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## Transnational Mennonite Studies Conference on Anthropology

By Ernest N. Braun

*“My personal experience after almost fifty years of researching and writing about Mennonites is that Mennonites have been active participants in the world and as such they have contributed to change and not just been victims of change.”*

This comment by Dr. James Urry of Wellington, New Zealand, in his keynote address on Friday October 25 may well summarize the theme of the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies Conference titled **Mennonites and Anthropology: *Ethnography, Religion and Global Entanglements***. The two-day event on October 25-26 was sponsored by the University of Winnipeg, the D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation and the University of Victoria at Wellington, New Zealand. Spread over ten sessions and featuring thirty different speakers from New Zealand, the Netherlands, England, Albania, Switzerland, Paraguay, Japan, various American states, and several Canadian provinces, this conference was a ground-breaking event in that it constituted the first international conference on Mennonite Anthropology in the world, according to organizer Dr. Royden Loewen. The conference was held in Convocation Hall of the Wesley Hall Building where it has been held annually for 25 years. Attendance varied by session.

The presenters unpacked the “global entanglements” that have characterized Mennonite presence in various



Dr. Katherine Hill of Birkbeck College, London, speaking on Friday about the role of ritual in Mennonite communities in transition. Professor Hill did her graduate work on Luther and dissident groups in the Reformation (including Mennonites), and will shortly be publishing a book on the Prussian Mennonites.

— Photo by Ernest N. Braun

parts of the world, particularly in frontier areas or in new initiatives. Although the focus of the conference was anthropology, presentations examined what it means to be Mennonite from widely different perspectives:

- from the relationship between indigenous peoples in the Paraguayan Chaco and Mennonites to the creation of fair-trade outlets by Ten Thousand Villages;
- from 1890s Mennonite evangelism among the Cheyenne to 1960s evangelism/church planting in

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Albert Falk (left) tells fellow cyclists (clockwise: Franklin, Gavin, and Darcy) about the place where he grew up during a break from their ride along the Post Road at the present-day cemetery in Schoenwiese (West Reserve) on Saturday, July 20th, 2019. (See WestMenn Report on page 4.) — Photo by Paul Krahn



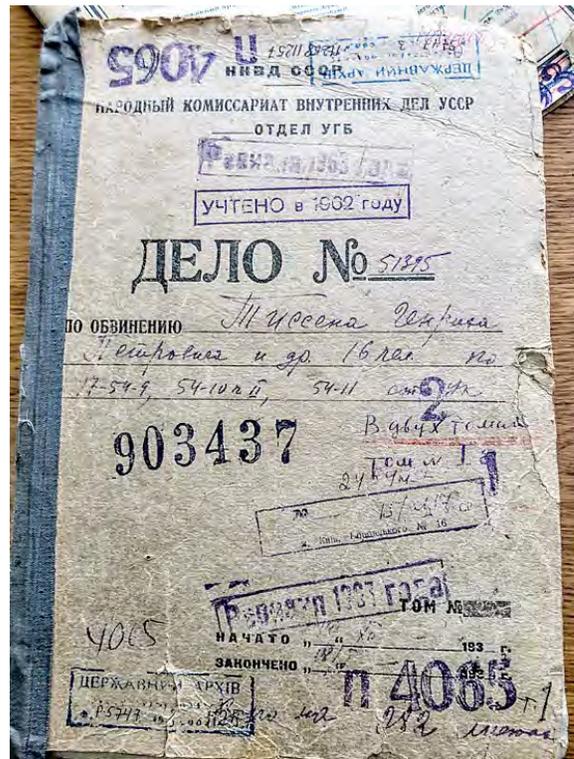
# News from the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies

by Aileen Friesen

In 2019, the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies (CTMS) at the University of Winnipeg continued its robust engagement in the field of scholarship, community outreach, and teaching. CTMS sponsored and hosted a number of talks. On May 30, 2019, a packed room listened to Dr. Colin Neufeldt deliver the fourth annual CTMS lecture at the University of Winnipeg, entitled "Building a Soviet Utopia: Mennonites and the Collective Farm in Ukraine, 1920–1924." This lecture explored how Mennonites performed leading roles in developing and administering Soviet institutions during the first years of Bolshevik rule. Dr. Neufeldt, who is a Professor at Concordia University of Edmonton, showed how Mennonites took an active, voluntary role in organizing and operating early versions of collective farms in local communities. (See report by Harold J. Dyck in *Heritage Posting*, June 2019.)

CTMS also hosted Dr. Mark Loudon who spoke on "The Meaning of the Pennsylvania Dutch Language." Dr. Loudon, who is a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is fluent in Pennsylvania Dutch, thoroughly entertained the audience with examples of the colourful language while illustrating the significance it performed in the formation and consolidation of identity.

The centre also launched the Paul Toews KGB project, which helps Mennonites find the answer to the fate of their family members who disappeared in Soviet Ukraine during the 1930s and 1940s. Families searching for information on their missing family members should send the name of the family member, date and place of birth, and names of their parents to [ctms@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:ctms@uwinnipeg.ca). This program has already answered inquiries from nearly 50 Mennonite families. At this year's Darp Day, I presented on my



Title page of the KGB file of Heinrich Thiessen who was arrested with 15 other men in 1937.

findings from archival files of arrested Mennonite men and women.

This was the first year that Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg hosted a Fall Meet & Greet. This event allowed students to interact with each other and learn about the courses offered by the program. This year the program also started to offer Mennonite Studies I and Mennonite Studies II as video on demand courses. In the fall term, nearly 100 students have been educated and entertained both in the classroom and remotely by the chair in Mennonite Studies, Roy Loewen.

