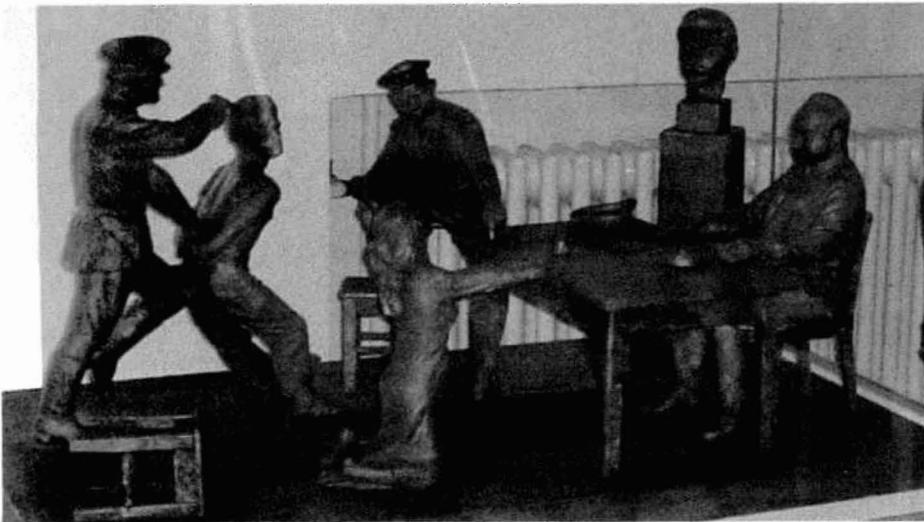


Mennonite Historian

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



This display, created by Jakob Wedel, shows three officers interrogating a Mennonite couple in the presence of a Stalin bust. Displayed at the Russian - German Museum in Detmold. Photo courtesy of Heinrich Loewen.

Mennonite Historical Interest in Germany

by Heinrich Loewen

After being one year in Canada, I am encouraged by the interest of Canadian Mennonites for the global Mennonite history. In order to contribute to this new view of our Mennonite heritage, I want to find ways of cooperation between European and North American historians. With this in mind, I visited some institutions in Germany in September 2003 to speak to different people who are collecting historical documents and/or doing research in the area of Mennonite history in Russia.

Mission Agency "Hilfskomitee Aquila"

This institution was founded in the beginning of the nineties in order to support mission and social activities in the area of the city Karaganda in Kazakhstan and in Siberia. This mission agency consists of and is supported by Russian-German immigrants who moved to Germany from Karaganda and surround-

ing areas. Volunteers who invest a lot of time and money in this ministry do most of the work. They have done very extensive work in reaching the people with the Gospel and helping them with their social needs.

In addition to this ministry, they are interested in collecting historical documents, doing research and publishing in the area of Mennonite Brethren history in Russia. So far they have published two books with very valuable materials such as photos and copies of original documents. The first book deals with the Mennonite Brethren Church and Baptists in Karaganda and covers the time from 1931 through 1946. The second volume covers the evangelical movement in Kazakhstan in the first half of the twentieth century. They would like to see the book in English. Additionally, they publish constantly in their news magazine

the results of their research. According to Lawrence Klippenstein, this magazine "is the most significant Mennonite journal bringing together primary sources, that we have in print today."

In regard to their archival collection, they have 18,500 photos on the computer. They hope to make them available on-line someday. It looks like that this collection will grow in the future. Their hardcopy holdings contain printed and handwritten books and materials, which were used by leaders and churches during the Soviet time. A study of these documents could show what kind of material these churches used and how it influenced their understanding of theology and practice in the Mennonite Brethren church. These holdings are not categorized yet. However, they are working on this.

Historical Commission of the Bund Taufgesinnter Gemeinden

I met with Nikolai Reimer who is the chair of this commission. This agency was founded in order to support the publication of historical books, which deal with the MB and Baptist history.

I spoke with Nikolai about the necessity of collecting information with the help of oral history. I tried to explain that there are still many older people in Germany who could be a very valuable source of historical information. In about one decade most of them will not be among us anymore. If we don't collect this kind of information, it will be lost forever. Nikolai is willing to do something about it if we could give them assistance. I talked with Hans Werner from the University of Winnipeg about opportunities in helping to train interviewers in Germany. He has done research for his dissertation with the help of this method. Because he dealt in his dissertation with the Russian-German immigrants in Germany, he has a lot of experience in interviewing Mennonites in Germany. It would be good to find sponsors for such a project.

