

# Mennonite Historian

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



**Interior view of the Chortitza Mennonite Church taken in 1930 by artist Jacob Sudermann (1888-1937). The construction of this two storey structure dates back to 1835. In 1935 the Soviets closed this house of worship and the building was used as a theatre. Photo: Courtesy of Werner Toews, Winnipeg, Manitoba)**

## The Forgotten Village of Neubergthal (Russia)

by Bruce Wiebe

I first encountered the village of Neubergthal, Russia in the story of my great-grandmothers' life as recorded by her son, William Miller. Great-grandmother, Margaretha Funk, "was baptized 1874 in the village Hamburg N. 3, Pluhowka by Bishop Gerhard Wiebe of the Old Colony Church. She got married to David Derksen, son of Jacob Derksen on Nov. 11, 1874 in the village Bergthal N. 4, Pluhowka in the home of her parents Franz Funks."

Wanting to know more, I consulted the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* but found no reference to this Neubergthal. Even a check under "Nepluyevka Colony" was of little help other than to verify that the colony had existed and where it was located. It read, "... a Mennonite settle-

ment located in the province of Ekaterinoslav, Ukraine, Russia, established in 1870, consisted of two villages, Steinau and Blumenfeld, consisting of 10,800 acres. The land was owned by the Nobleman Nepluyev, and the settlers came from the Chortitza Mennonite Settlement. The villages were located 10 miles from the city of Nikolaipol on the Dnieper River."

The *Mennonite Historical Atlas* confirmed the encyclopedia data and added that Blumenfeld was Village No. 1 and Steinau was No. 2. My questions were still unanswered until significant further information became available with the publication of *A Mennonite in Russia: the Diaries of Jacob D. Epp 1851-1880*

(cont'd on p. 4)

## Fate of the Chortitza Colony Church Records

by John Dyck,<sup>†</sup> Glenn Penner\* and Margaret Kroeker

The fate of the various Russian Mennonite church records has been the subject of much private discussion and speculation. This article is an attempt to put together what is known about the church records of the Russian Mennonite colony of Chortitza (Khortitzia). The basis for this article is a file left by John Dyck in which he translates parts of *Dorfberichte* (village reports). The *Dorfberichte* were prepared by the German army during the occupation of the Ukraine in 1942/43. The report on each German village included a short section entitled *Kirchenmatrikeln*, which outlined what church records could be found and the last known whereabouts of records that had been removed. Some of these reports provide very depressing reading as one realizes that many of the Chortitza Colony church records are gone forever. On the other hand some of the reports indicate that records did survive attempts by the Communist authorities to have them destroyed. One can speculate as to what happened to this latter group of records: 1) they were destroyed by the advancing Russian troops, 2) they were collected and found their way into Russian archives, 3) they were removed to Germany, presumably for safe keeping. The following sections, in quotations, are the translations by John Dyck and Margaret Kroeker of the *Dorfberichte* found in microfilm nos. 399 – 407 at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. A shorter set of reports for some of the villages are found in microfilm no. 808, and are referred to below as the second source. My (GHP) comments are in italics.

### Blumengart

"A church register for the years 1796-1901. Then a new church register started which was brought to Nieder Chortitza about 1936 or 1937. However, it is not available there, as enquiries have proved. The old register remained only because secretary Reimer hid it at his place."

### Burwalde

"Regarding the church register, Iwan Kriwopust, one time Komsoinort and secretary to the village council, who looked after the records says that he was ordered to burn all archival records in Burwalde. The order was not wholeheartedly obeyed by Kriwopust. He (cont'd on p. 2)

## Chortitza Church Records

(cont'd from p. 1)

did not burn the church registers, the statistical records and documents of 1941. Four books were on hand from the Czarist period. Five to six books were started as civil registers: one birth register, two marriage registers, one divorce register, two death registers. On August 16 he received a second request to burn all the records. Kriwopust bundled the church registers and documents of 1941 and stacked them in a warehouse. After German troops surrounded Burwalde at 11:00 am on August 18, Hungarian troops relieved them. The Hungarian troops moved the residents of Burwalde to Schoeneberg, 10 km away, because the Bolsheviks were firing heavily from the shore of the Dnjeper. At the end of September the people were allowed to return home. The former village office was occupied by Hungarian soldiers. What was left of the archival records and church registers lay scattered in the rooms, torn and dirty. In total, three old church registers could be saved. What was not torn and dirty was used by the Hungarian soldiers to heat the rooms. The condition of the books can be discerned from the attached records.