CTMS has also engaged in a number of publishing initiatives. Roy published the 2019 issue of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* based on last year's Mennonite Studies Conference, "A People of Diversity: Mennonites in Canada since 1970." And *Preservings* is almost ready to go to press. Our upcoming issues (yes, we are going to two issues a year) will explore Mennonites on the rails in Canada, Mexico, Paraguay, and Russia. I invite contributions for our next theme of Mennonites and their Neighbours, which will focus on how Mennonite communities have interacted with their non-Mennonite neighbours. If you have an interest in contributing an article on this theme, please contact me ([ai.friesen@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:ai.friesen@uwinnipeg.ca)). We also encourage the submission of articles, biographies, local histories, reflections, and archival materials on other topics in Mennonite history.

## Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

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French-speaking Quebec;

- from fieldwork in oral history among the Campos Mennonites and indigenous peoples of Mexico (Darp Stories project - YouTube) to an examination of luxury in Paraguayan Mennonite Colonies;
- from a treatise on how Mennonite church rituals serve as a mechanism to maintain connection when on the move from country to country to a report on interviews with participants in the Steinbach Pride march;
- from a discussion of the collection of indigenous artefacts by H. R. Voth as missionary among the Hopi to an analysis of a Mennonite skeleton accidentally unearthed near Kleefeld in 1995;
- from the story of Mennonite resistance to government mandated digital chips on their cattle in Belize to a MEDA-initiated charcoal project among the Ayoreos in the Chaco so successful that it defeated its own game plan;
- and a dozen others.

A sampling of notable comments (in no particular order) may provide an idea of how complicated the topic is:

- one group of Mennonites should not claim ownership of Mennonitism;
- the ability of Anabaptists to opt out of the dominant narrative is really a part of “white privilege” and may therefore not be effective in carrying out social justice;
- there is no pure Gospel (without cultural context);
- Ten Thousand Villages are strictly secular (business) places - compromises are made;
- the majority of indigenous workers in the Chaco are temporary workers, many allowed to live and hunt on what was their ancestral land in return for clearing the bush, but never able to rise out of accumulated debt bondage;
- will I (as a convert to Mennonite faith) ever be Mennonite enough?



**Presenter Dr. Christa Mylin (left) of State University of New York, Albany, discussing the matter of schisms in Mennonite Church USA with the chair of the Saturday morning session on “Dissension”, Muriel Smith (right) member of the Journal of Mennonite Studies board.**



**(Left to right) Jake E. Peters and Conrad Stoesz of Wpg chat with John Reddekopp, Jake Buhler and Leonard Doell of Saskatchewan during coffee break at the anthropology conference. Conrad served as chair of the session on archaeology Saturday afternoon.**

— Photos by Ernest N. Braun

- in Paraguay the life of Mennonite simplicity is gone in favour of a prosperity gospel mentality;
- to “Christianize and Civilize the Heathen” (was the evangelical mandate of the first Mennonite missionaries to the Cheyenne in 19<sup>th</sup> century), and to “teach work” (was the main cultural mandate);
- why does Mennonite faith result in inequality in social and economic life (in the Chaco)?
- What is a truly autonomous church (in a mission setting)?
- how are Biblical stories told to other cultures?
- what does non-violence look like in prison?
- missionizing also transforms the sending church - missions modernized/liberalized Mennonites, not the reverse.

Although these comments have been reconstructed from hasty notes, they provide an insight into the spectrum of ideas that surfaced during the conference. It became clear that the contributions that Mennonites have made to change in the larger world are indeed complicated, as indicated by the conference sub-heading, *Ethnography, Religion and Global Entanglements*, and not all have been positive.

A theme familiar to Mennonites surfaced as well: how to describe the various types of Mennonites, those of ethnic North European background (with their own diversity), as well as those from other-where who have “become” Mennonite in a larger global context.

After each session the chair opened the floor for questions and comments. Several presenters including Dr. Urry gave pre-recorded video presentations, although his keynote address was followed by a live Skype Q and A from New Zealand, where it was 10:40 AM the next day.

The conference was co-hosted by Dr. Royden Loewen, U of Wpg, and Dr. Philip Fountain, U of Wellington, NZ. Selected papers from this conference (after being peer-reviewed) will be published in the 2020 *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.

(Other interesting accounts of this conference may be found on Erin Unger's blog *Mennonotoba*.)

# Historian Henry Fast Retires from EastMenn

(Presentation address by Glen Klassen on behalf of EastMenn, Oct 19, 2019)

“Henry Fast has decided to step back from active participation in the EastMenn Historical Committee. We would like to recognize him with the award of a lifetime honorary membership in the committee tonight. This entitles him to contribute to EastMenn in any way he desires, whether it’s meeting attendance, advice, or providing resources for historical research.

Back in the 70s Henry suddenly found himself assigned to teach Mennonite History at Steinbach Christian High School upon the retirement of Ben Hoepfner. Fortunately it was just that part of Mennonite history since the sojourn of the Mennonites in Russia. He jumped in with both feet, reading every book he could find. And then he did what every good teacher does -- he made the students work -- they wrote their family histories and visited local graveyards to record names and dates. This research is still in the now-SCS library, I hope.

Henry himself started to research the subject seriously, concentrating on *Kleingemeinde* history, especially that taking place in the United States, specifically Jansen Nebraska. But, of course, he also completed his *magnum opus*: a history of the first Mennonite village in the East Reserve, Gruenfeld, close to present-day Kleefeld. His book joins Royden Loewen’s Blumenort book as an exemplary village history.