Museum of the Russian-German Mennonites in Detmold

This museum was initiated by Otto Hertel about ten years ago and is placed at the "August-Hermann-Francke-Schule". This is the largest private high school in Germany and was founded by churches, which belong to the Bund Taufgesinnter Gemeinden. The museum has a collection of historical books, documents, photographs, and displays. Because of space limitations the museum is not able to make its whole collection accessible to the public. However, many schools freq-

(cont'd on p.2)

Historical Interests

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uently use the museum for educational purposes. Russian-German children as well as native German students have the opportunity to learn more about the Mennonite culture and history. The director of the museum is Katharina Neufeld who has done extensive research in the Russian archives for her Ph.D. studies at the University of New Samara. She has written an article about their collection and wants to keep us updated if she has new acquisitions. She is also willing to help us with the oral history project.

Verein zur Erforschung und Pflege des Kulturerbes des Russlanddeutschen Mennonitentums e.V.

This historical society was founded more than five years ago with the aim to study and to foster the cultural heritage of the Russian Mennonites in Germany. In the meantime, this society has published some books and initiated or supported symposiums. This year the leadership of the association moved from Gerhard Hildebrand and Herbert Wiens to Johannes Dyck and Katharina Neufeld. Johannes is active in organizing historical events. The participants of these events are ordinary people who are interested in history. They reach more than one thousand people at such occasions and make history more useful for the parish. I

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

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Subscription rates: \$11.00 per year, \$20.00 for two years, \$28.00 for three years. Individual subscriptions may be ordered from these addresses.

ISSN 07008066

talked with Johannes about cooperation with our North American Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission. I hope that this society can be a good vehicle for doing oral history among Russian-German Mennonites in Germany. An additional note: This society was planning to publish the biography of Benjamin H. Unruh written by his son Heinrich Unruh who was a member of the "Verein". Unfortunately Heinrich died a few months ago before the completion of his book. Relatives of Heinrich are planning to finish his work.

Mennonitische Umsiedlerbetreuung (Hans von Niessen)

I met with Hans in order to see what kind of historically valuable information he has. Hans worked for more than 25 years with Mennonites who immigrated to Germany from 1970 to the present. He has planted more Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Churches in Germany than anyone else. In all his years of working with the Mennonite immigrants, he kept a list of the Mennonites who immigrated to Germany since 1970. This list contains at the present time 111,742 names and is available as hardcopy or CD. For genealogy research this list is a very valuable source. In addition, Hans has all the correspondence and documents, which deal with the immigration of more than one hundred thousand Mennonites. His work can be compared in some way with that of B.H. Unruh. It would be very helpful if we could find someone to write a dissertation or at least a book on this work with the help of Hans' sources. The collection of Hans' archive contains another valuable source: The original (!) MCC-list of Mennonites who went from Russia via Germany to North or South America after World War II.

Mennonitische Forschungsstelle

The Mennonitische Forschungsstelle is the only professionally built and operated centre and archive with a very valuable collection. Here you will find collections of George K. Epp, Arnold Dyck, Richard Kornelsen (about Mennonite agriculture in Russia), Peter Braun, microfilms of documents from the St. Peterburg's archive (done by David Rempel) and Hermann Thiessen's genealogy research on Prussian Mennonites. It will be too much, to list the whole collection. Gary J. Waltner, the director of the Centre, promised to write an article about their collection for the *Mennonite Historian*. He is also willing to write reviews of new German books related to Mennonite

history. Because Gary is operating a Mennonite bookstore, the readers of the MH would be able to order the reviewed books through him.

Missions Agency "Friedensbote"

This organization came into existence after a split from the missions agency "Friedensstimme" which represents the Russian Baptist Underground Church in Germany. In spite of the split from the Russian Baptist Underground Church, the representatives of this organization sympathize very much with the suffering church in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). They have collected some valuable documents from the time of persecution of Christians in the Soviet period. In addition, they have published some books, which deal with the history of the Evangelical churches in the FSU. Jakob Janzen who is in charge of their publishing house is very knowledgeable in regards to the history of the persecuted church during the Soviet era. He is willing to serve as an interview partner for historians who are interested in the relationship between the Soviet Government and the Underground Church.

Missions Agency "Novye Nivy"

This organization is lead by Jakob Loewen the founder and first executive director of missions agency "Friedensstimme". Similar to "Fiedensbote", this institution was initiated because of a split from "Friedensstimme". Because of his radio/TV ministry and his publications, Jakob is very popular in Russia. He had the opportunity to preach in the Kremlin and publishes articles in the largest Russian newspaper "Trud" with a circulation of some millions. Because of his popularity he has very good connections to the media and people who have access to archives in Russia. He is a very good friend of a Russian evangelical journalist Benjamin Chorev who has an extensive collection of valuable sources from the Russian archives. The material Benjamin has collected deals with the relationship between the Soviet State and the church. He could be a big help to historians interested in the subject.

