

Mennonite Historian

A PUBLICATION OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE and THE CENTRE FOR MB STUDIES IN CANADA



One hundred years ago (1911), the *Kleine Gemeinde* (predecessors of the EMC) built the first church building in Steinbach (top left). Today their spiritual descendants worship in a very different modern-looking structure (top right), the church is part of a conference with churches across Canada from south-western Ontario to British Columbia (Google map on EMC conference website).

Evangelical Mennonite Conference (1812-2012)

by Alf Redekopp

It is 200 years since the Evangelical Mennonite Conference had its beginning in what was then New Russia, current day Ukraine. What challenges and changes have they experienced in 200 years? Who were they then and who are they today?

The Evangelical Mennonite Conference began as the *Kleine Gemeinde* in Molotschna, South Russia in 1812, after a small group of families met for Bible studies. A common concern was that the Mennonite church was lacking in its following Jesus in daily life. Led by 44-year-old minister Klaas Reimer, they officially formed a Mennonite church separate from the main church because

They claimed Anabaptist teachings of the church were not being heeded by the main church. It was a small group and thus came to be known as the *Kleine Gemeinde* (small church). In its first 50 or so years it was led by three elders – Klaas Reimer, Abraham Friesen and Johann Friesen – successful farmers and prophetic leaders.

During the second fifty years, the church faced a number of challenges – disruptive pressures from within and without. There was a split in 1866; there was the forming of the Borosenko colony, which included all that goes with moving and establishing a new community; there were the new military laws of

(cont'd on p. 4)

Government uses Scripture to encourage compliance.

by Conrad Stoesz

February is the time of month that at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies we begin the process of collecting statistical information from the previous year. Since 1946 forms are updated, letters written and personnel put in place to collate and tabulate the information. Initially large charts were created, later replaced by electronic spreadsheets.

Census style information has long been seen as an indispensable tool in the formation of policies and direction for any organization. In our national context this becomes foundational for medical, sociological, economic and historical research – even genealogy. The Canadian government conducts a census every ten years and to encourage compliance the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics sent a letter to Mennonite Church Canada reminding them of the census date in 2011. “It will be vitally important that the Census be as accurate as possible,” they wrote. The letter also included the following paragraph:

“The Census is not a new idea. In the Bible, the Book of Luke Chapter 2 Verses 1-5 tells of the census of the entire Roman world order by Caesar Augustus. The Census of Canada may not be quite as ambitious, but it’s just as important.”

I found the inclusion of Biblical Scripture intriguing. Was there a long standing tradition using this passage? I contacted Manitoba’s Chief Statistician for more information. As it turned out the use of Luke 2 was initiated independently of any earlier use of the passage. I shared with Chief Statistician, Wilf Falk, the story of how Luke 2 was used in 1918.

In 1918 the Canada Registration Act was passed requiring all men and women to be registered. Mennonites were suspicious of the act, fearing it would be used for conscription purposes and therefore refused to submit to this law. The privileges given to the Mennonites in 1873, encouraging their immigration, released them of military duty. The government was concerned that this resistance would infect other communities. Meetings with Mennonite representatives and legal council stymied the government officials.

Finally eight days before the registration deadline, a meeting was set for June 13, 1918. Superintendent for registration P.C. Locke, lawyer Alexander McLeod of

(cont'd on p. 2)

Scripture and compliance

(cont'd from p. 1)

Morden and W.J. Rowe of Manitou traveled to Reinland (near Winkler) to meet with the Old Colony Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

A few miles from Reinland the officials noticed many horses and buggies streaming out of Reinland. They stopped one of the teams and inquired why everyone was leaving. The meeting is over – they were informed. A meeting was held at 6 am and Locke was told “the Lord said we cannot register.” Frustrated the government officials took the Mennonites up on an offer to meet in the home of Mr. Harms with the bishops and ministers to discuss the matter further.

Locke explained that it was simply “an endeavour to get the man and woman power of the Dominion made up so that the Government would know what efforts could be put forth should the war carry on.” Locke used every argument he could think of. Locke said “Bishop, I have known the Mennonite people since my childhood. If you refuse to register it is my duty to enforce the Act. The Act provides for ten days imprisonment and a daily fine. I cannot have the authority of the Dominion Government flouted.” The Mennonite leaders solemnly responded saying they would be first in line for jail time and offered to bring their bank books. Locke reflected, “They knew that I knew that they did not fear imprisonment or confiscation of their worldly goods in defence of a principle.” For a while nothing was said. Locke was desperately groping for a way out. Finally he got up and walked over to the middle of the room and picked up the German Bible that was on a small table and returned to his chair. Leafing through it his eye rested on Luke chapter 2. He returned the open Bible to the table and addressed the group. “I have known your people as long as I can remember. I know that this book is the Mennonite’s law. My friends, if I can show you authority for this registration in the Bible will you do as I ask you to do? This government is only asking from you the same thing that Caesar Augustus asked the earthly father and mother of our Lord to do, and they did so.” Locke read the passage in German and then English. After a period of “awed silence” there was a lot of discussion, gathering in little knots around the Bishops. The old Manitoba Bishop



Conrad Stoesz with a 1952 stats sheet.

walked to the centre of the room to stand with Locke. He replied in a shaky voice, “Mr. Locke, we are deeply obliged to you. You have shown us the truth. We believed we were right this morning when we told you that we had been advised not to register. We have put the government to a good deal of expense. Will you let us register our own people under your direction? We will give you all our young people who read and write English well and they will do whatever work is necessary without expense.” There was no more trouble. Locke reports that “Bishop Wall went back to Rosthern and in no part of Canada was there a more complete registration than amongst our Mennonite Canadians.”

While the Mennonite leadership was stubborn and willing to suffer for its principles, it was not close minded but once convicted was contrite.

Source: *Reinland: an Experience in Community* p. 239-240.

Mennonite Historian is published by the Mennonite Heritage Centre of Mennonite Church Canada and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

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Subscription rates: \$15.00 per year, \$28.00 for two years, \$40.00 for three years. Individual subscriptions may be ordered from these addresses.