On the wider history stage he pioneered the study of Molotschna Colony demographics, translating the census from Russian! Add to this an analysis of the *Brandordnung*, an interMennonite fire insurance scheme in the early days. Add to this dozens of articles in *Preservings* and *Heritage Posting*. In Steinbach, Henry played a leading role in the erection of plaques marking the homesteads of the original settlers along Elmdale Avenue. He also contributed

chapters to several of the MMHS ER history compilations and he helped bring his wife Helen’s book to press.

Henry worked closely with Delbert Plett in the Steinbach Hanover Historical Society and with its successor the EastMenn Historical Committee. He was the 'go-to' person on everything to do with KG history and could be counted on to support every EastMenn project including the recent Atlas and the Immigration Sheds cairn.

We are happy, Henry, to award this honorary membership to you as well as a small token of appreciation.”

## WestMenn Report

by Lawrence Klippenstein

The recent meeting of the WestMenn Historical Committee has brought some changes, with the usual updating. With a review of terms for the ten members of the committee, a new chair took over. He is Graham Schellenberg of Winnipeg, who is now working on a history of the former Altbergthal school district. He has also done a review of the early history of Neubergthal.

There is some extant evidence now showing that the two communities known as Neubergthal and Altbergthal were both established in 1878-79, making that a 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The appointment of a new secretary for the committee is pending. Albert Falk will handle some of the treasury work for the next term. A warm thanks to all who served in the previous term!

A bike tour brought the Memorial Post Trail into actual service again in August, thanks to leadership by Albert Falk. In addition a former West Reserve atlas revision is definitely underway. We also have a joint exhibit project, begun by Eleanor Chornoboy, under consideration with the Fort Dufferin Historical Group.

The most vigorous activity at the moment appears to be work being done on writing a history of the community of Altbergthal. Its renovated school building, moved to Neubergthal in 2012, to enhance the National Historic Site, showed its value in accommodating some 60 persons (including standing room) for several lectures offered to *Darp Day* visitors earlier in September. A good deal of earlier unavailable historical information has recently come to light. Even the small neighbouring village of Lichtfeld has been given more “reality” in the process. Graham is heading up the project. Martha Martens of Winkler has much material to offer in this research.

A modest “scrapbook” on former West Reserve history is about to appear in a second edition and we will be celebrating with others the publication of a book on missionary work in Mexico published by a former teacher, Helen Ens, formerly of Reinland, and now Winnipeg. It reached the public earlier this year (see **Book Notes** in this HP issue).



Glen Klassen (right) presents Henry Fast (left) with his honorary membership certificate.

— Photo by Ernest N. Braun

# Three Women in the Life of Paul J. Schaefer

by Ernie G. Dyck

(The material below was prepared for the 60th anniversary reunion of my graduating class at Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna. Paul Schaefer was the school principal at the time.)

Margarete Wiebe was born in 1897 in Marienthal, Molotschna. At age four her family moved to Berdyansk, a small port city on the sea of Azov, actually a part of the northern coastline of the Black Sea. Her mother Katharina Dyck was the daughter of a prosperous merchant in the city, her uncle Franz was a medical doctor who had studied abroad, her father Peter Wiebe was a teacher in Berdyansk.

Margarete attended gymnasium in Berdyansk and qualified as a teacher. She taught a few years in a Mennonite village of Crimea, then in the prosperous and progressive Kuban Mennonite settlement in the northern Caucasus region. In the Kuban she met and fell in love with a Lutheran colleague, Paul J. Schaefer. Or possibly they had met earlier and that is why she went to teach there. Though born and raised in the Kuban, Paul had attended gymnasium in a German settlement in Bessarabia, later known as Romania and now in 2019 part of Ukraine.

They married in 1921 and their daughter Lily was born in 1923. For Paul marrying a Mennonite meant leaving the Lutheran church and at some time being re-baptized (*wieder Taufe*). This tidy and warm-hearted story of two young people falling in love, marrying and having a child is set against a background of terror and starvation and social and economic upheaval. Margarete's sister Louise came to live with the Schaefer household because starvation was less severe in the Kuban than in Berdyansk. She wrote to fiancé Willy Neufeld sometime around Christmas in 1921 from Berdyansk, "Dark shadows surround people's eyes and their cheeks are sunken. Starvation does not beautify people. We are hoping to get some food supplies from the American ships that have arrived in the Crimea."<sup>1</sup>

By 1925 they were no longer starving but they decided to emigrate to Canada. They settled in Gretna for two years where daughter Irma was born and where Paul attended MCI and learned English. He took teacher training at the



Paul J. Schaefer with his wife Margarete and family.

— From *Gnadenthal 1880-1980*, 1982. p. 91.

Normal School in Manitou and then taught 15 years at Gnadenthal west of Altona. In 1943, with the girls 20 and 17 and the two boys, Ted and Wilfred, not yet teenagers, the family moved to Gretna. Here Paul joined the teaching staff of the MCI.

The next year Margarete was diagnosed with cancer. Surgery and other treatment dragged on for over three years. During this time her daughters Lily and Irma were married, both on July 6, 1946. In addition to her daughters leaving home, Margarete, during her struggle with cancer, had to deal with the awareness that her elderly mother Katharina was a refugee in flight from the Soviet army, traveling by horse and wagon and on foot, ending up at the refugee camp at Gronau, Germany. Of the 35,000 or so Mennonites who embarked on the Great Trek as it came to be known, mainly women, children and old men, only about 12,000 reached safety in the West. I call Margarete's mother the second woman in Paul Schaefer's life, a remarkable survivor. The year that Margarete died, Katharina arrived from Germany and joined the Schaefer household in Gretna.

