

Mennonite Historian

Conscientious Commemoration of Mennonites in the War of 1812

by Jonathan Seiling

The bicentennial celebration of the War of 1812 began long before June 18, 2012, especially in those communities that were most devastated by the war. In Niagara many place names remind residents that the United States armies attacked this land in order to settle grievances against Britain and battle re-enactments have been longstanding traditions in some areas. For Canadians this war is special because, although pre-Confederation, it is arguably our only defensive war, involving Canadian soil. It also gave rise to a rich mythology of military valour, a notion that when Canadian militias were called to muster, they fought off the Americans and would soon earn their sovereignty from Britain.

Some of that mythology has been debunked recently. Amid the patriotic drum-beating and heralding of folk heroes, whose tales may contain surprisingly little that is verifiable, the commemorations seem prepared at times to paper over the rather unbecoming and unpatriotic elements of our nation's early era: namely, that Upper Canadians generally did not want to fight. Some of them were pacifists, many were too concerned with homesteading and others had little opposition to the ideals of a republican government. Furthermore, not all British subjects were thrilled to be living under the rather harsh, autocratic rule of the Crown. Commemoration is a complicated act, when earnest.

Until very recently, the commemoration of historic peace church experiences and activities during the War of 1812 has received little attention. On the other

(cont'd on p. 2)

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



Facilitator Joanne Klassen of Heartspace Writing School discussing book production during the Creating Living Legacies Workshop offered by the Mennonite Heritage Centre and Centre for MB Studies March 12 & 19, 2012. Photo credit: Jon Isaak.

Creating living legacies workshop

by Jon Isaak

J5M, anchors, power notes; what do these terms mean? These are just a few of the “bakers dozen” of approaches that Joanne Klassen and Eleanor Chornoboy of *Heartspace Writing School* used to get participants to write at the recent life-writing workshop in Winnipeg. The two-evening workshop was sponsored and hosted by both the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (on March 12, 2012) and the Mennonite Heritage Centre (on March 19, 2012).

Sixteen participants came and got a taste of what transformative writing or life-writing is all about. According to Klassen, “It brings together the reflective, expressive, healing tradition of personal writing (journal, diary, memoir), and the artistic tradition of literary writing (poetry, short story, fiction).” The particular interest of both archival institutions was to use the life-writing

tools, in order to resource the growing number of individuals interested in writing their family stories, creating a living legacy.

Besides touring the collection and resources at both archival centres (genealogical, historical, documentary), workshop participants used “triggers” (random objects from a kitchen) to remind them of experiences from the past that could be revived for readers with words—words that evoked sights, sounds, and feelings. Silencing your inner critic, finding anchor persons to support your writing project,

(cont'd p. 2)



Jonathan Seiling at the plaque commemorating Mennonite Conscientious Objectors 1812-1814, located in Vineland, Ontario.

Creating living legacies

(cont'd from p. 1)

and learning how to give constructive feedback (i.e., power notes), were several other approaches that Klassen demonstrated.

By the way, J5M means "just five minutes"; it is an empowerment term designed to optimize the small spaces we all have and harnessing them for creating a living legacy with words. Several times each evening, Klassen had the group write for J5M. The mix between presentation and actual writing proved to be very stimulating and highly constructive. Even the discussion on publishing gave participants new ideas about how to produce a book for family and friends at a relatively low cost, thanks to the recent innovations in micro-publishing (e.g., McNally Robinson).

One participant wrote: "After the first session, I called up my grandpa and asked him about an old bench that has been in our family for ninety years. We had a wonderful conversation that we may not have had otherwise. This has inspired me to climb into my family's legacy and explore it more." The feedback from the two-workshop event was very encouraging. Consistently, the evaluations noted a desire for another session!

The response was so positive that both archival centres are talking about hosting the workshops again next year in spring. Plus, there is interest in expanding the intersection that life-writing has with archival research and adding an optional one-day advanced workshop for those who have completed the basic workshop. Watch for notices and advertisements . . . and keep on writing!

COs during War of 1812

(cont'd from p. 1)

hand, the commemoration of the military side of the war has dwarfed the non-military experience. Bookstore shelves are packed with the latest studies of the war from various angles. So, where are the perspectives on the non-resistant side of the war? Sadly, there is little published research available on this topic.

The main reason for the lack of attention to this era of Mennonite history is due to the scarcity of primary sources. Land records in Niagara were mostly all destroyed when Niagara-on-the-Lake was burned in 1813; marriage records for thousands of people before 1820 have been irretrievably lost. It is astonishing

how little documentation concerning Upper Canada has survived from the years 1786-1814, from the arrival of Mennonites until the end of the war.

To further illustrate the research challenge, consider this question: how do we identify who were the Mennonites during this era? There are no church membership records and there are even uncertainties as to who was ordained during this era. While Mennonite history is not a genealogical exercise, genealogy remains crucial to understanding some issues. A study of what some might think are typical last names for Mennonites is not straight forward. For example, there are hundreds of Millers, Smiths, Youngs, Waggoners, Myers, even Horsts, Freemans, Baumans and Martins, who were alive during this era of Canadian history, but who have no clear genealogical connection to Mennonite history, while others with those names were Mennonite. Then there are Freys, Benders, Sniders, Weavers, and others who did have a previous connection to Mennonite communities, but who sided with the Crown during the American Revolution and were granted Loyalist status upon settling Upper Canada, along with handsome land grants in return for their service (for example, the Benders who settled Niagara Falls). Others of Mennonite heritage, who settled as economic migrants in Upper Canada, did end up on the muster rolls and in active

service, and subsequently earned themselves further land grants due to their service in the War of 1812. The list is not very long, but it does give one pause before claiming that the convictions of all Mennonites in this era of history were uniformly in opposition to wearing the uniform.

Then there is the question of the historic "Tunkers," now called Brethren in Christ, who seem to have melded almost seamlessly with Mennonites in some regions, leading me to wonder if their primary difference or perhaps even their only distinction during that era was the mode of baptism? Otherwise the two groups seemed to enjoy even more cohesion than Mennonites and Brethren in Christ do today. During this era of high-impact Methodist missionizing, there seems to have been no lack of Mennonite interest in the message these horseback preachers galloped around to their communities. One settlement of Mennonites appears to have lost connection with the church structure altogether after the war, passing through Presbyterian, then Methodist, and eventually United Church identities. Today Burkholder United Church owes its origins to a group of Mennonites who settled Hamilton in the 1790s, but virtually disappeared from the Mennonite map after the War of 1812.

Although it is clear that Mennonites advocated for exemption from militia duty, non-resistance for them seemed to involve a significant degree of engagement with positions and tools of power and violence. There were Mennonites in positions such as sheriff, justice of the peace, assessor and collector, positions in which they were sworn (or in the case of Mennonites, affirmed) into office to perform duties on behalf of the government. There were also two silversmiths in the Niagara region who were Mennonite, one who was rewarded handsomely for his service to the local militia after repairing their guns. He was not praised quite as highly when he did the same for local First Nations neighbours, many of whom he also helped to resolve land disputes and offered employment and hospitality as well.

Mennonite women were likewise prepared to be vocal and resist injustices. There are stories passed down in family histories of the defiance of some of these women in the face of military officers

(cont'd on p. 5)

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Genealogy and Family History

Winters of the Old Colony

By Henry Schapansky

This is not, as might be supposed, an article on climate change in Southern Russia, but rather on the family Winter who lived in the Old Colony and related regions. Winter is a very rare surname in Mennonite Russia, and rare as well in the Mennonite world of Prussia and Poland. Winter descendants were notable in the Old Colony, the most prominent of whom was Heinrich Winter (26.1.1896-30.12.1981). He was the last Aeltester of the Old Colony in Russia, elected during the difficult times of the Second World War, in 1943. His biography is cited in the references. Heinrich Winter was a leading figure in the Mennonite world of the period, and he baptized many young people in Russia and Germany during his period of service, among whom was my mother. He later served in the Mennonite church in Canada.

