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Mennonites and Manitoba: An Unlikely Love Affair

by Hans Werner

This year, Manitoba marks its 150th year as a province of Canada. For almost as long, Manitoba has been a place that Mennonites seem to have loved. In 1870 when the Manitoba Act created the postage stamp province, its population was still dominated by Métis. Soon, however, the numbers of Métis would be overwhelmed by the arrival of European settlers. Among them would be approximately 8000 Mennonites from the Russian Empire who came to settle two blocks of land set aside for them in southern Manitoba. Manitoba would become home for Mennonites from Russia forever after. When the increasing population of a primarily agricultural people outstripped the available land in the two reserves, areas adjacent to the reserves became Mennonite, as did many places in Saskatchewan. The large migration of refugees from the Russian Revolution brought more Mennonites to Manitoba and places like Arnaud, Boissevain, Pigeon Lake, and North Kildonan became Mennonite places. The largest migration of all brought Mennonites to Winnipeg from rural areas and further migrations from Europe after World War II, and from Paraguay meant that Winnipeg also became a place where Mennonites felt at home.

To some extent the Mennonite love affair with Manitoba was, and remains an unlikely match. From the point of view of the natural environment, settling in Manitoba was not the obvious choice. The wistful comment by the 1873 delegate Leonhard Suderman that the "forwardness" of Manitoba's mosquitos "surpassed all limits of decency and moderation" certainly rings true for Manitoba's Mennonites some 150 years later. Mosquitoes were not the only problem. The



Mennonite Centennial Plaque in the Manitoba

Legislature .

— Photo by Harold J. Dyck

East Reserve and the eastern part of the West Reserve were poorly drained, the growing season was shorter than what they were used to, and markets and transportation systems were in their infancy. It was a minority of migrating Mennonites that would choose Manitoba. The majority would settle in Kansas, South Dakota, Nebraska and Minnesota. But the Mennonites who choose Manitoba came to love their land. The West Reserve farmland proved to be some of the best in the province and over the years has supported a variety of high value crops while the Mennonites of the East Reserve adapted to their landscape by pursuing animal agriculture providing Winnipeg with its dairy products and a global market with pork and poultry products. Both reserves have sustained a thriving agricultural life for many Mennonites. The towns

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MMHS Annual General Meeting!

on Saturday, March 14, 2020,

from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon

at Altona Senior Centre, 39 1st St. NW
(one block North of the Co-op Gas Bar
on Hwy 201)

Your attendance and input matters to MMHS

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that sprang up in the Mennonite reserves, while always having a population of other ethnic groups, have retained a distinctive Mennonite identity. Steinbach, Winkler and Altona in the former Mennonite reserves are the fastest growing urban places in the province.

As with most relationships, the Mennonite love affair with Manitoba has had its tensions. As a German speaking minority in a country that went to war with Germany twice in a period of twenty-five years, Mennonites experienced the nativism of their British neighbours. The realization that there were significant numbers of Manitobans who spoke German, read German language newspapers, and conducted the education of their children in the language of the enemy led to changes that were difficult for all Mennonites and defining for some. Changes to education that some of the more conservative Mennonites viewed as a betrayal of the promise made in 1873 that Mennonites could educate their children "without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever" led to the largest single exodus of a group leaving Canada. Mennonites left Manitoba for Mexico and Paraguay in the 1920s after the educational battles with the province that rocked the community in the aftermath of World War I. Another migration to Paraguay followed after World War II. The majority of Manitoba's Mennonites adjusted to the new realities. While English became the language of instruction, the nationalism that had pervaded the war years subsided and Mennonites were able to both fit into the state funded educational system while maintaining enough local control to avoid offending their desire to educate their children in keeping with Mennonite religious sensibilities. The rising sense that Canada was a multicultural nation meant that Mennonites could adopt whatever they wanted from Manitoba society and keep the distinctives they held dear.

The Mennonites that chose to settle in Manitoba did so because they believed Canada and Manitoba would be most amenable to them maintaining their faith commitments. At the time, these included not bearing arms in time of war, being free to worship their God in their own



John C. Reimer, Ed Schreyer, Russell Doern, and Gerhard Lohrenz gathered around the plaque in the Manitoba Legislature commemorating the centennial of the coming of the first Russian Mennonites to Manitoba.
— MAID CA CMBS NP149-1-5253

way, and remaining separate from the 'world'. Assurances of these freedoms were not given to those emigrating to the United States. The problems of the 1920s notwithstanding Manitoba Mennonites have been free to practice their faith unmolested. The Mennonite religious landscape has become diverse over the course of 150 years. Writing an article about Manitoba Mennonites conveys a sense that being Mennonite is a single identity. While it was not the case in the 1870s it is certainly not the case in 2020. Mennonite faith practices range from traditional conservative churches, to those that differ little from other Protestant denominations. Mennonite churches are found all along the conservative, liberal and evangelical spectrums.

The Mennonite love affair with Manitoba has been reciprocated. Much has changed over the course of 150 years. Mennonites have become embedded in all walks of Manitoba life: politics, education, law, medicine, business. Alongside being accepted in society, many Mennonites have fallen in love with Ukrainians, French Canadians, British and those from other ethnicities and cultures. What in earlier times was often somewhat despised as a 'mixed marriage' has become common place and it has meant that Manitoba family life and society is infused with Mennonites. To be sure for many their Mennonite identities

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Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4
1310 Taylor Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3M 3Z6

Editor — Glen Klassen

Contributing Editor — Lawrence Klippenstein

Layout Editor — Ted Barg

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Manitoba Mennonite Farm Lands. — Photo by Dennis Fast

EastMenn Historical Committee - Annual Activities

by Ernest N. Braun,
EHC secretary.



Members: Jacob L Peters (chair), Ernest N. Braun (secretary), Glen R. Klassen, Henry N. Fast, Orlando Hiebert, Harold J. Dyck, Ben D. Funk, Edward G. Krahn.

EastMenn Historical Committee is a Standing Committee with two representatives on the MMHS Advisory Council, and one representative (Jacob Peters) on the MMHS Board. In January the committee welcomed a new member, Edward G. Krahn of Lorette, to the committee. Ed was the first ever salaried head of the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum and has retired from a long career in parks and recreation.

The EastMenn Historical Committee hosted its fourth annual Local History Lecture at the Mennonite Heritage Village auditorium at 7:00 PM on October 19, 2019. The theme of the event was "Abandoned Manitoba". Main speaker was Dr. Gordon Goldsborough, Professor at the University of Manitoba and President of Manitoba Historical Society. He presented a power-point entitled, "More

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are not primary, or an important part of their daily lives. However, by 2020 there are many Manitobans whose in-laws, grandparents, mothers, fathers, cousins were or are Mennonites. Manitoba's church life is similarly infused with Mennonites. All kinds of congregations that are not Anabaptist-Mennonite have large contingents of adherents with Mennonite ancestry and residual ethnic identity. The reverse is also true. Mennonite religious and ethnic life has been infused with spouses from backgrounds that are not from the 19th and 20th century Mennonite colonies of Russia. While a 'Mennonite name' may still be an indication of a person's identity, certainly the confidence one would have in assuming someone was a Mennonite judging only by their name is no longer what it was 150 years ago.

While the Mennonite-Manitoba love affair is a story worth telling and celebrating we have also become more conscious of our people's part in the displacement of indigenous peoples. While it would be a distortion of the past to assume that our forebears who came Manitoba in the 1870s could have had the perspective we have today, it is clear that they were ideal candidates for participation in the massive colonial project that settled the province and the rest of the Canadian West. Nothing is to be gained by feeling guilty about the past, but we also need to hear the stories of those whose relationship with Manitoba has been less fulfilling.

History is generally not knowledge that predicts the future. It would be interesting to see ahead to the next years of Manitoba's story. How will the love affair with the province unfold in the next 150 years?

Abandoned Manitoba", exploring the various sites of abandoned buildings, enterprises, and government initiatives, all now in ruins or obliterated except for the stories that can be told. Gordon is the author four books, two of which *Abandoned Manitoba* and *More Abandoned Manitoba* deal with the same topic. The event also featured the bestowal of an Honorary Life Membership to charter committee member and historian Henry N. Fast for his service to the history of this area, and for his work on the committee. Gary Dyck of MHV welcomed the audience to the venue, and Jake Peters served as emcee. The session was well attended.

In the fall of 2018, the committee with the help of Diamond Construction, placed the large granite rock at the site of the Shantz Reception sheds, and in 2019 Glen Klassen and Ernie Braun created an information board which will be printed on Dibond, and fastened to the rock at an unveiling to be held in spring of 2020.

EastMenn Historical Committee continues to have representation on the Chortitz Church Heritage Committee which over-see the restoration of the old Chortitz Church near Randolph. The committee held its first official AGM on March 5 at the Mennonite Heritage Village. This year two public events were held: a program at Chortitz on May 26, featuring Ernest N. Braun who spoke on the significance of 2019 as the 100th anniversary of 1919 when the great Manitoba School question was resolved by the unilateral establishment of English only schools, a move that led to mass emigration of Mennonites from Manitoba. The second event was the sixth annual German Christmas at Chortitz was held on December 9 with one service only due to a freezing rain which forced cancellation of the evening service. The new interpretative shelter has been moved to the east side of the church and an information board placed on the wall. A guest book installed.