Other Sources

I had a meeting with Horst Gerlach who is a retired history teacher and an active writer of Mennonite history. His last publications dealt with the Russian Mennonites and were very well received by the Russian German Mennonites. His

(cont'd on p. 6)

Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

Queries



Wolfe and Fehr (Affair?) – Does anyone recognized this photograph -- specifically the child and young lady? The photo was taken in the early 1930s. The man is Jacob Wolfe (1908-1963) who married Elizabeth Wall (1907-1996) (see Reinländer Gemeinde Buch 66-3) in 1935. It is believed that this child may be a half-brother to the five children of Jacob and Elizabeth Wolfe. Who is the lady? Was it a Nettie Fehr? Or did Wolfe have an affair (pre-marital)? Contact: Edna Legere in northern B.C. via e-mail at: vinneddy@bcgroup.net

Giesbrecht -- I am looking for information on Rev. Isaak B. Giesbrecht (Feb. 8, 1847-Dec. 18, 1926) especially regarding his burial site, and on two of his children, namely Jacob and Elizabeth. Please contact Francis A. Dyck, 17-200 Ronald St., Winnipeg, MB R3J 3J3 or 204-897-1031.

Recent Books

Agatha C. Enns Ratzlaff. *Our Koslowsky Family History* (Abbotsford, B.C., Private Publication) 268 pp.

This book is a family history of our earliest known Koslowsky ancestor, David Koslowsky (1769-1846), born in Zeyer, West Prussia, who emigrated from the Danzig area on foot to Russia in 1803;

and his wife Anna Willms (1792-1846), born in Einlage, Russia. The book is a largely-expanded revision of the 1979 register of The Koslowsky Family, 1769-1979 by the same author. This book begins with a look at the origin of the family name Koslowsky, continues with an account of life in Einlage, the home of our Koslowsky ancestors for many generations, and then provides genealogical information on the families of five of the seven children: David D. Koslowsky (b. 1812), Anna D. Koslowsky (b. 1822) who married Johann Rempel, Johann D. Koslowsky (b. 1827), Jakob D. Koslowsky (b. 1831), and Maria D. Koslowsky (b. 1833) who married Klaas Kroeker. The book includes many brief profiles of individual members, 120 photographs, several maps, other related materials, and an index of names. Contact: Agatha C. Enns Ratzlaff, 31861 Beech Avenue, Abbotsford, B.C. V2T 1G8, or e-mail: ace33@shaw.ca.

Cornelius Lorne Dick. *In the Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Story of Peter P. and Margareta Dick* (Abbotsford, BC: Private Publication, 2003) 168 pp.

Part one of this book contains a biography of the author's parents, Peter and Margareta (Dueck) Dick. Peter P. Dick was born in 1898 in Alexanderfeld, Sagradovka and died in 1990 in Clearbrook, BC. His wife Margareta Harder was born in 1904 in Nikolaiheld, Caucaus, Russia and died in 1998 in Clearbrook. They were married in Schoensee in the Barnaul Colony. A key chapter in this section is the account of the emigration experience via Moscow in 1929, to Riga, Latvia, then spending 9 months in the Free City of Danzig and eventually arriving in Canada in February 1931. Subsequent chapters describe their life in Rosemary, Alberta and then British Columbia. Part two contains brief accounts of the lives of each of their seven children. There are numerous photographs, some maps and appendixes. Contact: C.L. Dick, 32777 Chilcotin Dr., Abbotsford, BC V2T 4W5.

Gerry Thierstein. *Thierstein Family from Bowil, Switzerland 1526-2003* (Fort Collins, CO: Private Publication, 2003) 71 pp.

This edition of the Thierstein family was published as an update to the book *The Theirsteins Switzerland and America* published in 1985. This book begins with the ancestral charts for Samuel Thierstein (1840-1909) and his wife Katharina Mosimann (1838-1914), both born in Switzerland and who immigrated in 1883, and died in Kansas. It continues with a two page outline of the family information about the siblings and children of Katharina Mosimann, starting with her parents Niklaus Mosimann (1797-1863) and Katharina Zaugg (1797-1894). The largest section of the book is denoted to listing the Thierstein descendants beginning with Michel Thierstein (1526). There is also an index at the end. Contact: Gerry Thierstein, 2525 Baxter Pl., Fort Collins, CO 80526-5360.

Arthur B. Hook. *Nick & Helen Friesen / Hooock Story* (Langley, BC: Private Publication, 2003) 102 pp.