The Winter book, presumably based in part on family records and recollections, indicates that the ancestor of the Old Colony Winters was a Johann who married a Maria Pauls, came to Russia in 1819, and settled at Einlage. Esther Patkau's book (p. 149) indicates that a Johann Winter (30.10.1834-15.2.1882) ml) Anna Martens (1831-1.12.1867), 2)m2) 23.4.1869 Helena Epp (8.11.1837-16.1.1902) was a son of this first Johann Winter. However, as might be expected from the 15 year gap between the arrival in Russia and the birth of son Johann (1834-1882), there seems to be a missing generation here.

The following is my analysis on this Johann Winter, but begins with the Pauls family.

1. Jacob Pauls (d. before 1792)

Neustädterwald 1776: 2 sons (*Arbeiter*)

m. X (unknown)

Jacob Pauls was one of the few men with the name Pauls in 1776, who was a member of the Flemish *Gemeinde*. Most of the other Pauls were members of the Friesian *Gemeinde*.

1.1 Isaac Pauls (no dates)

m. 9.1.1781 Maria Dyck (no dates)

Isaac likely lived at Neustädterwald for a few years, but later moved to the Marienwerder area south of Heubuden,

and owned 7 *Morgen* of land at Foßwinkel (Fuchswinkel) in 1789.

His children included the following:

1.1.1 Maria (no dates)

m. Johann Winter (no dates)

Children:

1.1.1.1 Johann Winter (no dates)

m. X (unknown)

1.1.1.2 Karl Winter (1810-22.8.1847)

m. 20.7.1834 Elisabeth Krause (b. 1812) (a daughter of Peter Krause (b. 1790) of Kronsweide)

1.1.2 Jacob (b.~1791, bapt. 1810)

1.1.3 Agatha b.~1795, bapt. 1814)

1.1.4 Anna (b.~1795), bapt. 1814)

The Johann (1834-1867) mentioned in Patkau's book, and ancestor of the above Heinrich, was then very likely a son of the Johann (1.1.1.1) mentioned above. Karl Winter above later moved to the Bergthal Colony, and is found in the church register under A17.

Some key information and confirmation of this analysis can be found in Peter Rempel's book (p. 127). Isaac Jacob Pauls is listed as an immigrant to Russia of 1819 (*from Pecus (Pieus)?*), with children Jacob, Maria, Agatha and Anna. Daughter Maria is listed as a widow (*from Winter?*) with children Johann and Karl. The passport of 1819 was issued in Marienwerder.

The original passport entry listed, it seems, in 2 different registers, copies of which were recently made available to me, read as follows, under no. 233 [in French, the international diplomatic language of mainland Europe at the time]:

Visa à Isaac Jacob Pauls Mennonite de picus avec 1 fils, 3 filles & 2 enfants de la fille veuve de Winter.

Visa à Isaac Jacob Pauls Mennonite de Pecus avec 1 fils: Jacques... et 3 filles: Marie, Agathe & Anne et les enfants de la fille Marie veuve de Winter, nommément 1 Jean 1 Charles.

My translation of the 2nd more detailed entry is as follows:

Visa for Isaac Jacob Pauls from Pecus with 1 son: Jacob, and 3 daughters: Maria, Agatha, and Anna, and the children of daughter Maria, widow of [Mr.] Winter, by name, 1 Johann, 1 Karl.

The place Pecus is difficult to locate. It may have undergone one or more name

changes or disappeared altogether. Foßwinkel, also Fuchswinkel/Vosswinkel, was somewhat to the northeast of Graudenz. Nearby villages included Parsken and Prenezawa.

The above analysis, while based on circumstantial evidence, agrees with and explains all the known facts related to the above Winter families. The Isaac Pauls family also likely settled in Einlage, and there is no evidence they settled in the Molotschna, the other probable settlement option of the 1819 immigrants.

Isaac's brother Jacob Pauls (b. 1772) had earlier moved to the Old Colony, in 1796, and was living at Osterwick in 1814.

Another person with the name Winter may have also been related to the above family. His widow (1760-20.12.1816) died at Hohenwald, as a member of the Thiensdorf (Friesian) *Gemeinde*.

References:

Ein Hirte der Bedrängten, Henry Winter, Wheatly, Ont., 1988.

The Paethkeau Book (Vol.1), Esther Patkau, Saskatoon, 1987.

Mennonite Migration to Russia, Peter Rempel, Winnipeg, Man., 2000.

The Mennonite Migrations (and The Old Colony), Henry Schapansky, Rosenort, 2006.

Copy of visa entries: RGIA Fonds 383 Opus 29 Dielo 443, MHC Microfilm 804, copies of which were kindly made available to me by Alf Redekopp, Mennonite Heritage Centre (Winnipeg).

Henry Schapansky lives in New Westminster, BC.

Recent Book

Valerie Beckingham. *Our Giesbrecht family* (Winnipeg, MB: Private publication, 2011) 55 pp.

This book is the account of the family of Peter H. Giesbrecht and Katharina Penner who were married 10 January 1904 in the Rudnerweide church near Neu Hoffnung, Manitoba.



Peter taught in a private school initially. By 1916 he was teaching in the public school, Neu Kronsthal. The book is written from the perspective of the grandchildren, describing village life in southern Manitoba. The book also contains photos and genealogical charts.

Contact: V. Beckingham, Box 1613, The Pas, MB R9A 1L4.

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Jakob D. Reimer (1817?–1891): church leader, village planner, and horticulturalist

by Jon Isaak

The story of Jakob D. Reimer is a remarkable account of a visionary Russian Mennonite church leader and founder of the Wiesenfeld village in southern Ukraine. It is a story of passion, disappointment, and differentiation. Recently, the donation to the Centre for MB Studies of a family memoir by Reg Reimer, *Dead they are, but living still: a family's trip to Wiesenfeld July 2007*,¹ and correspondence with great grandson, Edgar G. Reimer of Vancouver, provided an occasion to review Jakob's remarkable story.²

Jakob was born in Kronsgarten, in the Ekaterinoslav area. His tombstone gives his birth date as January 29, 1818, but other sources indicate the birth year as 1817.³ Jakob was the oldest son of David Peter von Reimer, the former "Royal Gardner of Prussia," and Helena (Neufeld) Reimer. Jakob's family lost their land in Prussia during the Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815), but Jakob's father kept his expert knowledge of plants and landscape architecture.⁴ Immigrating to Russia with many other Prussians during the first decade of the 19th century, they settled first in Schoesee, then Kronsgarten, and later developed an extensive tree nursery at the large Felsental estate (1820) on the northern edge of the Molotschna Colony. David P. Reimer had also been engaged by the Russian Imperial Government to plan and lay out the settlement of

Kronsgarten.⁵

Learning all he could from his father, Jakob got into the habit of recording every botanical detail he came across in a series of diaries. Growing up at the Felsental estate, his interests were wide and diverse. He loved learning about most anything—plants, architecture, theology, and all aspects of life. According to Harold Jantz, Jakob's interest in *theosophy* (divine wisdom) was stimulated by a group of *Gichtelians* that formed at Felsental. The Gichtelians were Christians of orthodox but mystical faith, who embraced ideas promoted by the reform-minded German mystic, Johann Georg Gichtel (1638–1710).⁶

Jakob's diaries included his own minutes of the meetings he attended with various Mennonite groups. He was known for writing "unexpurgated reports and for leaving out no unhappy facts."⁷ These diaries, which are no longer extant, proved to be very useful to Peter M. Friesen, when writing his history of the Mennonite Brethren church.⁸ Many of Jakob's diary entries are preserved in Friesen's Mennonite history. During a visit to Wiesenfeld in 1866, Friesen asked Jakob for advice on how to write about difficult church disputes. Do it "honestly," Jakob replied; "the murderer, Moses, does not get off easily in the Bible; nor does the adulterer, the warrior, David. Write it all as it happened!" Apparently, Friesen took Jakob's counsel.⁹

As a young man, Jakob moved to Gnadenfeld to study with the educational reformer, Heinrich Franz, and to secure land for farming. He was admitted into the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Church by baptism¹⁰ and in 1839, he married Wilhelmine Augustine Strauss, whom he had met at a Bible course. Wilhelmine was also from a Prussian immigrant family, coming from a German Lutheran family that likely joined the Mennonite church prior to immigrating to Russia in 1834.¹¹ Jakob and Wilhelmine had 12 children, two daughters and ten sons, three of whom died in early childhood.