Under the leading of Ed Krahn, EastMenn has nominated Steinbach native Maria Vogt (1881-1961) for *The 150 Women Trailblazer Award*.

EastMenn is also working on a Heritage Tour, both a geographical tour and eventually a virtual tour of the East Reserve, incorporating the various sites. The RM of Hanover has a page dedicated to heritage, and material is being uploaded to the site. At this point the site hosts material on the old Chortitz church, and a little on the Mennonite Memorial Landing Site.

The *Historical Atlas of the East Reserve* was sold out and a fourth reprint was ordered in early 2019, printing another 169 copies. The committee as a whole met three times this year. Glen Klassen has fashioned a new logo for the committee.

Starting From Scratch: Farming in Southern Manitoba in the Early Years

by Ron Friesen,
a retired agriculture reporter with the Manitoba Co-operator

An unassuming cairn in a small park near the Disraeli Bridge in downtown Winnipeg marks the location of a little-known but significant event in Manitoba history.

Near this spot on October 7, 1812, Miles Macdonell, the Governor of Assiniboia, helped plant a bushel and a half of wheat he had brought from Scotland for the newly arrived Selkirk Settlers.

It was winter wheat and unsuited to Manitoba's harsh climate. History records it did not survive the winter. But it was still the first attempt at a grain crop for a group of immigrant farmers in Manitoba.

Out of that bushel and a half of wheat would eventually emerge a multi-billion dollar agricultural industry more than 200 years later.

Of course, agriculture in Manitoba goes back further than the arrival of European settlers. Early records show that First Nations were growing corn, potatoes and other crops along Netley Creek, the Assiniboine River and at other locations in the early 1800s.

Metis farmers, many of them descended from fur trade employees, occupied land along the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. Fur trading posts grew vegetable gardens and, in some cases, small plots of cereal grains.

Still, the arrival of the Selkirk Settlers as the first permanent farming residents

along the Red River helped to launch the shift from hunter gathering to a farming-based economy in southern Manitoba and, eventually, Western Canada.

The early years were difficult for the colonists. The settlers tried growing spring wheat and harvested their first crop in 1815. However, grasshoppers destroyed their crops seven times between 1818 and 1868. Floods in 1826, 1852 and 1861 delayed seeding. The colony had to petition

England for charity in 1868 when crops were wiped out. Economic failure and political violence forced many residents to relocate to Upper Canada and the United States.

But those who stayed managed to adapt and eventually become self-sufficient. Livestock were gradually brought in. Wheat and other cereal crops were grown, sometimes producing surpluses.

The population grew, too. Early records reveal that in 1831 Manitoba had 2,152 cultivated acres, 460 families and 2,417 people. By 1856, there were 6,523 people, 1082 families and 8,371 cultivated acres. The population was bolstered by new immigrants, Metis settlers and retired European fur trading agents. Some

58,000 immigrants, mostly from Ontario and Great Britain, arrived in Manitoba between 1879 and 1881.

Agricultural development remained slow and sporadic between 1812 and 1870 as the fur trade largely dominated. Settlement was largely limited to the old long and narrow river lot system along the Red and

Assiniboine. Most people resided in what today are Winnipeg, Selkirk and Headingley.

Gradually, however, settlements began to spread with the arrival of settlers from Ontario, the Eastern Townships of Quebec, the Maritimes and Great Britain. Surveys of southern Manitoba in the early 1870s, based on the township plan, created square farms and helped promote early settlement. One settlement in the Portage la Prairie area, led by Ontario immigrant John McLean in 1862, became one of the first successful attempts at agriculture in the region.

Agricultural settlement was greatly encouraged in 1872 with the passage of the federal Dominion Lands Act (the Homestead Act). The legislation enabled a person to claim a quarter section (160 acres) of land for a \$10 fee,



Postage stamp issued in 1988 in honour of Marquis wheat.



The Selkirk Wheat Monument. This plaque, located in Joseph Zuken Heritage Park, Winnipeg, was dedicated in October 1987 by the Lord Selkirk Association of Rupertsland.

— Photo by Gordon Goldsborough



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provided the homesteader would “prove up” -- live on the land for at least six months of the year, establish a permanent residence and break 40 acres of land over three years. A second adjacent quarter section could also be reserved. Such original farm homesteads formed the basis of agricultural expansion in the province.

The resulting influx of immigrants, many from Ontario, led the provincial government to pass the County Municipality Act in 1877. It created a municipal government system based on sections, townships and ranges.

The new legislation, along with settlement in the Portage la Prairie and other regions, helped spark an immigration explosion. In 1874 the first wave of Mennonites from Russia — 65 families in all — arrived and settled on land reserved for them in the Steinbach area. A second Mennonite reserve was established west of the Red River in the Altona-Winkler area in 1875. French-speaking settlers from Quebec and Massachusetts, aided by the French Colonization Aid Society, arrived in 1875. Most settled along the Red and Rat rivers, forming communities such as St. Malo, St. Pierre Jolys, St. Jean, Ste. Anne, St. Agathe and Letellier. Immigrant groups of Icelanders arrived between 1875 and 1878.

Around that time, a revolution in agricultural technology greatly assisted the rapid expansion of agricultural land. Horses replaced oxen in pulling plows to break the sod. New farm equipment including mechanical seeding drills, mould board plows, self-binding reapers, steam driven threshing machines and barbed wire became standard on Manitoba farms by the late 1870s.

Other industries saw revolutionary developments as well. The milling industry began switching from grinding stones to steel rollers, speeding up the process and producing higher quality flour from red spring wheat, now becoming the standard variety in Manitoba and the northwest.

As indicated earlier, it was obvious early on that winter wheat would not thrive in Manitoba. Metis farmers in Red River grew a variety of spring wheat called Prairie du Chien, apparently imported from



Hon. John Lowe (1824-1913), Minister of Agriculture in the Liberal government of Prime Minister Alexander MacKenzie.

— National Archives of Canada

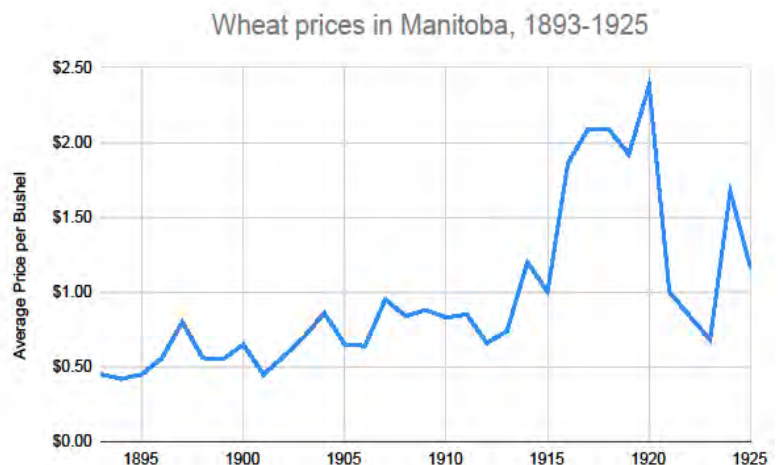
Wisconsin. Around 1868 farmers in Red River began growing Red Fife, a hard red spring wheat brought in from Ontario. Although it possessed good milling quality, Red Fife was susceptible to rust and early fall frosts. It was later replaced by Marquis, an earlier maturing variety with superior milling quality developed by Dominion Agriculturalist Charles Saunders.

The wheat boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries produced a brief phenomenon called “bonanza farms.” These were extremely large farms up to and beyond 10,000 acres, mostly owned and operated by large corporate interests and devoted mainly to growing wheat. Such farms flourished almost exclusively in Minnesota and North Dakota but there were several attempts at similar farming in southern Manitoba. One such farm was owned by John Lowe, who around 1880 held 16 sections of land near the present day village of Lowe Farm. Although the venture ultimately folded, it did serve as a testing ground for farming innovations.

So it was with agriculture in southern Manitoba as the 19th century neared its end. Ahead lay another 120 years of tumultuous activity and development, culminating in an industry generating over \$6 billion in annual farm cash receipts. And to think it all started with that bushel and a half of wheat planted in October 1812.

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Data taken from the cropping records of Wilhelm Friesen, Roseheim.

— Courtesy of Conrad Stoesz

1870 - What's in a Date?

by Ernest N. Braun

One often hears that study of history is just memorizing a bunch of dates. More reflective people may say instead that history is the study of momentous past events, of exciting and controversial individuals, of radical ideas, and of a spectrum of human affairs. However, I wonder whether the simplistic idea about dates does not come much closer to truth than one might think. A date is a short cut to an entire cascade of meaning, where all of the above elements intersect. A DATE is the combination to unlock that dynamic confluence.

A date can carry within it an entire universe of meaning, emotion, action, engagement with the environment or a people group, physical change etc. Just mention 9-11 and everybody over the age of ten instantly knows that September 11, 2001, is a watershed in the history of western civilization. Those who were more nearly affected will hardly manage to keep from getting emotional at the devastation and loss; those more distant from the event can hardly contain their outrage at the memory.