This book was written for the descendants of Nicolai Hooock (1908-1978) and his wife Helena Friesen (1912-) by their son, Arthur Hook (1939-). Nicolai Hooock was born in Alexandrovsk (Zaporozhye), Ukraine. After the Great War around 1918 or 1919, his family was traded to Germany in exchange for Russian prisoners of war. They lived in refugee quarters in Elbing, Prussia until 1922 when they immigrated to Canada where the family lived in Saskatchewan for about a decade. In 1937 Nick married Helen Friesen in Vancouver. She was born in Sagradovka, Ukraine and had come to Canada with her parents in 1923. The book includes several family group sheets, ancestry charts, family stories and history, numerous photographs and sketches showing the location of specific buildings and places of interest from the various communities in which the family lived. Contact: Arthur Hooock, 57aa-247A Street, Langley, BC V2Z 1H2.

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



MHC News

The Heritage Centre hosted the meetings of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada on December 5 and 6 2003. This included the editorial committee of the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia On-line Project and the annual general meeting.

The Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia On-line managing editor Sam Steiner reported that the site has now had over 500,000 unique visitors since statistics began to be kept in April 2000. Another landmark accomplishment was that the site is now averaging 1000 visitors per day. The Mennonite Heritage Centre has supported this project this year through a \$500 contribution as well as the volunteer involvement of Alf Redekopp on the editorial committee.

In other news from the Centre, support for the installation of a mobile, compact shelving system has been received from the following organizations: Canadian Council of Archives, The Winnipeg Foundation, Mennonite Foundation of Canada, and The Thomas Sill Foundation. Just over 60% of the required funds have been raised. An amount of \$20,000 is still needed for this project. *AR*



Peter Dueck, CO Project researcher

CO Web Project

Peter Dueck joined our staff in October to research and provide content for a web site featuring conscientious objectors (COs) in World War Two. The site will include over 150 pages of stories, photographs, documents, newspaper clippings, audio interviews and film footage. It is written at a grade six reading level and there will be a section of lesson ideas for teachers to use in the classroom. Peter has uncovered many interesting stories and documents. The site will highlight the contributions of Canada's COs and encourage people to think about peace in their own lives. A launch date is yet to be announced.

Dueck says reading and researching the stories of these COs has impacted him and forced him to think about some of his beliefs. He says it is interesting to see the faith of these people and how that was applied to practical service. He says he has enjoyed the freedom to research and write, creating material that will impact a younger generation.

Creating a web site has involved many people – in our case it included a web architect, a graphic designer, a communications expert, educational and historical consultants, translators, and digitization technicians, many of them contributing as volunteers. If you would like to donate additional material please contact us. The entire budget for this project was just over \$18,000, of which \$9,000 was received from the Department of Canadian Heritage through the Canadian Council of Archives. *CDS*

The Financial Appeal

With one eye on January 31, our fiscal year end, and the other on the bottom line, the MHC continues to appeal for financial support. The MHC needs to raise approximately \$65,000 annually through designated donations and self-generated income toward its annual operating budget of approximately \$105,000. As of the end of November, we still need approximately \$20,000 to meet our current budget needs. Some of this revenue will come through book sales and other fees for services, but we really depend on the generous gifts of those who know about our ministry.

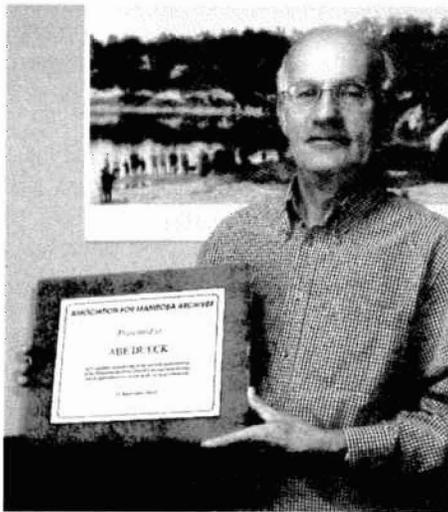
In addition to our general operational needs which keep the doors open to researchers, we invite financial contributions toward the following projects:

- **developing a website** which will honour the contributions of the Canadian conscientious objectors (COs) during the Second World War and promote the way of peace for our world today. The site will be a creative interactive exhibit using archival sources and aimed at children (Gr. 6-12) with teacher's resources.
- **acquiring archival records** on microfilm from the Odessa Regional State Archives in a collaborative project with other North American Mennonite Archives. Many North American Mennonites will for the first time be able to look at records previously not accessible.
- **upgrading our vault** storage capacity through the purchase and installation of a mobile shelving system. The current space shortage for storing important historical documents is putting some collections at risk of not being saved.