During the 1840s and 1850s, significant discession developed in the Mennonite churches in

Molotschna, sparked by the evangelical-charismatic renewal movement promoted by the Lutheran-Pietist preacher, Edward Wuest. In Gnadenfeld, Jakob was influenced by Wuest's revivalist missionary endeavours and became one of the leaders in the "brotherhood" renewal movement within the Mennonite church. Jakob wrote: "We Mennonite brethren began to meet together one Saturday afternoon of every month, and until 1858, Pastor Wuest participated enthusiastically in these meetings. Our purpose was to strengthen one another in the faith . . . Oh, these were often blessed afternoon hours during which our hearts were filled with Jesus' love and we were fused together in Him. The alliance of believers reached as far as Odessa and the surrounding villages wherever believing souls were to be found. . . . But the enemy of the soul could tolerate this no longer and so he filled the elders and ministers as well as the respectable church-goers with envy, and these reported it to the authorities, who circulated a petition: to expel Pastor Wuest from the villages in a civil manner."¹²

In December 1859, Jakob was among the individuals who faced severe opposition in several stormy meetings at the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Church, meetings called to process their request to celebrate the Lord's Supper more frequently and as part of their home-fellowship meetings. Jakob reports that a "barrage" of criticism was directed "at Johann Claassen and me"; and they "threatened to turn Reimer over to the area Administrative Officer together with all those who agreed with this shameful act." Jakob requested permission to leave the meeting, and one of the church members shouted: "Out with them, they are no better than the rest." Claassen, Jakob's brother-in-law, and Jakob quietly left the meeting together with about ten others.¹³

On January 6, 1860, eighteen "brethren" signed the so-called Document of Secession, including Johann Claassen, Jakob's brother-in-law, alleging the "godless living" of the mother church and promoting a more vital and experiential spirituality, as espoused by the revival movement.¹⁴ The signatories were soon excommunicated from the mother church.¹⁵ Even though Jakob had not signed the secession document, he fell out of favour too, because he continued to associate with his brother-in-law, Johann Claassen, being in essential agreement with the secessionists.¹⁶



Around the recovered tombstone are seen the group of 11 who traveled in July 2007 to see the recently relocated village of Wiesenfeld, Ukraine. Back row (L to R): Edgar Reimer, Cornelius (Neil) Reimer, Elvera Bergsma, Jerry Reimer, Don Reimer, Myrna Eastman, and Eva Reimer. Front row (L to R): Trent Eastman, Leona Eby, Reg Reimer, and Kila Reimer.

The brethren met at Jakob's home on June 5, 1860, to organize the young movement; Jakob was appointed as a leader to help the first elder, Heinrich Huebert.¹⁷ Almost one year later, on May 28, 1861, Jakob was re-baptized by immersion,¹⁸ which by 1862 was emerging as an identifying characteristic of the Mennonite "brethren" reform group.¹⁹ In addition, the "expressions of exuberance, which developed into formal dancing accompanied by wild music and the beating of drums,"²⁰ increasingly came to be associated with the brethren movement, especially during its first several years.

The "Exuberant Movement" or *Froehliche Richtung* was deeply disturbing to Jakob. A diary entry dated June 11, 1861, states: "I will no longer tolerate such bedlam in my home as took place last Sunday, May 28, in my shed. . . I do not attend any of the larger meetings because I am uneasy there and am firmly convinced that it is not the Pharisee within that warns and chastises me and holds me back from such pagan conduct, but the Spirit of God."²¹

While debate continued as to the appropriateness of emotional expressions, the reform movement's excommunication from the mother church meant the secessionists were cut off from participating in the larger church affairs and could not take part in commercial village business, even limiting travel and the purchase of land.²² Between 1862 and 1864, Jakob and his family made several trips to the Kuban region, toward the Caucasus Mountains, in search of a new place to farm and establish the new brethren movement on a firmer footing.²³ The Russian Imperial government gave 100 families land in the Kuban to farm; each family was allocated 65 dessiatines (ca. 176 acres).²⁴ Jakob's diary speaks of long, arduous trips traveling east with three heavily-laden covered wagons.²⁵ During these years, Jakob repeatedly warned the Kuban settlers about the uncontrolled emotionalism, despotism, and other radical actions that threatened to discredit the young reform movement.²⁶

By September 1864, Jakob, fed up with the revivalist "Exuberant Movement" in the Kuban region and their extremism, abandoned his 65 dessiatines of good land and returned to Gnadenfeld in the Molotschna.²⁷ In retaliation, the exuberant faction managed to have Jakob excommunicated from them in December 1864.²⁸ He was deemed "non-spiritual"

(cont'd on p. 8)

COs during War of 1812

(cont'd from p. 2)

who demanded food, livestock or property (such as a team of oxen). There are at least seven stories of Mennonite women in Niagara, whose experiences with soldiers have been passed down to us in various forms. I recently completed a book on this topic, illustrated for children entitled, *Feeding the Neighbouring Enemy* (contact: adifferentcalloffduty1812@gmail.com). The title is slightly ironic because these women in fact did refuse some soldiers food when they attempted to steal it; however, there is a strong sense that Mennonites were not prepared to side exclusively with the British, but rather to remain neutral, feeding those who were in need. Yet they defied violent persons who attempted to do them harm. The demands of the *Act of Quartering and Billeting Act* (1809) in Upper Canada meant that all citizens were required to provide for military personnel who demanded it, both a means and a place to sleep. Such hospitality would last for months in some cases, and the 16x20 cabins, which were typical for this era, were required to accept up to six of these military guests. Refusal meant a very steep fine. Many Mennonite women and men supplied food to the military as well, which was financially lucrative during the war.

The first example of Mennonites being involved in the war through the use of their property was in the summer of 1812, when Isaac Brock borrowed at least two boats owned by Mennonites on the shore of Lake Erie. Those boats would then carry soldiers from Port Dover, sailing to Detroit. In Niagara this scenario would play out throughout the duration of the war. Mennonites in that region would suffer many losses, including a recent settler near Fort Erie whose entire two-storey house and barn were burned to the ground by the British. The British destroyed many properties in this way, especially those storing supplies, whether food or otherwise, which they feared would support the advancing Americans.

In Waterloo and in Hamilton there were Mennonites who were conscripted to haul supplies down to western Upper Canada, and begin the evacuation, which included up to 7,000 soldiers and civilians, among whom First Nations warriors and families were the majority. Their role in this retreat was tragic, ending in the loss of at least 14 wagons after the Americans caught up with them at Moraviantown (near Chatam, south of London), forcing

the Mennonites to flee. There was one Mennonite in Waterloo who avoided this loss by removing the wheels from his wagon, claiming to the officer that it was broken! Most weren't so lucky. The loss of all these transport vehicles in a community rapidly increasing its agricultural output must have been enormous.

In some cases Mennonites had to wait over ten years for adjudication of their claims. In a few of these cases they were dismissed because they did not receive notice of requirements for re-filing, or they were asked to produce a list of names (about 30) of fellow citizens attesting to their being loyal citizens despite being Mennonite. Disloyalty and even charges of treason were certainly not the marks of Mennonites uniquely, but there were frequent suspicions of their disloyalty and there were some Mennonites connected with the treason trials at Ancaster, called the Assizes.

