when the Solbrekken tents came to town, for Billy Graham in Winnipeg and Barry Moore in the Steinbach Arena.

I was born into the local *Kleine Gemeinde*, which became part of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference in my early years. Along with the name change came an increasing fascination with American evangelists — from Wes Aarum to the Sutera twins and Freddy Gonzalez and the God Squad who brought their Las Vegas musical act to the stage of the local EMC — blue polyester bellbottom pant suits, afros, a loud horn section, and a band leader that breathed his simulation of being in hell into the mic. Sunday school teachers, choir directors and other church people that I had always looked up to as examples of faithful commitment flocked to the front — I followed — but I walked right out the front of the sanctuary — holding tightly to the quiet and sincere faith of my *kirchliche* forebears and renouncing unequivocally this parody of evangelism.



**Ralph Friesen**

— Photo by Harold Dyck

Ralph Friesen’s presentation brought all of this back to me, but it also filled in a few pieces I had missed. Having grown up with a mother who was from a large Holdeman family, I spent a lot of my time in that environment. I had always thought of this group as a small ultra-conservative splinter from the main stream, only to discover that they made up 25% of Steinbach’s population only 8 years after the town was settled predominantly by the *Kleine Gemeinde* — and that starting with them, American revivalism had had a

significant impact on the main stream in Steinbach from the very beginnings.

Glen Klassen’s presentation of Walt’s Steinbach was a wonderful segue — backing up the contention that the third church to come to Steinbach, the Bruderthaler (EMB), was able to meld Mennonite theology with entrepreneurship and provide the basis for Steinbach’s phenomenal development as a business hub, rising literally out of the muddy main street that was best crossed on a wooden boardwalk. Three hydro poles represented three different sources of power for the newly burgeoning industry of the town, along with the chimney of the central steam plant. Of special interest to the crowd seemed to be the pictures of the big dredge — with discussion of who had owned and operated that amazing piece of equipment. It turns out that



**Visit of Governor General Lord Bessborough to Steinbach in 1933.**

(credit Jacob D. Barkman)

a healthy competitive spirit was already arising in the town and that there were two different machines with two different owners. I finally started recognizing the Steinbach of my youth with the pictures of the large H.W. Reimer’s General Store building on Main Street — I am old enough to remember tagging along with my dad into this huge cavernous dark interior filled with amazing things — including a pickle barrel and another barrel of white peppermints with a large H embossed on the surface — I still wonder if they were proprietary or whether this was just a neat coincidence.

The final presentation of the evening provided an illuminating insight into how the faith and work ethic and the strong double helix of *kirchliche* and evangelical traditions in Steinbach has led to formation of over 80 not-for-profit organizations — more than twice the national average — commanding over 120 million dollars in net assets in 2016 alone. When asked to name a local business with almost \$1.5 million gross income and a profit margin of 40% — no one guessed the MCC Thrift Shop. Such numbers are only possible with small armies of volunteers working for free — with huge benefits to the local community on many levels. Other organizations included 28 churches, numerous organizations committed to caring for vulnerable adults, and serving those in need of food aid, shelter, English language skills — and the list goes on.

The original intent of the evening was to include a presentation on Steinbach’s future, but as someone wryly stated — maybe that had been accomplished by an all-candidates’ forum for city council earlier in the week. I do believe that the challenges Glen left us with at the end of his session did call for some serious reflection on our future as a city and region: Will the governments of the future still trust non-profits to do much of their work and thus support them with funding? Will citizens continue to give generously to provide the critical private funding from many of these organizations? Will there still be enough volunteers willing to provide all of these not-for-profit but essential services? Will the Steinbach of the future still be the Steinbach of then and now?

# Neubergthal Culture Days (Sept 27-29, 2018)

by Erin Unger

Approaching Neubergthal on the 421, you can see its giant cottonwoods rising up from the prairie in the distance. They draw you in like a magnet.

Andrew and I have felt drawn to Neubergthal for several years now. . . but this past September 15th marked our first time experiencing Neubergthal Culture Days.

My first thought of that day at Neubergthal is one of regret. Regret that we weren't able to take in everything. There was so much going on, that we had to pick and choose.

I regret missing out on the artisan market in the Commons Barn. I only saw it for about 30 seconds, as my friend Melissa was purchasing some locally-roasted coffee. The imaginative artisan booths attracted my attention, but we were afraid of being late to other events and so we rushed away.

