

# Mennonite Historian

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



Pictured above is a Kroeger clock replica that Harold Neufeld made out of wood. Harold describes how he went about making the wooden clock and some of the surprises he encountered along the way. His story starts on page 5. Photo credit: Harold Neufeld.

## Contents

A Mennonite Girl, an American Soldier,  
and Green Farm in the West Reserve ... 2  
An Old Document Sheds Light on  
the Origin of Mennonite Surnames ... 3  
Making a Wooden Kroeger Clock ..... 5

MHA: COVID-19 Update ..... 6  
Historical Commission Meets by Zoom  
to Deliberate and Grant Awards ..... 7  
Mennonites and Dancing ..... 9  
Documenting the Famine, 1932–33 ..... 10

## Book Reviews

*Circling the Globe: The Evangelical  
Mennonite Conference* ..... 11  
*Blessings and Burdens: 100 years  
of Hutterites in Manitoba* ..... 12

# A Mennonite Girl, an American Soldier, and Green Farm in the West Reserve

by Bruce Wiebe, Winkler

Heinrich Siegmann was born in the Kingdom of Hanover in 1839,<sup>1</sup> while Maria Nickel was born in 1860 in the Chortitza colony of southern Russia; however, the intersection of their lives has a connection to the Mennonite West Reserve of Manitoba.

While still in Europe, Heinrich, age 24 and a butcher by trade,<sup>2</sup> was recruited as a soldier for the Union Army for service in the American Civil War.<sup>3</sup> Aboard the SS Bellona, after departing Antwerp, he arrived at the port of Boston in July 1864<sup>4</sup> and was immediately mustered into the Union Army's 35th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, "A" Company.<sup>5</sup> Siegmann served until the war ended in April 1865; the Regiment was discharged in June and his term expired in July.<sup>6</sup> He went on to enlist in the Twentieth U.S. Infantry "I" Company for three years (1867–1870) and in "F" Company for five years (1870–1875).<sup>7</sup>

From October 1873, "F" Company was stationed at the American military's Fort Pembina, located south of the confluence of the Red and Pembina rivers,<sup>8</sup> three-and-a-half miles south of the Canadian border

and the town of Emerson, which developed during this period. The 1875 arrival of Mennonites at Fort Dufferin and their subsequent settlement of the West Reserve, as well as their presence in Emerson, would certainly have been noted by the soldiers of Fort Pembina. Visiting between the two Forts—Dufferin and Pembina—was common, and soldiers from Fort Pembina frequented the saloons of the nearby town of Pembina and socialized with local girls.<sup>9</sup> When his 5-year term was up in September 1875, Heinrich Siegmann was discharged at Fort Pembina, but, within a month, he reenlisted in "F" Company for a further 5 years.<sup>10</sup>

The following year, in July 1876, Johann and Margaretha Nickel, together with their unmarried children—Elizabeth, Anna, Maria, Helena, Cornelius, Aganetha, and Jacob—arrived from Russia.<sup>11</sup> They settled in the village of Waldheim<sup>12</sup> on the western edge of the Mennonite West Reserve, about 40 miles from Emerson via the Post Road. Nickel homesteaded the SE 23-2-5W<sup>13</sup> but had a significant amount of debt that he was unable to repay.<sup>14</sup> This financial stress may have been a reason why Nickel permitted at least one of his children to find employment beyond the Mennonite villages.

Shortly after the Nickel's 1876 arrival in Manitoba, daughter Maria began working for one of the officer's families at Fort Pembina.<sup>15</sup> Here she met and fell in love<sup>16</sup> with the much older Heinrich Siegmann, the tall (6' 2½") soldier with brown hair and brown eyes who spoke German. However, in mid-December 1877, the Twentieth Infantry was ordered to Texas for service along the Rio Grande<sup>17</sup> and Siegmann ended up at Fort Duncan near Eagle Pass.<sup>18</sup> Shortly thereafter, Maria followed him to Texas,<sup>19</sup> and they were married there in Kinney County, August 1878.<sup>20</sup> There were other sons and daughters of Mennonite families who were also working in Emerson, Fort Pembina, and the towns of Pembina and St. Vincent.<sup>21</sup> What these young people thought of Maria's love affair is unknown, but their parents' immediate reaction was to bring their children back home.<sup>22</sup> Because of financial need, such employment outside the West Reserve had been tolerated. However, Maria's departure prompted *Obervorsteher* Isaac Miller, on December 2, 1878, to issue a directive that all those persons, *die außer der Kolonie dienen*

*bei Englaender* (i.e., those working for English people outside the West Reserve), were to be brought back home by New Years and were no longer to be hired out outside of the Reserve, and that this was to be obeyed.<sup>23</sup>

Heinrich and Maria lived at Fort Duncan until Heinrich was discharged in October 1880,<sup>24</sup> after which they immediately travelled to Canada,<sup>25</sup> stopping first at Waldheim to visit Maria's parents.<sup>26</sup> They returned to Dakota Territory, where, in June 1881, Heinrich began his naturalization process when he filed his First Papers, signalling his intention to become a United States citizen.<sup>27</sup> This was likely done in conjunction with his making a pre-emption entry for the North West Quarter of Section 5, Township 162, Range 56, West of the 5th Principal Meridian, in Pembina County.

In both March and May 1882, Heinrich filed declaratory statements that he had settled on this property and intended to claim it under the pre-emption law.<sup>28</sup> After mortgaging the property for \$350 to obtain the funds,<sup>29</sup> the sale to him for \$198 was registered in November 1883, but patent did not yet issue.<sup>30</sup> Here, about 2 miles south of Walhalla in Beaulieu (later named Liberty and then La Moure) Township, is where Heinrich and Maria lived and farmed for a period of 5 or 6 years.<sup>31</sup>

Civilian life, however, does not appear to have agreed with Heinrich, nor, it seems, did the impermanence of a military posting agree with Maria. Accordingly, she remained at Walhalla,<sup>32</sup> when, in October 1886, at Fort Snelling, Siegmann again enlisted in the Twentieth Infantry, "G" Company; this was recorded as his 4th enlistment.<sup>33</sup> The Twentieth Infantry had in the meantime again been transferred to the Department of Dakota and "G" Company was at Camp Poplar River in Montana,<sup>34</sup> to which he was now posted.

While he was away, there were some interesting transactions involving the Walhalla farm. In December 1886, Heinrich and Maria deeded the NW 5-162-56 to George Loring for \$1, subject to the \$350 mortgage.<sup>35</sup> The following month, January 1887, Loring for \$1, deeded it back, still subject to the \$350 mortgage, but this time to Maria Siegmann.<sup>36</sup> The actual patent for the NW 5-162-56, in Heinrich's name, only issued in September 1889,<sup>37</sup> but did not alter the fact that it had

(cont'd on p. 4)

**Mennonite Historian** is published by the Mennonite Heritage Archives (Mennonite Church Canada, Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies, and Canadian Mennonite University) and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches).

Editors: Jon Isaak (CMBS)  
Conrad Stoesz (MHA)

All correspondence and manuscripts should be sent to the editorial offices at:

1310 Taylor Ave.  
Winnipeg, MB R3M 3Z6  
204.669.6575  
jon.isaak@mbchurches.ca  
or  
500 Shaftesbury Blvd.  
Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2  
204.560.1998  
cstoesz@mharchives.ca

www.mennonitehistorian.ca

Subscription rates: \$17.00 per year, \$32.00 for two years, and \$46.00 for three years. Individual subscriptions may be ordered from these addresses.  
ISSN: 07008066



# Genealogy and Family History

## An Old Document Sheds Light on the Origin of Mennonite Surnames

by Glenn H. Penner <gpenner@uoguelph.ca>

In 1586, trouble was brewing in the Prussian Mennonite community. Some 20 years earlier, their Dutch brethren had undergone a painful, major split over how strictly the ban should be applied to wayward members. This controversy had separated the Flemish and Frisian Mennonites in the Netherlands and the churches in Prussia would soon be choosing sides.