Many of these stories have only been brought to light recently as I mined various government and community archives and hundreds of family histories, which have been passed down for two centuries. The latter offer us a clear reminder of the importance of passing along stories orally and in written form. If we only put them in writing and never retell them, they will simply become the domain of historians; on the other hand, if we only retell them they may not always be passed on with the same care we might hope for!

June 10, 2012, marks the date when the three historic peace church communities - Quakers, Brethren in Christ, and Mennonites -- will be dedicating historic markers in the Niagara region to commemorate the experience of our forbears in the War of 1812. Although there is increasing attention given to this era of history currently, these markers will remain as dead stones unless there is a community that engages the topic and remembers anew what it has largely forgotten.

Jonathan Seiling is the Chair of the 1812 Bicentennial Peace Committee and a postdoctoral Research Fellow with Brock University and the University of Toronto; he is also the Administrator of Onefortyfive/Quest Community in St. Catharines, Ontario.

War of 1812 children's book available for order:
Feeding the Neighbouring Enemy: Mennonite Women in Niagara during the War of 1812
by Jonathan Seiling, illustrations by Cynthia

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Conscientious Objector story gaining familiarity but struggling for respect

Part 1

Hauling my display on conscientious objectors, I entered the University of Winnipeg for the annual Red River Regional Heritage Fair in May. The usual displayers were also there, Winnipeg Rifles, Hong Kong Vets, Bank of Canada, and the Cancer Society, to name a few. Over 400 grades 4-11 students with their teachers and parents were present. Through the day each student came by my booth, looking to complete the scavenger hunt organized by their teachers. My goal was to plant a seed -- that there has been, and continues to be, an alternative to military service in Canada. The conscientious objector is one who believes it is wrong to kill others and offers to do alternative service for their country. I was encouraged when one public school student said, "Oh ya we heard about that in class." Later a teacher came and whispered, "In school we talk all the time about peacemaking and working collaboratively to solve problems, except on Remembrance Day; then we are expected to commemorate something else . . ." Her voice trailed off, but her eyes continued to speak. I gave her a knowing nod and she smiled and hurried off. Still, the story about conscientious objectors is gaining familiarity in schools.

Also at this event, I served as a judge for the Faith In Action award on behalf of Canadian Mennonite University. While many people in Canada are people of faith, religion is conspicuously absent from discussions in most classrooms. And yet to understand people and events in the past, faith is an important factor. When students research Cindy Klassen, Louis Riel, or best-selling Manitoba author, Ralph Conner, faith is central to understanding their actions. This year's Faith in Action awards went to an Aboriginal project on the seven sacred teachings and a project on Mennonites.

Two artists and a film maker recognized on Manitoba Day



Recipients of the 2012 AMA Manitoba Day Award hosted at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, May 10, 2012 (l-r): Gail Sawatzky, Ron Stevens, Bev Friesen, Andrew Wall, Audrhea Lande, Marj Hildebrand, Grace Evans, Joe Mackintosh, and John K. Samson.

The sixth annual Manitoba Day Awards presented by the Association of Manitoba Archives took place on May 10, 2012. Thirty-six archival institutions are affiliated with the AMA and this year the award ceremony was hosted by Alf Redekopp and the Mennonite Heritage Centre and Gallery on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.

Thirteen original works of literary, visual, and musical arts were recognized as having "enhanced the archival community and contributed to the understanding and appreciation of Manitoba history." Each of the projects accessed and used material from the archival collection of the nominating archive in a significant way. According to Yvonne Snider-Nighswander, program coordinator for the AMA, "This year's celebration was noteworthy for two reasons: we were able to recognize

many more outstanding projects and showcase a wider range of works." The recipients included: Dale Barbour (book, *Winnipeg Beach: Leisure and Courtship in a Resort Town*), Grace Evans, Donna Royer, and Sally Ito (book, *A Manifest Presence: 100 years at St. Margaret's*), Audrhea Lande (book, *With Love to You All, Bagga S.: Stories and Letters from the Remarkable Life of Sigurbjorg Stefansson*), Joe Mackintosh (book, *Andy Dejarlis: The Life and Music of an Old-Time Fiddler*), Arnie Neufeld and Bruce Wiebe (project, *Stones and Stories*, a collection of 335 obituaries and life stories from Winkler and area), Arthur Ray (book, *Telling it to the Judge: Taking Native History to Court*), John K. Samson (musical album, *Provincial*, a thematic album focused on Manitoba), Gail Sawatzky and Bev Friesen (art exhibit: *Mennonite Women Evolving*), Danny Schur (film, *Mike's Bloody Saturday*,



Mother's Little Helpers (Bev Friesen)



Gathering (Gail Sawatzky)



No Electricity Required (Gail Sawatzky)

Winnipeg Strike of 1919), Jaroslav Z. Skira and Karim Schelkens (book, *The Second Vatican Council Diaries of Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk*), Ron Stevens (book, *Much Ado about Squat: Squatters and Homesteaders Ravage Riding Mountain Forest*), Robert Sweeney (book, *Portraits of Winnipeg: The River City in Pen and Ink*), and Andrew Wall (film, *The Paper Nazis*, 1930s Canadian newspapers sympathetic to the Nazis cause).

Recipients, Gail Sawatzky and Bev Friesen, were the two nominees from the Centre for MB Studies. Their paintings of Mennonite life are an excellent example of extending the reach of archival resources; and their story is equally interesting. Gail and Bev called the Centre at the beginning of the summer (2011) and asked if we had some photos of Mennonite women. They were planning an art show and wanted to view some photos, ones that they could use as



Strawberry Shortcake Pride (Bev Friesen)

inspiration for their paintings. Driving in from Altona, Manitoba, they spent an afternoon looking through our collection of some 18,000 photos. They made a list of the images that they thought they could use and later we made pdf scans of the photos. There were too many to send by email, so they came a second time to copy the scanned photos to a portable hard drive that they brought along. These photos contributed to the artwork that was exhibited recently at their showing of “Mennonite Women Evolving” at Portage la Prairie, Manitoba (January 2 to February 11, 2012). They are planning a follow-up exhibit called, “Mennonite Men Evolving” at Altona, Manitoba, August 10 to Oct 6, 2012. Samples of their work can be seen at <http://www.bevfriesen.com> and <http://www.gailsawatzky.com/>

Recipient, Andrew Wall, was the nominee from the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Andrew drew on numerous archival sources in the production of his film, including the Jewish Heritage Centre (Winnipeg), Mennonite Heritage Centre, and Archives of Manitoba, as well as sources beyond Manitoba. His documentary film examines 1930s anti-Semitism in Winnipeg. The film explored the rise and ultimate failure of two extremist groups in Winnipeg—the Nazi movement and the Canadian Nationalist Party. Andrew was surprised to learn that some Mennonites had been involved in the movement, including his great grandfather who was a shareholder for a few years in the *Deutsche Zeitung für Canada*, a pro-Nazi newspaper printed by fellow Mennonite publisher, Hermann H. Neufeld. *The Paper Nazis* can be viewed on the MTS on demand network. See <http://www.bottlerocket.ca/> for more on Andrew Wall’s documentary films.



The remarkable works produced by this year’s recipients are a good reminder that the archival community includes more than historians and genealogists; it also includes artists, novelists, film makers, and musicians!