1870 is such an historical date as well, but it encompasses not a day but a year. It was a pivotal year that saw the end of the old Europe, and the beginning of a new one with a paradigm we now call nationalism. Most significant of those changes was outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, in which Bismarck's victory over the French constituted the creation of modern Germany. The implications of such a change affected the entire world, as is evident in the concept we now know as a "World War", something not seen before.

In that same year, Italy liberated itself from a thousand years of rule under the Papal States. That year, the defeated French began a third republic, having learned a thing or two from the failure of the first two. The United States entered the modern world that year by giving the vote to all ethnic groups, and having the first woman cast a ballot in the USA. In 1870 it established federal holidays for the first time. Also that year, the Netherlands, one of the ancestral homes of the Mennonites, abolished capital punishment, a plank in the Mennonite theology of forgiveness.

In technology 1870 begins the era that is just now beginning to close, as Rockefeller founded

Standard Oil and enslaved a planet to non-renewable resources. Lifestyle amenities that have been taken for granted now for over a hundred years began in 1870 when, for example, the first movie ever was shown to an audience, and when the soda fountain was invented. A life without movies and soft drinks cannot be imagined today.

That is also the year that two political movements 8,000 km apart (measured over the North Pole) were to affect Mennonites more than any other year except 1919 (when Civil War ravaged Ukraine in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution). The first event occurred in Russia in 1870, exactly 150 years ago when Mennonites first heard that the Russian government was making huge reforms that would change their lives. Rumour suggested that that the 1800 *Privilegium* and its exemption from military service and freedom of religion as it respected education would be canceled. It appears that in the new post-Crimean-War Russia, the promise of rights "in perpetuity" could easily be understood to mean about seventy years, the span of one life. That rumour was translated into reality a year later. The second event happened in Ottawa also exactly 150 years ago when Canada created a new province out of the Hudson's Bay territory transferred to Canada, and immediately faced the need for settlers to anchor that Province, Manitoba, to Central Canada.

In both cases there was a sequence of events that prompted the event: in Russia it was the aftermath of the Crimean War, when the vaunted and invincible Russian military suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire. That inspired the Great Reform movement which proposed a restructuring of Russia into a modern European state. The way this affected the Mennonites was that the old state-within-a-state paradigm that the Mennonites enjoyed would be eliminated, multiplicity of languages would be reduced to Russian only, all schools would be nationalized, and, most importantly, every adult male would be conscripted into the military. By 1870 these Reforms had taken enough shape to be communicated to the Mennonites, with the result that by 1871 delegations were formed to appeal to the Czar on the basis of the *Privilegium*. All for naught at first, and



Louis Riel

— Toronto Public Library



A Russian monument in Neu-Halbstadt, in recognition of Mennonite services during the Crimean War.

— MAID CA MHC 044-10.0

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emigration appeared to be the only option for those who clung to the special rights as their way of protecting the faith.

In Manitoba likewise, a series of events preceded the creation of Manitoba. By 1869 the Hudson's Bay Company was ready to offload the huge Rupert's Land area they controlled to the Canadian Government for cash and some land which could be sold for profit. This transfer was to take place in December 1869, but the Government sent surveyors to Red River before the transfer. This threatened the Métis who felt that the survey was the first step to losing their land and culture. A stand-off between the survey crew and local Métis leaders occurred just southwest of Winnipeg, putting a stop to the survey, and prompting Louis Riel, the Father of Manitoba, to create a Provisional Government. As such he had Orangeman Thomas Scott executed for treason on March 4, 1870, an execution that signaled to Ottawa the gravity of the grievance. Negotiations resulted in the creation of Manitoba as a province in May 1870, and acceptance into Confederation on July 15, 1870. This sequence of events set the tone for a new paradigm in the new province, one that would not necessarily be dominated by British values. That was to be profoundly significant in the next few years.

The absolute necessity of providing settlers to occupy a large tract of land on a permanent basis created a barrage of advertisements and inducements for settlers from Central Canada but more importantly from Europe to come and exploit the opportunity. The basic fact is that Riel's "Rebellion" in 1870 made the Mennonite immigration of 1874-6 possible. Without it there is no Manitoba. Without it Rupert's Land simply becomes an extension of Ontario to be dominated by British settlers and British values. The new province now begs for permanent settlers to connect the area to the rest of Canada. By 1873 it is clear that few settlers from Central Canada were interested in settling in an isolated colony but fear of annexation by the USA fed a strong paranoia, which made Canada desperate to fill the empty spaces with solid settlers. The Mennonites fit the bill exactly.

However, for that mass immigration to occur, the logistics to get them there safely needed to be in place. The emigration of Mennonites from Ukraine was facilitated by something else that occurred in 1870 - the railways being constructed in Russia were just then being connected to Odessa, after a decade of delay, so that as James Urry points out "the rail tracks and carriages that carried Mennonites northward were newly built."¹ Without that option, all emigration would have been by sea from Odessa, an option also proposed at the time, but in the light of Russia's hostility to the presence of any foreign power whisking away its citizens from its own sea ports,



The author with the Countess of Dufferin, the first steam locomotive to operate in the Canadian prairie provinces, named after the actual Countess of Dufferin, the wife of the Earl of Dufferin, the Governor General of Canada at the time of Mennonite settlement in Manitoba.

— Archives of Manitoba: Transportation-Railways; Countess of Dufferin, #3, n.d. N16.

this option was rejected.² For this reason, the railways were a godsend for the Mennonites at exactly the right time.

Moreover, in 1870 the rail line from Duluth westward to Moorhead was begun, and by 1874 the Northern Pacific Railroad was able to carry the large groups and their freight from Duluth to the steamer at Moorhead, so that mechanized transportation was available from the home rail station in Ukraine to Fort Garry.

In 1870 unrelated variables in two countries continents apart conspired to pressure the Mennonites out of one country and into another. One can look back 150 years and wonder at the coincidence.

Ernest N. Braun and James Urry, "The Travel Costs of Mennonite Immigration from Russia to Manitoba in the 1870s", *MQR* 93 October 2019 p. 514

² Ibid. 513.

The Same Flatlands. . . Homesteads ago

Whose fields are these? They look so much like those
Where I grew up. Whose meadows these? They seem
Like duplicates of those where I would dream
Of distant and exotic worlds. . . Who knows
Whose gardens of potatoes these? Who grows
Familiar wheat and sugar beets? I deem
It odd, for I am far from home. Whose cream,
Whose Frisien milk, is this? . . . Time stands? . . . or flows?
Such rural scenes are universal, I
Well know, but somehow these are just too. . . , well. . .
Too perfect. . . copies of old memories
I half-forgot and half-recall. And why?
Enraptured by Brigadoon's ancestral spell,
I X-ray roots in planted farmyard trees.

by Edward Reimer Brandt, in
*Where Once They Toiled: A Visit to the Former
Mennonite Homesteads in the Vistula Valley.*
Mennonite Family History, 1992.

Chortitza Gravestone Project in Ukraine 2019-2020

by Werner Toews, January 8, 2020

(Editorial Note: A longer account of this project was published in *Preservings* 39, Dec. 2019, by the author. The gravestone information has been updated for this article.)

An extraordinary event happened in Ukraine on July 22, 2019. That event was the excavation of a derelict barn at 61-A Zachynyaeva St. in Upper Chortitza (Verkhnya Khortytsia). The building and property were once part of the village of Chortitza. This was one of the first villages that was established by Mennonite settlers in 1789. This area is now a suburb of the city of Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

The purpose of the dig was to uncover and remove the foundation stones that were rumoured to be gravestones from the Chortitza Mennonite church cemetery. The cemetery had been demolished long ago by the Soviet government in the 1930's.

The excavation was a few years in the planning by project manager Max Shtatsky, a research scientist with the Khortytsia National Reserve. Max and his family lived in the former village of Chortitza and it was during his childhood that Max became interested in learning about the "Germans" who lived in Chortitza. It was his strong interest in learning about the Mennonites and their lost history that motivated him to excavate the building foundation and uncover the Mennonite gravestones. It is also his belief, that by researching and locating long lost Mennonite artifacts, he could help to rehabilitate their past and provide some justice to the descendants of the Chortitza Mennonites.

On the first day of the excavation, Max was assisted by a colleague from the KNR, Mykola Anatoliyovych Svydran and Roman Akbash, a local historian and former creative director for the museum of the History of Weapons in Zaporizhzhia. As a young child, Roman lived in a house beside the barn. During his childhood, Roman became aware that the foundation walls of the barn were most likely constructed from Mennonite gravestones.

Shtatsky's goal on the first day was to remove dirt and rocks from the foundation and possibly uncover a few

gravestones. The property had fallen into disrepair and the lot was being used by locals as a dump site for construction materials. After removing debris from the first wall foundation, the back-breaking work of excavating the stones began on a very hot and humid day. One of the first stones uncovered was a pedestal for a gravestone with no inscription.

The second stone belonged to a female with the maiden name of Siemens 1820-1887. It became quite clear from the start of the excavation that the stones had been cut or broken to create somewhat of a uniform foundation for the barn walls. The top of the Siemens' stone was missing and a search for the missing piece and other missing pieces would continue throughout the excavation.

On the second day, the stone of my great great grandmother Katherina nee Pätkau Koop (1839-1910) was found. It was an elegant black marble stone with gold inlay lettering. The stone had some damage but was in relatively good shape. It was, of course, covered in grout that was used by the builders to bond the stones together.