At this time, Quiryn van der Meulen (Cryn Vermeulen) was the *Ältester* (elder or bishop) of the Danzig Mennonites. In 1586, a letter of complaint against van der Meulen was signed by 32 members from 5 of the Prussian congregations (see Horst Quiring, “Aus den ersten Jahrzehnten der Mennoniten in Westpreussen,” *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* Volume 2 [1937]: 32–35). The details of the complaint are not relevant to this article, but the names of the signatories are!

From the Montau congregation, the signatories were: *Hilken Smet*, *Antony Kerber*, *Hendrich Roosenfeld*, *Jelis Deckmaeker*, *Eyvert Pieters*, *Jelis Fransen*, *Hans Leenert*, and *Hendrech Leenerts*. From the Klein Werder (later Thiensdorf) congregation: *Koen Henderichs*, *Hans van Mechelen*, *Jacob Smet*, *Willem Smet*, and *Langen Dirk*. From the Elbing congregation: *Lavis Schoemaeker*, *Hans van Cuelen*, *Cornelis van Utert*, *Aert den Boor*, *Abraham de Wever*, *Joost Kempener*, and *Pieter Janszen*. From the Danzig congregation: *Hans van Amersfoort*, *Arent Lodszaemaeker*, *Evert Janszen*, *Hans van Brüssel*, *Marten van Nonnekan*, *Hans de Stopper*, *Jan van Deventer*, *Olof den Schnyder*, *Jan Paen*, *Cornelis Bulaert*, and *Pieter de Waele*. From the Torn congregation: *Pieter de Groote*.

The first thing that should be pointed out here is that many of these surnames disappeared from the Mennonite community within the next 200 years—names such as Deckmaeker, Leenert, Mechelen, Schoemaeker, van Cuelen, Utert, de Wever, Kempener, Lodeszemaeker, Brüssel, van Nonnekan,

de Stopper, van Deventer, den Schyder, Paen and de Groote.

However, the names of several of the signatories should be of significant interest to Low-German Mennonite genealogists.

**Quirin van der Meullen:** note that Quirin is used as a first name. Derived from Quirinius, this became the well-known surname Quiring.

**Anthony Kerver:** he may have been the common ancestor of the Mennonite Kerbers and Karbers.

**Hendrich Roosenfeld:** likely the common ancestor of those with the rare Mennonite surname Rosenfeld.

**Eywert Pieters and Evert Janszen:** during this time period Ewert was a well-known first name among the Germanic people. It is also a well-known Low-German Mennonite surname.

**Jelis (Julius) Fransen:** likely the common ancestor of those with the less well-known Mennonite surname Franz(en).

**Koen Henderichs:** this first name hints that the rare Mennonite surname Koehn, found mostly in the United States, may have been derived from a first name, as are most Low-German Mennonite surnames.

**Langen Dirck:** translated this means tall Dirk. By the late 1500s nearly all of the Mennonites living in Prussia had taken on permanent family names. Here is an example of a Mennonite who had not yet done so. Note that the surnames Dirks, Doerksen, etc., are derived from the first name Dirk. Perhaps he was the ancestor of one of the Dirks or Doerksen family lines.

**Olof den Schnyder:** or Olof the Tailor. Another example of a Mennonite who may not yet have taken

a permanent family name. Schneider is a very common German surname, which is unknown among Low-German Mennonites.

**Lavis Schoemaeker:** those who know Mennonite Plautdietsch will recognize this as possibly being related to the surname Loewen, pronounced “Laewis” in Plautdietsch. Note that the surname Loewen is derived from a first name and has nothing to do with the German word Loewen (Lion).

**Cornelis Bulaert:** a member of the early Buhler family and possibly the common ancestor. Surnames ending in -er, such as Penner, Wieler, Kroeker, Buhler, etc., were occasionally spelled with an -ert ending. The reason for this spelling variation, which was very rarely done by Mennonites themselves, is unknown.

**Pieter de Waele:** could he have been an early member, or possibly the ancestor, of the Mennonite Wall family? In early records, the name is occasionally written as de Wael or de Wahl and later as Wahl, Walde, and Wall.

A further letter of 1592 contains many of the same signatures. A new one that stands out is that of Philips van den Dyck. Although Philip was a relatively rare name among Low-German Mennonites, it was common in the early Dyck family. I suspect that most of these men named Philip Dyck were descendants of this Philips van den Dyck. It is also likely that many of the early Low-German Mennonites named Philip were his descendants.



The Kroecker clock factory in Rosenthal, Chortitza, Ukraine, ca. 1920s. Many Mennonite families had wall clocks in their homes made here or at the Mandtler factory in Lindenau, Molotschna, Ukraine. See Harold Neufeld's article starting on page 5. Photo credit: MAID MHA PP-4-044-258.0.

## Green Farm in the West Reserve

(cont'd from p. 2)

already been deeded to Maria alone. In October 1889, "G" Company relocated to Fort Assiniboine, Montana,<sup>38</sup> and this was to be Siegmann's last station. In January 1890, at Hot Springs Arkansas, he was discharged from the service for disability,<sup>39</sup> and, in March, he applied for his "invalid" pension<sup>40</sup> in North Dakota.<sup>41</sup>

During her absence from them, Maria's family in Manitoba had experienced changes as well. Her father's inability to repay his West Reserve Gebietsamt travel and resettlement expenses, plus the subsequent addition and compounding of interest, made it necessary for him to deed the Waldheim homestead to Jacob Y. Shantz.<sup>42</sup> After their 1876 arrival in Manitoba, the Nickels were not recorded in the original West Reserve church register (Johann Wiebe Gemeinde),<sup>43</sup> but in the somewhat later West Reserve Berghthaler Kirchenbuch, Vol. A.<sup>44</sup> Due to the absence of subsequent entries therein, they do not appear to have been active church members. Still unmarried, daughter Anna had a son named Peter Wiens,<sup>45</sup> and one of her unidentified sisters had a daughter named Margaretha König.<sup>46</sup> Brother Cornelius Nickel, in August 1888, made an entry to purchase the NE 13-3-4 West,<sup>47</sup> located about 2 miles north-east of the village of Reinfeld for the price of \$2.50 an acre plus the performance of certain residence and cultivation obligations. Nickel immediately paid one-third, the sum of \$133, from monies advanced to him by Valentine Winkler for this purpose<sup>48</sup> and appears to have soon commenced living on the property but did not make any further payments.<sup>49</sup>

The month following Heinrich Siegmann's discharge from the army, he and Maria were back in Manitoba, where, in February 1890, they took up residence on the property that brother-in-law Cornelius Nickel had purchased.<sup>50</sup> Cornelius Nickel's own intentions now became clear. Beginning in 1888, some southern Manitoba Mennonites had begun moving just south of the border into Cavalier County near Langdon,<sup>51</sup> and Cornelius intended to do the same. Heinrich and Maria provided him with the opportunity to do so and they now referred to their new place of residence as "Green Farm, Plum Coulee P.O."<sup>52</sup>



**The Greenfarm School District (#853) was formed in 1895 and the Greenfarm schoolhouse (pictured above, but no longer standing) was built on the same section (but not same quarter) as the Siegmann property. The name "Greenfarm" was given to the area by five farmers all living in close proximity to a creek running through it, as reported by Jacob J. Wiens in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, December 14, 1887, page 1. Photo credit: Archives of Manitoba, District School Inspectors' photograph album (ca. 1926–1939), GR8461, A0233, C131-2, page 12.**

Cornelius abandoned his homestead entry in favour of his brother-in-law<sup>53</sup> but could not receive any financial compensation other than the \$133 already paid on the land. Heinrich was required to pay the remaining \$267 and complete the residence and cultivation requirements. To pay these sums, Heinrich mortgaged the land to the North of Scotland Canadian Mortgage Co. Ltd. for \$500 in October 1892,<sup>54</sup> but whether the loan from Valentine Winkler was included is unknown. Since he was not a Mennonite, there was initially some question as to whether Heinrich was entitled to acquire land within the West Reserve.<sup>55</sup> The matter appears to have resolved; in any event, he conformed with the usual Mennonite practice and affirmed rather than swore when making application for his patent.<sup>56</sup> In subsequent years, Heinrich and Maria built a frame house (16' x 24'), stable (16' x 24'), granary (16' x 20'), dug a well, and increased their cultivated acres to 100 from Cornelius's 36.<sup>57</sup>