Please consider making a financial contribution to our general operating needs and these additional projects.

While we know that we are serving those who recognize the value of history and heritage, we also believe that future generations will benefit from our faithful recording, preserving and telling of the story. Let us continue to work together to extend this vision.

AR



Abe Dueck receives AMA Award of Recognition

The Association for Manitoba Archives (AMA) awarded Abe Dueck with the Award of Recognition at their Annual General Meeting on September 25, "...in recognition of the leadership in the use and understanding of the Mennonite Brethren Church's documentary heritage and in appreciation for service to the archival community". The award is given to individuals who have made a significant contribution to the development of archives in Manitoba.

Abe Dueck was the director of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, located in Winnipeg, for twelve years and since 1980 has been an active member of the Historical Committee, which gives overall direction to the Centre. While at the helm of the Centre, Dueck used the archival documents to examine, interpret, and tell the story of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada. With education in church ministry, teaching, and reformation history Dueck is a sought after teacher, lecturer, and consultant in the community. In addition to his post at the archives, he has been a long-standing board member of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, the bi-national Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission, and board member of the AMA. Dueck has published a number of books and plans to continue with selective research projects during his retirement.

CDS

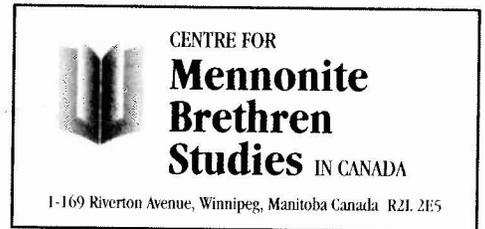
Katie Peters: A Remarkable Woman

Approximately 18 years ago, Katie Peters donated a large collection of materials, mostly relating to genealogy, to the Centre for MB Studies. At that time the *Mennonite Historian* published a fairly lengthy article about Ms. Peters and the nature of the collection (Ken Reddig, "Genealogy: A Service to God's Glory", *Mennonite Historian*, XII, 1, March 1986). Her collection then consisted of approximately 600 binders of which over 200 were family genealogies, approximately 66,000 index cards of family names, and many file folders with collected information on various topics. Most of the collection was donated to the Centre at that time, although Ms. Peters continued to work on collecting information at a reduced pace—indeed, failing health was the primary reason why she chose to donate it at that time.

Now, many years later at age 91, Ms. Peters has still been collecting information and smaller amounts have been forwarded to the Centre from time to time. She now lives in a suite in Donwood Manor and still manages to do much of her own cooking and engages in other activities. At one point it seemed that her eye sight would fail her completely, but an operation has improved her sight again. Her lively interest in history and the church is still very evident to those who visit her. Recently Heinrich Loewen and Conrad Stoesz visited her and still found her to be a remarkably engaging woman. AD



Heinrich Loewen, Katie Peters and Conrad Stoesz, November 2003.



New Web Site Launched

The Centre has revamped its website www.mbconf.ca/mbstudies. In addition to finding aids to their vast collection of personal papers and Mennonite Brethren Conference materials, the site now also includes a feature photo and feature article. These will change every month. The photos are chosen from a stock of over 17,000 and will include a description and links for more information. The articles will be a variety of inspirational and news reports. Initially the popular *Profiles of Mennonite Faith* series will be used, which highlight the struggles and faithfulness of Mennonite people of the past.

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies is operated by the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches with a mandate to collect materials relating to the Mennonite Brethren experience, especially in Canada. The Centre has a wide variety of personal collections, conference materials, congregational records and genealogical materials as well as a historical library. The Centre's staff seeks to preserve the story of God's interaction with a people who strive to be faithful. CDS

Historical Interests

(cont'd from p. 2)

book *Die Russlandmennoniten* was very successful. He is a valuable partner for those interested in Russian German history.

I didn't have the opportunity to meet Viktor Fast who has published the Russian book about the Mennonites in Karaganda, Kazakhstan. He was in Russia while I visited Germany. Viktor has done an extensive work of collecting information from archives in Kazakhstan.

Another valuable person for historians is Sergei Sannikov. He is the founder and former president of the Odessa Theological Seminary. At the present time he is the executive director of the European-Asian Accreditation Agency of Theological Schools. Sergei collects documents from archives in Russia and the Ukraine and publishes them. He has written some books on Russian Evangelical Church History.

Book Reviews

(cont'd from p. 8)

was used to send relief parcels to Russia.