ISSN 07008066

Otto Klassen and Text to Terabyte Project

Three years ago, thanks to the generosity of Otto Klassen, the two Mennonite archival Centres in Winnipeg were given the permission to duplicate and distribute Otto’s documentary films on Russian Mennonite topics. The Text to Terabyte Project (supporting archives in the 21st Century) is the creation of a fund that will continue to help archives face the ever-increasing challenges of digital media. There are documents and photos to be scanned, there are audio and video recording to be digitized, there are computers, software, networks and systems to be maintained and upgraded. Simply put, for every \$30.00 donation to this project, the donor can choose one of Otto Klassen’s documentaries on DVD, from a predetermined list.

The project continues to be a success. After expenses, a total of \$14,321.50 has been raised and over 700 DVDs have been distributed in a period of 3 years. DVDs have been available at an annual film night and also at each of the Centres. More DVDs continue to be added.

On April 7 of this year, Otto Klassen will be celebrating his 85th birthday. He continues to be active in his studio producing more short films of specific events he filmed in the past. In January 2012, he marked the completion eight DVDs, all related to activities that took place in 1999 when Manitoba Mennonites in the Steinbach and surrounding towns celebrated the 125th anniversary of the first Mennonite settlers in the area. They include: a message by Dr. Royden Loewen and meditation by Dr. Archie Penner (both from Sun. Aug. 1, 1999), memorial worship services in Grunthal and in Randolph, the dedication of the K.R. Barkman Park, separate productions for speakers Karen Peters and Henry Fast at a heritage celebration in Blumenort and a production of the Grunthal Parade. Otto hopes to complete another 4 productions before his birthday which include the memorial services in Mitchell and Landmark, the parade in Steinbach and the dedication of the new bridge at New Bothwell. All events from 1999.

On behalf of all who have watched and appreciated the works that Otto Klassen has shared, CMBS and MHC wish him a very happy and blessed birthday!

A.R.

Genealogy and Family History

Recent Books at CMBS

By Jon Isaak

Arnie Neufeld (1944-), of Winkler, Manitoba, documents the story of his family in his latest book, *Family Trees, Milestones and Memories: My Family Story*

(Winkler, 2011). The fruit of five years of research, Neufeld narrates the lives of his ancestors and those of his wife, Trudi Neufeld (nee Klassen).

The 425-page volume includes stories, photos, and genealogical data from the 18th century through to the present.

The ancestral families documented are the descendents of Gerhard Neufeld (1840-1887) and Katharina Loewen (1840-1910), Isbrandt Wiebe (ca. 1700) and Agatha (?), Peter Heidebrecht (ca. 1834) and Katharina Boschmann (1833), Peter Epp (1681-1733) and Anna Claassen (1683-1730), Johann Klassen (1825) and Agatha Martens (d.1858), Jakob Dyck (1742-1801) and Marie Penner (1744-1804), Gerhard Peters (1772-1848) and Agatha Bueckert (1778-1846), and Peter Toews (1839) and Katharina Siemens (1845-1925).

Neufeld's characteristic attention to detail and sensitivity to story make this an especially important addition to the Mennonite genealogical collection.

Ann Wiens, of Winnipeg, published a family remembrance book entitled, *Leaving a Legacy: Treasuring the rich Christian heritage of the Johann J. Klassen family* (Winnipeg,

2004). Johann J. Klassen (1869-1941), together with his first wife, Aganetha Doerksen (1871-1920), had thirteen children. After Aganetha's death, Johann married Aganetha's sister, Katharina (1868-1952). The book traces the family history of the thirteen Klassen children,



with their spouses and children, through to the present, including photos, stories, and contact information. The Klassen families described are: Simon, Johann, Abram, Agatha, Aganetha & Jacob Reimer, Jacob & Maria (Langemann), Gerhard & Helena (Froese), Maria & Jacob Wiens, Cornelius & Mary (Janzen), Dietrich & Gertruda (Langemann), Katharina & John Spent, Anna & Victor Wilms, and Erna. The book includes a tribute to Aunt Erna Klassen, the well-loved aunt, known for her hospitality.

Both of these recent additions to the library at CMBS continue the strong tradition of people writing the history of their ancestral families "for the next generation." With computers and micro-publishing options becoming more affordable, it is relatively easy to produce a smart-looking book with text and photographs for family distribution.

Centre for MB Studies and the Mennonite Heritage Centre support this tradition and are grateful to be included in the distribution of these volumes! Books like these help extend the historical and genealogical record of Mennonites in Canada that is housed at these Centres.

Recent Books at MHC

By Alf Redekopp

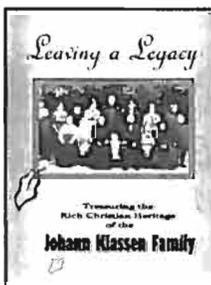
Henry Unger, compiler. *The House of Heinrich Unger 1863-1948 and Katharina Elias 1876-1966* (Crystal City, MB: Henry Unger, 1995) 207 pp.

Although published over 15 years ago, this book just recently was donated to the MHC by Francis Dyck of Winnipeg. The book is divided into sections that follow the families of the children of Heinrich and Katharina Unger, who grew up Manitoba's Mennonite West Reserve as children of recent immigrants from Russia. The book includes the Heinrich Unger's children with his first wife Justina Banman (1867-1905) who he married in 1885, the children of Katharina Elias with her first husband Herman

Neufeld (1871-1904) who she married in 1897, and the children that Heinrich Unger and Katharina Elias had together after their marriage in 1905. Katharina was the daughter of Peter A. Elias (1843-1925), known for his writing about the early times of Manitoba Mennonite life. Heinrich Unger was the son of Heinrich Unger (1838-1876). His mother, Maria Wiens (1839-1897), married Jakob Reimer (1843-1904). Using the term "The House of" in the title, certainly is a fine way of describing the content of this compilation. The book will make a fine addition to the genealogy section in the Mennonite Historical Library at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU).