An event in September 1890, quite early in their residence at Green Farm, brings into question the nature of the disability that had caused Siegmann's discharge from the army and his pension. Although the Army-Navy Hospital at Hot Springs Arkansas specialized in arthritis and other ailments treated with therapeutic baths,<sup>58</sup> perhaps his issues were not just physical in nature, since he now threatened to kill Maria and everyone else who came in his way. He was arrested by Constable

James Atkin, held in detention in Morden, and ordered by the judge to keep the peace for one year or forfeit \$500.<sup>59</sup>

That event may not have been a contributing factor, but with the Nickel's Waldheim homestead having been forfeited, by May 1891, Maria's parents Johann and Margaretha Nickel and their son Jacob were also living in the vicinity of Green Farm.<sup>60</sup> By December 1893, Heinrich had already paid for his Manitoba land and would soon meet the four-year residence requirement to qualify for naturalization in Canada, but Maria still owned the farm at Walhalla. Apparently, in preparation for returning there, on December 20th, Heinrich now deeded the Green Farm property to Abraham Shore for \$1,500 but took back a mortgage of \$700 as partial payment.<sup>61</sup> Three months later, on March 24, 1894, Heinrich's patent for the NE 13-3-4W was issued and on April 23rd his Certificate of Naturalization was issued, but, sadly, Heinrich died on April 25th at Green Farm<sup>62</sup> and was buried at Walhalla, North Dakota.<sup>63</sup> Maria applied for Letters of Administration to disburse the estate, which was valued at \$1,179 and consisted of 5 horses (\$300), 1 cow (\$20), cash on hand (\$109), and a mortgage receivable (\$700).<sup>64</sup>

There were no children of their marriage,<sup>65</sup> and with the Manitoba property already sold, Widow Maria Siegmann moved back to the United States, where

(cont'd on p. 8)



# Making a Wooden Kroeger Clock

by Harold Neufeld, Winnipeg

While on route to Canada in 1926, my grandparents, Johann and Anna (Enns) Neufeld, aided a young widow who was about to be turned back with her child because she was unable to pay a surcharge levied by the Russian authorities at the transfer point in Moscow. In return for 20 rubles, she gave them a wall clock. For a quarter century, this clock kept time in my grandparents' farmhouse near Niverville, Manitoba.

When Johann and Anna retired to St. Catharines, Ontario, they took the wall clock with them. After their deaths, it passed through several other hands before finding its way to the Winnipeg home of my cousin, where it marks the hours reliably to this day. I only learned of its existence in December 2019. When I discovered that it was an 1885 Kroeger clock (see *Widow Clock* at <https://www.kroegerclocks.com/mc0285>), I decided to try making a wooden replica.

The use of wood in clock movements is not new. English clockmaker John Harrison built a number of wooden clocks, including a 1720 version that still marks time in its 300th anniversary year in a North Lincolnshire clock tower. Early Mennonite clockmakers in Western Europe, Russia, and North America also built wooden clock movements.

Because of its fibrous nature, precise machining of wood at small scales is difficult, and wooden cogs as small as those found on the gear wheels of conventional brass movements would have little strength. For these reasons, the wheels in my replica were scaled up considerably and the cogs enlarged. The numbers of cogs on each wheel were reduced, but their relative ratios were preserved, so that a pendulum of the same length and period as on the original clock would still advance the minute and hour hands accurately.

Like the Kroeger clock, my replica is gravity driven by a brass weight on a chain running over the sprocket that drives the *main wheel*. From here, the force is transmitted through the *centre wheel* to the *escapement wheel*. This three-wheel system would spin out of control were it not for the *escapement*, the small anchor-shaped device that rocks back and forth at the top of the gear train. Its action is

governed by the regular motion of the pendulum. Together, they control the measured "escape" of energy as the weight makes its 13-hour descent to the floor. It is this escapement that produces the familiar "tic-toc" as each cog on the escapement wheel is stopped and released.

Both clocks have a pendulum measuring about one metre in length, yielding a period of two seconds. Since the escapement wheel of my replica has 30 teeth, it takes 60 seconds for a complete rotation. The gear train reduces this to one rotation per hour at the main wheel, so that its axle can double as the stem of the minute hand. Smaller reduction gears running off this axle drive the hour hand in its own rotation every 12 hours. To allow both hands to share the same centre of rotation, the stem of the hour hand is a hollow sleeve that slips over the stem of the minute hand.

Several components could not be constructed of wood. A broken clock from an MCC Thrift Store supplied the chain and weights, and I was able to salvage its chain sprocket to replace my own bamboo version, which had failed after a run of a few hours. Stainless steel axles were cut from an unused oven rack; copper BB pellets serve as ballast in the pendulum bob; and a dulled razor blade provides a frictionless suspension for the pendulum.

Fortunately, even with the roughly four-fold upscaling, the entire movement can be concealed behind a face with the same dimensions as the original Kroeger clock. The dial, numerals, and hands are close replicas of the original. Not so the decorative motifs. Late in the project, when I learned that the art work on the face was possibly not original, or at best the result of several restoration efforts, I felt freed to express some of my own connections to the people that had owned the clock, and whose roots lie in the land where it was built.

*Sergejewka* was the name of the village in Ukraine from which my grandparents emigrated with their children, including my father. Founded in 1868, as the last of the Fürstenland Colony villages, it flourished for only some 45 years before the ravages of the Great War, the revolution, and the civil war ended its prosperity. By 1930, only a very few Mennonites remained, among them my grandfather's brother and his wife, and their adopted son.

In July 2018, my brother and I, and our

two daughters were part of an organized tour of a number of Mennonite settlements in Ukraine. We took one day away from the main group to visit Sergejewka. Where the village had stood, high on the banks overlooking the Dnieper River, we found only the ruins of the fabled village well, and the crumbling foundations of the great chimney of the Janzen & Neufeld farm machinery factory (Janzen was Anna's grandfather, and Neufeld was Johann's uncle). Nothing remained of the 20 farmsteads and 50 or so factory workers' cottages. There was only a field of poor hay surrounded by waist-high grasses and weeds. As I stood there, I remembered ... what my father had remembered ... that as a five-year-old, he had been sent with his brothers and sisters to gather dried thistle heads on the fringes of this place, to be ground up as a flour substitute during the famine of the early 1920s. The thistle motif that surrounds the clock face is a tribute to his memory and symbolizes, more broadly, a vanished world.

A little more than a week after I had completed and tested the clock and installed it on the dining room wall, I made a final startling discovery. Abraham Kroeger, the son of the same David Kroeger who built the clock I have tried to replicate, was married to "Tante Marie." I had met her occasionally as a child when my family visited the home of her brother, my great-grandfather, Johann Schroeder, in Morris, Manitoba. The Schroeder home in Rosental, Chortitza Colony (Ukraine), was directly adjacent to the Kroeger property and still functions as a family residence. The many generations of clockmakers in the Kroeger family manufactured several thousand clocks before the end of their enterprise in the 1920s. Of these only a few hundred survive. The main building has survived intact (see image on page 3). But, as we discovered during our 2018 visit, it has been "repurposed" a number of times and currently serves as a Pentecostal chapel.

Also in 2018, the Kroeger Clocks Heritage Foundation, together with the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba, mounted an exhibit featuring 33 Kroeger clocks. For images, videos, and stories of these and other Kroeger clocks, see <https://kroegerclocks.com/>.

For further information, contact Harold Neufeld at <[hdneuf@mymts.net](mailto:hdneuf@mymts.net)>.

## COVID-19 Update

by Conrad Stoesz

The effects of COVID-19 have been wide and far reaching. The pandemic has significantly affected the archives but in perhaps surprising ways.

In early March, things were operating normally but with a heightened awareness of the changing nature of our understanding of the virus and its potential impact. Then, on March 20, 2020, the archives and the entire Canadian Mennonite University campus were closed down.

For the next two weeks, Selenna Wolfe and I worked from home. Plans were made for an extended work-from-home period. On April 3, Selenna was laid off until August 17 and I was allowed to come into the archives for a few hours once a week. I continued to work full time, but starting May 25, I could work half time from the office and gradually back to full time.