As the day progressed, other stones were discovered and were pulled up from the rubble. It soon became quite clear that the foundation of the barn was, in fact, constructed of Mennonite gravestones from the Chortitza cemetery. It also became clear that heavy equipment would be needed to continue the excavation due to the weight of the stones and the length of the foundation walls of the barn.

News of the find spread through the city of Zaporizhzhia as well as to North American Mennonites through the Facebook posts by Roman Akbash and Max Shtatsky.

A press conference was held on July 29 that further publicized the project. Due to the scope of the project, a request was also made for donations as the KNR did not

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have the resources to complete the excavation.

In the preceding weeks and months, the excavation continued as funds became available. The project was able to proceed with generous donations from private citizens, The Friends of the Mennonite Center Ukraine and a donation from the director of the Khortitsia National Reserve, Maxym Ostapanko and his wife Galina.

By the end of November, the excavation was complete. A total of over 100 stones and pieces of gravestones were identified and transported to the property of the KNR. Many of the stones were damaged and some were reduced to several pieces. One of the earliest stones located was a simple field stone with the initials H.P. 1793.

The next phase of the project will be the creation of a memorial that features many of the gravestones. The memorial is being planned by the director of the Khortitsia National Reserve, Maxym Ostapanko, with assistance from a group of people in Winnipeg with Mennonite ancestry and organizational experience. The memorial is a work in progress and will hopefully be completed by the end of 2020. A catalogue with photographs of all the gravestones is also being created by the staff of the KNR.

REVISED LIST as of January 8, 2020 by Werner Toews
Note to Publisher:

The GM numbers in bold are either corrected or were found for that person.

- Numbers: 10, 21, 43 and 79 are new additions
- Descriptions or information of the people in bold are new
- geb. is born in German

Number 67 M. Regier was incorrectly listed as #68, M. Schultz in Preservings

- Question marks indicate less than a 100% match or speculation on that person's identity from information in GRANDMA.

1. Bergen B. 1812-1861 #529181?
2. Braun Peter 6.01.1794--28.10.1851 #267133
3. Braun Peter 1858 #753559? (grandson of #267133?)
4. Dyck Agata geb. Braun 22.05.1823 — 9.11.1896 #173519 mother of H. Hamm stone mason?
5. Dyck Elizabeth geb. Epp 8.08.1849 — 31.12.1886 #509238
6. Dyck Jacob 16.03.1804 — 8.11.1847 #175866, Church minister
7. Dyck Helena, geb. Siemens 21.08.1814 — 13.11.1889 # 505902?
8. Dyck Jacob 16.11.1831 — 19.05.1893 #506645 husband of Maria (9)
9. Dyck Maria geb. Regier 4.03.1830 — 3.12.1905 #506644
10. Dyck Maria geb. Reimer 17.02.1846--14.01.1900 #179970
11. Dyck Maria 1804 #452231? or Maria Dyck geb Penner #196355? (Stone MD 1804)
12. Dyck Julius 19.12. — 29.04.1870 #353467?
13. Epp Heinrich 18.12.1827 — 11.04.1896 #69113 Teacher, Minister
14. Epp Johann 17.10.1804 — 31.03.1880 #12621 one stone for Johann & Anna (15)
15. Epp Anna 12.07.1808 — 06.04.1886 geb Andres

- #12633
16. Epp Johann 4.12.1830 — 17.03.1888 #69115 District Secretary
17. Epp Elisabeth geb. Leike 01.07.1819 — 02.05.1904 #198741
18. Epp Gertruda geb. Hamm 10.11.1858 — 29.09.1880 #127021 sister of H. Hamm stone mason
19. Epp Helena 7.4.1878 — 10.07.1879 #435594 sister to 20, daughter of (18)
20. Epp Johannes 18.09.1880 — 11.04.1881 #435595 son of (18) Same stone as (19)
21. Epp Gertruda geb. Goosen 11.03.1783 — 1848 #64083
22. Epp Helena geb. Thiessen 04.08.1797 — 14.04.1864 #77581? fragment of stone. Dates only
23. Epp Marie geb. Thiessen 11.01.1879 — 13.05.1906 #127006
24. Epp Elizabeth geb. Perk 5.04.1830 — 25.01.1904 #127004
25. Epp Gerhard (piece of stone) no dates. #12644?
26. Epp Jacob 09.02?
27. Epp Jakob December or November. Fragment of a stone
28. Fast Peter 29.08.1883 — 24.02.1890 #429335
29. Hamm Katharina geb. Wilms 18.08.1817 — 2.02.1887 #467073
30. Hamm Maria geb Braun 28.08.1865 — 2.08.1889 #467073
31. Hamm Peter 18.08.?
32. Hamm Justina 06.12.1847 — 05.06.1907 #343347?
33. Hamm 1855? Fragment of a stone
34. Hildebrandt Agatha geb. Hubert 14.07.1827 — 12.07.1889 #160905?
35. Hildebrandt Gerhard 15.10.1819 — 4.02.1889 #53087?
36. Hildebrandt Katherina 15.10.1867 — 6.05.1877 #265841 age 10, fish poisoning. Sister of (37)
37. Hildebrandt Helena 2.04.1857 — 08.06.1877 #265837 age 20 same stone as (36) fish poisoning.
38. Janzen Maria geb. Holzrichter 21.09.1858 — 09.11.1910 #509263
39. Klaassen Helena geb. Hamm 27.12.1837 — 20.01.1909 #343274
40. Klaassen Peter 05.04.1842 — 30.01.1907 #343269 Same stone as his wife Helena (39)
41. Koop Katharina geb Patkau 27.11.1839 — 12.02.1910 #146874
42. Koop Peter 18.12.1844--17.07.1889 #148253 two stones.
43. Kroeger Sara G. geb Lowen 22.03.1868 — 17.08.1903 #468835
44. Krahn Gerhard 10.10.1805 — 10.11.1855 #396292 wife (45) on stone
45. Krahn Katherina 14.07.1806 — 11.05.1855 #765841
46. Loewen Abraham 28.08.1836 — 05.06.1908 #353458
47. Loewen Katharina geb. Dyck 21.11.1838 — 4.03.1885 #353480 husband (46)
48. Loewen Gerhard 20.05.1821 — 16.10.1887 #89231
49. Loewen Aganetha geb Funk 20.09.1822 — 07.09.1854 #468360? Fragment no name. wife of (48)?

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

50. Loewen Helena 25.12.1862
51. Loewen Jakob Abraham 18.08.1860 — 29.07.1913
52. Martens Heinrich 19.12.1819 — 27.02.1888 #451504
53. Nachtigal G. 1858 same stone as (36) & (37) All three died of fish poisoning.
54. Niebuhr Abraham 31.12.1836 — 22.02.1893 #151861
55. Niebuhr Eva geb. Hamm 6.06.1853 — 3.02.1896 #461749 wife of (54) One stone.
56. Niebuhr Maria geb. Loewen 30.08.1839 — 10.10.1872 #151872 first wife of (54)
57. Niebuhr Gerhard 2.05.1882 — 15.01.1901 #508152
58. Niebuhr Heinrich 21.09.1877 — 10.05.1880 #508154? Fragment. Years of Birth & Death missing
59. Niebuhr Heinrich 10.06.1880 — 18.12.1883 #508153
60. Niebuhr Katharina 6.02.1874 — 13.05.1884 #508157 on the same stone as (59)
61. Niebuhr Anna 19.02.1875 — 11.03.1881 #175118
62. Patkau Jakob 28.06.1816 — 12.10.1908 #126987 church elder
63. Patkau Jacob 07.10.1897—29.06.1906 #435593 threshing accident. Son of barn owner.
64. Pauls Abraham 6.03.1812 — 9.04.1886 #196189
65. Pauls Anna 12.04.1890 — 05.01.1891 #459008
66. Pauls Anna 25.07.1886 — 31.07.1886 #459006
67. Pauls Dietrich 4.02.1844 — 14.10.1907 #452057
68. Pauls Gerhard, the child of Gerhard, died young. 23.10.1887? Father #456300?
69. Pauls Kornelius 23.10.1815 — 29.11.1855 #509230?
70. Pauls Margaretha geb. Siemens wife of (69) no dates #509229?
71. Pauls Margareta geb. Dyck 5.12.1833 — 8.08.1907 #452207
72. Pauls Peter 14.08.1834 — 06.09.1906 #452198 same stone as (71)
73. Pauls Maria geb. Penner 05.05.1811 — 05.01.1856 #196194
74. Pauls Helena geb. Dyck 02.07.1845 — 06.08.1864 #452058
75. Pauls Katerina 17.10.1848 — 16.01.1893
76. Penner Helena geb. Klassen 22.08.1835 #494691?
77. Penner Jacob 5.05.1831 — 07.1911 #494692?
78. Penner Johann 28.01.1828 — 25.07.1914 #199527 Veterinarian
79. Peters Franz 19.11.1834 #308843
80. Regier Margaretha geb. Schwarz 10.09.1831 — 04.03.1887 #214709
81. Regier Abraham Jacob 03.06.1821 — 05.02.1888 #508242 wife (80)
82. Rempel Maria geb. Hildebrand 01.08 #767919?
83. Sawatzky Jacob 21.1.1831 — 21.1.1908 #267380? Wife (84)
84. Sawatzky Anganetha geb. Giesbrecht 3.05.1833 — 5.10.1902 #267381?
85. Schellenberg Bernhard 2.02.1840 — 13.02.1888 #127042 Doctor
86. Schellenberg David 30.10.1868 — 18.12.1874 #127048
87. Schulz Margaretha also Koop geb. Wiens 22.01.1851 — 5.02.1909 #119564