The manner in which the books were

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kept can be seen from the enclosed copy of Book 1, Folio 224. Volumes 1 and 2 are written in German. Many entries are repeated in both volumes. In Volume 1 even the column headings are in German; in the other two they are in Russian. In Volume 3, entries were made in Russian, apparently with a companion volume in German which was missing. The cover on Volume 3 has an old number 4. In the pre-Bolshevik period the church registers were kept by a trustworthy person. No current registers have been started yet."

The 2<sup>nd</sup> source states that the largest part of the records were destroyed and that birth records for 1799-1900, 1800-1900 and 1828-1917 are available.

### Chortitza

"No church register can be found any more. They have all been brought to Saporoschje where it is said they have all been burned by the Bolsheviks. On May 2 two men went to Saporoschje to search for the books. Church registers could not be found but the very old archive of the Chortitza Gebietsamt was found in the city archives, including statistical records for the years 1801-1806. We must and will search more thoroughly and intensively in Saporoschje to determine what is on hand. In addition, the entire archive must be sorted and organized, which will take much time but would be historically worthwhile, since Chortitza is the oldest German settlement on Ukrainian soil.

Excellent family chronicles and much valuable materials, such as diaries, clippings from old newspapers, *Familienkalender* from before the World War can be found in many families. Unfortunately much of that has been burned recently out of fear of the Bolshevik police. A harmless piece of paper in the German language, even if it is from the previous century or older, was enough to put its owner in prison and annihilation as a damned fascist. That has naturally caused much exceptionally valuable material to be lost."

### Einlage

"The birth, baptism, marriage and death registers were entered by the *Gemeindeältesten*. In 1921 the Gemeinde was required to deliver the documents to the Sachs in Saporoschje. Out of caution the entire records were copied by hand and they continued to update them. In 1934 the copies were also called in and placed at the disposal of the Sachs in Saporoschje. When the Red army withdrew the archive also disappeared. At the present no records of births, marriages and deaths are kept in Einlage.

Up to the present time searches for the church documents have proven fruitless."

The 2<sup>nd</sup> source claims that the church records are in Nikolaifeld.

### Insel Chortitza

See *Chortitza*.

### Kronsgarten

The 2<sup>nd</sup> source simply states "destroyed".

### Kronstal

"Kronstal belongs to the Osterwick Gemeinde where the church and statistical books are entered. There are five old church registers dating back to the previous century there."

See the entry for Osterwick.

### Kronsweide

"In the pre-war period the baptism, marriage and death registers were kept by the local minister. In 1935 the church records had to be turned over to the village office in Einlage (Kitchkas). From Kitchkas they came to the left shore [of the Dnjeper] into the city S.A.G.S. After the reds withdrew, the Archives in the SAGS disappeared too. Attempts to ascertain their whereabouts have remained without results. It is strongly assumed that the entire Sags Archive has been burned, yet the search is continuing. There are indications that it may be possible to get a portion of the pre-Bolshevik archives back. While other German colonies are in possession of various diaries and entries in bibles and hymn books, that is hardly the case in Kronsweide. After the attack of the bandits, these treasures were destroyed as well. It is known that after the work of Kommando Dr. Stumpf was accepted, the people not only went to neighbors or older people to obtain records of marriage, births or deaths of relatives but would go many kilometers to neighboring villages in order to get such information or even undertake distant rail trips. Many young families do not remember birthdays of their children nor their own marriage dates. This situation is explained by the fact that no celebrations accompanied marriages. Registration with statistical departments was apparently considered of secondary importance. Parents have not always found joy in the birth of children and birthdays were not celebrated. Then, who could have imagined the things that have happened five or six years ago?"

### Neuenburg

"The church registers in Neuenburg were  
(cont'd on p. 5)

# Genealogy and Family History

By Alf Redekopp

## Queries



Can you identify this family? The photo was submitted by John K. Neustadter of Vernon, New York and had the inscription on the back "Onkel Abraham", most likely referring to the family of Abraham Loepke, uncle to John's grandmother, Agnetha (Fast) Neustaedter (1865-1937) whose mother was Agnetha Loepke that was married to Jacob Fast from Halbstadt, Molotschna. Contact: John K. Neustadter, 4385 State Route 26, Vernon, NY 13476; phone 315-829-3945 or e-mail: neustadt@tds.net.