During the work-from-home period, the archives' website was updated: writing projects were undertaken; meetings via Zoom were attended; Selenna took some professional development; and new ideas were considered.

As people were spending more time at home, some of the "one day I want to" projects were started, including sorting through family materials and starting family research projects. These projects led to more email inquiries about archival materials and resources. Most of these

requests were placed on hold until staff could return to the office on a more regular basis.

Some volunteer projects could continue away from the office: Helen Ens and Erica Ens continued translating; Carole Grier began typing manuscripts; Henry Fast continued indexing the newspaper *Unterhaltungsblatt*; and Alf Redekopp migrated our finding aids into the Mennonite Archival Information Database (MAID). MAID itself underwent a huge shift with five new partners joining MAID and the migration of their finding aids to the MAID website, <https://archives.mhsc.ca/>.

Our grant application for the digitization of film and sound recordings was not approved, as the funder decided to direct money towards "projects that benefited vulnerable populations" during COVID-19. However, in mid-January, the application to the federal Young Canada Works program was completed, and, on April 30, we were notified that our application was successful. We were fortunate to hire Andrew Klassen Brown, who has previously worked at processing records at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. In addition to processing congregational records from home, Andrew has written Facebook posts and scanned the magazine *Intotemak*.

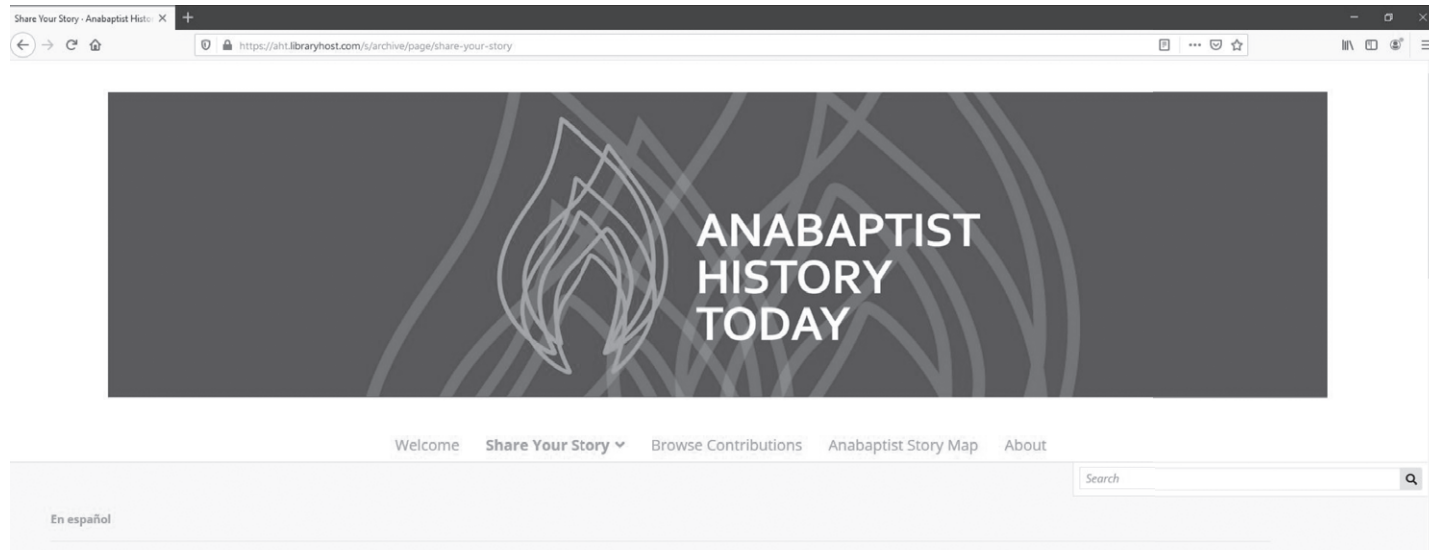
Travel has been severely impacted with the global lock down. Our friends at TourMagination, who specialize in Mennonite heritage tours, adjusted their plans and called together a dozen Mennonite archives and museums in North America, creating "The Anabaptist Story Lives on: Virtual Museum and Archive Tour." The Mennonite Heritage Archives

was the first "stop" on the tour and my thirty-minute presentation was viewed by over 270 screens. It was followed by a lively thirty-minute question and answer period. Response to the presentation has been very positive and can now be viewed on our website at <https://www.mharchives.ca/happenings/events/>.

I also participated in a book project, *Mennonite Village Photography: Views from Manitoba 1890–1940*. Over half of the photos in the book come from the Mennonite Heritage Archives and feature four photographers from the East and West Reserves. It and the accompanying exhibit were delayed, since the archives was closed, affecting last minute fact checking. The launch finally happened outdoors on July 23 at Altona's Gallery in the Park.

Another new initiative is our participation in the "Anabaptist History Today" website (<https://aht.libraryhost.com/s/archive/page/Welcome>). The website (see image below) is designed to collect stories related to COVID-19 and the remarkable historical, biological, and social events of our day. All Mennonites/Anabaptists in North America are encouraged to submit photos, video, poetry, essays, works of art, or personal reflections. Sixteen Mennonite historical agencies in Canada and the USA are collaborating on this project, which was launched at the end of July 2020.

Selenna and I are now back working in the archives full time. Unfortunately, our volunteers will not be coming to the office for the time being. While the archives has been negatively affected by COVID-19 and its ripple effects, work has continued and offered some unforeseen positive opportunities.



## Historical Commission Meets by Zoom to Deliberate and Grant Awards

by Jon Isaak

On June 12–13, 2020, the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission met for its annual meeting, this year via Zoom video conference, on account of the COVID pandemic. Like many, the Commission observed that the year 2020 is turning out to be apocalyptic in the biblical sense of “revealing” many things about our times, institutions, and social arrangements.

Among the items discussed at the meeting were reports from the four Mennonite Brethren (MB) archives associated with the Commission (Fresno, Hillsboro, Abbotsford, and Winnipeg), manuscript submissions for publication consideration, and research grant applications. The Commission was impressed with the quality of grant applications and was pleased to award financial support to three of them—one institution and two individuals. The projects were viewed by the Commission as increasing Anabaptist-Mennonite appreciation in MB congregations, not only in the US and Canada, but globally.



An Archival Development Grant of \$1,750 was awarded to the Marturía Centro de Investigación, a research centre within the Instituto Bíblico Asunción (Asunción, Paraguay). Marturía’s book project—**The Missional and Evangelistic Work of Paraguayan Mennonite Brethren Church Planting Teams**—attracted the Commission’s interest for its prospect of preserving and assessing the Paraguayan church planting efforts during the last 15 years. It is a project likely to prove instructive for the ongoing MB mission in Paraguay.



Jayaker Yennamalla

An MB Studies Project Grant of \$1,000 was awarded to Prof. Jayaker Yennamalla of the MB Centenary Bible College (Shamshabad, India). Jayaker’s research project—**The Life and Legacy of Local Workers of the MB Church in India (1899–2020)**—explores how local people embraced and promoted Christian education and literacy among disadvantaged populations. The Commission was drawn to the significance of this project, especially in these days of heightened awareness of racial discrimination.

A second MB Studies Project Grant of \$1,000 was awarded to Andrew Klassen Brown, an MA student at Canadian Mennonite University (Winnipeg, Canada). Andrew’s thesis project—**Peace in the End Times: Apocalypticism in Sixteenth-Century Anabaptist Peace Theology**—investigates the roots of Mennonite peace theology in the 16th



century by analyzing how the Anabaptists thought about the end of the world. The Commission was intrigued by the potential relevance for today, given the rise of apocalyptic concerns around infectious pandemics, global climate change, and security of resources.



Andrew Klassen Brown

Currently, the Commission funds six initiatives: an archival internship, Katie Funk Wiebe women’s studies research grants, MB studies project grants, J.B. Toews college scholarships, GAMEO stipends, and archival development grants. For details about these initiatives—and the news releases announcing past recipients—see the Commission’s website, <https://mbhistory.org/>.