The MHC Centre is grateful to Ted E. Friesen of Altona for recently donating a number of published and unpublished works which he either collected or compiled himself. The published works will become a significant addition to the Mennonite Historical Library at CMU. The unpublished works will be held in the archives. The books include: *Genealogy of Heinrich Sawatzky & Helena (Bergen) Anna (Nickel) Katherina (Nickel)...* by Dave Sawatzky of Altona, Manitoba (1998); *The Sawatzky Heritage 1853-1981* compiled by Tina Klaassen and John Driedger (ca. 1980); *Family Register of Johann F. Dueck* by Maria and Jake Stoess of Winnipeg (1995); *The John and Katherina Penners and Family* by Don Penner of Altona, Manitoba (1995); *The House of Cornelius [Schmidt]* (ca. 1988); *Heinrich Penner and Anna Woelk Family 1842-1983* by David G. Penner (1983); *Let's Get Acquainted [about Heinrich Heinrichs Descendants 1838-2003]* compiled by Cleo Heinrichs of Altona (2003); and, *Bernhard Wiebe Descendants* by Herman Rempel, Morden and Ben Rempel, Winkler (ca. 1986).

The unpublished genealogies include: *The Wall Genealogy 1852-1989* (20 pp.); a Krahn family history containing descendants of the brothers Peter Krahn (1843-1930), Johann Krahn (1848-1920) and Dietrich Krahn (1853-1916) (2 binders); and *Genealogy of Katherina Klippenstein (1833-1878) and Heinrich Klassen (1831-1890)* compiled by T.E. Friesen; *Genealogy of Peter Klippenstein 1831-1904* compiled by T.E. Friesen (1986); and, *Genealogy of David Friesen 1856-1893 and Anna Wiens 1857-1883 First Wife and Anna Klassen 1862-1940 Second Wife* compiled by T.E. Friesen (1990).



EMC 1812-2012

(cont'd from p. 1)

Imperial Russia in 1870 which forced them to leave Russia for Manitoba and Nebraska; and there was the "Holdeman crisis" of 1882 which resulted in the founding of the Church of God in Christ (Mennonite). Leaders such as Peter Toews, A.L. Friesen, Jacob M. Kroeker and Peter R. Dueck worked hard at shepherding their flock during these times.

Just after marking their 100-year anniversary, they faced the World War I (1914-1918) and a crisis around the Manitoba School Act of 1919, which forced the acceptance of public school education.

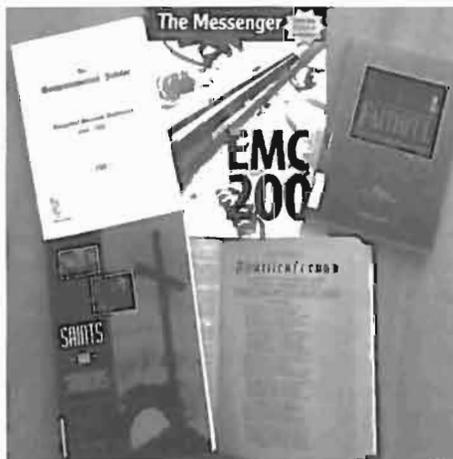
The story of the first half of the 20th Century has been described by Dr. Royden Loewen as "often the story of a reluctant leadership and a progressive laity." In the 1920s Sunday schools were introduced. In the 1940s there was increased local church autonomy and Bible schools were attended. In 1952 the name was changed to Evangelical Mennonite Church and in 1960 the name changed to Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

The *Christlicher Familienfreund*, a German language family paper containing church news, devotional articles, and personal letters, was first published in 1935 and continued till 1984. *The Messenger*, an English biweekly publication was begun in 1962 to inform readers about what was going on in the conference and to instruct in godliness and faithful living.

The last half of the 20th Century witnessed the development of various church structures and programs. The Board of Missions was first organized in 1953 with a budget of \$4,500 which increased to over a million dollars by 1986. By 1997, 125 missionaries were serving under the board in Canada, Europe, Africa and Central and South America -- five were serving under Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and 63 under other associate missions.

The Missions Auxiliary, a para-conference fundraising organization, was instrumental in providing funds to construct radio station ZP-30 in west Paraguay in 1975. This station was jointly sponsored by the EMC and the Chaco Mennonite colonies (Fernheim, Neuland, Menno).

The Board of Education and Publication was established to be responsible for



Some of the many resources at the Mennonite Heritage Centre which can be used to studying the 200-year history of the EMC.

promoting Christian education in the conference, as well as being their publishing agent.

Numerically the Evangelical Mennonite Church grew from 6 Manitoba churches with a membership of 1,870 in 1951, to a conference in 2011 of 7,200 members in 62 churches, with approximately 7,800 people attending weekly worship services. Three of the churches were Hispanic in culture and Spanish-speaking and another two had significant ministries to Spanish-speakers.

In 2011, church planting in Dutch-German circles remained strong, with increased ministry in southern Alberta, northern Alberta, and southern Ontario. This was often among descendents of those who moved to Mexico and Paraguay and later returned to Canada for economic opportunities. Their presence has revived the use of Low German in some worship services within the conference.

For decades in Canada, the KG/EMC's presence was limited to towns, villages and rural areas. This is still common, but a number of urban congregations have been founded. In Winnipeg, Aberdeen EMC traces its beginning to the services begun in 1951, Crestview traces back to 1965, Braeside to 1968, Fort Garry to 1976, St. Vital to 1990, Many Rooms Church Community to 2005 and Oak Bluff to 2006. The City of Calgary has four churches and Brandon has one.

The first non-Dutch/German minister in the EMC was Edwin Wright, born in Wales. Having served with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Saskatchewan, he crossed paths with Rev. Ben D. Reimer, director of Western Gospel Mission (WGM). Wright served under WGM at Canora and Endeavour, both in

Sask. The Endeavour congregation was received into conference membership in 1965, while Wright was its pastor. He later served at Riverton Gospel Chapel (Man.) from 1966 to 1969.

In 1987, which marked the 175th anniversary of the EMC, Dr. Royden Loewen mused about the future. "Will the EMC become just another North American evangelical church? Or will it be able to integrate the vision of the Anabaptists with their insistence on Christianity as discipleship, on non-resistance as a way of life, and the church as a brotherhood?"

The 2005 survey of leaders and members revealed there was some movement away from non-resistance and non-involvement in state activities. A majority of leaders and members surveyed, said a Christian could be a police officer, a majority disagreed that agreement with pacifism was a requirement for church membership, a majority saw the use of up to and including lethal force as acceptable to protect a family member, and a minority saw serving in the military as acceptable. However, above all, the survey revealed that there was still a strong devotion to the Bible as God's Word, to discipleship, and to community – core distinctives of an Anabaptist identity.