In the different provinces, women addressed a variety of needs. They sewed items for the Toronto Mission, clothes for distribution in Busby, Montana and collected clothes for orphanages in India and China. They donated canned fruits and vegetables to Bible schools, the Girl's Home in Vancouver and sent funds to purchase and build Camp Squeah. During World War I the Red Cross requested knitted and sewn clothing for those serving overseas. The women also added to their work making quilts and blankets for Mennonite Central Committee. Canadian Mennonite Bible College was a regular recipient of a variety of gifts. Those who could not sew gave funds.

Several groups included young girls who were taught sewing skills. The Junior Charity Circle, organized with a membership of thirty in Waterloo, Ontario nearly a century ago may have been the first girls group in a Canadian Mennonite church. In 1922 the first prayer booklet was prepared with 20 pages of information for prayer.

Names of the groups indicate their purpose. Mary-Martha, Tabea, Naomi Ruth, Lydia, Dorcas, *Missionsverein* and so on. Later names such as *Koinonia* and Women's Auxiliary reflected the changing focus of their meetings. Many

groups included more Bible studies and discussion of current issues. Missionary speakers were welcomed and provided project suggestions.

The author has consulted annual reports, minutes and conference programs in her research and includes a seemingly exhaustive amount of detail, quoting facts and figures which will make this history a very helpful resource for the future. Included also are excerpts of addresses given over the years. One chapter contains biographies of the earliest nine women in leadership.

Nearly 100 pages of appendices include lists of women's organizations in each province, conference and retreat themes, questionnaires and lists of missionaries supported by Women in Mission. Also included is the attendance and amount of donations at annual conferences.

Patkau's book carefully chronicles the measurable contributions of women of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. Not included are countless hours given to serving meals at weddings, funerals, church events, visiting the sick or volunteering at Mennonite Central Committee Thrift Stores. Much of the work of Women In Mission cannot be reduced to one volume, as Patkau acknowledges in her preface, but her book is an important recognition of the work of Canadian Conference women. Ministries performed by small groups in church basements out of love for their Lord and commitment to faithfulness.

Ray Dirks. *In God's Image: A Global Anabaptist Family* (Waterloo, ON and Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, in cooperation with Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery and Mennonite World Conference, 2003), 143 pp.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

This very-carefully edited and strikingly-illustrated volume, brought together by the curator of Winnipeg's unique Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery is one which might well be dubbed "the Mennonite book of the year". Its core is the remarkable collection of colour photos which depict multi-aspects of Mennonite communities as they live, work and worship in 17 out of the 53 different countries in which Mennonite World Conference (MWC) membership groups are represented. The countries featured here are: Brazil, Canada, Cuba,

Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Netherlands, Paraguay, Switzerland, Taiwan, United States, Uruguay, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Since Canada and the USA are only two of the seventeen, North Americans will find themselves among a lot of "foreigners" here, except they are not that at all. They are all indeed integral parts, equally, of this large Mennonite "global family", one million or so strong, who were represented at MWC in Bulawayo at the sessions last summer. That members of North American Mennonite congregations of MWC make up 25% of the total MWC membership, yet live in countries which hold ca 90% of the world's wealth, gives food for thought in sharing that remains a challenge especially in our time.

For those who have not been able to get to any MWC sessions ever, this book offers an indispensable "next best" if you like, to have the personal experience of being a living part of this most colourful and dynamic Christian community. You really must obtain a copy.

The maps for each country, and the brief historical/cultural introductions of all the included areas provide excellent contextual aids. to make the "trip" to each country in turn -- seventeen in all. It's the people you meet - obviously a passion for the author that form the power of the pictures, but taken in their home settings where they must be understood, and where the wonder of their coming into the family remains rooted as a truly global community. The graphic membership map and related data of MWC bodies (which seem to need alphabetical arrangement for easy reference), highlight this aspect of the volume.

The book is a most worthy tribute to the overall program of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, as well as to the publishers and the printers (Friesens of Altona).

For further information on *In God's Image* you may contact the MHC Gallery at (204) 888 6781, or visiting the Gallery during regular working hours at 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard in Winnipeg any time you are in town.

Book Note

M.J. Heisey's *Peace and Persistence: Tracing the Brethren in Christ Peace Witness through Three Generations*

(Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2003) 280p. is a study of one Anabaptist group struggling to practice their peace commitments. In the first half of the 20th century, American society mobilized for the three great wars: World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. During this tumultuous period the Brethren in Christ joined other pacifists in opposing participation in the mobilizations. Like the Amish, Mennonites, and Church of the Brethren – other groups descended from sixteenth-century European Anabaptists – the Brethren in Christ held nonresistant pacifism as a fundamental aspect of their identity. They carried out their peace witness, however, not as an isolated community but as one integrated economically, technologically, and culturally into American society. *Peace and Persistence* presents a wealth of material about this small, little-known religious group.