**Thiessen** - I am looking for ancestral information on Maria J. Thiessen (Dec 12, 1865 – Dec 23, 1919) who was the second wife of Franz Hiebert (July 2, 1854-Dec 27, 1918) and lived in Grigorievka, South Russia, shown on this 1903 photograph with the child on her lap. The back row shows the children of Franz Hiebert's first marriage (l-r): Anna (b. 1885), Katarina (b. 1882), Helena (b. 1889) and Maria (b. 1892). Front row shows Maria's children with Franz Hiebert (l-r): Agatha (b. 1894), Peter (b. 1902), Franz (b. 1897) and Liese (b. 1895). My grandmother, Aganetha Hiebert (b. 1904), was their next child together, and is not on this photograph. Contact Ken Derksen, 797 Cavalier Dr., Winnipeg, MB R2Y 1C5 or 204-837-4990 or kderksen@shaw.ca.

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



**Neufeld sisters: Sarah and Maria.** Sarah Neufeld married a Wilhelm Dyck, was widowed and then married a Jacob Friesen. Maria married a Jacob Bueckert. I am trying to get in touch with any relatives of these two families. Please contact: Henry A. Friesen, 3917-18<sup>th</sup> Ave., Regina, SK S4S 0C3, phone 306-352-9447 or e-mail hefriesen@accesscomm.ca

## Recent Books

Peter Wolf. *Isaak Wolf & Anna Goertzen: Jacob Wolf & Maria Goertzen* (Winkler, MB: Peter Wolf, 2004) 294 pp.

This book contains the family history and genealogy of the two brothers, Isaak Wolf (1891-1834) and Jakob Wolf (1897-1956), who married two sisters, Anna Goertzen (1890-1961) and Maria Goertzen (1900-1978). Each of these were born in the village of Chortiz, south-west of the current City of Winkler, where their parents and grandparents had settled in 1875 shortly after arriving from Russia. These families migrated to Mexico in the early 1920s. Contact: Peter Wolf, 205-3<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Winkler, MB R6W 2V9 or phone 204-325-7975.

Hilton Friesen and Ralph Friesen. *Abraham S. Friesen: Steinbach Pioneer* (Winnipeg: Hilton Friesen, 2004) 301 pp.

The content of this book is divided into sections – the first dealing with the life and times of Abraham S. Friesen (1848-1916); the second dealing with the three ancestors, Jacob Friesen (ca.1734), Johann Jacob Friesen (1763-1830) and Abraham F. Friesen (1807-1891); and the third dealing with the descendants of Abraham S. Friesen. The book includes about 100 photographs, extensive stories, including spouse pedigree charts and descendants' lists. The book is available for \$60.00 from the Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, R3P 0M4 or e-mail archives@mennonitechurch.ca.

## Neubergthal, Nepluyevka (cont'd from p. 1)

translated and edited by Harvey Dyck.

The entry under Feb. 19, 1870, had a reference to “[village] Number three” of the Nepluiiev Settlement. The entry for March 24, 1870 was most helpful: “on their way to Blumenfeld, their (leaseland) settlement on the Nobleman Nepluiiev’s land (also called the Seifart land). Five villages are being established of 40 households each. The households will each have 50 desiatinas of land and pay an annual rent of 2 R. (per desiatina). The lease contract has been concluded for ten years.”

The entry for July 25, 1870 referred to “Village number three, New Hamburg on the Nepluiiev Settlement.” Aug. 30, 1870 referred to Nepluyevka Villages numbers “five, three, one and two.” Feb. 26, May 27, and Sept. 10, 1871 named the following villages: Steinau, Hamburg, Blumenfeld.

The diary only named three of the villages, but it confirmed the existance of five. Margaretha Funk’s parents having lived in village No. 4 Bergthal now made sense. However, where in other historical records do the village names for No. 4 and No. 5 exist? I found the first reference in a letter published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* dated 30 July, 1884 which are written from “Neubergthal, Plujew.” The fifth village was named in a letter published 7 Feb. 1923 in the *Rundschau* and is given as “Hoffnungsort.”

What happened to cause three of the villages of Nepluyevka to disappear and be forgotten? The land was not owned by the settlers; instead it was acquired on a lease basis which required them to pay an annual rent. Epp diary (Feb. 28, 1871) states: “the poverty here [in the Nepluiiev Settlement] is very great, all of the settlers having suffered a great deal.” It is no surprise then that interest in emigration which offered the opportunity to own land should be strong in this settlement, resulting in the disappearance of several villages.