What else has happened in the last twenty-five years? The future viability of using the term "Mennonite" with its strong cultural connotations, as a denominational identity, has increasingly been questioned on an unofficial and practical level. Only 22 of 62 churches retained Mennonite in their local church name in 2011.

In July 1999 conference delegates decided to maintain their position on only ordaining men to ministerial leadership, but also approved an "exceptional circumstance" for female pastor Ardith Frey of Aberdeen EMC to officiate at weddings. She became the first woman to serve as a pastor in an EMC church. In 2011 four congregations had women serving as a senior, co-pastor, or as an associate pastor. Other social and theological issues that were addressed in the first decade of the 21st Century were the practice of homosexuality and abortion, resulting in statements or letters to government officials.

In 2011, it was increasingly common to find both pouring and immersion baptismal practices among both older and newer churches. Only a few

congregations still practiced foot-washing.

Three issues occasionally resurfaced about baptism -- how to respond to committed people who requested membership without rejecting infant baptism, whether baptism and membership could be separated, and how to respond to people who were baptized in conservative settings, where, for example, baptism was expected before marriage.

Choirs were rare in 2011. PowerPoint, choruses, and praise bands were common. Fewer churches practiced a plural ministry approach, where a number of ministers and deacons gave oversight. Ministers could be elected from within the local congregation. It was increasingly common to have a lay board (variously named) with a solo pastor, a senior pastor and a part-time youth pastor, or multiple leaders in larger churches. Almost all congregations in 2011 had a part- or full-time paid pastor. Almost all ministers had a Bible college education and many also

had seminary training. The first minister to obtain a graduate seminary degree was Archie Penner, who graduated from Winnipeg Bible Institute in 1940 and went on to earn BA, BD, MA, and PhD degrees.

Since Winnipeg Theological Seminary (now Providence Theological Seminary) opened in 1972, EMC ministers and members have obtained more graduate degrees from there than from all other seminaries in Canada and the U.S. combined. Part of the reason is proximity -- the seminary is in Manitoba, where more than half of EMC congregations are located.

In 2011, 104 missionaries were serving under their mission board in Canada, Europe, Africa, and Central and South America. Eighty-two were serving as associate missionaries or with organizations where the EMC had special partnerships, and 22 were in EMC-administered fields in Paraguay and Mexico and through AIMM in Burkina Faso.

Missions Auxiliary organized in 1973 was renamed Project Builders. Its purpose was to support EMC and affiliated mission agencies. The Board of Education and Publication was renamed the Board of Church Ministries (BCM). It has responsibilities in the areas of education, publication, youth, and archives. In August 2011 this board accepted a proposal from the archives committee to transfer the archival holdings to the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg. Details are still being worked out.

The Board of Ministers and Deacons was renamed Board of Leadership and Outreach after December 2005 as it received the church planting responsibilities from the Board of Missions.

From 2004 to 2008 a Special Committee for the Promotion of Evangelical Anabaptism (later called the Evangelical Anabaptist Committee) met and reported to the conference council, Board of Church Ministries and the Board of Leadership and Outreach. In addition to surveying leaders and members, it developed lists of Christian resources and a bibliography of Anabaptist materials. Its final report delivered to the conference leadership focused on how the conference's commitment to Anabaptist distinctives might be strengthened.

May God grant the EMC commitment and zeal to continue seeking faithful ways to follow Jesus Christ.

New Research on Einlage (Kitchas) being done



Einlage flooded after 1927. Photo credit: MHC Col. 635



Yuri Batayev, a diving instructor from Zaporozhye, and his students are exploring the local history of their region, specifically, the area of the former village of Einlage (Kitchas), which is now under water, due to the flooding when the power dam on the Dnieper River was completed in 1932. They have identified the residence of Isaac Lehn at the south edge of the village. If any one can provide information about this family such as role in the community, occupation or profession, that would be greatly appreciated. Also, old photos of Einlage would also help this research so they can compare objects found with objects on old photographs. Contact: Yuriy Batayev at bataeww@rambler.ru or send photos to Alf Redekopp at aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca. For a link to the You-tube video report on this project see the on-line version of this issue at: www.mennonitehistorian.ca.

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Loewen, Royden. "What will the EMC be in 2012." *The Messenger* (January 2012).

Queries

Bergen - Would anyone have a photograph of Larry Bruce Bergen, who passed in August 1968. He was living in Cranbrook when the small plane he was piloting crashed on Kootenay Joe Mountain. We were looking at engagement rings before he passed, and I've never forgotten him. I sometimes visit his grave in Burnaby. If you have a photo or know someone who might, please call Sandra Hawkes 604-837-1624 or email sh882@hotmail.com

Send inquiries to Alf Redekopp, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 or e-mail: aredekopp@mennonitechurch.ca



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MHC News

The Heritage Centre is pleased to be able to work together with Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in several of their programs. One of these is the on-campus student employment program, where students may apply for various types of jobs, allowing them the experience of preparing a resume, being interviewed, being hired, getting experience and evaluated – all of which should be an asset in future attempts at finding employment. The Heritage Centre for its part, provides one job opportunity for this program. This year we hired Esther Klassen as a Archival Assistant for 3 hours a week. She created inventory lists of books and tapes, and also worked at a digitization project.



Esther Klassen scanning cards.

Another CMU program is the Intensive Practicum which also helps a student to get experience-based education through a supervised assignment with an institution or agency. Since January Matthew Fransen, has been fulfilling his CMU Practicum requirement through a placement at the Heritage Centre. Three



Matthew Fransen cataloguing tapes.

days a week, Matthew has been learning archival theory, procedures and practises on the job, as he has created catalogues, selected and described photographs, sorted and listed tapes, and updated some existing finding aids.

We continue to appreciate the cooperative relationship with CMU.

A.R.

William Hespeler Collection

The MHC recently acquired a number of items which document events and times in the life of William Hespeler (1830-1921).



Hespeler was a German - Canadian businessman and immigration agent and a member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. He served as Speaker of the Manitoba Legislature and as honorary consul of Germany to Winnipeg and the Northwest Territories.

Today, the name is commonly seen in parts of Ontario and Manitoba. For example, Hespeler, Ontario, part of the City of Cambridge, was a former town. The City of Winnipeg has a Hespeler Park and Hespeler Avenue. The Town of Niverville (Manitoba) has an 80+ acre park named after William Hespeler. This park also has a National Historic Sites and Monuments plaque dedicated to William Hespeler.