I regret missing out on taking a tour of the Friesen Housebarn, led by Lawrence Klippenstein. (My friend Pam told me about this tour, and I'm jealous to have missed out!)

We also missed out on pony rides, and sipping lemonade sold by adorable children.

Here's why we missed out on these things: it was our goal to take in specific talks. We knew Dr. Royden Loewen would be speaking in the Hildebrand Housebarn, and so we bolted directly for this event. . . nevertheless, we were awkwardly late. We quietly slipped inside and commenced listening. Dr. Loewen was in the midst of explaining that to plant something is to put your stamp on the land, particularly when planted in straight lines, such as the cottonwoods of Neubergthal. In the late 1870's, Mennonites were writing in to the Rundschau, mentioning their surprise at the fact that there were Indigenous people here. They'd assumed this would be their land, and it would be empty. We were urged to read Treaty One, and also the Roseau River Land Settlement. To understand that Mennonites were complicit in clearing the plains of indigenous people. We were urged to make an effort to expand our awareness and understand who the indigenous people were, and the gratitude that we should have, so we may put a shoulder to righting injustices. Such a powerful message here in



Neubergthal Culture Days welcomes visitors.

this place. That's something I appreciate about the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation: they make a real effort to confront the facts, the cause-and-effect, the harsh history, that enabled Mennonites to come here and establish these villages.

After the talk ended, small groups were able to tour the Hildebrand Housebarn, so Andrew and I eagerly joined a tour of this fascinating, historic house which in 2015 had been carefully moved from Neuhorst to Neubergthal.

After this, we hurried down the street to the H.F. Hamm House to hear Ernest Braun's lecture, "Old School." As soon as I had heard he would be speaking, I was eager to attend his talk, as he is one of the authors of the *Historical Atlas of the East Reserve*, which is my favourite local history book. Ernie told us about the little private Mennonite schools, about the funding and government control of education. An interesting fact that I'd never heard before was this: the *Privilegium* was changed five days after it was signed, and then sealed for 45 years. . . so really, Mennonites came to Canada under false pretenses, believing they could have private schools, when really that was never the government's intention.

I also learned that the people who were teachers in the ER were considered the "*schlukses*" — not good for much else, like farming. This makes me think of my great-grandfather, who had been one of the first teachers at Spencer North. As we were listening to Ernie speak, I looked around, and noticed people leaning in through the windows to hear Ernie's talk! In the midst of exposed beams and stacked walls, and one lonely light bulb. And the sounds I heard: the wind in the cottonwoods, and children playing.

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Erin Unger running between events in Neubergthal.

— Photos by Erin and Andrew Unger

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After this, we joined the line for the soup and pie supper, and encountered my friend Jamie — she was positively glowing! She'd had an experience at Neubergthal that I never could: she's descended from the Klippensteins of Neubergthal, and she rediscovered this connection! Her grandfather grew up in Neubergthal, and her great-grandfather built the barn that is today known as The Commons. And the house that the Neubergthal Heritage Foundation is restoring? Her grandpa grew up in that house! Jamie hadn't been to Neubergthal since she was 12. . . now her daughter is 12, seeing the village and family farm site for the first time. Standing in the very same barn that her great-great-grandfather built... seeing the initials he had carefully etched into the crossbeam over 100 years ago. Such a palpable connection to the past!

Following the meal, we returned to The Commons Barn so Andrew could get set up for his talk. . . as that evening was to feature Andrew Bergman of *The Daily Bonnet*, and the heartfelt music of Joshua Letkeman of *The Letkeman Bros*. The Commons Barn looks good packed to the brim with many many people! And I really have to say, that while I cannot boast a family tie to Neubergthal the way my friend Jamie can, nevertheless we left with a feeling of connection, eyes bright with challenged hearts, expanded minds, and ignited imaginations. Thank-you to everyone who planned the day, and who participated in the day. I look forward to experiencing Culture Day next year!

Erin Unger has her own internet blog called *Mennotoba*.