The diary entry for Jan. 24, 1875 states: “there is great controversy in the Nepluiiev Settlement between those emigrating and those remaining here.”

The diary entry for Feb. 3, 1875 states “the unrest continues with the Nepluiiev Settlement arising from the plans of those wishing to emigrate to America. The emigrants would like to be able to sell



**Maria (1823) and Klaas Kroeker (1828-1914) with sons David (1876) and Jacob (1870-1905) of Neubergthal, Nepluiiev taken in 1893.** Photo credit: Mennonite Heritage Centre Photograph collection 529:4.

their properties to people of other confessions while those remaining here are prepared to permit such sales only on the condition that no more than one or two villages are sold in this way. People in such (designated) villages who are staying, would then purchase properties in other villages, making it possible for Mennonites to remain together (in villages) on their own. In Blumenfeld, however, villagers remaining (in Russia) refuse to allow any sales to outsiders. That is causing bad blood! For reasons of faith the quarrelsome want to emigrate, yet Christian Church members try to prevent this, thereby disadvantaging their neighbours.”

Landlessness, poverty, controversy, emigration intentions, property trading, and sales to outsiders all appear to have contributed to a population decline to the extent that only Blumenfeld and Steinau survive, and are remembered. Certainly not all settlers, dislodged for these reasons, came to Canada, but a significant number did. In 1875, the first year of emigration to the Manitoba West Reserve, Peter Wiens recorded 34 families as coming from “Pluow”. These have been identified and are among those listed in the *1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve*.

On May 10, 1911 the *Rundschau* published a letter from Johan Sawatzky of Rebalka, Russia who identified himself as a son of Jacob Sawatzky, formerly of the

village of Neubergthal, Neplujew, and states that many emigrated to America from there, and inquires about them. On June 21, 1911, Abraham Friesen of Gnadenthal, Manitoba responded that Neubergthal was well known to him and then proceeds to list some of the persons he remembers that left this specific village for America. Between the two letters, there are sixteen families confirmed as having emigrated from Neubergthal. I will list the names here in the order that they appear, and will include my opinion as to their identity.

1. Franz Dyck – spouse at time of emigration Anna Doell, on the ship Peruvian, arriving June 1878, living at Burwalde Lot #6 in 1880, recorded in West Lynne Church Register (SGB) 1A263.
2. Johan Braun – Anna Janzen, Peruvian June 1878, Burwalde #7, SGB 1A287
3. Herman Kethler – Helena Krahn, Sardinian June 1876, Gruenthal #13, Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch (RGB) 152-1.
4. Gerhard Friesen – Anna Werner, Mississippi June 1876, Schoenwiese #21, RGB 43-1.
5. Johan Martens - ?
6. Johan Peters – Justina Boldt, Sarmatian July 1875, Schoenfeld #20, RGB 261-1.
7. David Martens – Maria Peters, Sarmatian July 1875, Schoenfeld #2, RGB 256-1.
8. Franz Funk – Margaretha Rempel, Dominion July 1876, Blumstein #1, RGB 270-1.
9. Jacob Schapansky – Anna Friesen, Manitoban July 1875, Gruenthal #22, RGB 157-1.
10. Johan Boschman – Katharina Klassen, Quebec July 1880, Blumengart, RGB 221-3.
11. Jacob Boschman – Helena Funk, Quebec July 1875, Neuhorst #3, RGB 3-1.
12. Heinrich Hildebrand – Helena Martens, Quebec July 1875, Neuendorf #4, RGB 95-1.
13. Aron Wiebe – Maria Martens, Mississippi June 1876, Eichenfeld #17, RGB 327-2.
14. Jacob Doerksen – Anna Janzen, Mississippi June 1876, Schoendorf #11, RGB 175-1.
15. Klaas Kroeker – Maria Koslowsky, to Canada in 1903, to Lost River, SK ca. 1904.<sup>1</sup>
16. Peter Penner - ?

Letters in the *Rundschau* from 1884 to 1923 shed some light on the situation of those who remained in Russia.

July 30, 1884 – Neubergthal, Plujew. “The grain is only poor this year; the mice have done major damage and the weather has been very hot and dry, so that most of the grain dried up. We also did not get much hay this year.”

Feb. 4, 1885 – Neubergthal. “We have received an invitation to purchase our leased land for an amount of 60 Rubels. The Choritzta Colony Administration has agreed to purchase the Land for us, but...”