In 1948 Paul was in a tough situation, a widower with a household of two teenaged sons and an elderly 81-year-old mother-in-law, and embarking on new responsibilities as the principal of MCI. We now meet Paul's rescuer, the third woman in Paul's life, whom I consider to be the heroine of this account, Louise Wiebe, sister of Margarete and daughter of Katharina. Margarete, given her time and place, unquestionably was an amazing woman, both as a professional and as a homemaker. Katharina likewise stands out as a strong mother who overcame unbelievable hardship for the sake of her family. But the story of Louise, when I came upon it last year, for me overshadowed any

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Katharina (Dyck) Wiebe

— From the John and Lily Harms collection

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fictional romance I have ever read. In short, I came across a book, *Caught in a Broken World*, consisting of the correspondence between Louise and Willy Neufeld, 1921 - 1939, translated and edited by Ingrid Neufeld Epp (Toronto, 2011. 154pp. self-published).

Louise too was born in the Molotschna settlement on 30 September 1901 but arrived as an infant in Berdyansk weeks later when her father took a teaching position there. Like her older sister Margarete, she completed gymnasium but had her sights set not on a teaching career but on medicine. She wanted to be a medical doctor like her uncle Franz Dyck — a goal then almost unheard of for a woman. She learned French, English, Latin, studied Russian and French literature, and in Berdyansk was a well-known pianist and soloist. Her aspirations changed in the blink of an eye when in the autumn of 1919 a young Mennonite in an officer's uniform showed up one day for Sunday worship. Her strong views on women's rights and dreams of a medical career evaporated. From that moment all she wanted was to be Willy Neufeld's wife and bear his children.

Willy Neufeld by any measure was a colorful man. He was wearing an officer's uniform that day in Berdyansk because a general in the White army had requisitioned Heinrich Neufeld's automobile. Willy did not want to go to school and instead served as his father's chauffeur. The general requisitioned the chauffeur as well. A general's chauffeur cannot be an enlisted man, so Willy was given an officer's uniform. Willy's unit was stationed at Berdyansk for some months and a serious courtship ensued. But eventually his unit saw action in south Ukraine. He was wounded though not seriously. When the White Army was defeated many men and officers escaped across the Black Sea to Constantinople. From Turkey he and his two brothers made their way to Greece and Macedonia, then Romania. Because of his skill as a mechanic and his familiarity with farm machinery such as was manufactured in his father's factory in Sofievka, he always found employment.

Louise wrote letters, first from Berdyansk and then from the Schaefer household in Kuban, to relatives in Germany and to embassy officials, trying to get the money and the visas to meet up with Willy. Miraculously, letters Willy sent to Berdyansk were forwarded to her from Greece, from Macedonia, from Romania — this during a time of famine and civil unrest. If only they could be together, be in each other's arms, how she would kiss him.

In 1923 Louise finally succeeded in leaving the Soviet Union. She and Willy were married December 29 1923 in Gross Warder, Prussia. From Romania they emigrated to Canada in 1926. In Winnipeg Willy established a successful auto repair business. They were of course grateful to have escaped the Red Paradise. But there were very dark clouds as well. Louise became ill and spent many weeks hospitalized in Steinbach. They kept in touch by letter; some of these appear in Ingrid's book. Eventually she recovered her health. In 1938 daughter Ingrid was born, their only child. The other dark cloud was the never-ending stream of letters from family members in the Soviet Union



**Louise Schaefer with daughter Ingrid.**

— From the John and Lily Harms collection

detailing the unbelievable brutality of the Soviet system<sup>2</sup> and begging for aid, money, clothing and food. Some of these letters were harsh, Willy's brothers accusing him of enjoying an easy life in America and being indifferent to their plight. Letters from Louise's family, loving and gentle, nevertheless depict a life of sorrow. In fact Louise and Willy were exhausting their resources to send aid.

Their business was doing well but Willy became bitter. He felt the Canadian government could be much more aggressive in helping victims of Soviet government policy. He admired the economic policy of Germany that in ten years had changed the country from a defeated economic shambles to an economic giant. When Canada declared war against Germany in 1939, Willy refused to give up his German citizenship. Consequently he was interned as an enemy alien and placed in a prisoner of war camp. Louise, helped by friends in Winnipeg, kept the business going and cared for her daughter. It is unlikely they were able to visit him. In 1944 Willy was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumour and died at home. Louise sold the business and moved to Chilliwack.

The widower Paul Schaefer was principal of the MCI and an ordained preacher of the Blumenort Mennonite Church. It must have been with some trepidation that he chose as his second wife and step-mother to his two teenaged sons the widow of a man who wore a uniform in the civil war in Russia, and a man who refused to give up his German citizenship during WWII, and by many was regarded as a NAZI sympathizer. He was putting his reputation and his career on the line. He must have had to endure subtle, perhaps overt, criticism. But he knew what he was getting. He knew her. She had lived in his household in the Kuban in the 1920s. It worked out well. Paul's two sons and her daughter all became successful professionals. Louise Schaefer became active in the wider Mennonite church, chair of the Canadian Conference of Women and member of the executive of Mennonite General Conference Women. In this role, according to her obituary,<sup>3</sup> she was a trailblazer, "*bahnbrechend*".

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# Abandoned But Not Forgotten

by Maria Lodge

For a short period of time on October 19, 2019, those of us who attended an evening with Gordon Goldsborough at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach were reminded and indeed convinced that countless Manitoba sites and buildings which may not be recorded in any official records, nevertheless serve to tell us yet again how things change. Dr.