88. Schwarz Heinrich 24.08.1790 — 05.05.1849 #196217
89. Siemens geb.? 16.01.1820 — 17.01.1887
90. Siemens Katharina, geb. Klassen 20 Jan 1768 — 18.02.1843 #108860, same stone as (91)
91. Siemens Peter 16.04.1765 — 1.12.1847 #136330 Oberschulze
92. Siemens Johann 8.10.1808 — 13.12.1853 #110572
93. Thiessen Helena 26.03.01883 — 14.04.1883 #353010 one stone with her sisters (94) (95)
94. Thiessen Margaretha 26.09.1892 — 29.09.1892 #353005
95. Thiessen Agatha 16.08.1895 — 5.09.1895 #353004
96. Toews Heinrich 10.09.1869 — 10.01.1888 #199453
97. Unrau Abraham Wilhelm 30 04.1813 — 28.10.1890 #199042
98. Von Kampen Katherina geb. Siemens 10.07.1824 — 10.04.1890 #452064
99. Von Kampen Maria geb. Hildebrandt 13.08.1864 — 9.11.1898 #452327
100. Von Kampen Johann 21.12.1834 — 14.07.1855 #452632 died of cholera. Mother (101)
101. Von Kampen Helena geb. Janzen 25.08.1797— 25.07.1855 #452637 died of cholera.
102. Von Kampen Jacob 05.07.1793 — 26.07.1867 #196808 father of (100) Husband of (101)
103. Wilms Peter 1813-1863 #197298 Chortitza church minister
104. Zeldner (Seldner) Karl 1818 — 02.03.1894 non-Mennonite?

German Soldiers WW I:

1. Albert T Hübner Gefreiter A fragment of Albert Hübner's tombstone
2. Karl Reissert Leutnant grfallen an 14 April 1918 (Lieutenant, killed)
3. Wilhelm Ro Sergeant A fragment of a tombstone
4. Friedrich Landsturm A fragment of a tombstone

Field stones:

1. H.P. 1793 Heinrich Priess #197074?
2. D.D. and M.D. stone 1798?
3. I.B. 1803
4. K.E. 1804
5. J V B 1823
6. I • P • T

Dates only:

1. 08.05.1850 — 23.08.1913

Miscellaneous:

There were a number of field stones with only initials of the deceased and contained only one date. The challenge with all the stones is, that there are no surviving Chortitza church records to compare the inscription on the gravestones to the church records. However, the information found on the GRANDMA genealogy database consists of a variety of reliable sources. In many cases these sources confirmed the names and dates on the recovered gravestones that match the GRANDMA information. In several cases, we can only provide a best guess on some of the stones and their connection to the family relationships in GRANDMA. I hope that in the future people with Mennonite ancestry will be able to provide information from unpublished family genealogies to assist in confirming the information found on the gravestones.

May the Borscht be with You

by Dave Toews, Editor of the MHS Chronicle

For the past year we had been talking about going on a road trip, a trip to Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and some of Alberta. I dubbed it *The Dave Twins Menno Tour*, and so it was that Dave Dyck and Dave Toews embarked on a trip to see all things Mennonite.

Sunday Sept 15, 2019 at 7 am we left Edmonton. Four stops and 13 1/2 hours later, we were in Winnipeg.

Monday morning we began our itinerary with a visit to the Mennonite Heritage Archives and Art Gallery to see archivist Conrad Stoesz, artist Ray Dirks, genealogist Glenn Penner, and historian Lawrence Klippenstein. Conrad toured us through the archives and showed me where I might find some new information on my father. Alas, I could find nothing. Ray showed us the upcoming display of amazing art by Hutterite young people. After lunch with Lawrence at the CMU cafeteria, we went to meet Dave's boyhood friend John Schlamp at the Forks Market at the confluence of the Assiniboine and the Red rivers. The Forks was a great place to spend an afternoon in the unseasonably warm 30 C sunshine!

Tuesday morning we met up with John again and enjoyed brunch with him and his wife Kathy, who is Dave Dyck's cousin. More great boyhood stories! Then it was on to the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies to meet Director Jon Isaak. Jon showed us the archives and how to look for when my Toews and Kroeger families emigrated from Prussia to Russia in the 1790s. Next we travelled east toward Steinbach through various places of interest. Niverville was one of those places for me. In 1955 our family went on a big trip by train to Ontario and Manitoba, and we stopped in Niverville to visit the Johann Toews family. I felt compelled to seek out the graves of Johann and Mariechen Toews in the cemetery there. We also stopped at the Chortitz Mennonite Heritage Cemetery, across the road is the site of the first Mennonite church built in Canada in the 1870s, according to the sign.

Wednesday we set aside for a comprehensive visit to



Grandma Helena Klassen at MHV by Bill Epp

— Photos from the author

the Mennonite Heritage Village (Museum) in Steinbach. There is so much to see and read. You have all been there, so I will just mention a few highlights. The *Russländer* exhibit graphically displays the compelling story of the 1920s Mennonite migration from the Soviet Union. As a son of *Russländer* parents, I find this story to be an emotional one and close to my heart.

After leaving the main building I saw in the garden a bronze sculpture by Bill Epp to honour Grandma Helena Klassen of Glenbush, Saskatchewan (SK). So close to home. I met both Bill Epp and Grandma Helena Klassen, as I was raised at Mayfair not far from Glenbush.

For lunch at The Livery Barn Restaurant I had Komst (cabbage) Borscht, Foarma Worscht, (farmer sausage) two Vereniki (cottage cheese perogies) smothered in Schmauntfatt (cream gravy), a serving of coleslaw, a slice of stone ground whole wheat bread, and rhubarb plautz (squares).

The windmill, the buildings, the machinery row - so much to see and retain! But we were on our way again, this time to explore the Post Road Memorial Trail that stretches from Fort Dufferin in the east to Mountain City in the west. The Post Road (currently referred to as PR243) was a

(Continued on page 12)



Dave Toews and Dave Dyck.

(Continued from page 11)

cross-country trail over the treeless plains marked by square wooden post markers erected a stone's throw apart. The posts allowed early settlers to find their way through all kinds of weather. From there we turned north to Neuberghthal, a National Historic Site of Canada. Neuberghthal is the best-preserved single street Mennonite village in North America. The Mennonite village layout, house barns, and architecture were developed over centuries of Mennonite life in Europe and Russia. We finished the day driving through Altona, Plum Coulee (love the name), Winkler, and Morden, just to say we'd been there.

Thursday we drove to Regina to visit with Ben Friesen, another of Dave Dyck's many boyhood friends. (Dave comes from a family of nine, and when every family in the village has that many or more children, you gain a lot of friends. This was something that did not happen in my childhood, as Mayfair was largely non-Mennonite.) In Herbert, Dave was eager to show me the House Of Trinity, a huge structure on Main Street.

Further details about John H. Gerbrandt's life are revealed in his obituary. From that we learn that he was born on Feb 14, 1923 in Niverville, MB and passed away on June 4, 2013 in Saskatoon, SK at the age of 90. His wife of 70 years Mary Dueck was by his side. John and Mary were married at the Gouldtown Mennonite Church. Time in the army taught John how to survive. Following that he worked hard to excel in music and carpentry, and he farmed for 30 years. For about five years he owned the Circle G Grocery Store in Herbert. He designed and built the House of Trinity on Herbert's Main Street all with his own two hands.

Friday was reserved for the Swift Current and Wymark areas, Dave Dyck's home turf. We drove around Wymark and saw that the Emmaus Mennonite Church had closed in Oct 2018. After 90 years in operation, the building was for sale. When we came to the skating rink, there were about six vehicles parked in front. Seniors have coffee there three mornings a week. We joined the conversation, and Dave soon found people he knew.

We toured the villages of Schoenfeld, Reinfeld, and Chortitz, and we visited several churchyards. Modern farmhouses and buildings are spotted between dilapidated

old housebarns and sheds. The land is slightly rolling and mostly treeless. Looking into the distance in all directions, we could see clusters of trees where the thriving villages once existed.

We then headed along dusty country trails and across Dave's nephew Bob Dyck's combined wheat fields. We were looking for the Woolt läach (coulee) where Dave's maternal grandparents the Reimers had lived when they first moved to the area. Bob stopped his combine and pointed out exactly where the farm had been. The spot is now flooded as the current owner has built a dam across the coulee. On Dave's former home yard in Rosenhof there are only new farm buildings now. No original buildings are left, but we saw the site and could only imagine how it used to be. It tugged at Dave's heartstrings and left us somewhat melancholy.

Back in Swift Current we had supper with Dave's siblings, sister Anne and Jake Ginter and brother Peter and Elaine Dyck. I have now met all of Dave's living sisters and brothers except Marg in Saskatoon.