Historical Commission members meet June 12–13, 2020, via Zoom video conference. Top row (l to r): Jon Isaak (executive secretary), Kevin Enns-Rempel, Don Isaac (chair), and Peggy Goertzen; middle row: Chris Koop, Patricia Janzen Loewen, Hannah Keeney, and J Janzen (vice chair); and bottom row: Julia Reimer, Valerie Rempel (recording secretary), and Richard Thiessen. Photo credit: Kevin Enns-Rempel.



## Green Farm in the West Reserve

(cont'd from p. 4)

she also had family; her brother Cornelius Nickel, having married a widow with children, was still living in Cavalier County.<sup>66</sup> Maria herself returned to her Walhalla farm, NW 5-162-56, and, in November 1894, she applied for a widow's pension to which she was entitled because of Heinrich's military service.<sup>67</sup> In June 1900, she began her naturalization process and filed her First Papers, signalling her intention to become a U.S. citizen.<sup>68</sup> This coincided with her making homestead entry for the North West Quarter of Section 27, Township 162, Range 56, West of the 5th Principal Meridian,<sup>69</sup> located about 6 miles south of Walhalla, for which she received patent in November 1905.<sup>70</sup>

Maria appears to have continued farming with hired help.<sup>71</sup> Some years after her death on July 26, 1919, the Administrator of Maria's estate, in October 1924, sold the NW 5-162-56 for \$1,600.<sup>72</sup> A June 1925 Final Decree of Distribution revealed only \$119 in cash plus the NW 27-162-56, but with the addresses of her heirs-at-law unknown, the cash was paid into the County Treasury for the land taxes as they became due.<sup>73</sup> However, in December 1930, the NW 27-162-56 was sold for taxes owing.<sup>74</sup>

Maria Siegmann (née Nickel) was buried next to her husband in Section E, Lot 17, at Hillside Cemetery in Walhalla.<sup>75</sup> Her grave is unmarked, but Heinrich is commemorated.<sup>76</sup>

HENRY WILLIAM SIEGMAN  
PVT 35 MASS INF  
1839–1894

And so it is that an old Civil War veteran and frontier soldier, and his Mennonite wife, are forever connected, albeit anonymously, to the school district known as Greenfarm in southern Manitoba.



**Commemorative marker of Greenfarm school district.** Photo credit: Bruce Wiebe.

Bruce Wiebe <fraunzwieb@hotmail.com> is retired and continues to research the Mennonite West Reserve of southern Manitoba and has written about Hutterite immigration to this province.

## Endnotes

1. Massachusetts, Index to Passenger Lists of Vessels arriving at Boston, Massachusetts, 1848–1891 (www.familysearch.org).

2. Ibid.

3. Such recruitment practices are noted in *History of the Thirty-Fifth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers, 1862–1865, with a Roster* (Boston: Mills, Knight & Co., 1884), 284, 290ff; and Eva Ester Szabo, “The Migration Factor in the American Civil War: The Impact of Voluntary Population Movements on the War Effort,” *American E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* 12/1 (Spring 2016).

4. Massachusetts, Index to Passenger Lists of Vessels arriving at Boston.

5. *History of the Thirty-Fifth Regiment*, 11. The recruitment, voyage of the Bellona, and enlistment are reported in the *Ohio Statesman*, Columbus Ohio, August 13, 1864, as taken from the *New York Evening Post*.

6. *History of the Thirty-Fifth Regiment*, 11.

7. United States Registers of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798–1914 (www.familysearch.org); and Captain J.N. Coe, “Twentieth Regiment of Infantry,” *The Army of the U.S. Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief* (New York: Maynard, Merrill & Co., 1896), 668. The additional letters recorded after “F” could suggest that he served in more than one Company during these 5 years.

8. William D Thomson, “History of Fort Pembina 1870–1895” (MA thesis, University of North Dakota, 1968), 47, Appendix A, 68.

9. Ibid., 59–61; *Manitoba Free Press*, June 28, 1877; *ibid.*, December 15, 1877, refers to officers of the 20th being well known in Emerson and Winnipeg; *ibid.*, March 14, 1874.

10. United States Registers of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798–1914.

11. Quebec Passenger Lists, *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch* (Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 1993), 318.

12. *1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve* (Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1998), 280.

13. Mennonite Heritage Archives (MHA), MHC646, Homestead File for SE 23-2-5 West.

14. MHA, West Reserve Gebietsamt Records.

15. *Emerson International*, January 16, 1879; *Ibid.*, November 4, 1880.

16. Ibid.

17. *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotian*, December 5, 1877, 1; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 15, 1877.

18. United States Census, 1880, Maverick County, Texas (www.familysearch.org).

19. *Emerson International*, January 16, 1879; *ibid.*, November 4, 1880.

20. Texas County Marriage Index 1837–1973 (www.familysearch.org). It should be noted that the name Maria is consistently used in all documents, while the name Henry appears in many, particularly the military records.

21. *Emerson International*, January 16, 1879; *ibid.*, November 4, 1880; *ibid.*, May 15, 1879, “John Klasson” (sic) was a Mennonite clerk at Nicholas Dure’s “The Emerson General Store.” This latter newspaper item is courtesy of Albert Siemens.

22. Ibid.

23. MHA, Vol. 1099, file 27, Rosenort Village papers, Befehlen Buch zur eingehende Papiere zum Jahr 1878.

24. United States Registers of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798–1914.

25. Evidently, while he was enroute to Canada, it was confusingly first reported that Siegmann was a suspect, but subsequently that he was the victim of a money theft when he stopped to buy a suit of clothes (*Daily Globe* [St. Paul, Minnesota], October 23 & 24, 1880).

26. *Emerson International*, November 4, 1880.

27. North Dakota Naturalization Records Index, North Dakota State University (NDSU) Archives, Pembina County, Vol. D-3, page 210.

28. United State Bureau of Land Management, Tract Books, Dakota Territory, Vol. 85 (www.familysearch.org).

29. Pembina County Courthouse, County Clerk/Recorder, \$350 Mortgage due November 1, 1888, was filed November 30, 1883.

30. United States Bureau of Land Management, Tract Books, Dakota Territory.

31. Dakota Territory 1885 Census Index, NDSU Archives, Pembina County.

32. Pembina County Courthouse, County Clerk/Recorder, Register of Deeds, Book O, page 277, in December 1886, notes Heinrich at Poplar River and Maria at Walhalla.

33. Siegmann was incorrectly recorded as age 42 (United States Registers of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798–1914).

34. The Army of the U.S. Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief, 671.

35. Pembina County Courthouse, County Clerk/Recorder, Register of Deeds, Book O, page 277.

36. Ibid., 300.

37. United States Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, Patents.

38. The Army of the U.S. Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief, 671.

39. United States Registers of Enlistments in the U.S. Army, 1798–1914.

40. United States General Index to Pension Files, 1861–1934 (www.familysearch.org).

41. North Dakota became a state in November 1889 when the Dakota Territory was divided.

42. MHC646, Homestead File for SE 23-2-5 West, July 1, 1887, Jacob Y. Shantz to Department of the Interior.

43. List of adherents prior to arrival of the 1878 immigrants. This list precedes the Reinlaender Mennoniten Gemeinde church register.

44. MHA, Vol. 715, file 2, page 59.

45. MHA, Gebietsamt, Gemeindebuch der Mennoniten Gemeinde zu Reinland 1880, 350; Gemeindebuch der Dorfschaften Schanzenfeld, Chortitz, Waldheim, Schoendorf, Blumstein, 110. Manitoba Vital Statistics does not record his birth.

46. MHA, Gebietsamt, Gemeindebuch der Mennoniten Gemeinde zu Reinland 1880, 350. Manitoba Vital Statistics does not record her birth and the possibility of her father having been an American soldier could not be determined.

47. Archives of Manitoba, GR2133, G7159, Township General Registers.

48. MHC644, Homestead file for NE 13-3-4W, Valentine Winkler to Dominion Lands Agent, December 9, 1890.

49. MHC644, Homestead file for NE 13-3-4W.

50. Siegmann consistently claimed residence since February 1890; but the 1890 R.M. of Rhineland Assessment Roll contradictorily records Cornelius Nickel both as a non-resident and details about him being present on this same property.

51. Hazel J. Loynes, Mennonite Settlements in North Dakota, Mennonites in Cavalier County, Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Vol. III, pages 324–326.