Goldsborough is fascinated by the stories these now abandoned sites can tell us, and brings their features to our attention, along with the myriad of reasons why they were abandoned. In doing so he causes us to take note of their place in our history.

Gordon is an aquatic biologist in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Manitoba. He is also an active member of the Manitoba Historical Society and is the President of the Society. Dr. Goldsborough is the author of *Abandoned Manitoba: from residential schools to bank vaults to grain elevators and More*



**Gordon Goldsborough**

*abandoned Manitoba: rivers, rails and ruins* which focus specifically on abandoned sites in Manitoba. Having spent the last ten years or so mapping historical places in our province, Gordon has to date identified 7500 such sites.

We were indulged by numerous vignettes on a broad range of subjects. "One room schools" is an area that fascinates this author, and he has visited every one of the 2000 school sites that once served as institutions of learning for the children and youth of rural Manitoba, including the site of the Ferndale School attended by his father.

All of us have seen old wooden grain elevators – those solitary sentinels which served rural Manitoba for many decades. According to Gordon, there were more than seven hundred of these at one time. This common symbol of prairie life is also rapidly disappearing.

As if schools and grain elevators weren't enough of a challenge for this resolute trekker, he has also explored such sites as dance halls, hospitals, and abandoned quarries, all having their own unique history. So too, we discovered, was the "Orbit", that distinctive Manitoba trash bin from the early 1960s found alongside Manitoba's highways in the now distant past.

Gordon also brought to our attention an abandoned historical site which he deemed was the closest to a "time capsule" that he has found in Manitoba. That site frozen in time is the Wasyl and Anna Negrych Homestead, in the Municipality of Gilbert Plains, occupied until 1990 by descendants of Wasyl and Anna (nee Verhun) Negrych, who homesteaded here in 1897. Their farm is located on an old "colonization road". This truly exceptional historical treasure was designated a Provincial Historic Site in 1992 and a National Historic Site in 1996. It is one of the earliest and best-preserved examples of a Ukrainian farm in Canada, having a completely intact homestead with buildings originating from the late 1890s and early 1900s, unencumbered by modern amenities such as electricity and plumbing. On a personal note, many members of my extended family and I were at the official provincial inauguration of the Negrych Homestead as an historical site during the summer of 1992.

Gordon Goldsborough's curiosity about local history seems to know no bounds, and neither distance nor other difficulties deter him from continuing to seek out significant aspects of our stories. HMCS Churchill, housing naval personnel during the 1950s is one such location. Fortunately for him, and for the rest of us, he is now able to use a drone affixed with a camera as he explores dangerous or hard to reach spots worthy of historical investigation.

We are fortunate that the EastMenn Historical Committee and Mennonite Heritage Village arranged for us to hear this fascinating presentation, the fourth annual local history lecture sponsored by the Committee. We will long remember that abandoned sites and buildings are in their own right pages of the historical record of our province.

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Paul died in 1969. But even before that Louise had been suffering severe arthritis and she broke her hip on a visit to family in Ontario. Her health declined rapidly, soon she was bedridden in the Altona care home. When she died in 1984, her family regarded it as a liberation from suffering.

I first met Louise in 1955. She accompanied my father and me from Gretna to Whitewater to attend the wedding of my brother Pete, but more importantly, I am sure, to see her former husband's cousin, my grandmother, a native of the city of Berdyansk. I knew nothing about her, didn't even wonder how she and my grandma were related. I was a clueless fourteen-year-old. Ever since coming across Ingrid Neufeld Epp's book I have wondered how I would have responded if Paul Schaefer had told her story as one episode in *Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten*.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>*Caught in a Broken World*, p 17

<sup>2</sup>This is not to imply that the preceding rule of imperial Russia was less brutal.

<sup>3</sup>*Der Bote*, 19 Sept 1984, p7.

## Opinion...

by **Conrad Stoesz and Katie Lynch,**  
**Mennonite Heritage Archives**

Federal grants for heritage institutions, such as archives, have resulted in soft advocacy for archives, built awareness, and helped some determine a career path. For decades the Mennonite Heritage Archives (MHA) has applied for funds to hire university students during the months of May to August. The MHA has a good track record for receiving these grants starting already in the 1990s. Students come away from these opportunities, not only earning money for the next school year, but having new skills. Some go on to further training and become archivists and historians. Even for those who take other paths, the time in the Archives provides them with a new appreciation for the role of archives in society that they carry into their social circles. This year the MHA hired Katie Lynch, a history student at the University of Manitoba, thanks to the federal Young Canada Works program. The archival tasks lead her to ask new questions and delve into the theory of archives. Here a reflection piece she wrote:

In the past few weeks here at Mennonite Heritage Archives (MHA) I have learned a tremendous amount about the roles and methodologies of archivists. I have found myself, on many occasions, explaining to peers outside of my workplace what an archive actually is and what the archivist actually does. In answering this question I have found that my quick answer of “someone who maintains, catalogues, and organizes historical documents” to be incredibly simplified and in some ways inaccurate to what we do here at MHA. In trying to answer this question I have come to think about this role and question of how I can fulfill it during my time here.

Although managing and organizing is an aspect of archiving, it is not the complete description of the archivist’s role. Archivists have the role of understanding the social, political, economic, and bureaucratic contexts in which historical documents were created. After creating an understanding of historical documents, often with a lot of detective work, the archivist can then make the historical records available, or restrict access to the public. The archivist can also choose to highlight aspects of the document to create a different understanding of the historical context or significance to historians and the public. This is what makes the archivist the bridge or gatekeeper to history in many ways. Our understanding of history is restricted to documents in which archivists have the power to keep, toss away, understand, share, or restrict. This power can be influenced by the institution or the social and political climate in which the archivist is in. These factors therefore, create ‘politics of memory,’ a term used by author Robert McIntosh to describe this complex role.