Author M. J. Heisey received her Ph.D. in history from Syracuse University. She is presently assistant professor of history at State University of New York at Potsdam and has published in the areas of peace, gender, and religion.

Burwalde District Celebrates 115 years

The theme for the afternoon for the 115th anniversary of the Burwalde School district was "To God be the Glory". On Sunday, September 21 close to 200 people gathered at the Winkler Bible Camp to celebrate. There were people from BC, Ontario, Alberta and even from the US. Arnie Neufeld gave a short history of the beginning of the MB Church of Canada which began the same year. In the absence of Isaac Froese, who suffered a stroke 10 days prior to the event, Marjorie Hildebrand, another committee member took over the chair position. She gave tribute to Burwalde pioneers after which a candle lighting ceremony was observed in memory of the 89 loved ones once connected with the district. These passed away since 1988, when Burwalde celebrated its centennial. Dorothy Dyck, a former teacher, led the group in some old favorites hymns. Eight short tributes were given by descendants of long-time residents of Burwalde. Door prizes gave special interest as all items were made by people who were

connected with Burwalde. The old school bell called everyone's attention each time numbers were drawn for prizes.

Many former residents brought memorabilia to jog memories of the past. The large camp dining hall buzzed with conversation during the meal served by a very capable food committee.

There is a lot of material available to write a history of Burwalde. It needs to be organized and put into book form. A committee has been working to make this happen. Some of the material was on display at the gathering and interest in a book seemed to be high.

For more information contact: Majorie Hildebrand, 204-325-8644.

Neubergthal National Historic Site: An Update Report

by Lawrence Klippenstein

Sometime in 1990, I believe it was, I took part in a gathering at Neubergthal, southeast of Altona, Manitoba, to learn about the designation of "national historic site" for the village. That choice, I discovered, had been made the year before by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. It meant that the community was being recognized formally, and nationally, as a good example of a distinctive settlement of western Canada as being a "Mennonite street village".

Active research and planning for development, begun almost immediately, took a leap forward in 1996-1997 when Parks Canada appointed Frieda Esau Klippenstein to serve as liaison person for Parks Canada and the local community. Among other things Frieda helped to devise a research and planning strategy toward a future cost sharing program. Before long she also brought together a good deal of research material in a report titled **A Cultural Landscape History: Neubergthal National Historic Site: A Mennonite Street Village on the Canadian Prairie** which Parks Canada published in 1997.

Heritage preservation was now the central theme for a planning and steering committee which came into being also. About then Ray Hamm began to publish a local newsletter called *Neubergthal Notes*.

Special ceremonies to mark the ongoing development of the site as a national spot of significance took place at a home-coming of the community on July 1, 2000.

At that occasion Ms. Dawn Bronson spoke on behalf of Parks Canada, and William Neville, Manitoba representative on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada pointed out that his board serves as an advisory group for Parks Canada on matters intended to ensure that people, places and events of historical significance for the nation were duly noted and recognized. A special plaque had been prepared for the occasion. It has since been posted as a permanent public marker of site recognition in the community.

At a recent Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society local history workshop held in the village community hall participants were updated on recent developments in the preservation program of the local community. Several issues of a second series of the newsletter were distributed. Members of the workshop toured through a now more adequately funded house-barn renovation project not far from the hall. Special student groups were hosted by the heritage board throughout the summer. Neubergthal was also the focal point of a very well-attended drama presentation written by Wilmer Penner of Steinbach, with local direction under Rose Hildebrand of Altona.

All current work is presently under the direction of a seven-person board which includes: Margruite Krahn (chair), Karen Martens (vice-chair), Teresa Hamm (treasurer), Wendy Friesen (secretary) and members-at-large Frieda Esau Klippenstein, Rose Hildebrand and John Giesbrecht. Persons seeking further information on Neubergthal heritage projects may email krahnp@borderland.ca or call (204) 324 1567.

Book Wanted

The Museum of the Russian-German Mennonites in Detmold is looking for a copy of *Molotschnaer Mennoniten* by Franz Isaac, published by H.J. Braun, Halbstadt, Taurien in 1908. If you own a copy in German which you are willing to sell or donate please contact: Heinrich Loewen (hloewen@mbconf.ca or phone 204-669-6575)

Book Reviews

T.D. Regehr. *Faith, Life and Witness in the Northwest, 1903-2003 Centennial History of the Northwest Mennonite Conference* (Waterloo, ON: Pandora Press, 2003) 524 p.