52. MHC644, Homestead file for NE 13-3-4W, December 3, 1890, Dominion Lands Agent to Siegmann; and December 16, 1890, Siegmann to Dominion Lands Agent. The first usage of the name “Greenfarm” that I have found appears in several letters written by adjacent landowner Jacob J. Wiens to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* between 1887 and 1890. See photo caption for the former Greenfarm schoolhouse on page 4. Note that the name is sometimes written as two words and other times as one word.

53. Ibid. November 29, 1890, Cornelius Nickel’s abandonment of the land, written in the German language.

54. Manitoba Property Registry, Abstract for NE 13-3-4W.

55. MHC644, Homestead File for NE 13-3-4W, January ?, 1890, Jacob Nickel to Dominion Lands Agent. This Jacob would appear to be Cornelius and Maria’s younger brother and he intended to make homestead entry if Siegmann was ineligible. Since this was a purchase, the Nickel family’s lack of finances suggests that this might have been Siegmann’s backup plan if he himself was unsuccessful.

56. MHC644, Homestead file for NE 13-3-4W.

57. Ibid.

58. The Army and Navy Hospital opened in 1887 (<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2236>).

59. *Morden Monitor*, September 24, 1890, newspaper item courtesy of Albert Siemens.

60. Census of Canada, 1891.

61. Manitoba Property Registry, Abstract for NE 13-3-4W.

62. Manitoba Probate Files, 1871–1930 ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)); in an affidavit, Maria affirmed that he had died at Township 3, Range 4; however, Manitoba Vital Statistics does not record his death.

63. Cemeteries of North Dakota, Vol. 22, Pembina County, Red River Genealogical Society Inc., Fargo, 1990, Walhalla Township, Hillside Cemetery, pages 28–29 ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)).

64. Manitoba Probate Files, 1871–1930; the Abstract for NE 13-3-4W indicates that Shore’s mortgage was discharged January 1896.

65. United States Census, 1900 ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)); the Census specifically asks, “Mother of how many children?” to which “0” is recorded.

66. United States Census, 1900, 1910, 1920 ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)).

67. United States General Index to Pension Files, 1861–1934.

68. North Dakota Naturalization Records Index, NDSU Archives, Cavalier County, Vol. D-4, page 291.

69. United States Bureau of Land Management, Tract Books, Dakota Territory, Vol. 85.

70. United States Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, Patents.

71. United States Census 1900 gives her occupation as farmer; United States Census 1910 records farmer, pensioner, as overseer.

72. Maria died intestate and there is no information as to whom these funds were disbursed (Pembina County Courthouse, County Clerk/Recorder, Register of Deeds, Book G-4, page 193, Book I-4, page 44).

73. Ibid., Book G-4, page 241; heirs-at-law listed were: Cornelius J Nickel, Sarah Nickel Wiens, Elizabeth Nickel Fehr, Anna Nickel Grimke, Margaret Nickel Giesbrecht, Helena Nickel Coop (sic), and Agnes Nickel Martens.

74. Ibid., Book S-4, page 599.

75. Cemeteries of North Dakota, Vol. 22, Pembina County, Red River Genealogical Society Inc., Fargo, 1990, Walhalla Township, Hillside Cemetery, pages 28–29 ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)).

76. Memorials in Walhalla Hillside Cemetery (<https://www.findagrave.com/>).

## Russian Mennonites and Dancing: Historical Pirouettes

by Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, Tyndale Seminary, Toronto

Do you dance? I don’t really, but my daughter has loved competitive dance over the years. Those of us with a Russian Mennonite heritage have been given a very dim view of dancing. Here is a short history.

When it comes to moral infractions, the diaries and chronicles of Mennonite ministers are our best sources. In 1797, in Tiegenhagen, West Prussia—around the time that hundreds of Mennonite families left Prussia for Russia—respected Frisian Elder Heinrich Donner noted that he would not baptize two young people because one played a violin at a wedding, and the sister to the bride danced to this music together with Lutherans.<sup>1</sup>

New disciplinary rules regarding music and dancing were confirmed by the congregation in 1805: “No Mennonite innkeeper shall allow music in his guesthouse.” And regarding dancing: “With a first offence, the person must come before the ministerial and apologize. The second time, they will be brought before the congregation. The third time, if there is no intention to amend behaviour, he will be excluded from the congregation.”<sup>2</sup> His Flemish colleague, Gerhard Wiebe, was no friend of dancing either. His diary mentions congregants “bartending at ‘the Kruge’ with music and all manner of wicked things,” leading an “immoral” lifestyle, and dancing in “the Lame Hand” pub.<sup>3</sup>

Ministers’ diaries from Russia mention dancing at weddings as a perpetual

problem. “Immorality seems to have the upper hand. Adultery, unethical behaviour, dances at weddings, and annual fairs—all this seems to be the order of the day. Separation from the congregation [excommunication] is supposed to control ethical behaviour. There is no thought of repentance and conversion. Little attention is paid to spiritual life. ... Why is this happening? Because we do not enforce our own regulations through church discipline.”<sup>4</sup>

The Mennonite colonies had taverns, and in the 1860s the Molotschna successfully petitioned the Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers to direct tavern owners to “ban playing music and dancing at taverns to avoid beatings and crimes.”<sup>5</sup>

The “enthusiastic wing” of the new Mennonite Brethren movement saw a lot of “holy” dancing in church. As one Brethren leader complained, “Becker does not regard it as sin when brothers and sisters [‘in the Lord’] dance a waltz [in a ‘worship service!’] till the sweat goes through their clothes! Brother, this foolishness is breaking my heart.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1869, Chortitza minister Jacob D. Epp was angry about dance rumours implicating him! “January 13: Isaac Friesen told me that Isaac Klassen was spreading rumours that a fiddle had been played and there had been dancing at a wedding at brother Diedrich’s place. I had supposedly defended these goings-on in a sermon. What lies!”<sup>7</sup>

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, youth dancing at weddings was a recurring matter of conflict in Russia: “Wedding-eve party games with ridiculous performances,”



Mennonite circle games (ca. 1930s) in Hague, Saskatchewan. The back of the photo notes the name “Tina Bergen.” Photo credit: MAID CA MHA 039-3.0

“dances,” and any social games with “the goal of mutual contact between the sexes” are “forms of entertainment that are inconsistent with holy living,” according to a decision of elders in 1884.<sup>8</sup> Their continual admonitions met with only limited success, as Jacob P. Janzen observed in his diaries in the early 1900s. “He [the minister] also asked us to conduct ourselves in such a way that the Lord Jesus could remain to the end of the celebrations. Nevertheless, in the evening some games were played.” Janzen records the same moralistic tone in two preachers at another wedding who “spoke so seriously and sternly to the congregation that I began to feel as if I was attending a funeral. It was as if I almost expected a funeral song at the casket after the sermon.”<sup>9</sup>

Minutes of the annual meeting of Mennonite elders in 1893 record their “deep sadness” with the moral level in the Forestry camps (Alternative Service), especially concerning after-hours music making. Elders “urgently advise” the young men to “avoid dance music altogether, which our congregations consider to be contrary to the Confession.” In 1895, elders—now clearly exasperated—requested that all donated instruments come with the proviso, “For music, with the exception of all dance music.”<sup>10</sup>

Things worsened when the German army entered Ukraine in 1918; they brought not only guns but also “tactless familiarity with the occupation army ... and moral surrender of our youth,” including beer-drinking and dancing to the music of the military band.<sup>11</sup>

In the last quarter of the 20th century in Canada and the U.S., attitudes began changing rapidly. In my own memory in the Niagara United Mennonite Church, sparks flew when a retired Prussian-Uruguayan elder danced with his granddaughter at her wedding. For Prussians, this was not unusual, but the congregation’s ministerial also included a 1920s retired Canadian lead minister, one retired Russian/Paraguayan elder, and a row of other ministers, each with strong opinions! In a 1989 survey of five North American Mennonite denominations, “9 per cent of respondents said they participated in social dancing regularly, and another 24 per cent participated occasionally. These are double the percentages of a similar 1972 survey. By 1999, the percentages would have continued to increase.”<sup>12</sup>

## Endnotes

1. Heinrich and Johann Donner, *Orlofferfelde Chronik*, transcribed by Werner Janzen, 2010, 54, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, Newton, <https://mla.bethelks.edu/Prussian%20Polish%20Mennonite%20sources/orlofferfeldechronik.html>.