I have come to think about my own biases while cataloguing at MHA and how it affects my own politics of memory. I have also come to discover the scholarly conversations throughout the archive world surrounding



**Katie Lynch, Student Archivist**

— From MHA web site

politics of memory. I have come to discover that empathy, while is often the tool of the historian, can also create a bias in the archivist. As I catalogue the works created by women in history and try to understand the context in which they were writing I find myself often empathizing with the challenges they faced as women. As author Michelle Caswell writes, “In the archival realm, we posit that empathy is radical if we allow it to define archival

interactions even when our own visceral affective responses are steeped in fear, disgust, or anger.”

While radical empathy can be beneficial in understanding the context in which someone has lived, it can blur the line between yourself and the subject in which you’re cataloguing. Fear, disgust or anger that is directed toward the oppressors can create a different narrative within the archivist’s work and give a context that is inaccurate to the period. Radical empathy can also bind the archivist with the subject and with the contextual community in both the past and present. Creating an empathic bind can help us understand the historical context in many ways, but can also separate us from the context because the relationship between archivist, subject, the past and present constantly change over time.

I have also discovered the politics surrounding archives on a global scale. Nationalism plays an important role in the creation of archives. While many nations such as Germany have adequately highlighted WWII documents, a dark period of history for future generations to understand, others have had their history hidden. In an article by Vincent Hiribarren, the issue of ‘migrated archives’ is underscored; migrated archives are archives that have been moved from their original country of creation. Many countries with a colonial past such as the United Kingdom have moved their archives, which would have been potentially incriminating, from their home in previously colonized countries such as Nigeria to the U.K. where many were destroyed. In Hiribarren’s article, it is estimated that only 6-14% of the U.K.’s colonial archives still exist today. In cases like this, it becomes evident of that an archivist can exercise power in what they make available to the public, or what narratives can be created about a country or an individual’s history.

As we have seen, from these articles the job of an archivist is a complex one. Archivists are those who are documenting history, not only maintaining and cataloguing but creating a site that preserves memory, identity, culture, and negotiates power dynamics.

# Stumbling into Neureinland

by Erin Unger

I received a message from a woman who knows my penchant for exploring cemeteries: decades ago, riding horseback on the West Reserve, she encountered one in the midst of a field. I opened google maps. Satellite view. Zoom. Zoom. Zoom in again. A patch of wild grass in the middle of a cultivated section, a farmer was careful to leave alone. I tucked this information away in my brain.

Coffee warming my hands, I pulled out a family history book, and read about my great-great-great-great-grandparents, Heinrich Paul Neufeld and Maria Kroeker. In the spring of 1902, they had left their home in Ekatrinasiawski, South Russia and crossed the ocean on the S.S. Lake Megantic. They took the train from Quebec to Plum Coulee, and settled in the Winkler-Morden area. "That same year their 3-year-old youngest daughter Aganetha died and was buried in Neureinland Cemetery."

My eyes flicked to the *Manitoba Back Roads Map*, which displays many West Reserve village names... but no Neureinland.

One more try: I looked to *Harms Rempel Atlas of Original Mennonite Villages Homesteaders and Some Burial Plots of the West Reserve Manitoba*. Just inside the cover, a map. And there, Neureinland! My eyes widened. The google satellite image of the grassy island in the midst of a farmer's field sprang to mind, super-imposed on the scratchy map before me.

I felt the impulse to go find my great-great-aunt's grave.

Andrew drove me there, following my directions, navigating our little Jetta around the specific field that called to me. In the middle of the section, a tree, with no easy drive to lead me to it.

I walked in, alone. This, too, I had wanted to do. By myself. One step after another, led me further from the car and my husband, and closer to that tree.

My mother's words began echoing in my mind. Sometime in the mid-1990's her father had insisted she and her siblings visit the grave of their brother, who had died long before they'd been born. My Grandpa had said, "You have to know!" They obediently followed his directions, driving together to a seemingly random field. No longer able-bodied, leaning heavily on his cane, grandpa crossed the field littered with badger holes, picking up speed, led by something primal, led by love perhaps... the deep

remembered sadness of losing baby after baby as a young couple. Now in his old age, he had to show his grown children this place. They indulged him, and found themselves following their elderly father far far far into a field, the lone tree a beacon.



Grave of Aron F. Ens



Neureinfeld cemetery?

— Photos by Erin Unger

\* \* \*

I was lost in thought, blatantly trespassing over the sharp stubble in rubber boots and the hot sun. I came to the edge of the field, now through beans, careful to not trod upon them. And then, the sound of violently swishing grass. I looked up. There before me — an island of wildness. Of long-forgotten family history?

Cautious step after cautious step. The ground unpredictable beneath the deep, deep, impossibly tall grass. Fearing I'd find my foot suddenly descending into a giant badger hole, contacting the bones of my ancient relatives.

Was I standing on a tombstone? Wholly unprepared, I didn't want to damage an inscription. I turned to the tree. A gravestone at its base! I bent to photograph it, then saw another in the distance. And another. And another. All of the names: Ens.

My Grandpa Neufeld's mother was an Ens.

A half mile trek back to the car. Windswept, sunburned, my heart beating strangely. What had I just seen?

\* \* \*

I visited my mother; showed her the photos.

"That's it! You found it. What a gem!" Her eyes bright.