Saturday in Taber we marveled at the huge Lantic Rogers Sugar Factory. The plant produces 150,000 tons of sugar a year from sugar beets produced by 400 farmers in the area. There was a constant stream of semi trailers dumping beets onto an enormous pile in the front yard of the plant. There was no sign of Mennonite young people acting out on Taber street corners or Wal-Mart parking lots in contravention to Taber's recently enacted Community Standards Bylaw 4-2015.

On to Brooks to see my high school friend, Bob Speiser, recently relocated to Brooks from Watrous, SK. Bob was happy to see us. He toured us around and showed us his regular haunts including where he goes for his daily walks and where he golfs once a week with his friend, Swede. Of special interest was the gigantic, sometimes troubled, XL Foods Lakeside Packers plant. This facility processes a million animals per year! Also worth the visit was the Brooks Aqueduct. A national historic site erstwhile unknown to me, it is an Alberta engineering milestone built in 1912-14. The three-kilometer structure carried water to irrigate almost a million acres of land for 63 years. It was replaced in 1979 with a lower maintenance earthen canal.

Our visit to Brooks concluded a very busy enjoyable week of driving, concentrated learning and observing, meeting new people, and seeing different places and things. We were home by 8 pm Saturday evening.

"May the Borscht be with You" — is a slogan on a tee shirt for sale at the gift shop of the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, marketed by redbubble.com.

(Reprinted from the MHSA Chronicle, Vol XXII, No. 3, Oct. 2019)

Coming Events

Mar. 14 - MMHS AGM in Altona

May 1 & 2 - SE Manitoba Writers Festival at MHV

May 12 - Manitoba 150 events at MHV

**May 12 - Unveiling of Shantz Immigration Sheds
Cairn near Niverville**



Dave Toews and Artist Ray Dirks at MHA.

Red Faced at the Embassy

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Our year in Moscow in 1992 was new and strange at almost every step we took, indoors and outdoors. After a year things became more familiar, but surprises could happen at any time. The same was true for various tour trips that took us to the city over the years.

On one occasion I had been tour leader with a trip that took the group to Moscow enroute to the airport *Sheremetova* to go to Frankfurt, Germany and then on to Amsterdam, and overseas to Toronto and Winnipeg. Our group had spent the final night in a big hotel called the *Kosmos*. During the final day the entire group left for the airport to depart. I said I would come a little later — had a small errand to run yet.

The errand was to take a quick trip to the American embassy, gain entrance and go to a certain room used by the chaplain, a Rev. Johanaber, very friendly always, who had promised to give me something left in that office. I said I thought I could get through the hoops, and pick up what I needed on my own.

I knew how to get to the Embassy (American), did so and needed to pass a booth with several Russian soldiers inside to ask permission to proceed. I managed that and soon was at the regular entrance to the building where two more Russian soldiers guarded the door.

They saluted very smartly. I asked, May I enter (Russian word for "may I" is *Mozhno*). They very politely gestured, of course after I showed my passport. Once inside I was close up to a small window where an American Marine waited for me to explain my wishes, and I did. He told me, again very friendly, even smiling, where to find the room I needed to get to to pick up something given to me. I found the room, checked the shelving, and found the desired item.

Then I hurriedly returned the way I had come, and hastened down the street to find a metro (subway) station, and headed for my hotel. I was running short of time to get a taxi at the hotel, and on to my plane departure.

Instinctively I checked my billfold pocket (again my back pocket — a no-no), but noted immediately my bill fold and passport were missing. I did a quick think, decided the only place they could be would be in that room I had checked out to get my package.

So I rushed back to the Embassy, explained to the soldiers in the booth that I needed something I lost at the Embassy (the soldiers probably understood some English, but I used Russian as I could) once more went to the front door, got my Russian salute, and then a word with the Marine to say why I was back — no problem, he opened the door, saying, "Check where you think you left your stuff". I did and there to my great relief it was lying on the floor, where I had put it instead of back into my pocket, but undisturbed and everything there.

I picked up everything, quickly retreated back to the out of doors, thanked the Russian guards and said goodbye (after thanking the Marine of course) and decided if I took the metro I would be late for my connection at the hotel and perhaps the plane departure. So I quickly signaled to a taxi,



Moscovites gather around a new memorial on Lubyanka Square (in front of the former KGB headquarters) to give tribute to all who died in the repressions of the Soviet period. Taken the day of a march demonstration in the city held on November 7, 1992.

— Credit: Lawrence Klippenstein

gave my hotel name, *Gostinitza Kosmos*, and if I had remembered my Russian properly I would have said, *Skoryeye*, which means hurry but I could not remember it, thought I would make it okay.

I got to the hotel, do not recall asking the taxi driver "How much?" (*skolko stoiet?*), simply emptied all my Russian change into his outstretched hand, included some American currency (hoping I had not short changed him) and dashed from the car to the hotel.

He just looked at his stack of coins, did not take time to count (it was a few dollars) and drove off. I ran off to do my last packing and get away to the airport (another taxi, I think it was — always some waiting to hurry somewhere), had him take me right to the airport (again a few dollars) so I could catch my plane, and I was on time, with only a little to spare. Checking in took almost no time, and I was seated comfortably in my Lufthansa, breathing much easier, of course.

The rest is history. I tried not to think too much about how I would have proceeded if I had not found the papers when and where I had left them. It didn't matter now — just be careful. . . be careful. . .

John (Jack) Bumsted (1938-2020)

was a beloved university professor of history at St. John's College and an author of about 30 books on Canadian history. He was the authority on the life and times of Lord Selkirk and the recipient of numerous academic awards. His Manitoba books almost invariably won the Margaret McWilliams award from the Manitoba Historical Society. He inspired many students with a love of the Canadian adventure.

Ernie P. Toews

1929 – 2019

by Glen R. Klassen

The passing of Ernie P. Toews on November 1, 2019, at the age of 90, left the community of Steinbach without its leading local historian. He was always interested in history, even as a young person, but after retirement he contributed to Steinbach and Hanover history in a very significant way. He published a biography



— Courtesy of the Toews family

of his father who was born in Russia but spent most of his life in Steinbach as the son of one of the original *Kleingemeinde* settlers in the village. The book rehearses the early history of Steinbach in great detail. He followed this up with a series of articles in *Preservings* with maps showing the location of all the original hearths in the Steinbach of 1874 and also the places of business and worship in the village in the early days. He preserved the old records of burials in the Pioneer cemetery and was always willing to help people find significant sites. He was a pillar of the EMB church, serving in many capacities, even preaching occasionally. The church archives ended up in Ernie's home and were eventually deposited in the Mennonite Heritage Archives. When questions of history arose in the community, Ernie was the person with the answers. Twenty-five years ago human remains were unearthed by construction machinery near Kleefeld. Ernie was able to identify the location as the Schoenfeld cemetery and was able to provide clues as to the family connections of those buried there. When someone published the idea that Louis Riel was the first MP for Provencher, Ernie gently corrected him with a letter showing extensive knowledge of early Manitoba history. Ralph Friesen says that Ernie was his main source for his book of Steinbach history *Between Earth and Sky*. I myself consulted extensively with Ernie when preparing the Steinbach pages in the *Historical Atlas of the East Reserve*.

Ernie's sister Linda says that her brother exemplified the servant disposition. This was evident in his business career, his church work, and also in his historical activities. He was a tolerant man who could relate to anyone. He will be greatly missed.

Edward Enns had Two Careers

by Lawrence Klippenstein

That's what the *In Memoriam* tells us about Ed. Very many people are aware of one of them. Ed and Elizabeth served in Bible School teaching and pastorates for three decades or more. He told me once he had all his sermon notes carefully organized and filed properly.

His second career did not get the same public profile. It is summarized in the words of the family tribute

"...second career as one of the province's foremost translators of handwritten German Gothic script". You have to try to read it to discover what that script looks like. I happened to get very early writing instruction in Gothic script though never did use it much. I soon became aware in my work at the Mennonite Heritage Centre that it was a rare gift and, we discovered, much in demand. We had been very fortunate to obtain a predecessor for such work at the Centre, in the person of one Jake Wiens, who really set the course for ongoing retirement volunteer activity in this area.

When Jake was gone we were most anxious to discover a replacement and Ed became that person. When a five-volume set of dairies and other notes written by a former Siberian Mennonite teacher Heinrich Wieler, who happened to settle in Lancaster Pennsylvania, came to our attention we started the search for help on translating.

It was about that time that Ed had begun to work with materials related to Abram Enns, a teacher who took his first job in Canada at the Altberghthal school, and carried on for a number of years. Ed also did a good deal of writing for the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, and he became totally taken with writing up the story of his great grandfather until it became a full-blown biography. This meant a great deal of translating German scripts which took us then to the Heinrich Wieler documents – in Gothic script – hundreds of pages.

That is where Ed came to the rescue and never looked back. A large collection of letters from an Epp collection in South Russia (dealing with the emigration to Russia in 1787 – 1806) had come our way by then. It was all in Gothic script and it seemed that Ed simply lapped it up. It was tough going, and Ed was not able to complete as much of that project as he had hoped. But in due time someone else came to the rescue and it is done by now.