**Dr. Royden Loewen lectures in the Hildebrand Housebarn.**



**Erin's friend Jamie, in front of the Klippenstein House her grandpa grew up in.**



**Klippenstein initials carved into the beam in The Commons.**



**Ernie Braun in discussion with attendees after his talk.**



**Andrew Bergman of the *Daily Bonnet* entertains with gentle satire.**

## MHV Appoints New Director

In March, Barry Dyck announced he would retire from that position at the end of 2018. Museum President Willie Peters says they have hired Gary Dyck to replace him. Peters jokes while the two men have very similar names, there is no relation. Peters says Dyck brings experience in a wide span of business and charitable work.

According to Peters, Gary Dyck grew up in Steinbach. He graduated from Steinbach Regional Secondary School, then earned a Bachelor of Arts in Intercultural Studies from Briercrest College and a Master of Arts in Global Studies from Providence Seminary.

Dyck's career began with enVision Community Living and continued with the Evangelical Mennonite Conference/ Frontiers as an overseas holistic development worker. His international knowledge increased as the Director of Language and Translation Research in Uzbekistan with Central Asia Free Exchange, and as a Mandarin and Uyghur Language Student in China at Urumqi Vocational University. Focusing his interest in sustainable agriculture, Dyck became the CEO and founder of an organic fertilizer company in China called New Earth Agro Inc. His travels included witnessing a cultural genocide in Asia.

Dyck's list of languages includes English, Uzbek, Uyghur, Mandarin, Russian and French. Peters says his experiences and skills will allow him to initiate successful connections with tourists, donors, colleagues and government officials.

Dyck and his family now live in Steinbach. He will take over at MHV in February, but Peters says he will spend time at the museum between now and then getting himself familiar with the position. And though Barry Dyck had announced he would retire at the end of 2018, Peters says he has now agreed to stay on until February to help with the transition.

"Everything fell into place very nicely and we are thrilled," notes Peters.

Barry Dyck has served at MHV since February 2009.

(MHV Press Release)



**Gary Dyck is the new Executive Director at MHV, starting on Feb 11.**

— Photo credit Gary Dyck

## Dirk Willms Sculpture Installed at MHV



**Peter Sawatzky, renowned local sculptor, accompanied his crew as they installed his work of art at MHV.**

— Photo by Glen Klassen

The long anticipated sculpture depicting an iconic event from the *Martyr's Mirror* was installed at the Mennonite Heritage Village by sculptor Peter Sawatzky and his crew on October 23. The committee in charge, headed by Elbert Toews of Steinbach, saw their dream realized after a number of years of planning and fund-raising. Official unveiling will take place on November 10 at 2:00 p.m.. A plaque will be mounted on a nearby rock.

The two bronze life-sized elements were mounted on an elliptical granite base which was highly polished to represent the frozen moat on which the action took place during the time of the Reformation. The story is that Dirk Willms, after escaping from the prison castle by crossing the frozen moat, was hotly pursued by a guard. The guard broke through the ice and could not save himself. He implored Dirk to save him and so Dirk turned around and pulled him to safety. Unfortunately, in spite of the guard's intercession, Willms was re-arrested and ultimately burned at the stake. The committee and the Museum are looking ahead to the installation of a small pavilion from which visitors can view the statue, read the interpretive panels, and reflect on the meaning of the event portrayed.



# Book Reviews

**Shirley Hiebert.** *Trüdyt's Daughter: A Mennonite Woman's Memoir*, (HHCXchange Inc., 2018), pb pp. 323.

**Reviewed by Maria Falk Lodge**

*"Looking back over the landscape of my life, it's as if, I spent most of it trying to find a way through a maze with high walls until the plane crash changed everything."*

The "Author's Note" at the beginning of Shirley Hiebert's Memoir, *Trüdyt's Daughter: A Mennonite Woman's Memoir*, invites, . . . indeed seems to implore the reader that we too explore this landscape, and that we walk the maze with her, trying to determine and understand what made those walls so very high.

And then, as if to throw a thunderbolt at us, the author gives us a brief glimpse of what it is that changed everything — *the plane crash*.

Trüdyt's daughter Shirley begins her earthly journey in December, 1945, as the child of an unmarried mother — "I was about to be born into the fractious Harder household . . .", and *fractious*, we soon learn is a very mild term. Trüdyt however, also has a mind of her own, and decides she will not give up her daughter for adoption, and names her Shirley, after the young movie star of that era, an entirely unconventional Mennonite name at the time.