Jon Isaak



CO Story (cont’d)

Part 2

In May I also presented my research on Mennonite midwives on the Mennonite West Reserve 1881-1900 at the 2012 Keewatin history conference held at Elkhorn resort, just outside Riding Mountain National Park. The park holds a special place for me, as it is the location where my grandfather did alternative service as a conscientious objector. The conference was attended by graduate students and professors from universities in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Another presentation was by a forensic archeologist, who was involved with the archaeological dig at the Prisoner of War camp in Riding Mountain National Park. The camp was so secluded that no fence was needed around the compound. German soldiers interned were treated respectfully in an attempt to demonstrate the peaceful and kindness of Canada and its citizens. They were well feed, attended dances in neighbouring communities, and even helped with the fall harvest. I was intrigued by the camp and asked if there had been any thought of comparing the POW camp to the CO camp in the same park. The archeologist looked surprised and laughed, “No, no one wants to talk about that”; and she moved on to the next question. I was saddened by this response.

My demeanor brightened, when after the presentation I talked to the keynote speaker for the conference, Dr. Stephanie Bangarth from King’s University College, University of Western Ontario. She knew about the conscientious objector camp and was interested in my question. She asked for more information about the CO experience and was excited to incorporate the CO website that I manage in her teaching.

The story about Canada’s conscientious objectors is gaining familiarity, but work remains to raise the respectability of the COs and their experience. As John F. Kennedy said, “War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today.”

Conrad Stoesz

Jacob D. Reimer

(cont'd from p. 5)

for not dancing in church, and for singing his favourite hymn using the traditional tune.²⁹ Now he was out of favour with both the mother church and the reforming church! Still, his watchword and slogan remained, “moderation in all matters.” Aiming to establish a gentle brotherhood “where everything rotates around the centre, Jesus Christ,”³⁰ he was joined by some like-minded “brethren” and farmed some leased land near Alexandrovsk.

In 1865, after five years of very divided and conflicted relations in the brethren movement, those promoting the excessive exuberance were eventually discredited (one had even bestowed on himself the rank of Apostle!) and the leadership of the more “serious and moderate” first leaders (Claassen, Huebert, and Reimer) was restored.³¹ The so-called, “June Reforms,” that were hammered out during six meetings spread out over the month of June, were read in public on August 4, 1865.³² Two of the six points of agreement are especially noteworthy: “the unjust and arbitrary excommunication of Jakob Reimer, Gnadenfeld, and others was revoked” and “the wild expressions of joy, such as dancing, were unanimously declared as not pleasing to the Lord.” Jakob’s leadership was thereby reaffirmed; and reconciliation between the “enthusiastic” and the “sober-minded brethren” began to take place.³³

Some fifteen years after returning to Gnadenfeld and renting farm land, Jakob began preparing for yet another move in order to establish his growing family. He learned of a so-called “haunted” place called Magrova (2,040 acres), several kilometers north of Alexandrovsk, but south of Kronsgarten, his birth place. According to a local legend, the ghost of a landowner’s daughter, who had been brutally killed by her captors, still whispered in the breeze blowing over the grassland.³⁴ On October 27, 1879, the day after the birth of his grandson (Jakob C. Reimer), Jakob left with his sons, Johannes and Cornelius, and with his son-in-law, Johan Martens, to inspect the soil of the haunted area. It was a rich, black humus soil, 50 cm deep!³⁵ Magrova was purchased by Jakob, his sons, and several friends; it was renamed Wiesenfeld (=meadow field). Sod huts were built in 1880 and trees planted as windbreaks and orchards. Once again his landscape architecture was deployed in the layout of the village. The village thrived and

developed so that by 1912, the sod structures were all replaced by buildings constructed of red bricks and tiled roofs.³⁶

Jakob lived to see his plants thrive, his trees bear fruit, and his grandchildren grow, away from the rivalry of the church extremists. While Jakob continued to give leadership to the brethren, he “became progressively more quiet and reserved,”³⁷ preferring to spend his last years in *theosophical* conversation with friends in his orchard, reminiscing on the memories of the early part of the Wuestian reform movement. Jakob died in peace at 74 with his family at his bedside on November 13, 1891.³⁸ An elaborate tombstone was set in 1893, two years after his passing; it was surrounded by a wicker fence, one stone covering the graves of Jakob, his wife, Wilhelmine, and her sister, Juliana Strauss.³⁹

The story of this extraordinary man and the family’s legacy continues to spark imagination. In recent years, several trips were made to relocate the village and the lost family tombstone, destroyed in 1919, during the Bolshevik Revolution.⁴⁰ In 2006, the footprint of the destroyed village of 13 homes was recovered and even the 810 kg tombstone!⁴¹ The next year a group of 11 of Jakob’s descendents went to see the site for themselves. Reg Reimer recounts that “during our visit at the tombstone, Reg heard Edgar reciting a wonderful German hymn. It had been Jakob’s favourite hymn.”⁴²

What could be more wonderful, or what could be more blessed, than to dedicate our lives to God in trusting faith?

We are always in His presence and live with that assurance, our eyes indeed behold Him and our hearts are filled with joy.

But when we grow exhausted and He takes us to our rest,

He covers us with cool earth as a mother tucks her children in.

There we sleep in sacred silence, in a deep and quite night,

until, until on that bright morn, He calls out, “Awake, awake!”

In 2010, the tombstone was transported to Canada and now rests on the Mennonite Heritage Museum grounds in Steinbach, Manitoba.⁴³ The provocative words from the life of Jakob D. Reimer, visionary reformer and generous spirit, etched on his tombstone continue to speak with astonishing currency: “Not for us this tombstone, Oh wanderer, but for you; consider and go slowly here. What you are now, we once were. You soon will be what we are now; so make haste—become a child of God.”

Endnotes

1. See book note under “Genealogy and Family History” *Mennonite Historian* 36/3 (Sept 2010):3.
2. Jakob D. Reimer’s story is also described in several published works: Christian Neff, “Reimer, Jakob” *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (1959) 4:277, now online at <http://www.gameo.org>; Peter M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia* (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, 1978, 1980); Helmut T. Huebert, *Events and People* (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 1999); Katherine Martens, *They came from Wiesenfeld Ukraine to Canada* (Winnipeg: n.p., 2005); Katherine Martens, “Tombstone of Mennonite Brethren founder located” *Mennonite Historian* 33/1 (Mar 2007):10; Abe J. Dueck, “A stone to revive memories: the life of Jakob Reimer” *Mennonite Brethren Herald* 48/11 (Nov 2009):15; and Susan & Gilbert Brandt, “Reimer grave marker unveiled at Mennonite Heritage Village” *Mennonite Historian* 36/3 (Sept 2010):4.
3. GAMEO (*Mennonite Encyclopedia* 4:277) gives the birth year as 1817. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 279, gives 1817, but then also 1818 (p. 534). GRANDMA genealogical database gives the birth year as 1817, but notes the discrepancy with the tombstone recovered in 2006 (see Martens, “Tombstone,” 10).
4. Reg Reimer, *Dead they are, but still living: A family’s trip to Wiesenfeld, July 2007* (mypublisher.com), 15; Reg acknowledges that much of the material on Jakob’s life comes from the writing and research of his uncle, Edgar G. Reimer.
5. See also Martens, *They came from Wiesenfeld*, 152–55.
6. Harold Jantz in an unpublished paper, “David P. Reimer Descendants and Story,” suggests that Reimer’s attachment to a wide-ranging love of learning and renewal (i.e., *theosophy*), likely drew him to the renewal movement represented by the early Mennonite Brethren. See Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 157–59. Friesen’s most critical comment about Reimer is that—because of the influence of Gichtel ideas—he wasn’t assertive enough in challenging the failures within the larger Mennonite church (*Mennonite Brotherhood*, 158).
7. Reimer, *Dead they are*, 15.
8. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, is the English translation of Part I of *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland (1789–1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte* (Halbstadt, Taurida: Raduga, 1911).
9. Friesen makes reference to this visit with Jakob in the Preface and to the diaries that Jakob provided for Friesen’s history-writing project. See Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, xxvii–xxviii, 534.
10. Friesen notes that in 1837, when Jakob was 18, he read the biography of Baptist missionary Anne Judson and became interested in baptism by immersion. “Even before his baptism by pouring in the church, he felt the urge to be baptized by immersion. Pointing out the section about baptism in the biography, he asked his father whether there were still people who baptized by this mode. His father answered in the affirmative, but suggested he would have to travel to Prussia to meet them” (*Mennonite Brotherhood*, 286).
11. A significant number of Lutherans became part of the Brenkenhofswalde-Franztal Mennonite Church in Prussia, who then formed the core of