Oct. 19, 1887 – Neubergthal. “We are having a very dry summer...we have no grain nor water for the animals...85 head of cattle have died...45 head are sick. The price of grain in Nikopol is low as usual.”

April 3, 1889 – Steinau. “We are living here on the Seifert and Pluhof settlement, stretched toward the future, because at the end of this year 1889, it appears that only the Steinau villagers will enter into a renewed lease arrangement with the woman that owns this land. The reason that the residents of the other villages no longer wish to continue the lease arranged is due to the increase cost of the lease terms from 2 rubles and 50 kopecs to 5 rubles....but where should we go? In our area...lease property is simply expensive, in addition to the expenses required to establish residency...Several families have sold their farming operation and settled on purchased land some 200 verst away, establishing new homes.”

May 10, 1922 – reference is made to the “two villages”, an indication that the other three have ceased to exist earlier.

*Hildebrandt's Zeittafel* published in 1946 lists all five village names: Steinau, Blumenfeld, Hamburg, Neubergthal and Hoffnungsort.

My Great-grandmother Margaretha Miller nee Funk died in 1953. Regrettably, nobody recorded her recollections of the years 1870 to 1875 and the fate of the forgotten village, Neubergthal in the Nepluyevka Colony.

#### Endnote

1. “Ship Lists of Russian Germans arriving in Canada 1900-1909”, by George Dorsher, p.41. Thanks to Conrad Stoesz for pointing this out.

Bruce Wiebe lives in Winkler, Manitoba.

## Chortitzta Church Records

(cont'd from p. 2)

kept by church officials until 1935 for births, baptisms, marriages and death registers. In 1935 these documents had to be turned over to the local chairman of the village council in Neuendorf. In 1940 all church documents in Neuendorf were turned over to the village council of Tscapajew (Rechotinka). After withdrawal of the Red army, village council chairman Yurtschenko packaged the archive in a fireproof case which he brought to the south side of the Dnjepr. All searches for the documents have so far proved fruitless. Copies of these lists are not available. Many individual families have entered birth, engagement, marriage and death dates in the first pages of bibles and hymn books. Not infrequently one finds that individual families have kept detailed diaries, recording not only family events, such as births, marriages, etc., but also genealogical data and congregational information. These entries in books and scribblers were carefully guarded during the Bolshevik era, sometimes at risk of life. In the completion of the genealogical questionnaire, the necessary data can be taken from these entries and considered entirely dependable. Currently the mayor's office records births, other lists are entered by the minister of the local church, just as was practiced in the pre-Bolshevik period.”

Note: under “Herkunft” the report refers to a Tagebuch (diary) written 60 years after immigration into Russia with detailed information about the early years, which had been deposited in the Einlage museum.

#### Neuendorf

“The church books were all taken along by the Bolsheviks when they fled the first time, and have disappeared without a trace since then. However, there is still faint hope that they might show up later. The other church papers have also been lost from the time that the church was closed.”

#### Neuhorst

“There are no church books found at this location since Neuhorst belongs to the Neuendorf Gemeinde.”

#### Nieder Chortitzta

“Birth register volumes 1-4 and 12-17. Death registers 6, 9-11 and 18. Marriage register 5,7-9 and 19. Listed in the Village Report.”

The Village Report for Nieder Chortitzta has not yet been found.

## Osterwick

“Osterwick is in the fortunate position to have church registers from 1812, the founding year of the village. They have been kept up to date until 1931. In addition to the church registers there are some statistical record books from the soviet period, so called diaries. A listing of the church registers is enclosed.”

According to Victor Janzen, presently of Steinbach, Manitoba, his father David Janzen took the church records with him when the family left Osterwick on Oct. 21, 1943. Later, in Bergdorf, Germany, David Janzen prepared a wooden crate which he used to ship the church books to his cousin, also named David Janzen. These records never reached their destination! The whereabouts of the Osterwick church records are presently unknown.

#### Rosengart

“While the main church was kept in Chortitzta, records were also kept locally, which had to be turned over to Chortitzta in 1937 and has since disappeared.”

#### Rosenthal

The church records for Rosenthal were probably kept in Chortitzta.

#### Schoeneberg

“There are no church records at this location. The church registers are kept in Osterwick, 4 km away, where there are five registers from the previous century. A sample page of these books is appended to the Village Report of Osterwick.”