In the collection are items such as: documents confirming his attending the Polytechnic Institute in Karlsruhe (1847-1849), documents of his deferment from military service in 1850, of immigration to Canada, and of his naturalization as a British subject.

Hespeler played a key role in the settlement and development of Western Canada. As an immigration agent for the Canadian government, he recruited some 7,000 Mennonites to Manitoba between 1874 and 1880, in one of the first large waves of European migration to the West. These pioneers inspired many other groups to settle the Prairies by demonstrating its enormous agricultural potential.

For many years, Jeremy Hespeler-Boulton, cherished and kept in his possession, this collection of some 20 or so documents and autographs from the life of his great-grandfather, William Hespeler. Upon donating these documents to the Heritage Centre he wrote, "I am happy the documents are now...in the right place...and my hope is that they will be useful to future historians and researchers interested in the Life of William Hespeler..."

Of special interest to Mennonites will be the correspondence from Ottawa that Hespeler took to Russia in 1872 which contained the responses to the Russian Mennonite inquiries about exemption from military service and freedom to run their own schools. In one of these letters, the government in Ottawa extends an invitation to the Mennonites to select one or two delegates visit Canada at Ottawa's expenses to see the land first hand.

Some other items of a general interest are items such as Hespeler's 1867 passport which verifies that he had become a naturalized as a British subject; or the various items with the autographs of individuals such as Otto von Bismark, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Prussia. A full list of the documents can be found at:

http://nanna.lib.umanitoba.ca/icaatom/uploads/6/5/65212/Hespeler_file_inventory.pdf.

A.R.



William Hespeler (1830-1921) at a younger age. Photo Credit: MHC Col. 431.1

Suvarthamani digitizing project completed

At the end of January 2012, electronic copies of seventy-eight years (1921 to 1999) of the monthly Telugu magazine for the Mennonite Brethren Church of India were delivered to the archive at the Mennonite Brethren Centenary Bible College in Shamshabad, India. This brought to a conclusion a joint project that spanned a decade, a project sponsored by three MB archives: Shamshabad, Fresno, and Winnipeg.

The inset photo shows MBCBC Principal and archive Director, Dr. I.P. Asheervadam, in the Shamshabad archive with a bound copy of the *Mennonite Brethren Suvarthamani* (which means, Gospel Messenger). The Telugu magazine, first appearing in 1918, documents the growth and development of the MB church in India. The *Suvarthamani* contains church news, sermons, general interest stories, and Sunday School material. It provides valuable insight to the church's history.

According to Dr. Asheervadam, "Now researchers will be able to access the magazines on computers, which will help to preserve the only-remaining, and now fragile, original copies housed here at the Shamshabad archive." On Monday, January 30, 2012, Principal Asheervadam presided over a special ceremony, expressing his gratitude for the contribution that these digital files represent.

Interest in the project began in 1997, when I.P. Asheervadam and G.K. Rufus visited many of the Indian MB village churches, interviewing pastors and church members in an effort to document the birth, growth, and particular challenges of the Indian church. Asheervadam, who was conducting the research for his M.Th. thesis, found that the early issues of *Suvarthamani*, so relevant for his thesis, were few and hard to find.

An almost complete set of *Suvarthamani*, going back to 1921, was located in 1998. The find proved to be very valuable and played an instrumental role in the research for Asheervadam's M.Th. thesis: *Dalit conversions to the Mennonite Brethren Church: in Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh in pre-independent India*.

But there was one problem; the paper on which the *Suvarthamani* was printed was becoming very brittle with age and

the risk of damaging them was great. The Center for MB Studies in Fresno, California agreed to sponsor the micro-filming of the entire *Suvarthamani* collection. The microfilming was completed at Union Theological College in Bangalore, India. One set of microfilm was made for the Shamshabad archive and one for the Fresno archive.

The Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg, Manitoba joined the project on the next phase. Then director, Doug Heidebrecht, offered to use the Centre's new micro-film computer and office personnel to have the micro-film converted to portable document format (pdf) files. The digital conversion would make the *Suvarthamani* readable on any computer.

Summer staff, Carmen Campbell and Simone Hildebrand, worked at the project during the 2011 summer. Using the Fresno micro-film set, they carefully scanned each page of micro-filmed *Suvarthamani*, in order to make a pdf file of each issue.

In January 2012, the project came to a conclusion as new CMBS Winnipeg



director, Dr. Jon Isaak, was able to present all seventy-eight years of the digitized *Suvarthamani* to Dr. Asheervadam in person on a tiny "thumb drive"! The delivery was made possible since Isaak was in India on a three-week assignment at the MB Centenary Bible College. He taught in several classes and gave lectures from his new book, *NT Theology: Extending the Table* (Wipf and Stock, 2011). According to Isaak, "both the *Suvarthamani* project and the lecture series are prime examples of CMBS's aim to resource MB church leaders for the mission of God that we share. I'm glad we can do this important work together!"

J.I.



Dr. I.P. Asheervadam holding a bound copy of the M.B. *Suvarthamani* at Shamshabad, India.

Edward Reimer and Steve Jobs

by Art & Marge Hildebrand

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

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

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

Edward is an amazing person. His farm has become home for uncountable demonstrations of God's heavenly majesties. Besides his planetarium, he has built a small, mobile constellation projector, a holder for his binoculars so that he can lie on his back and watch the stars with no wobbles, and a two-dimensional model of our solar system, where the position of each planet and our

moon can be adjusted to the day of the year.

In the year Edward reached the age his father was when he died, Edward built a model (to scale) of the solar system, with a one-inch Earth and a sun over eight feet in diameter. He placed this model on the road with the planets at the appropriate relative distances from the sun, and then conducted tours for community members "into the solar system".

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

Today, the study of astronomy requires a deep understanding of mathematics and physics. In spite of this, and with no formal training in these disciplines, Edward studied the sky and built an accurate planetarium.

For many years Edward received a special group of students from Miami University.

There have been cultural anthropologists, biologists and astronomers, teachers and professors – all eager to learn about

Belize's cultures and ecology. Group leader, Carl Jantzen, has been visiting and writing about Spanish Lookout for decades.