- the Gnadenfeld Mennonite church in Russia, according to Friesen (*Mennonite Brotherhood*, 98–100). Wilhelmine was baptized three times: once as an infant, a second time when she joined the Mennonite Church in Gnadenfeld, and a third time in the river, becoming part of the Mennonite Brethren Church (Martens, *They came from Wiesenfeld*, 132, 164, 176).
12. Friesen is quoting from a report that Jakob wrote in 1884 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the M.B. Church, January 6, 1885 (*Mennonite Brotherhood*, p. 206–07).
 13. For a narration of this incident, again with excerpts from Jakob's diary, see Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 228–29.
 14. For the full text of the secession document, see Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 230–32.
 15. For the full text of the "Explanatory Statement" given to the Area Administrative Office and signed by five Mennonite church elders, denouncing the "erring ones," see Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 236–38.
 16. Jakob did sign the March 1860 document that tried to explain the context of the "secession" and reply to allegations made by the five church elders: namely, that their aims were reform oriented and that they had no intension of establishing a new or independent Mennonite church. For the full text of the March 19, 1860 letter, see Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 240.
 17. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 242–43.
 18. *Ibid.*, 266.
 19. *Ibid.*, 286–87.
 20. *Ibid.*, 275.
 21. *Ibid.*, 266.
 22. *Ibid.*, 372.
 23. *Ibid.*, 401.
 24. *Ibid.*, 406.
 25. *Ibid.*, 401.
 26. *Ibid.*, 417.
 27. *Ibid.*, 413.
 28. *Ibid.*, 274–75.
 29. Reimer, *Dead they are*, 16.
 30. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 484.
 31. *Ibid.*, 275.
 32. *Ibid.*, 276.
 33. *Ibid.*, 444–45.
 34. Reimer, *Dead they are*, 16. For the story of the Russian legend of the ghost calling out "Moj grob, moj grob" (i.e., "My grave, my grave"), which resulted in the name Magrova, see Martens, *They came from Wiesenfeld*, 17.
 35. Reimer, *Dead they are*, 16.
 36. *Ibid.*, 16.
 37. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 484, 405, 535.
 38. According to Friesen, "This old Gnadenfeld and Wuestian brother, who did not find his ideals realized in the 'secession' of 1860, did not find them entirely satisfied by the Christian norms of Liebig and Unger (because of their sharp corners, boundaries and certain narrowness), although he sincerely loved these organizers of the M.B. Church. He softened the hardness and rounded the corners of strict Anabaptism as much as he could, largely through 'being silent,' which . . . 'also preaches'" (*Mennonite Brotherhood*, 484); see also *ibid.*, 535.
 39. Martens, *They came from Wiesenfeld*, 160–61.
 40. For several first hand accounts of the destruction of Wiesenfeld, see Martens, *They came from Wiesenfeld*, 18, 27, 31–32, 113–15, 145–50.
 41. Martens, *They came from Wiesenfeld*, 217–22; see also Martens, "Tombstone," 10 and Dueck, "A stone," 15.
 42. Reimer, *Dead they are*, 17.
 43. For the story of the tombstone's transatlantic migration, see Susan & Gilbert Brandt, "Reimer grave marker," 4.

Books on India

Paul Wiebe. *Heirs and Joint heirs Mission to Church among the Mennonite Brethren of Andhra Pradesh* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Productions, 2010) 408 pp.

Peter Penner. *Russians, North Americans, and Telugus: The Mennonite Brethren Mission in India 1885-1975* (Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Productions, 1997) 413 pp.

Reviewed by Dorothy Yoder Nyce, Goshen, IN.

This review engages two books on Mennonite Brethren mission endeavors in India: sociologist Paul Wiebe's recent *Heirs and Joint Heirs* and historian Peter Penner's *Russians, North Americans, and Telugus*, written fourteen years earlier. Each writer's professional discipline prompts distinctly different accounts of the three generations of missionaries and the Telugu people among whom they served. While Wiebe explains missionary programs among Indian nationals in nine MB "stations" in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, Penner's focus is personal and official correspondence, reports, and minutes of the missionaries. Wiebe's writing is enriched as an American by scholarship and experiential knowledge of the social and religious realities in India, while Penner reflects carefully on printed material from mostly Western, male reporters, a year's exposure in person, and interviews. Wiebe's maternal grandparents, Daniel and Katherina, arrived in India in 1904. His mother, Viola Bergthold, returned with her husband, John Wiebe (new to India), in 1927. Paul, one of seven Wiebe children born in India, was a 1956 high school graduate of India's Kodaikanal International School, a boarding school where he later served nine years as principal. Since retiring to Iowa, he returns to engage with MB efforts in India.

Wiebe addresses the three basic areas of background, mission, and church. The first section presents some solid chapters on Christianity in India (by 1914, a half million strong), the historical period of the Mogul-Nizam empire of the Deccan area near Hyderabad, plus mission programs and the individuals who led them. His four central chapters are a restatement of content from his 1988 book that in turn draws on his 1969 PhD dissertation. Chapter titles convey key dimensions of

mission: Recruitment ("conversion"), Community and Church, Leadership, and Development. Prior to his conclusion, he reflects on the Fullness of Time and prospects anticipated.

The first Mennonite Brethren missionaries to India, Abraham and Maria Friesen from Russia, arrived in 1889 to work among the Telugu people; they teamed up with American Baptists already active there for fifty years. By 1899, over 65,000 Telugu people had been baptized by American Baptists. The first American MBs to the region (1899) were Nikolai and Susie Hiebert and Elizabeth Neufeld. Anna Suderman (later Bergthold) joined them, having gone the year before with an independent group to the western state of Gujarat. Feeling "called" and believing Menno Simon's phrase "true evangelical faith cannot lie dormant," MBs centered on "saving souls." By 1920, Indian pastors carried out baptisms; within two more decades, a "division of labor" found Indian leaders responsible for preaching and evangelism, while Western missionaries focused on plans, funds, and construction, on organization and maintenance of buildings, on programs with education and medical institutions (W, 120). "Mission Compounds" -- walled-in institutions with the church at the center -- offered refuge, separateness, and group identity. In addition to gathering at Hughestown, Nagarkurnool, Deverakonda, Wanaparathi, Shamshabad, Kalvakurty, Mahbubnagar, Gadwal, and Makthal/Narayanpet, recruits continued to live in villages or moved to more urban settings.

When Mennonites arrived in India, in the state called Andhra Pradesh since the 1947 Independence, Muslims ruled, but Hindus (85%) defined social arrangements. The Andhra MB church developed along caste lines or *jatis*, known primarily as Madigas and Malas. Ninety percent of MB Christians emerged from the Dalit ("untouchables"), bringing Hindu influences to their new, "foreign" faith. Spirits with power, stories from sacred Hindu texts, concepts of good and evil, and many festivals shaped life experiences (W, 149). To translate "God" for villagers who linked deity with one of Hinduism's many gods was not simple. Many recruits found self-worth and dignity through religious change. But features of their original social order remained. When missionaries left during the complex transition of the 1960s and 70s, people of different caste heritage competed for institutional leadership

positions. Within the Governing Council, operated by Indians for over fifty years, one side could “fully intend to do the other in” (W, 218). Leadership was valued, as it provided greater opportunity.