2. Ibid., 65.

3. Gerhard Wiebe, “Verzeichniß der gehaltenen Predigten samt andern vorgefallenen Merkwürdigkeiten in der Gemeinde Gottes in Elbing und Ellerwald von Anno 1778 d. 1. Januar.” Transcriptions from the original by Willi Risto, <http://chort.square7.ch/Buch/Risto1.pdf>.

4. David Epp, *Diaries of David Epp: 1837–1843*, translated and edited by John B. Toews (Vancouver: Regent College, 2000), 165.

5. “Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers in South Russia,” Odessa Archives Fund 6, Inventory 5 (Part I), 189, 379, 1867, Mennonite Heritage Archives, Winnipeg, <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/archives/holdings/organizations/OdessaArchivesF6.htm>.

6. Peter M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia 1789–1910* (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), 435, <https://archive.org/details/TheMennoniteBrotherhoodInRussia17891910/>.

7. Jacob D. Epp, *A Mennonite in Russia: The Diaries of Jacob D. Epp, 1851–1880*, translated and edited by Harvey L. Dyck (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

8. Heinrich Ediger, ed., *Beschlüsse der von den geistlichen und anderen Vertretern der Mennonitengemeinden Rußlands abgehaltenen Konferenzen für die Jahre 1879 bis 1913* (Berdjansk: Ediger, 1914), 12 (Minutes 1884); 138 (Minutes 1910); cf. *ibid.*, 39 (Minutes 1890); Ministers are instructed instead to “recommend more library reading rooms, singing groups and the establishment of Christian youth groups, etc.,” <https://chort.square7.ch/Buch/MJ/MK1.pdf>.

9. Jacob P. Janzen, “Diary 1911–1919. English monthly summaries,” edited and translated by Katharina Wall Janzen. Jacob P. Janzen fonds, 1911–1946, vol. 2341, May 1912; April 1912, Mennonite Heritage Archives, Winnipeg.

10. Ediger, *Beschlüsse*, 53, 62, 87.

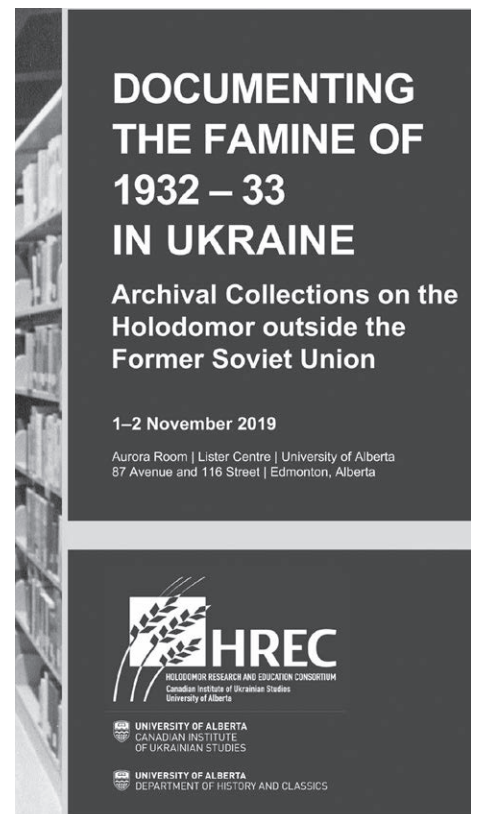
11. Janzen, “Diary 1911–1919,” August 31, 1918.

12. Ann Weber Becker, “Dance,” *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (1990), <https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Dance>.

## Documenting the Famine in Ukraine, 1932–33

by Colin P. Neufeldt, *Concordia University of Edmonton*

On November 1 & 2, 2019—before the COVID-19 pandemic engulfed our world and when social distancing was not a requirement for public gatherings—scholars from around the world gathered for a two-day conference at the University of Alberta in Edmonton to discuss some of the latest developments in research related to the Holodomor in Ukraine. Entitled “Documenting the Famine of 1932–33 in Ukraine: Archival Collections on the Holodomor Outside the Former Soviet Union,” the conference focused on archives and archival collections located



outside of the countries of the former Soviet Union containing materials related to collectivization and the Holodomor.

The key aims of the conference organizers—the Holodomor Research and Education Consortium (HREC), the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, and the University of Alberta—were twofold: to bring attention to lesser known and under-researched sources, and to encourage and stimulate publication of and further research into these important primary source materials.

Conference papers focused on a wide variety of topics, including the following: foreign government and diplomatic records located in archives in France, Germany, Japan, Romania, Moldova, England, the United States, and Canada; collections associated with Ukrainian immigrant and diaspora communities outside Ukraine; archival records of émigré minority communities (Germans, Mennonites, and Jews) as well as their social welfare, relief, and religious organizations in Europe and North America; eyewitness and survivor collections from the early Cold-War period; survivor testimonies in the archive of the U.S. Commission on the Ukraine Famine; efforts to develop online photo collections documenting the famine; memory recollections in East Ukrainian and Mennonite communities;



and eyewitness accounts in the Maniak Collection established in the 1980s.

Most of the conference participants had previously focused on the 1932–33 famine from a Ukrainian perspective, and so this conference provided them with opportunities to view the Holodomor from non-Ukrainian perspectives. My paper, for example, focused on the Mennonite Holodomor experience as documented in Mennonite archival collections in Canada and the United States, including the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada Archives; the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission; the Mennonite Heritage Archives; the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg; the Mennonite Central Committee Canada Archives; the Mennonite Archives of Ontario / Milton Good Library; the Archives of the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia; the Archives of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta; the Archives of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan; the Mennonite Archival Commons; the Mennonite Central Committee archives in Akron, Pennsylvania; the Bethel College Mennonite Library and Archives; the Mennonite Historical Library / Goshen College Archive; the Hiebert Library and Archives; the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Hillsboro; the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO); the Mennonite Archival Information Database (MAID); the Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry (GRanDMA); and Library and Archives Canada.

More specifically, my paper examined the importance of documents in *Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Zaporizhs'koi Oblasti* (State Archive of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast) in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine; the value of Soviet Mennonite letters in *Der Bote*, *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, *Zionsbote*, the Barga letter collection, and the B.H. Unruh reports and papers; the information provided in diaries, personal papers, and oral interviews of both Mennonite leaders in North America and Europe, as well as Mennonites who lived in Ukraine during the famine; the importance of records related to Mennonite and international relief organizations that assisted Soviet Mennonites; the value of Nazi records and perspectives dealing with the famine; the information available in photographic collections, online resources, genealogical

databases, and NKVD and KGB files; as well as the latest research presented in dissertations and theses analyzing the Mennonite experience. Finally, my paper outlined some of the limitations of these resources, the impact of the 1933–34 *chistki* (purges) on Soviet Mennonite communities, the repercussions of the rise of Hitler and subsequent anti-German discrimination of Soviet Mennonites, and the work that still needs to be done to facilitate more research on the Mennonite experience of the famine.

Conference organizers heralded the conference as a resounding success and plans are now underway to publish the conference proceedings and papers in an upcoming special issue of *East/West Journal of Ukrainian Studies*.

## Book Reviews

Doris Penner, *Circling the Globe: The Story of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference* (Steinbach, MB: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 2020), 255 pp.