She recalled the day she, my dad, my aunts and uncles let Grandpa lead them to the storied burial place. They'd seen bones, dug up by badgers. Grandma urged them to leave. But Grandpa didn't see badger holes and skeletons. He saw his beautiful 3-month-old baby boy, Irving.

I had found the very place Grandpa had walked out to with such determination, led by love and memory.

\* \* \*

I told my aunt I'd found five headstones. "How many had there been when you were there?"

"At least twenty-five."

\* \* \*

During the Depression, my Grandpa was a farmhand, working for his cousins, the Ens's. He and my Grandma lived on the farm site too. When they lost their baby, they buried him in the garden cemetery at the back of the property. In the Family Bible, Grandpa wrote:

*Irving Edward Neufeld*

*Born 1937, June 15th, 2AM*

*Died 1937, Aug. 27th*

*Funeral Sun 29th August*

*Buried in Neureinland Cemetery near Winkler*

\* \* \*

What was Neureinland? Harms & Rempel had nothing to say about this disappeared place.

But the graves I did see, and my own family's memories, say otherwise.

# The Post Road Bicycle Ride

By Albert Falk

The idea of doing a Post Road ride by bicycle originated from a discussion at one of the WestMenn meetings this spring. Originally it was thought of as a ride for which we could bring cyclists out from Winnipeg but the organizing and the logistics proved too difficult given the timeframe we had. It was decided to go with a group from the ABES (Altona Bike Enthusiast Society) cycling club.

July 20, 2019 was a perfect day for this ride, not hot but as you can see from our dress in the pictures, warm bright and sunny. We started at Stanley Park about 5 miles southwest of Morden as it was a good place to leave a vehicle. We rode the two miles or so to the site of the former Mountain City and continued west and then east to Fort Dufferin. By doing so we were able to take advantage of a nice northwesterly tailwind and we stopped briefly at Osterwick and Hochfeld.

At Reinland we stopped in at the Ens Heritage homestead which is located across from the oldest Mennonite church in the West Reserve. We were met by Abe Ens and given an excellent tour. A replacement bike for one of the riders as well as a bag of *Rollkuchen*, which disappeared fairly quickly; was brought out from Altona. Heading east we stopped at Schoenwiese and Neuhorst before making a short detour at Gretna to the Oakview golf course for lunch. Then a stop at the monuments near the former Schellenberg farmstead that sheltered many a traveler at Neuanlage at the junction of highway 30 and highway 243 and on to the cairn at the Edenburg cemetery. A straight east ride to highway 75 brought us to the cairn there. We then followed hwy 75 to Emerson and crossed the Red River at the railway track at West Lynne and rode the trail to Fort Dufferin.



Post Road Bicycle Ride Start

— Photo by Albert Falk

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# Book Reviews

*B.H. Unruh's Research on Mennonite Migration to Russia 1787-1895*, trans. Edward Enns, Bert Friesen, Marianne Janzen, and Alf Redekopp, MMHS, Winnipeg, 2019.

## Reviewed by Glenn Penner

This book is a translation of the second part of Benjamin H. Unruh's "*Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*" (Karlsruhe-Rüppurr, 1955). This is the section in Unruh's book with the genealogical data. For decades Unruh's "*Hintergründe*", a must for any serious Mennonite genealogist, was hard to find. Now, with many of those who purchased the book in the 1960s and 70s downsizing, obtaining a used copy is not that difficult. However, during that same time the number of people doing Mennonite genealogy without any knowledge of German has increased dramatically. For this group Unruh's original book can be formidable. The translation by Enns, Friesen, Janzen and Redekopp fixes this difficult situation.

Since almost the entire book consists of lists, and since

(Continued on page 12)

## B.H. Unruh's Research on Mennonite Migration to Russia 1787-1895

A Translation from Part 2 of Benjamin Heinrich Unruh's  
*Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im  
16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Selbstverlag: Karlsruhe, 1955)

by  
Edward Enns, Bert Friesen, Marianne Janzen and Alf Redekopp



Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

*Crash Landing: the Long Road Home* by Liz Jansen, Trillium Wordworks, 2018, pb. 247 pp. \$19.95.

## Reviewed by Glen Klassen.

This retelling of an extended family's sojourn from Russia to Canada in the form of a motorcycle trip all over Ontario and the western provinces is much more than a memoir disguised as a travelogue. It is a travelogue of the soul, the soul of an initially unfulfilled career woman who emerges from a warm but silently terrified people into a world of rich, earthy joyfulness.

As a *Kanadier*, I can't identify with the terrors of revolutionary Russia, but I certainly can identify with the terrors of the revival meeting, with a whole congregation of warm but terrified people slow-singing "Just as I am. . .". What are they scared of? Loss of salvation, the sudden appearance of Jesus the judge, social disintegration such as that they experienced in Russia, perhaps. Enough there for a sensitive but strong-minded sixteen year-old to turn her back.

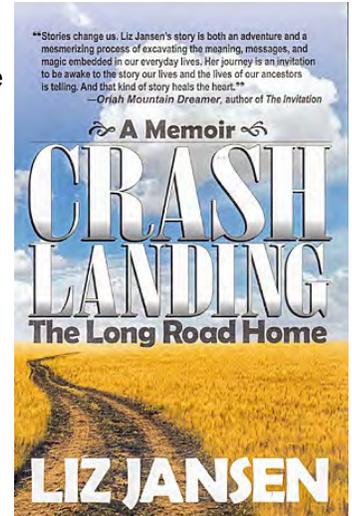
When the author crashes on a gravel road in Alberta, and has to abandon her beloved mechanical friend in the ditch and heal for two years, she realizes that she must find out much more about herself and her need to cram her life full of tasks. Having abandoned her strict Mennonite Brethren church in southern Ontario long since, she has turned to a shamanistic mythos, and seeks access to indigenous wisdom, particularly that of the Siksika (Blackfoot) people of Alberta. Her approach fails, but she is wisely directed to find herself among her own "blood".