Ed could retain his fine touch as a translator for twenty years, both with respect to transcribing the Gothic or Latin scripts from German to English. There were few



1926-2019

— Photo Credit: MAID CA
MHC 321-858.0

(Continued on page 15)

WestMenn Activities

by **Graham Schellenberg**

2019 involved a series of positive developments for the WestMenn Historical Committee, which met four times over the course of the year. Our committee members continue to be involved in several local projects, namely the Post Road and Fort Dufferin, and a variety of engaging historical studies pertinent to the West Reserve.

Albert Falk has actively maintained Post Road trail markers and public checkpoints for several years, and led a 90+ kilometer bicycling tour of the trail on July 20, 2019. Albert's report can be found in the November 2019 edition of Heritage Posting. The group departed Stanley Park, near Morden, and continued in a generally eastward direction through Mountain City, Osterwick, Hochfeld, Reinland, Schoenwiese and Neuhorst, before ending up at Fort Dufferin – quite a distance covered! As for Fort Dufferin, both Eleanor Chornoboy and John Giesbrecht are involved with ongoing work (led by an external organization) to develop a permanent plaque on display at the National Historic Site.

Relevant to WestMenn's interest in sustaining the ongoing research and publication of village histories, two additional projects were identified and informally endorsed last year. The first is the 'West Reserve Atlas Project', inspired by John Rempel and William Harms' *Atlas of the West Reserve*. The Atlas committee, led by Albert Falk, is discussing long-range planning of that project. The second project is my and Lawrence Klippenstein's history of the Altbergthol School District, including the Fasting, Bergman Siding and the neighboring villages of Altbergthol and Lichtfeld. A map of Bergman, named after pioneer farmer, businessman and politician Cornelius Bergman, was



**WestMenn Chair
Graham Schellenberg**

published in Hans Werner's article in the recent edition of *Preservings*. There is plenty to come on his life and developments at Bergman through the Altbergthol project.

Other projects underway by committee members include Pam Klassen-Dueck's study of the 1940s migration of Manitoba Mennonites to Paraguay and a community history of the Grimsby School District, including the West Reserve village of Heuboden. Pam is also the creator of Mennonites (Unreserved), a very interesting Facebook group dedicated to Manitoba Mennonites. The group has become a valuable resource of local history, with newspaper clippings, photos and stories regularly shared!

The WestMenn Historical Committee also underwent significant personnel changes in 2019. Early in the year, the committee welcomed three new members: Pam Klassen-Dueck, Sean Goerzen and Graham Schellenberg. In September, Graham Schellenberg and Albert Falk were confirmed as Chair and Treasurer of WestMenn. The outgoing Chair and Secretary, Lawrence Klippenstein and Eleanor Chornoboy, have completed their terms but renewed their committee membership. Further committee additions to WestMenn are anticipated in 2020.



Conrad Stoesz, archivist at Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg, can now be heard on radio telling interesting archival stories.

"There are amazing stories in the archives," he says. "They can give us something to think about. Together, we can listen to people of the past who are still speaking."

Still Speaking can be heard Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9:20 a.m. on CFAM 950 (Altona), CJRB 1220 (Boissevain) and CHSM 1250 (Steinbach).

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competitors around, and even fewer who did everything on a volunteer basis, as Ed did. At one point I thought he had "retired" from this career but then learned that he had gone back to work when vision and other prerequisites were restored. The list of projects completed became longer and longer, some done quietly just for friends and families who needed his help. It is a long story, and not at all certain whether Ed carefully listed all his projects and marked them "done" at the right time or not. And it's not clear if he kept copies of everything he did. We trust they are still in his files. Ed was an exceptional talent, with a most significant achievement, any way you look at it.

God is good and gives us people that we need!

Book Reviews

Ralph Friesen, *Dad, God and Me. Remembering a Mennonite Pastor and His Wayward Son* (Victoria: Friesen Press, 2019), pb., 275 pp.,

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein.

What is the book about? this is very traditional book review question, with a backcover blurb offering an answer upon which this author cannot meaningfully improve. "In a compelling, honest and transparent account, Ralph Friesen tells the story of his father Reverend Peter D. Friesen of Steinbach, Manitoba. He also tells his own story of the search for his father and a crisis of faith."

To complete this task, one for which I volunteered, turned out to be more complicated than expected. For me there was first of all, a concern about objectivity. I have been connected to the Friesen family to some degree for sixty five years -- the context, issues, personalities and life stories for many of them.

My wife was a life-long (till marriage and a little longer) a member of the church which Pastor Friesen served as minister and pastor. I am personally acquainted with a large number of the people we meet in the book and I have known the congregation for 65 years. I think I visited Friesen's shop once or twice. I have also been acquainted for quite a long time (not sixty five years) with the author himself and appreciate that acquaintanceship to the present – to the point that I am tempted to say, "I think I know where the author is coming from".

As things stand then, I found myself unable to find solid "footing" as a regular reviewer as I drew more and more comparisons with my own relationship with my father with whom I shared just over fifty years of my life before he passed away in 1983. I also did not get to know him as I should have. If given another chance I would try to do so. But I am also in my in my advanced years and discovering at least some of the meaning of a "crisis of faith."

You should read this book, and may you the reader take the contents and judge them any way you wish. I think Ralph will be okay with that. He is not a novice in writing; he has authored or co-authored two other important books. I will not say I read his new work in one sitting because that would not be true, though I sat longer at reading stretches than I have with many other books. And could summarize with the words, "Good job, that!"

This book is gripping, it is sad, it is happy, it is puzzling, it is well organized and edited, comfortably detailed, but possibly unfinished; it is whatever it will become to its readers. It would be interesting someday to see how the

author's children will interpret all of this. Others too. We all have all had a father — as a baby, as a young child, as a teenager, as a young adult; for each one there is much of what Ralph has trekked through that has been equally experienced by others.

If I had it to do over I think I would trek differently with my Dad. Not long before he passed away we made a family visit to his therapy spot at Eden. I walked with him along a sunny sidewalk for a while, chatted about small things, went in where I asked him at the bedside if I might pray before we left. He said, "yes" and then asked. Where did you learn to pray like that (a usual but audible prayer), and I answered as I thought I needed to, and he touched my hand – he had never done that before In a few days he passed on during or right after shock treatment. Like Ralph, I too am not sure I really got to know my Dad as I should have — or he me.

Joan Thomas, *Five Wives*, Harper Collins Canada, 2019, 400 pp.

Reviewed by Erin Unger and Andrew Unger

The story of Elisabeth Elliot and Operation Auca is a familiar one to many residents of southern Manitoba. In 1955, five mission-minded young men felt led by God to delve deep into the Ecuadorian jungle, never to emerge. Two years later, Elisabeth Elliot published *Through Gates of Splendor*, celebrating the martyrdom of her late husband and his four associates. The book was made into a popular film and Elliot, herself, spoke in southern Manitoba on at least one occasion at a conference at Providence College (then Winnipeg Bible College) during the 1980s. Her story inspired countless people across the world, including in our own region, to head out into the mission field. The story is so entrenched in Evangelical culture, many of us think we know it. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say we know a story, rather than *the* story.

Another version is told by Winnipeg author Joan Thomas in her Governor-General Award-winning novel *Five Wives*. The book is a novel, yes. It does not claim to be biography. However, Thomas weaves meticulously-researched fact and well-imagined fiction to explore the background stories of each character and speculates about how the next generation — the children of the "five wives" — might process their legendary family history.

Thomas examines what drove these couples deep into the rainforest in the first place, takes inside the experience of each woman and each relationship. It wasn't quite as peaceful as I'd imagined. She takes us on a vivid, intimate journey into the fascinating, highly individualistic minds of these women, and the fear that sat at the edges of their consciousness. . . and the yard sites they'd gouged from the rainforest.

Her writing ushers the reader deep inside each scene, conveying it exquisitely. The wives are reading their husband's diaries. The men had been camped near the

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forest people, deep in the heart of the jungle. The contact is made. An unsettled feeling nestles in my belly. I read on, captivated.

In the character of Abby, the (fictional) granddaughter of two of the couples, Elliots and Saints, what would be the viewpoint of someone in this unique position? Thomas weaves a tantalizing exploration of this question.

I was surprised to discover Olive's true feelings toward the charismatic Jim Elliot, who is described unflatteringly in Olive's voice, as he proved to be an effective piper, essentially luring her partner to his death. She felt "a new calling take possession of her heart: a calling to strangle a minister of God with her own bare hands" (Thomas p. 57).

In the character of Cornell, a New York City photojournalist covering the story in the aftermath of the massacre, the reader's perspective shifts abruptly from insider to outsider. We learn what would someone outside an Evangelical Christian context might've made of this story.

It's remarkable how Thomas is able to handle these nuanced multi-faceted perspectives. This is illustrated in Thomas' treatment of diametric sister-in-laws Marj and Rachel. Marj, run off her feet simultaneously nursing babies, hosting visitors, and maintaining radio contact with her spouse. Rachel, trying to bulldoze her way back into her brother's life, by turns clumsy, earnest, overbearing, sincere.

The book also dissects the concept of obedience, particularly when God seems to give people completely different directives. Marj reflects: "You obey your husband, who believes he's obeying the Lord, but what if your husband got it wrong?" (Thomas p. 180).

In *Five Wives*, Thomas examines their varied motivations, and ultimately the motivations of us all; what drives any of us to do the things we do?

Ego, competition, cult of personality. . . and culture.