Fortunately for Shirley, her grandparents are not opposed to her and Trüdyt living with them. "Quite the contrary, Grandpa dips his nib pen into the ink bottle and enters my name in perfect Gothic lettering in the family record book."

Shirley's aunts and uncles descend on the Harder household with no thought, it appears, of blessings for mother and child. The names that are addressed to both Trüdyt and Shirley are outright vicious -- "*dee Hua onn äa Huabauljch*" (the whore and her whorebrat!). Ultimately the decision is reached that Shirley can stay. A photograph of a happily smiling infant confirms, as do numerous other photographs, that Shirley is indeed a member of the clan. In time her mother will marry Paeta Rempel, and Shirley will have cousins, and eventually also siblings.

The author writes a very personal note, in the nature of a dedication, which sheds light on where the memoir is taking the reader. "*To Ethan Hiebert Barreda, 'My very dear Ethan, . . . This book was lovingly written to help you appreciate your Manitoba prairie heritage. You will come to know stories of your Canadian family and those of the First Nations people your Grandpa and Grandma came to respect in the boreal forest . . .'*"

When the author turned sixteen years of age, she married Abe Hiebert. However, not before her future father-in-law invites her into the living room and tells her "*Diene Mama es eene Hua*" (your mother is a whore) and then proceeds to tell her, deliberately inaccurately, the name of her biological father. Presumably considering himself magnanimous, he goes on to advise her, "We won't hold it against you. We will accept you as a daughter-in-law — the best we can."

Abe follows his dream and becomes a pilot, his flying route covering northern Manitoba communities. Shirley

pursues a career in nursing, a decision that will take her to the Canadian north as well. In time she too will become a pilot, and will fly out to the site of the plane crash.

Shirley experiences the warmth and kindness of the people of the North, who help her come to grips with the tragedy that is shaping the rest of her life.

The book provides a Plautdietsch Glossary, an Appendix of two documents, one being the confession protocol of the church for a *repentant member*, and the second one being a Memorandum to the Manitoba Legislature dated March, 1921, by the Sommerfeld Community, Altona, Manitoba, and the Chortitz Community, Niverville, Manitoba.

*Shirley Hiebert, PhD, has career experience as a nurse practitioner, administrator, educator and researcher.*



**Walter Sawatsky.** *Going Global with God as Mennonites for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (North Newton, USA: Bethel College, 2017), pb., 110 pp.,

**Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein**

This volume is listed as No. 19 in the Cornelius H. Wedel Historical Series, edited by Dr. David Haury and John D. Thiesen. It is based on the Menno Simons lectures held at Bethel College in 2014. The author is a retired professor emeritus of church history and missions at Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. The lectures, declares a blurb on the back cover "are the fruit of over 30 years of international ministry, research and teaching history." And the comment adds, "Our task is to glimpse the light and shadow sides of Mennonite, indeed of Christian history as a whole."

The lecture commences with a sermon preached at the Bethel College Mennonite Church on the topic, "The Nevertheless of Love" and kicks in with a question: What does it look like to love your neighbour in 2014? One could quickly amend this question with another one as does the biblical story: And who is my neighbour? "Our mission needs critique" are other words found in this sermon.

The second chapter is titled "The Pluralities of Mennonite History: Why Russian Mennonites as Paradigm." Some readers may think that this piece might well have come at the end of the series, rather than the beginning. It is a kind of case study. We are challenged here to re-examine our thinking on the place in our current efforts of renewal, of past experiences. In this case two are relevant: the early "pure" church (which was not flawless by any means, but still waited and hoped for the moving as the Spirit) and next the renewal vision of the Anabaptists which remains dated as something deemed meaningful primarily for their sixteenth century world.

The Russian Mennonite experience, suggests the author, may have something to teach us, first of all in its thriving time under the tsars, then in its testing and reshaping under the Soviets, and finally in its

# Book Notes

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Harold Jantz, translator and editor, *Flight* (Winnipeg, 2018), pb, 720 pp. \$60. Based on materials from the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. Stories of Mennonites leaving Bolshevik Russia in 1929-30 and then corresponding with friends and relatives from new areas of residence. Available at Mennonite Heritage Village gift and book shop. Call 1-204-326 9661.

Harold N. Wiens, *Return to Odessa* (Victoria, B.C.: Friesen Press, 2017), pb., 240 pp, \$20. About a young Russian woman who leaves Odessa in a migration to Manitoba, and then returns ultimately to find herself involved in opera work in her home city, doing what her grandma always wanted to do but never could. Available from the Mennonite Heritage Village book shop at 1-204-326 9661.