That's what her extended pilgrimage which she calls her "Ancestor Trail" is all about. All of the sites of the successful and failed farming trials of her extended immigrant family are duly and sometimes frustratingly visited, each receiving a handful of tobacco as an offering. This takes her to many communities. In Linden, Alberta, she seeks out Klassens, who turn out not to be her relatives after all. They happen to be mine.

Her solitary trip is not without company. She "carries" her a collection of ancestors and relatives with her wherever she goes, treating them to her own intense experiences which she thinks they find fascinating and liberating. She has their total approval. Interestingly, her father is not there; perhaps she fears that he will still try to convert her. This experience is more than imaginary -- she feels it as real and meaningful. As a scientist, I have always found this sort of thing to be dubious, but I am willing to suspend judgement.

Then there is the shamanism. As she admits, this is

(Continued on page 12)



# Book Notes

## by Lawrence Klippenstein

We are much enriched these days by autobiographies which continue to be favorite reading for many. Another one with us now is Helen Ens's story, *My Sojourn in Mexico from 1955 to 1995* (Winnipeg: self-published, and printed by Country Graphics of Rosenort, Manitoba, 2019, pb., 112 pp.). The "sojourn" was in fact essentially an extended quite remarkable teaching career, which included 40 years of genuine pioneering and innovative aspects of real significance for her place and time. Helen retired from her Mexican venture some time ago, and now resides at Bethel Place in Winnipeg.

Also, Helen Ens helped with a 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion of her 1947 graduation class at the MCI, of which this author gratefully happened to be a participant. For further information and to order contact MHA at [cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca).

In case it had passed us by, we mention again the appearance of Volume 37 of *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (Winnipeg: Chair of Mennonite Studies, 2019, pb., 419 pp., \$28.00). It is sub-titled as *JMS Forum: A People of Diversity since 1970*. The "core of content" lies in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary presentations held at the University of Winnipeg in 2018. A significant essay by Sam Steiner tells how work on the journal was begun in 1968. Two provincial organizations, the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario and the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society (now 60 years old) were responsible for its inception. The late Dr. Harry Loewen led the way as editor, and his current successor, Dr. Royden Loewen, has kept up the pace.

It happens. In fact we do overlook legitimate candidates for this column from time to time. That applies to a slim volume, titled *The Quiet in the Land. A Volga-German's Christian Journal: Russian Revolution Years 1916-18* (Lancaster, PA: by the editors, 2005), pb., 125 pp., and published by Arthur L. Pavlatos and Michael C. Upton. The "Volga German" was in fact Heinrich P. Wieler of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia, who taught in Siberia for several years, and brought five ledgers of diary material to Pennsylvania in the USA when he moved there after the Revolution. Pavlatos retains ownership of the ledgers. The book includes excerpts in English translation (the diaries are written in Gothic German longhand) using a portion (dealing with Mennonites in Siberia) held in translation by the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg ([cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca)) Further information is available at [www.trafford.com](http://www.trafford.com) The title of the books suggests succeeding volumes to come, which, to the knowledge of this reviewer, have not materialized so far.

Persons interested in the Hutterites of Manitoba will find the new book by Ian Kleinsasser very helpful to get a bird's eye view of the story. Kleinsasser has published *Blessings and Burden. 100 Years of Hutterites in Manitoba* (2019, pb., 108 pp) in an easy-to-read volume. The marketer is Hutterian Brethren Book Centre, at: [e.orders@hhbookcentre.com](mailto:e.orders@hhbookcentre.com) and 1-204-252 2381. A related very meaningful exhibit is being shown at Mennonite Heritage Gallery with further info at 1-204-487 3300 ext. 345.

## Glenn Penner review

(Continued from page 11)

I plan to continue using my original German copy, I did not read through every single entry in these lists. My random checks indicate that the translation is relatively free of errors. The first half of the book has surnames highlighted in bold. This is very helpful. Unfortunately, this stops, for some reason, on page 108. There is an excellent index at the back of the translation. Those who have struggled with the index at the back of the original will breathe a sigh of relief. There are numerous references for the lists of the 1820s which has the original "Ausw. Akten v. Kulm" incorrectly translated as "Official record of Kulm". The correct translation should be "Emigration records of Kulm". Similarly, the sources starting with "Hyp. Beil. Akten. . . Bl." refer to "Hypotheken Beilage Akten" — property and inheritance records (some of which are still in Polish archives). "Bl." Refers to the property number.

It should be noted that 99% of the information found in these lists has been integrated into the GRANDMA database.

## Glen Klassen review

(Continued from page 11)

anathema to the Mennonite mind. She draws strength from guide-animals riding with her on her machine. Jaguar gives her courage to be transformed, Serpent represents renewal, Hummingbird imparts wisdom and guidance, and Eagle gives her wings. Again, this is foreign to me, and I'm not sure how literally she takes it. Perhaps it reflects the literalism of Mennonite biblicism or maybe its apotheosis.

This is a story of liberation as you will see if you read it to its end (a bit of a slog). You will also find out why her surname is spelled the way it is. We meet countless people along the way: helpers, healers, relatives, doctors, nurses, mechanics, and on and on. The author manages to accept everyone, even her own family, whom she is finally able to hug wholeheartedly, and who finally forget to try to convert her.