"Culture is a delicate porcelain. . . you can smash it just like that. Or, your culture is written so deep in your bones you can never hope to resist it" (Thomas p. 378).

The story is no doubt a different one than that which many of us may have grown up with, but one that offers a unique — dare I say, essential — perspective on not only the role of the missionary, but on the complexity of human motivation.

An EMC hat trick!

Three books by Evangelical Mennonite Conference ministers have recently appeared: Arden Thiessen's *Welcome to Hope* (\$15), Layton Boyd Friesen's *Seditions, Confusion and Tumult: Why Reformation Europe thought Anabaptism Would Destroy Society* (\$10) and Darryl G. Klassen's *The Anabaptist Evangelical Puzzle: Discovering How the Pieces Fit*. (\$20). The latter two are available at the EMC Conference Office: 440 Main Street Steinbach, MB R5G 1Z5. Phone: 204-326-6401.

Layton Boyd Friesen, *Seditions, Confusion and Tumult. Why Reformation Europe Thought Anabaptism Would Destroy Society*, Steinbach, MB, Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 2001, 2019. 165 pp.

By John J. Friesen, Professor emeritus, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg MB

This book by Layton Boyd Friesen is a republication of his masters dissertation, first published in 2001. At first glance it may appear that Friesen is merely restating what is already well known about sixteenth century Anabaptism. However, it soon becomes evident that organizing his discussion around the question, "Why Reformation Europe Thought Anabaptism Would Destroy Society" allows Friesen to provide fresh perspectives about the Anabaptist movement. His goal is to understand the world of medieval Europe, and ask why it felt so threatened by Anabaptism.

Friesen provides two answers to the central question of the book. The first is that for both Catholics and Protestants, the Anabaptist beliefs of adult baptism, peace and a church free from government control, were seen as fundamental threats to the basic order of their societies. The political and religious authorities concluded that this threat was so great that it had to be rooted out with executions of the most gruesome kind to assure the survival of their society.

The second reason why the sixteenth century European states felt so threatened was that they believed Anabaptism put the eternal souls of their subjects in peril of eternal damnation. The reasoning by both Catholic and Protestant states was that since Anabaptists were heretics, their presence, and their teachings threatened not only the salvation of Anabaptists themselves, but also the eternal salvation of all the rulers' subjects. This religious motivation and fear resulted in some of the most vicious persecutions of the 16th century.

In the introduction, Friesen also provides a helpful overview of how sixteenth century Anabaptism has been reinterpreted since Harold S. Bender published his article "Anabaptist Vision" in the 1940s.

After his introduction, Friesen discusses in greater detail the various aspects of the sixteenth century European world that felt threatened by the Anabaptist emphases. These perceived threats become titles for his chapters: Anabaptists as Anarchists, Anabaptist Baptism and 'Uncitizenry', Fanatical Apocalypics, and the Economics of Subversives.

In each of the four chapters Friesen does a masterful job of portraying the assumptions and convictions of sixteenth century medieval society. He shows how the Constantinian synthesis of church and state was carefully crafted over centuries of struggle. He describes how within that synthesis, church and state were fully intertwined and worked hand-in-glove to address the Anabaptist threats. The central concern of the church and state was to maintain order. It was this order that the Anabaptist movement threatened.

Friesen also notes that the Lutheran, Zwinglian and

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Calvinist Protestant movements, even though they rejected much of Roman Catholicism, did not reject these basic Constantinian assumptions. Protestant states identified the threat Anabaptists posed to the social, political and religious orders of their states in the same way as did the Catholic states.

While the European states felt threatened by the emphases on adult baptism, nonviolence, and free churches, they were even more afraid that apocalypticism, the early violence of the German and Dutch Anabaptist movements, and economic communalism would disrupt the order of their states. The authorities did not make fine distinction about which group emphasized what. They

simply tarred all Anabaptist groups with these emphases, and charged them with potentially being violent revolutionaries like Thomas Muenster, dangerous apocalypticists like the Muensterites and economic communalists like Hutterites.

Friesen concludes his book with an Afterword, in which he reflects upon the conclusions of his research almost 20 years earlier. The book also includes a good select bibliography, and a helpful index.

This is an excellent book. John Roth, in the Foreword, says, "There are lots of reasons to recommend this book." The book is informative, readable, accessible and relatively free of technical academic language. A great read for everyone interested in sixteenth century Anabaptism.

Altona History Seekers 2020

presents

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Program

- Mar. 5** *History of the Canadian Mennonite University*
— presented by Gerald Gerbrandt
- Mar. 12** a) "*The Last Objectors*" a film about COs in WWII
b) *Swiss Mennonites*
— presented by Conrad Stoesz
- Mar. 19** *Mennonites in Soviet Ukraine: Reflections from the KGB Archives*
— presented by Aileen Friesen
- Mar. 26** *History of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute*
— presented by (TBA)

*If cancelled due to weather, announcements will be made on CFAM Radio (on air and online).

For information contact: Ronald (Joe) Braun 324-6259
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Book Notes

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Syd Reimer *et al.*, compilers. *A Collection of Stories* (Winnipeg: by the compilers, 2019), pb. 290 pp, ring-bound, \$30, offers an amazing collection of life stories, 59 in all, by a group of three relatives, Glen Kehler, Syd Reimer and Ernie Doerksen, all having had or still having connections with Steinbach. Illustrated. Further information may be obtained by contacting Syd at 205-254-6015 or 202-490 Lindenwood Dr. E, Winnipeg, MB, R3P 0Y5.

Issue No. 39, 2019, of *Preservings* (D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation), is now off the press. To obtain copies or further information contact editor Aileen Friesen at ai.friesen@uwinnipeg.ca. The current issues is subtitled "Mennonites on the Rails" and is very well illustrated. The fall issue of 2020 will focus on "Mennonites and their Neighbours". Back issues are also available from the editor.

A second edition of *One Hundred and Forty: Windows on the West Reserve*, a "scrapbook" of information on the West Reserve in Manitoba is now available from its compiler, Lawrence Klippenstein (pb., 40 pp, ring-bound, well-illustrated, \$10 not including postage). It is published under the auspices of WestMenn Historical Committee of the MMHS. The author's publication *Peace and War: Mennonite Conscientious Objectors in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union before WWII, and other COs in Eastern Europe* (pb., 356 pp, 2016) is still available on CDs (\$30) in Mennonite book stores (CMU, etc.) or free online at <http://bit.ly/2jcwJS1>. The paperback version is out of print. It offers background data for the Mennonite emigration from south Russia to Manitoba in 1874-1880. For further information or to order contact lawklippenstein@shaw.ca

To obtain the latest issue (December, 2019) of *Mennonite Historian*, newsletter of the Mennonite Heritage Archives and Centre for MB Studies, both in Winnipeg, contact cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca. Ask for their most recent issue of Used Mennonite Books if interested.

To get the most recent issue of the Mennonite Heritage Village museum newsletter, *Village Voice* (November, 2019) contact andread@mhv.ca. Both *Mennonite Historian* and *The Blazer* can also be obtained through regular subscription.

The *Blazer: Connecting Alumni and Friends of CMU* is a newsletter published by CMU to provide general CMU news to the public. If you would like to get a sample copy contact the editor, Kevin Kilbrei at info@cmu.ca. Its fall 2019 issue is off the press.

Manitoba History is a long-standing journal of historical research and publication published by the Manitoba Historical Society. It has just published a double-sized final issue, No. 90, as it prepares to reappear as *Prairie History* with the same objectives as its predecessor. The editor remains Robert Coutts. Frieda Esau Klippenstein of Niverville serves as book review editor. The office can be reached at info@mhs.mb.ca

The *MB Herald*, a major publication of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada, has just published its final issue as it bids its readership farewell. Its most recent editor was Karla Braun. To reach her or others connected with the periodical call 1-204-669- 6575 or visit the office at 1310 Taylor Ave., Winnipeg, MB. We warmly congratulate the *Herald* for its illustrious and long-lasting career.

Klippenstein Reunion



— Photo courtesy of Ron and Dolores Dyck, Winnipeg, (standing, extreme left).

Daughters, sons and in-laws of the Cornelius D. Klippenstein family, formerly from Altberghthal/Altona at a Christmas gathering in early November, 2019. Eight of the "sibling originals" have passed away. The three men on the right are all octogenarians. Cornelius and Susan, parents of the persons on the photo have also passed away. Great Grandpa Heinrich, his wife Sarah, and their family of ten children will be featured in an upcoming book on the Altberghthal school district. They came to the West Reserve from the East Reserve (and from Russia in 1875), in 1890 and settled in the village on Buffalo Creek. The book, *Peter H. and Maria Dyck Klippenstein. A Brief Sketch of Their Life and Work* (2008), edited by Lawrence Klippenstein, tells part of the "rest of the story".



A Hundred Years From Now

By Gary Dyck (MHV)

A hundred years from now?

All new people.

Look around you, all the people you know and see will not be here.

All new people.

There will be new ways of living, new technology and new governments.

There will be all new people.

You will not be here.

All new people.

Your children will not be here.

All new people.

The grandchildren you see?

All new people.

However,

the culture and heritage you left behind will be with them.

With all the new people will be an old culture and heritage.

It will be their source of wisdom to know how to deal with their new ways of living, their new technology and their governments.

It will be all new people,

but it won't be all new.