Reviewed by Paul Friesen, Head Librarian, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Ted Regehr indicates in the introduction to his history of the Northwest Mennonite Conference (NWC) that he did not know much about the conference when he was invited to write its history by the Historical Commission. When his research and writing was done, however, he had completed a substantive (524 pp.), detailed account of this conference which over its hundred year history has included congregations and/or church plants in Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Manitoba, Montana and Alaska. For his research Regehr was able to use primary documents collected by the NWC Historian as well as information and documentation provided by the Historical Commission of the conference.

This treatment of the history of the Northwest Mennonite Conference is chronological, with each of the segments developed thematically. The pioneering work of establishing the first congregations and the conference, building the conference through adding congregations in communities where Mennonites settled in the Northwest, living as citizens in a country at war, attempting to survive during the Depression and coping with the vicissitudes of an agricultural economy, providing religious education for young people, the development and impact (long-term) of the winter bible schools which flourished in the 1930s and 40s, embarking on mission and voluntary service work in communities lacking a church presence, adapting church and conference leadership and governance to new realities, establishing an urban church presence and serving immigrants from Latin America and Asia, the rural-urban dynamic, maintaining an identity in a time of transition and relating to the broader Mennonite community, are some of the themes that are elaborated.

The theme that permeates the entire history is non-conformity, whether social, cultural, political, economic, or

theological. Non-conformity remains a characteristic of the NWC to this day. The Northwest Mennonite Conference has been at the geographical fringe of the Mennonite constituency to which it related since its inception. Now, even though the geographical considerations have changed with the formation of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, the Northwest Mennonite Conference has chosen to remain separate.

Regehr has done a good job of placing particularly the early development and history of the Northwest Mennonite Conference within its broader context. This is one of the benefits of having one who knows the history of the settlement of the Canadian west, the history of the railroads and the development of the agricultural economy, write a conference history. He has also made every effort to include the contribution of women, even though the Northwest Mennonite Conference was, and continues to be, shaped largely by men. Women still only comprised 10% of the delegate body to the 2003 conference sessions of the NWC in March 2003 (photo p. 447). Undoubtedly one of Regehr's biggest challenges was to write the history of the last decade or so of the Northwest Mennonite Conference. The book concludes with a "2003 Postscript" that provides a helpful description of the current situation of this conference in transition. Numerous photographs are included, although some are of rather poor quality and others are quite small; as are maps, showing the location of congregations, church plants, mission stations and voluntary service locations, and even a few cartoons. References to the source material used are extensive and a detailed index is included.

Regehr's history of the Northwest Mennonite Conference is sympathetic in tone. While he seeks to understand the faith, life and witness of this small Mennonite conference and documents its many accomplishments, he does include some of the shortcomings, disappointments and negative experiences of individuals, congregations and the conference.

By the end of the book, one feels that one knows more about the newer congregations in the conference than one does about the founding congregations and those that joined in the early years. While Regehr states at the outset that this is a history of the conference and not of

each congregation and that short congregational and biographical profiles will be provided as an addendum to this book and in Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, one still wonders if there could not have been a way to include more current material about the older congregations in the conference. The Northwest Mennonite Conference is after all a conference of congregations.

This history will serve the Northwest Mennonite Conference and its members well as they learn from the past and move into the future. At the same time it will provide a valuable resource to others who are interested in the history of Mennonites in Canada.

Esther Patkau, *Canadian Women in Mission 1895-1952-2002* (Saskatoon, SK: Private Publication, 2002), 368 pp. photos, appendices.

Reviewed by LaVerna Klippenstein of Winnipeg.

This history of the Canadian Women in Mission is a comprehensive compilation of the ministries and meetings of women's groups who began as sewing circles more than a century ago. Increasingly they met also for spiritual encouragement and fellowship, and found ways to raise significant funds for mission and relief programs.

In 1952 the women's groups of five provinces organized under the umbrella of the Canadian Women's Mission Conference in order to broaden their ministry and increase support of larger projects.

The earliest *Nähverein* in Canada was likely organized in 1895 or 1896 in Gretna, Manitoba. In Saskatchewan the Rosthern *Missionsverein* began in 1907. These groups, like other early sewing circles met to serve those nearby and abroad. They were also a place of prayer for missionaries.

In the early years every penny counted. The author has included examples of how women with few funds managed to make impressive numbers of articles from remnants for their annual mission sales. In 1929 the Yarrow Maria Martha Society sent two dollars to the T. Eaton Company and requested the maximum amount of material that could buy. Eaton's generously sent them cloth worth about ten dollars. Several months later the auction brought in \$140.00. Most of it

(cont'd on p. 6)