Each class comes to listen to and be inspired by Reimer, the man with no textbook but with an amazing inquisitiveness, passion and desire to learn more about the heavens above.

The 2011 students were so impressed with Edward's planetarium and demonstrations, they raised funds to allow the International Star Registry to name a star after him. The next time you are stargazing, check out the "ice cream cone" near the Big Dipper. The star, now named *Edward Reimer*, is about 6 degrees south of the bright star, Arcturus, the tip of the ice cream cone. The star twinkles and sparkles.

The world is immeasurably healthier because of both Steve and Edward. They both were given extraordinary gifts of passion, creativity, intuition and amazing intellect. Each worked with his hands, mind and heart. Both were perfectionists. Both experienced highs and unimaginable lows. Both knew poverty, although in different ways. Both have inspired people. Both can give you an experience, one with an iPad the other with a planetarium. One is our friend.

Art & Marge Hildebrand from Crystal City are semi-retired from farming and recently enjoyed travelling to Belize where they met Edward Reimer.



Edward Reimer and the planetarium he constructed in his workshop at Spanish Lookout, Belize. Photo credit: Art & Marge Hildebrand.



Believed to be taken at the Halbstadt Zentralschule, 1898. What was the purpose of this structure? Photo: Courtesy of Lydia Church.



Engaging in gymnastics seemed to be a form of entertainment at some of the forestry camps in South Russia where Mennonite men did alternative state service. Photo credit: MHC Coll. 686.

William Yoder Speaks on the Church in Russia Today

by Peter H. Rempel

The future of Mennonite church life in Russia is precarious. Do we care? This was the primary message of William Yoder, a long-term observer of church life in Russia and Eastern Europe, in his presentations on February 3 and 4 in Winnipeg under the auspices of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. Yoder drew upon his personal visits to Mennonite churches in Siberia as an occasional liaison for Mennonite Church Canada and his numerous encounters as media coordinator for the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians - Baptists and the Russian Evangelical Alliance to depict general conditions and church life in Russia with pictures, anecdotes and insights.

The vestiges of the main Mennonite church in Russia, the few *kirchliche* Mennonites in Siberia, are on the verge of extinction. For the Mennonite Brethren,

now identifying themselves as independent Evangelical Christian Baptists in two larger conferences, the question is whether they have the desire and capacity to recover and reclaim their Mennonite heritage. The major challenges in the broader Evangelical scene are the divisions between the Charismatics and other Evangelicals and between conservatives and progressives in adapting to modern Russian culture.

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

Book Notes

by Harold Peters-Fransen

John N Klassen's *Russlanddeutsche Freikirchen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Grundlinien ihrer Geschichte, ihrer Entwicklung und Theologie*, (Russian



German Free-churches in Germany, their story, development, and theology) published by the AVM, (Arbeitskreis für evangelikale Missiologie), 450 pages, is based on his doctoral dissertation for the University of South Africa. After an introductory section on Church history, with special focus on the immigration of German Mennonites to Russia, their life during communist times, and the relationship between the Soviet Union, and Soviet Germans, Klassen tells the story of the waves of immigration to Germany, for the purposes of this story, beginning in the early 1960s, and their establishment of congregations. He says that very few were able to integrate into existing German congregations, even into the more evangelical denominations. Eventually growing into several hundred churches with a variety of affiliations and in some cases no affiliations, these groups have a high view of the Bible and congregational authority, and a sense of separation from the world. He speaks of both positive and negative church plants from the original *Umsiedler* churches. Throughout the book he uses dozens of tables with many statistics. He chooses twelve representative congregations for a more in depth study, including interviews in those congregations around issues of their growth, their beliefs, their level of integration into German society. His tone is mostly positive about these congregation's future, but does challenge them to find new ways to integrate into the German society for the sake of evangelism and witness, without losing their strong biblicism and evangelical faith.

Caught in a broken world: Correspondence of Louise and Willy Neufeld, 1921-1939, translated and edited by Ingrid Neufeld Epp, Toronto, 2011, 154 pages, is a self-published work.

A series of letters, from Louise to Willy, when they have fallen in love and are separated from each other, she in

Berdiansk, on the Black Sea, and he, fleeing the disintegrating White Army he had been part of. Willy ends up in Greece, then Romania, before finding a way to Marienberg, West Prussian where Louise was able to emigrate. There they married. This first set of letters tells of the erosion of the community life under the early years of communism. The third group is a set of letters from Willy's family to Louise and Willy as Willy and Louise work in Romania, then West Prussia, 1925-1926, before they immigrated to Canada. This is followed by a set of letters from Willy to Louise, as Louise is convalescing from illness, in Steinbach, while Willy works in Winnipeg, April, May, 1929. The remainder of this volume is letters from relatives of both of theirs, male and female, from the Soviet Union to them in Winnipeg, with some dates missing, all the way to 1936. The pathos, sometimes anger, in this last set gives much information of the increasingly difficult lives for these Mennonites in Stalinist Soviet Union. Willy and Louise sent packages to their relatives when they could. The writers varied in their ability to cope with the horrendous changes forced upon them.

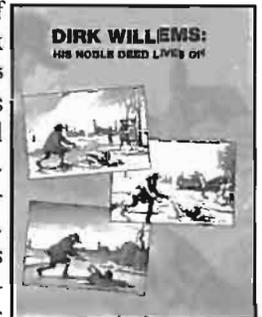
Cassel Mennonite Church 1935-2010, self-published, 161 pages, John Bender, editor. This is a thorough updating of the 1985 50th anniversary book, and includes the text of then writers, Vernon Zehr and Leona Bender. Part 2 includes a variety of first-person stories from both participants and leaders. Part 3 is a comprehensive set of lists of current members, baptisms, births, weddings and deaths, current structures, and leaders through the decades. Succinct narratives of the history of various aspects of congregational life are also included. The fourth part includes reports of various anniversary celebrations over the decades. Of special note is the history of the Lend a Hand Literary Society, the youth group from the 1930s till the early 1960s when the Mennonite Youth Fellowship became the new model. Part 5 has a variety of historical documents, such as the motion by the Evangelical Church to build the building, around 1900 (eventually leased, then bought by this congregation) through



to the current pastor's annual report. Part 6 contains a wide variety of pictures of congregational life over the decades.