Most MB missionaries went to India ill prepared to learn about indigenous belief systems. They went “more to offer than to learn,” Wiebe observes (W, 116, 130). Their own commitments, biases, and views of the world emerged. While some strongly denounced Hindu practices, others “gained deep insights into the great traditional teachings of Hinduism” (W, 231). While some educated Indians disliked evangelizing efforts, they credited the good work done by medical and educational missionaries. Wiebe holds that most Protestant missionary programs followed a similar pattern: a central “kingpin” missionary, followed by ordained national ministers, un-ordained evangelists and Bible women; and then came church schoolteachers, along with elders, lay preachers, and prayer leaders on the periphery.

Peter Penner’s key sources for narrating the Mennonite Brethren endeavors in India were the archival centers of the American Baptists, as well as American and Canadian MBs. He proceeds chronologically from the Russian MB involvement (1889-1915) to the American (1915-1945) and Canadian missions (1945-1975), concluding with indigenous Indian leadership. He deals with themes of ownership, senior and junior roles for missionaries, Hillsboro MB Board engagement, parenting, personal tragedies, single women, and mission legacy. Penner draws extensively on correspondence, reports, and interviews.

Penner’s book raises a question for me: do readers truly comprehend how stressful isolation or separation or competing strong wills can be in a missionary context? On occasion, I wondered if the writer, or I, favored certain persons. My assessment of accounts on work in India is colored by my own positive years of learning in/from India. Since “those who write history make history,” Penner’s account of the MB experience needs to give the Indian nationals a greater voice. Of interest, for example, is I.P. Asheervadam’s recent comments about missionaries’ “luxurious lifestyles” or “disparity in lifestyles” as a source of conflict when writing the chapter “The Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Churches of India,” in *Churches Engage Asian Traditions: Asia*, Global Mennonite

History Series, 2011.

Penner writes informatively about missionary tragedies, tensions, and coping patterns, mission theology and strategy, women, children, the role of the Board, and transition efforts. Missioner honesty and trauma enabled his reporting; and the story conveyed is necessary. Of the 96 missionaries, John Wiebe sent the most correspondence and reports, Anna Suderman became the “most outspoken,” and Margaret Willems gave 240 talks about work in India when on furlough between 1953-1955. Missioners experienced hostile environments, strange diseases, broken nerves, disputes about finances, tensions over where to locate medical or school programs, exposure to superstition and fatalism, clashes over employees, car usage, schedules, relating to indigenous churches, human error, and death -- in childbirth, by drowning, poison, disease, falling into a well, or suicide -- isolation, observing famine and devastation, family separations, and cultural adjustments. Amidst such trauma, the people pursued their main task of informing others of God’s Wisdom and love through Jesus the Christ. Ever prone to paternalism towards new church members and younger or single women missionaries, God’s “work” went on.

Penner wisely attends to often-neglected people in the writing of history. Children attending boarding schools at young ages either thrived in them or struggled with them. Many knew culture shock on returning to the West and many left the MB church. While prior to 1957 MB women were ordained for the mission task, wives were expected to care for the family, organize servants, and know vicarious worth through their husband’s (rather than personal) achievement. Single women, with equal salary, made strong professional contributions despite some male missionaries’ resistance to their being “too independent” and teaching Bible in schools. Two Sudermans were known as a “formidable team” for two decades. Helen Warkentin, leaving after 37 years, was widely honored by Indians. Katherina Schellenberg, sole doctor for 45 years, took two furloughs. She and her staff saw 5,200 patients in a two-year period. She found distinct access to Muslim women in *zenana* (seclusion); her medical work consistently offered spiritual salvation.

Transfer of authority and assets to the Indian Church proved a nemesis for most Protestant groups, in part because of

dependency patterns, failure to train young churches in stewardship giving, or lack of leadership training. While mistakes were made, Paul Wiebe’s stance from within the “body of Christ,” remains ever positive. And Asheervadam’s statistics speak volumes: in 2010, Mennonite Brethren membership in India numbered 200,000 in 964 congregations (A, 135).

Penner’s and Wiebe’s books are gifts to the Christian church. In addition, Paul and David Wiebe’s (twins) photo book, *In Another Day of the Lord: The Mission Days of the Mennonite Brethren Church of India in Pictures* (Kindred, 2010), complements the two books under review. I conclude with two quotes from their photo book: “Without reference to caste and its implications, it is not possible to understand what it means ‘to be Indian’” (W & W, 40). “Nothing would have remained after they [the missionaries] left if what they introduced hadn’t made sense and been embodied locally. And this happened under local leadership, in all that it involved in the way of prayerful good faith, initiative, risk taking, and persuasion” (W & W, 106).

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Book Reviews

(cont’d from p. 12)

theme, namely editor John B. Toews’ *The Mennonites in Russia From 1917-1930: Selected Documents* (Christian Press, 1975).

In this new volume a 20-page section, “Understanding the Story of the Union,” leads directly into three documents that illumine aspects of the Mennonite Congress Movement of 1917-1918, not included in *Selected Documents*, very important, if not necessarily fully sufficient, as contextual data for what follows. Chapter 3 on “Establishing the Union” includes a copy of the Mennonite-proposed charter for the Union, and Soviet documents intimating various objections to it, with some Mennonite observations added.

Minutes of Union Congresses, along with those of the board and the executive, are collected in Chapter 4. Seven documents of the Union Congress were offered earlier in *Selected Documents*, but 15 sets of minutes of the board and executive are added here.

A very extensive list of Soviet documents, centred around the section

title of "Soviet Perspectives on the Union," form Chapter 5. These 70 pages are in essence the core of what is new in this volume. Several short letters of B.B. Janz, offering responses to Soviet perspectives are found here also.

These Soviet documents reflect a general view strongly critical of the Mennonite initiative, revealing a fairly clear understanding of unspoken Mennonite assumptions and objectives which are seen as patently resistant to Soviet policies and longer-range goals. The Soviets knew very well that reconstruction was not the only reason for organizing the Union.

In other words, the documents give us an unclouded window into the thinking which was guiding Commissariat officials and bureaucrats, i.e., what Mennonites were "up against" in the total scheme of things. Disheartening as this information is, and not at all always obvious to Mennonite officials at the time, these reports do bring a needed "other side" to a dialogue which Janz and others were carrying on with the government of the day.

Documents bearing comments dealing with the modification and final closure of the Union in 1927 are found in Chapter 6, which are then followed by Mennonite documents dealing with emigration and copies of a number of B.B. Janz letters discussing these issues with Mennonite co-workers, like A. A. Friesen and B.H. Unruh.

Translators of these materials, John B. Toews of Vancouver, B.C., Walter Regehr of Winnipeg, MB and above all Olga Shmakina of Zaporozhia, Ukraine, and Fresno, USA, who did the Russian into English translations, obviously put forth great effort and energy in giving us the English equivalents. Certainly the same must be said for the editors, Paul and John B. Toews, who have in their roles helped to advance the study of this period significantly.

A few obscurities of translations, some syntax glitches, and occasional typos can hardly be avoided in a translation project like this, and one can spot them here and there. One could have benefited from including a few maps, an index, and possibly even a selected bibliography to enhance understanding and interpretation for the uninitiated readers.

The latter, i.e., interpretation, it must be conceded, is a huge challenge in itself, and needing a Volume II, or possibly simply added interpretive comments

scattered among the documents themselves. One might even challenge the remark about the emigration of the 1920s "closing with a whimper" (p.506), given the decidedly dramatic exit of the "final 5000" from Moscow in 1929-30.

A fine hardcover binding and clear print (though with slight crowding at the margins) makes this a reference work that will stand up to much consulting by anyone having this useful book on a shelf.