Three new novels on Russia by David Funk add some interesting reading for the winter months to come (do not say that!). They include *On the Banks of the Irtysh (Siberia)* (Abbotsford, B.C. self published, 2018, pb. 252 pp., \$26.25, and from the same author and also self published, at the same price, *Under Siberian Skies, 2017*, pb, 248 pp, dealing with the escape of Mennonites via Harbin, cross the Amur River, as well as *The Last Train to Leningrad, 2015*, 247 pp, pb.. Order from the address given above.

David Redekop, formerly Mexico (?) now resident in Ottawa, has recently released a series of books on various

topics, such as themes from Mennonite life in Russia, Low German grammar and related studies, etc. All texts are provided in three languages: Spanish, High German and Low German. To get further details on the set (some twenty titles) check the website at <http://www.plautdietsch-copre.ca> The books can be obtained online free of charge. For more details write to the author at David Redekop, 803 -333 Chapel St., Ottawa, ON, K1N 8Y8.

A new book on the town of Rosenfeld is expected to come off the press in October. For information contact [owltree@snet.ca](mailto:owltree@snet.ca)

A fine addition to the literature on Russian/Canadian Mennonites is a new book by Werner Toews of Winnipeg, entitled *Sketches of Siberia: The Life of Jacob D. Suderman*, printed by Friesen Press in Victoria, B.C just months ago this year (pb., 133 pp, \$29.95). Its strongest thrust resides in its depiction in color of the paintings of Suderman, a Chortitza Mennonite university-educated man hoping to forge a career as architect, who found himself in a Siberian gulag (*Svobodny*) in the 1930s and ultimately passed away and was buried there. A very readable biographical narrative places the "exhibit" in simple but excellent display style in the broader context of repression, deprivation and general suffering experienced by hundreds of thousands of Mennonites and many others during that period. It is hoped that a regular review can follow in these pages.

(Continued from page 11)

contemporary ongoing journey within the Slavic church world of our day. In a story, not well known in North America and many parts beyond, a series of key elements held high in the Anabaptist vision have been given flesh and blood in our time, and arguably instructive for us in growing our faith and mission.

One very obvious element in this modern story is the witness to a costly discipleship which took so many Russian Christians along the path of almost infinite suffering, as Jesus had walked it. It led to a death and suffering that can be called exemplary, though it was not the only case of a people's relentless, almost genocidal persecution. Other such elements were the dynamic of a peace theology, an effectual mission theme, and a contextually developing theology of state, church and society. Much work needs still to be done in these areas, to be sure, and there need to be more people to carry forward these labours in all places where the Mennonite community finds itself.

Chapter 3 is about reconciling free churches to two millennia of global Christianity. The total "Christian" population of the world is about two billion, out of a total world population of seven to eight billion. All are included in the scriptural word: God so loved the world. . . Within the Christian sector then, there are the many fragments of the world Christian community, so many of which, notes the author, have no place in the care of Christians who often see only their own small part of the global body as the

ones who have it right. These people, it is stated further, need to learn call their own the entire Christian community of the world, and its history. Our "reformation" today tends to place that task high on our uncompleted "to do" list.

The fourth and final chapter is about "integrating worship, ethics, nonviolence and public theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> century." Those themes represent a lot of theory and final challenges for readers to add to their already huge loads of hard work, and a great deal to think about. Much thinking needs to be done on peacemaking, more questioning about failure to become realistic and honest, and more effort in reconciling life and work in the church. Almost every paragraph has at least one longer or shorter quote to reflect the urgency of the author's pleas.

Still, suggests the author, if we want to talk about reformation, or changing what needs rethinking, restating, re-viewing, we cannot avoid the unthinkable large tasks that lie ahead. As it is said, reformation needs to be an ongoing process, never done, in fact. But there is hope in spite of failures and dark blemishes, incredible inconsistencies and wrong turns, all of which, sadly, will also continue as reforming takes place.

This reviewer trusts and hopes that others will bring forward the important critical comments which a genuine review should include, but this one looks only to provide a glimpse of what is set on our table here, so the feasting of gradually "getting it" can reach more and more people and be enjoyed by all. God is good!