The Reinland Mennonite Churches of Manitoba, 1958-2008, self-published, 102 pages, a full-colour book, with family photos organized under the headings of the various congregations, (6 currently), together with photos of congregational leadership, committees, and activities. Towards the end, are photos from the 50th anniversary celebration, a summer outdoor event, followed by a history section. The Reinlander are a group of churches which broke away from the Sommerfelder in 1958, and currently have churches in Altona, Austin, Blumenfeld, Grunthal, Winkler, all in Manitoba, and Rainy River in Ontario.

Dirk Willems: his noble deed lives on, by David Luthy, published by Pathway Publishers, (an Amish publishing house), 82 pages. Luthy examines in pictures and in text the use of the story of Dirk Willems and his rescuing his pursuer who fell through the ice. Still, he was executed in the end. Luthy discusses the use and adaptation of Luyken's famous etching of the event found in *Martyr's Mirror* in particular. The image, both in its original form, and readapted forms has been used in hundreds of publications through the centuries, to highlight love of enemy. There is a chapter of poems based on the story, chapters on its use in Netherlands, Great Britain, North America, and Cyberspace. Another chapter highlights the story's use, first developed for Amish school curriculum in 1968, called "Dirk Willems and the Thief Catcher," now printed in at least 16 languages by other publishers, with a colorized version of the *Martyr's Mirror* etching on the cover.



2011 revised and expanded edition of

A Homeland for Strangers: An Introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia
by Peter J. Klassen -- \$25.00



Contact: Mennonite Heritage Centre –
archives@mennonitechurch.ca

Book Review Essay

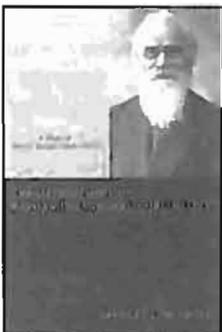
Gregory L. Nichols. *The Development of Russian Evangelical Spirituality: A Study of Ivan V. Kargel (1849-1937)*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011) 308 pp.

Reviewed by Dr. Abe Dueck, Winnipeg, former director of CMBS and former executive director of the MB Historical Commission.

This work makes a substantial contribution to the study of evangelical Protestant developments during the half-century prior to the beginnings of the Soviet era. It should be of special interest to Mennonites and to Mennonite Brethren in particular. Nichols had access to many sources that have not previously been extensively utilized, especially the Pashkov papers. Whereas Mennonite scholars to this date have primarily relied on German materials, Nichols' competence in the Russian language has enabled him to enlarge and modify previous understandings of evangelicalism in Russia.

Until now the most significant contribution to the study of Mennonite Brethren spirituality has been made by John B. Toews in a number of articles and books.¹ Toews has utilized some of the material related to Kargel's ministry and also begun to use some of the more recent discoveries in Soviet/Russian archives. Lawrence Klippenstein has also written specifically on Johann Wieler, a prominent leader among the early MBs who had extensive involvements with the German Baptists and Russian evangelicals.² However, the extensive correspondence that is found in the Pashkov papers at the University of Birmingham (on microfiche at Prague where Nichols is an instructor), have not been mined for their rich contents.

Kargel became a member of a German Baptist congregation in Tiflis after his conversion and baptism around 1870. Very soon thereafter he came into contact with the fledgling MB movement in Ukraine and worked with Wieler and other MB leaders. In fact, Nichols suggests that it was among MBs that Kargel developed his sense of calling to fulltime ministry and mission. Kargel



attended the first MB Conference in Rueckenau in 1872. Whereas MB scholars have discussed the influence of Gerhard Oncken, the leader of the German Baptists in Hamburg, as well as the contribution of August Liebig during the early developments of the MB movement, much less attention has been given to Kargel's influence.

While spending some time in St. Petersburg among the evangelicals there, Kargel was introduced to a much more ecumenical form of evangelicalism (Pashkovites). This is also where he became acquainted with other important figures such as Lord Radstock and Friedrich Baedeker. This brought him into the orbit of the "Open Brethren" and the Evangelical Alliance (*Allianz*). Although Kargel retained his German Baptist affiliations, he was increasingly concerned about their narrowness with respect to baptism and communion. This *Allianz* perspective was also to have a very significant impact on the Mennonites in southern Russia and prompted the emergence of the *Allianz* Mennonite Church (*Evangelische Mennoniten-Gemeinden*).

Perhaps the most significant period of Kargel's contact and influence on Mennonite Brethren came during the 1880s and 1890s. In 1882 Kargel and Wieler chaired a joint Baptist/Mennonite conference in Rueckenau which included German Baptists, Mennonites, Russians, and Molokans.³ The attempt at unity between the different groups failed. In 1884 a conference convened which marked the beginnings of the Russian Baptist Union, but MBs were no longer well-represented. Kargel, however, was extensively involved with MBs in the so-called "mission schools" or Bible courses. His involvement is documented for at least five or six years, including participation in the first *Saengerfest* in Rueckenau in 1893. In 1895 the *Zionsbote* began to publish his articles, thereby extending his influence to MBs in North America.

One issue that surfaces in Nichols' work is the issue of pacifism. Many Mennonites are not aware of the fact that Russian evangelicals and Baptists were essentially pacifists until the Soviet era. Although Kargel himself was never a pacifist, the issue itself was one on which MBs did not have to distance themselves from other Mennonites as a result of their extensive relationships with Russian evangelicals.

A puzzling omission is the lack of any reference to the work by J. Pritzkau on the Baptists in South Russia, which covers much of the same period.⁴ There are also some editing and publication errors (see e.g. pp. 50, 190, 201, 212) with the omission of some of the text and blank sections at the bottom of several pages.

Endnotes

1. See particularly "Early Mennonite Brethren and Evangelism in Russia," in *Direction* 28.2 (1999) 187-2000, and "The Mennonite Brethren in Russia during the 1890s," *Direction* 30.2 (Fall 2001) 139-52.
2. See "Johann Wieler (1839-1889) among Russian Evangelicals: A New Source of Mennonites and Evangelicalism in Imperial Russia" *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 5 (1987) 44-60.
3. See Minutes in Abe J. Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession: Defining Russian Mennonite Brethren Mission and Identity 1872-1922* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred, 1997), 37-54.
4. J. Pritzkau, *Geschichte der Baptisten in Südrussland* (Lage, Germany: Logos Verlag, 1999). The original edition was published in Odessa by Wencke & Lubeck in 1914.