I.P. Asheervadam, Adhi Dharma, Alle Hoekema, Kyong-Jung Kim, Luke Martin, Regina Lyn Mondez, Chiou-Lang Pan, Nguyen Thanh Tam, Nguyen Thi Tam, Takanobu Tojo, Nguyen Quang Trung, Masakazu Yamade and Earl Zimmerman. *Churches Engage Asian Traditions: Asia — A Global Mennonite History* (Intercourse, PA and Kitchener, ON: Good Books and Pandora Press, 2011) 376 pp.

Reviewed by Abe Dueck, Winnipeg.

This volume is the fourth in a series of four volumes that will form the complete set of the Global Mennonite History project that was launched about fifteen years ago. The Asian volume was released just in time for the Shenk Mission Lectureship in Elkhart, IN, in October, 2011, which became an occasion to celebrate and seek to learn from the entire project. The final volume on North America is expected to be released in 2012.

The Asia volume is perhaps the best example of the extent and diversity of the Mennonite/Anabaptist church around the world. It, together with the Africa volume, are the only ones that deal exclusively with Mennonite churches that are the product of mission/service rather than a combination of migration and mission/service. In addition to the various mission agencies, the work of the Mennonite Central Committee emerges significantly in most of the countries, often after the devastation of World War II. However, most of the mission agencies also were active in service areas such as health and education. The histories in the various countries should provide an excellent resource for evaluating how service and mission should be interconnected.



The Asia volume was probably the most difficult to produce, given the number of countries and the very diverse cultures that are represented. Thirteen authors wrote various sections; hence a unified approach can hardly be expected.

Two introductory chapters by Alle Hoekema provide an excellent background to Asia and the introduction of Christianity into Asia. The longest chapters are devoted to Indonesia and India, with about 100 pages each. Following these are chapters on Chinese-speaking areas, the Philippines, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. In general there is a frank discussion of internal conflicts and challenges as well as of difficulties between the western agencies and the national churches. In particular the issues pertaining to the unique cultural circumstances and the indigenous religious practices provide thought-provoking questions for western Christians.

Each chapter provides considerable detail on the church developments, individual leaders, growth of conferences, etc. Because the book is written in English it will have limited use in the respective countries. North Americans, except for academics and mission agency personnel, might be overwhelmed by the detail. There are many small photographs interspersed throughout the text, but they are very small and often of poor quality.

The larger interpretive and theological issues are briefly raised in most of the chapters, but more thoroughly in the concluding chapter by Takanobu Tojo. He is most forthright in his criticism of the fact that the Christian message was generally defined by the assumptions of imperialistic Christianity (338). He states, "It is our duty to reappraise, in the light of the Bible as the word of God, the nature of European Christianity which lost the true spirit of Christianity as it provided a religious foundation for modern sovereign nationalism and accommodated itself to the Enlightenment, modern imperialism and colonialism" (339). For Anabaptists this provides a unique opportunity and challenge.

The authors and editors are to be congratulated on producing such a comprehensive volume on the Mennonite presence in Asia. The material provides an excellent base from which further analysis and comparative studies can be done and should provide mission agencies with a basis for discerning directions for the future.

Book Reviews

Mark Jantzen. *Mennonite German Soldiers: Nation, Religion, and Family in the Prussian East, 1772-1880* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010) 370 pp.

Reviewed by Victor Kliewer, occasional lecturer in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg.

The immediate focus of *Mennonite German Soldiers* is on the Mennonite struggle with military service in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Prussia, but it also addresses larger topics, like the evolving Prussian state, the development of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe, and the overall Mennonite experience in this context.

The bookends of the account are 1772 (first partition of Poland) and 1880 (the reason for this date is unclear, except that it marked approximately a century of political and military history and, as a result, the revised confession of the Prussian Mennonites). The book is divided into ten chronologically-oriented chapters which focus on the Mennonite determination to maintain their exemption from military service, while trying to assure the authorities that they were, nevertheless, law-abiding subjects or citizens. Major impact was felt, for example, after the partitions of Poland, the Napoleonic Wars, the wars of German unification, and the German *Kulturkampf* of the later nineteenth century.

A major theme of the book is the development of the Prussian nation state, the changing forms of government from autocratic to representational, and the changing Mennonite identity from subjects to citizens; the process was not simple or easy, as Jantzen painstakingly shows. A crucial issue was whether national allegiance or religious convictions should be primary: for traditionalist Mennonites the answer was clear, but ironically it was Hermann von Beckerath, a liberal Mennonite from Krefeld, who, as a delegate to the 1848 National Assembly, insisted that national allegiance should have priority over religious convictions--including, in particular, serving in the military.

A second major theme is the ongoing debate around the Mennonites' military exemption: clearly they were a

(sometimes barely) tolerated minority who experienced unrelenting pressure to assimilate and paid significant sums to retain their position. Coercive requirements included substantial payments for the Culm military academy, special permits for land purchases, and strict regulations regarding marriage and family.



An interesting subtheme, hitherto largely unexplored, is the linkage between the Mennonites and the Jews, another (barely) tolerated minority. Jantzen notes, "From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, Mennonites and Jews in the Vistula Delta shared the status of religious pariahs tolerated for their economic benefits to the powerful" (22).

By 1867 military exemption as a legal option had ended, even if non-combatant service was still possible. In 1874 the "Mennonite Law" revoked the edict of 1789, lifting most restrictions on Mennonites. For the Mennonites it became clear that their options were, finally, to accommodate or to emigrate. By 1880, Jantzen observes, the last traditionalist Mennonites had left Prussia--either to Russia or subsequently to the United States--thus ending a "hundred-year procession of emigration" (220).

Jantzen deals with a fascinating subject, including not only the issue of nonresistance but also the issues of religious conviction versus national allegiance, and the place of a minority group within a larger dominant society. The book is thoroughly researched and meticulously written, never losing the reader's interest as it weaves together the strands of national and international politics, the decisions of Mennonite church and community leaders, and the experiences of Mennonite families and individuals. At the same time, Jantzen is aware of the larger contemporary academic context, referencing the work of other scholars in Polish, Prussian, and German politics and history and the rise of the nation states in Europe. The book makes a serious contribution to a field that so far has received relatively little scholarly attention, and it will surely be a significant reference point for any future studies, not only of the Prussian Mennonite experience as such, but also of Prussian and German history more generally.

John B. Toews and Paul Toews, editors. *Union of Citizens of Dutch Lineage in Ukraine (1922-1927): Mennonite and Soviet Documents* (Fresno, CA: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 2011) hdc., 516 pp. \$40.00.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein, retired director and historian-archivist of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, now resident in Steinbach, Manitoba.

It is quite well known that Mennonites of what became the Soviet Union, especially of South Russia, took the full brunt of the turmoil and terror of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Civil War that followed, the depredations of famine and disease, and then the most daunting challenge of how to respond to this catastrophic disaster.

Emigration became a central aspect of that response. Its story too is found in many books and articles and personal accounts. Obviously another top priority for those not leaving the country would be simply the question of survival. So another dimension of response became paramount. That was the matter of rebuilding communities and fitting in with the new Soviet environment somehow. Here is where the subject of this book, reconstruction, more particularly the establishment of a new organization would become crucial.

The Union of Citizens of Dutch Lineage in Ukraine (1922-1927) was one of several such organizations. It was established to deal with critical problems of the Mennonites at the time, tuned to as much as possible, yet also resisting, significant objectives of the new regime.

Editors Paul Toews and John B. Toews have here brought together documents which allow us to understand and which show how this process of reconstruction was envisioned by Mennonite leaders. The book also shows how their decisions were received by Soviet officials and bureaucrats, and how increasing conflictual discussions emerged between two very different, indeed diametrically opposed visions of what needed to be done to rebuild and refocus the country.

An enormous amount of detail is incorporated in these materials. What is new is the large number of documents brought forward in English translation from the Soviet archives. They are juxtaposed with a portion of an earlier volume published on a closely related

(cont'd on p. 10)