Reviewed by Abe Dueck, Winnipeg

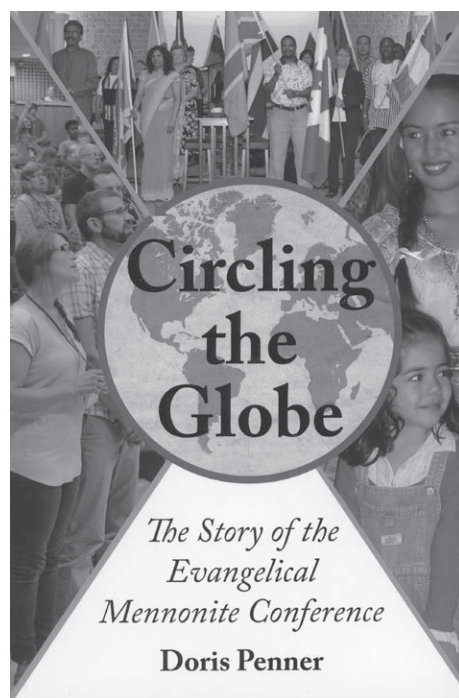
During the past fifty years or more, Mennonites have published a wealth of documentary sources and a series of histories, some regional or thematic in nature and many others focused on specific denominations. These have obviously been in constant need of updating and revision. The Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC, formerly the *Kleine Gemeinde*) is no exception. Between 1982 and 2000

Delbert Plett published seven volumes of material relating to the history of the *Kleine Gemeinde*. He described the period from 1824 to 1849 as the “Golden Years” of the church. For him the church at that time most fully reflected the vision of the early Anabaptists in the 16th century. He was highly critical of the Mennonite Brethren church that emerged in Russia in the 1860s and was particularly critical of Peter M. Friesen’s characterization of the *Kleine Gemeinde* (*The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, 1789–1910*).

The reader is not told why a new history was deemed necessary at this time. The last history of the EMC was written by Harvey Plett (*Seeking to be Faithful: The Story of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference*, 1996), almost 25 years ago. In the meantime, the EMC celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2012. A celebratory history might have been most timely for that occasion. However, the anniversary is hardly noted by Penner.

Doris Penner is not really concerned about the historiographic issues that scholars have debated in the past. Although, at various points, she makes references to the legalism, cultural narrowness, and divisiveness that characterized the church in the past, she is much more concerned about telling the story of positive developments and the growing mission emphasis of the church. Indeed, the EMC has experienced remarkable growth in recent years. Her story reflects her own personal involvement in missions in a number of countries around the world. Despite the growth of the denomination, however, the index of names is still primarily one of Dutch-Prussian origin.

The strength of the volume clearly lies in the wealth of detail it provides, especially in terms of the people that have served the church at home and abroad and the establishment of new churches in the last quarter century. A comprehensive name index is a valuable resource. A subject index would have made an excellent addition. There are seven appendices consisting of various documents, beginning with the Charter of Privileges of Catherine the Great (1788) and other documents that focus on the life and theology of the church, such as the EMC Statement of Faith (2017). Some of these can easily be found in other works, such as the history by Harvey Plett, and probably need not have been included here.



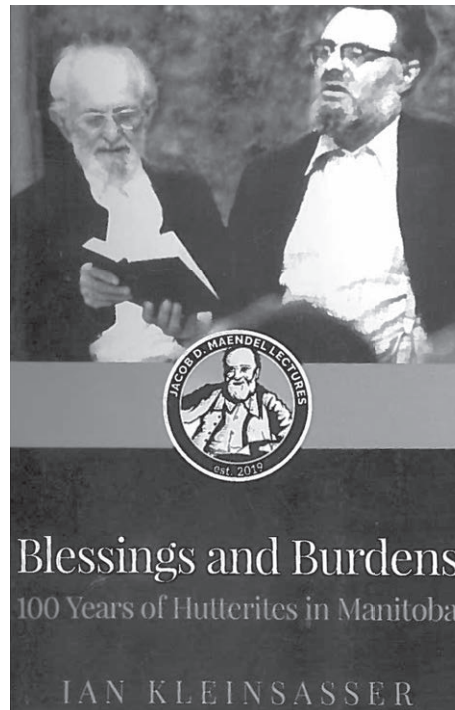
Layton Friesen, in his Foreword, points to three big questions that have permeated the EMC throughout its history. The first is the relationship between inner vitality (pietism?) and works or obedience. The second is “whether it is possible to be both mission-focused *and* non-conformed to the world.” The third is the question of leadership. These are questions that the EMC has grappled with more than some Mennonite denominations. Overall, the EMC has probably changed more fundamentally in the last two centuries than larger denominations like the Mennonite Church or the Mennonite Brethren Church. The change of name from the more derisive term *Kleine Gemeinde* to “Evangelical Mennonite Conference” not only reflects some of the changing cultural dynamics but also a shift in its theological identity. The impact of North American evangelicalism is pronounced and deserves fuller treatment.

Some of the themes addressed by Penner might have been addressed in separate chapters rather than scattered throughout the book. One of these is the theme of education. The attitude toward education and the role of educational institutions is a very significant factor in the development of religious denominations. Steinbach Bible College and Providence College and Seminary are cited as the most important educational institutions attended by EMC students. Other Mennonite colleges, such as Mennonite Brethren Bible College and Canadian Mennonite Bible College, are not mentioned. However, a fair number of EMC students did attend MBBC in the early decades and the EMC had a member on the board for some years. It has participated in other venues about the future of Mennonite education in Manitoba but has often appeared to have had an ambivalent attitude toward the larger Canadian Mennonite bodies. What were the factors that led to this ambivalence?

The book would have benefitted from the addition of tables of churches and memberships. The GAMEO article by Terry Smith and Henry Fast provides a number of statistics that could readily have been used. Smith gives a list of 63 churches that had been established by 2018 and a membership of 7,800 in 2011. The GAMEO article is not formally cited in the text. Indeed, Penner inserts very few endnotes and has a very slim bibliography. Eight full-page photos in glossy print are

included near the middle of the book and other photos are scattered throughout the book. Biographies of influential people and other materials are included at the end of most chapters.

*Abe Dueck is Academic Dean Emeritus at Canadian Mennonite University.*



Ian Kleinsasser, *Blessings and Burdens: 100 years of Hutterites in Manitoba* (MacGregor, MB: Hutterite Brethren Book Centre, 2019), 107 pp.

*Reviewed by Karl Koop, Winnipeg*

Hutterites have permanently lived in the province of Manitoba for 100 years. Ian Kleinsasser's recent publication captures the blessings and burdens of these years, but also endeavors to include analysis, critique, and even a vision for the future. The author is an independent scholar from the Crystal Spring Hutterite Community near St. Agathe, Manitoba. His work is based on lectures that he delivered at the inaugural Jacob D. Maendel Lectures, presented in June, 2019.

The first chapter of the book focusses on the period between 1918 and 1930. Kleinsasser examines the key factors that motivated Hutterites to leave South Dakota and move to Manitoba. He describes the settlement process, the government policies intended to discourage future Hutterite migrations into Canada, and the challenges that Hutterites faced in educating their young people. He also explores the early history of the Bruderhof and exposes some

of the disputes that took place between the Hutterite and Bruderhof communities.

In the second chapter, Kleinsasser gives attention to the years between 1930 and 1974. Readers learn about Hutterite experiences during the Great Depression and Second World War, and their struggles due to ongoing land restrictions. During this time, Hutterites faced challenges in education and again came into conflict with the Bruderhof communities that had been shaped by different cultural and spiritual impulses.

The final chapter of the book addresses a number of these themes again but also gives special attention to the church schism or break of 1992 that had a profound impact particularly among the Schmiedeleut communities. The author seeks to reveal the root causes of the conflict, noting, among other things, American and Canadian differences, ideological distinctions, and competing visions regarding leadership.

Overall, Kleinsasser provides an informative introduction to the Hutterite story in Manitoba. His attentiveness to broader social and political realities helpfully contextualizes the history. His writing is accessible, and his analyses and criticisms seek to be fair and balanced. The author's vision for the future may be of special interest to readers. Kleinsasser asserts that Hutterites should give more attention to their history and theology. He fears that fundamentalism and other contemporary movements are leading many Hutterites in the wrong direction. His hope is that through lectures, historical projects, and advances in education, Hutterites will come to “a new re-formation and rediscovery” of Hutterite faith and calling. He also makes a compelling argument for the importance of overcoming the conflicts of the past, emphasizing that a journey of healing is necessary and that it ought to be carried out with sensitivity and humility.

Such a generative imagination infused with a spirit of openness is a fitting vision for which the Jacob D. Maendel Lectures were intended. One can only hope that more Hutterite scholars will come forward to augment and further nuance this richly informative “first word” of the past 100 years.

*Karl Koop is professor of history and theology and directs the graduate program in theology and ministry at Canadian Mennonite University.*