Family DVD of Interest

by Alf Redekopp

George Penner Goes Home to Dolinovka produced by Richard Penner [DVD]. – 75 minutes. – 2010.

This production documents a trip that George Penner of Brooks, Alberta made in 1988 to his birthplace -- the village of Dolinovka in the former Orenburg Mennonite Settlement. Using personal video footage captured over 20 years ago, Richard Penner gives an idea of how Mennonites lived under the Soviet system. He tried to limit the video time focused on visiting relatives, and maximize the day-to-day texture of village life. Is there any other video footage taken by Mennonites visiting the former Soviet Union before the impact of Gorbachev? View or acquire a copy at the Mennonite Heritage Centre (Winnipeg) or contact Richard Penner, rpenner@geneticsinternational.com or phone 587-999-0444.

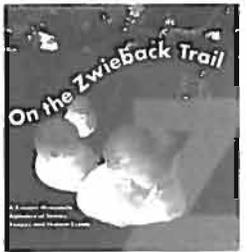


Book Reviews

Lisa Weaver, Julie Kauffman, Judith Rempel Smucker. *On the Zwieback Trail: A Russian Mennonite Alphabet of Stories, Recipes and Historic Events* (Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2011) hdc., 72 pp. and Miriam Rudolph. *David's Trip to Paraguay = Davids Reise in das Land der vielen Farben* (Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2011) hdc., 32 pp.

Reviewed by Maria H. Klassen, a retired elementary school teacher living in Dunnville, Ontario.

These two publications are a new genre for CMU Press, continuing to follow their long-standing tradition of publishing material related to Mennonite life and history, past and present. *David's Trip to Paraguay* was written and illustrated by a



young Manitoba artist who was inspired to write about her grandfather's trip from Manitoba to Paraguay in the 1920s. *On the Zwieback Trail* was written by Lisa Weaver, Julie Kauffman, and Judith Rempel Smucker; Lisa coming from Swiss Mennonite background, Julie and Judith having Russian Mennonite roots. *David's Trip to Paraguay* is written from a young boy's perspective on his family's journey to Paraguay. *On the Zwieback Trail* lists aspects of Mennonite heritage and culture through the letters of the alphabet using recipes, pictures, maps and other photocopied memorabilia.

For a non-Mennonite reader *David's Trip to Paraguay* gives a very short, condensed version of a long trip, focusing on the colours young David remembers which are associated with places and things he sees along the way. For this same reader the explanations *On the Zwieback Trail* are short enough to hold the audience captive yet detailed enough to give a clear overview of the basic components of Mennonite heritage and culture.

For the Mennonite reader *David's Trip to Paraguay* might be too short, especially if the reader has his/her own memories of such a trip. Nevertheless, it still provides a snapshot of this long trip without dwelling

on the many hardships the family faced. For this same reader the recipes, pictures and memorabilia of *On the Zwieback Trail* might bring back many fond memories, as well as serious and sad historical events, of one's own heritage and culture.

The amazing concept of *David's Trip to Paraguay* is that it is written in English and German. What a great refresher course in German, when one can compare it to the English on the same page. It's a great way for someone to figure out some words in German. *On the Zwieback Trail* has an amazing collection of memorabilia, impressive research, a creative presentation, and a long list of notes and credits that are themselves interesting to read.

Both books are a great, short read for any age, particularly for a child with an adult. It could be the start of many interesting discussions.

Helmut T. Huebert. *Mennonite Medicine in Russia 1800 to 1930* (Winnipeg, MB: Springfield Publishers, 2011) 178 pp.

Reviewed by Dr. Art Friesen, Cardiologist, and Dr. Marlyce Friesen, Internal Medicine specialist, of British Columbia who have been actively involved in humanitarian and medical projects in the areas of the former Mennonite settlements in Ukraine, and have a keen interest in Mennonite history.

In this book Dr. Helmut Huebert chronicles the medical world in the Russian Mennonite communities. He does not tell a single story but rather tells many individual stories most of which occurred between the years of 1890 and 1930.

In the book's Introduction Dr. Huebert sets the stage with a review of health among Russian Mennonites in the 1800s and presents a brief but pertinent review of the global history of medicine during this era to serve as a back drop for the Mennonite medical narrative. Medicine during this time was light years away from the medicine of the 21st century. Very little scientific evidence was available regarding disease processes and medical workers had to rely on a paltry education and very little scientific knowledge.

A significant portion of the book contains listings of medical institutions, physicians, nurses, and other medical personnel. However, he also amplifies the listing with more detailed descriptions of the major medical institutions and includes more detailed biographies of some of the medical personnel. Even

though many of the biographies are incomplete being a collection of roughly connected details, the reader is able to get a dramatic picture of the many difficult medical challenges facing the Mennonite communities during this incredibly difficult period of time. Inclusion of the current status of those medical institutions still in existence today provides added interest.

This writing paints the picture of how valued and respected Mennonite health care practitioners were in their villages. These stories are full of courage and faith. These accounts demonstrate the prominent role women played in medical care, not only as nurses and midwives but also as physicians and administrators in the medical institutions.

Physicians and other medical personnel were not exempt from the atrocities of bandit raids, war, persecution, exile, and execution. Their own children succumbed to disease.

Dr. Huebert also presents a concise summary of the development of the Mennonite Medical Corps, an alternative to military service (Sanitaetsdienst), and shows the importance non-resistance played in their Mennonite faith.

This work is not written as a novel but a thread runs throughout the myriad facts and points of information to tell the story of the crucial role medicine and medical institutions played in Mennonite communities in Russia. Dr. Huebert has pulled together an amazing collection of historical medical facts and information and placed them into one document. Although there is no overarching story line, the facts speak for themselves and allow the reader to understand and appreciate the vital role the medical profession played in Mennonite history. The inclusion of photographs and maps adds interest and clarity to this work. The writing style is somewhat disjointed at times but the work can be easily understood by the lay reader and is a valuable documentation of an important part of Russian Mennonite history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

A fascinating extension to this work would be a comparison of the role that the Russian medical personnel played in the surrounding non-Mennonite Russian communities during the same era. Such a comparison could further define the relative effectiveness and medical progressiveness of these Mennonite health care workers.