#### Schoenhorst

“The church books were in the townhall at Neuendorf until the beginning of the war (1941) and then taken away by the Bolsheviks. At present there are no church books available.

In the possession of a Jakob Penner there is an Amtsbuch from his grandfather, Prediger Jakob Penner, in which he wrote all of his official business, including marriages and burials. The years 1870-1917 are covered. The owner of the book is reluctant to hand it over but will allow it to be copied for general use.”

According to the 2<sup>nd</sup> source there is one church book covering 1796-1901.

There was also a church book in the form of a family register started in the 1870's which was taken to Canada in the 1920's. Copies of this register are available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Archives of the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia. The original register is in private possession.

(cont'd on p. 11)



**Mennonite Heritage Centre**  
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## Der Bote Index Volume 5 (1992-2000) Published

The Heritage Centre has recently completed *Der Bote Index Volume 5 (1992-2000)*. This volume was compiled by Helene S. Friesen, with Alf Redekopp and Adolf Ens, working as in house editors to refine the categories in the subject index, adding subject categories in German, and formatting the final draft.

The first volume of *Der Bote Index (1924-1947)*, edited by Adolf Ens and Peter H. Rempel, was published in 1976. The second volume (1948-1963) edited by Peter H. Rempel was published in 1991. Helene S. Friesen was the compiler for Volume 3 (1964-1976), published in 1999, Volume 4 (1977-1991) published in 2000, and now Volume 5 (1992-2000), published in 2005. Issues of *Der Bote* published from 2001 to the present, are being indexed by Bert Friesen, who continues to index two issues each month, in keeping with the frequency of publication. No date has been set for the publication of the next volume.

Since the publication of the first volume of the index, the importance of this tool for researchers has been demonstrated over and over again. *Der Bote* has been confirmed as an important historical resource. Now in its 84<sup>th</sup> year of publication, *Der Bote* sees its mission as "offering spiritual nurture to, providing information for, and fostering connections among German-speaking members of Mennonite Church Canada, and among Mennonites of Europe and South America." The index to such a paper is a tool that guarantees that the paper will continue to serve many future generations, long after the publication ceases.

The indexes are priced at \$30.00 per volume and may be ordered from the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 (204-888-6781) or e-mail: [archives@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:archives@mennonitechurch.ca).



The Editorial Board of the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (CMEO) met in Waterloo, Dec. 3, 2005. The growth of the project led the committee to recommend an expansion of the project, moving toward the goal of a global Anabaptist / Mennonite Encyclopedia. As a first step to this expanded vision the Historical Committee of Mennonite USA and the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission have been invited to consider joining the project. CMEO can be accessed at [www.mhsc.ca](http://www.mhsc.ca). The Editorial Board consists of: Back row: Alf Redekopp, Victor Wiebe, David Giesbrecht, Richard Thiessen, Peter Penner. Front Row: Linda Hecht, Abe Dueck, Sam Steiner and Bert Friesen. Guest John Sharp, from Goshen, representing the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA.

## Staff Retreat

On Thursday, January 13, 2005, the Christian Formation staff of Mennonite Church Canada held a retreat at Bethel Mennonite Church. Since February 2002, Mennonite Church Canada (previously known as Conference of Mennonites in Canada) has been structured under three elected Councils: Christian Witness, Christian Formation and Support Services. The Heritage Centre falls under the rubric of Christian Formation Council, which is currently directed by Executive Secretary, Dave Bergen.

Participants at the Christian Formation Staff Retreat included: Elsie Rempel (Education and Nurture), Anna Rehan (Youth), Byron Rempel-Burkholder (Mennonite Publishing Network / Faith and Life Resources), Ingrid J. Lamp (*Der Bote*), Arlyn Friesen-Epp (Resource Centre), Lois Bergen (Administrative Assistant to the Executive Secretary and *Der Bote*), Alf Redekopp and Conrad Stoesz (Heritage Centre) and Connie Wiebe (Administrative Assistant to the Heritage Centre Archives and Gallery). Sven Eriksson (Conference Minister) and Ray Dirks (MHC Gallery Curator) were unable to attend.

The morning session consisted of a presentation by guest Angela Reed entitled "Christian Formation: A Vision for Maturity in Christ", followed by discussion. Angela Reed is a Winnipeg

pastor and spiritual director. "Christian spiritual formation is a foundational part of God's action in the lives of God's people," she began her presentation.

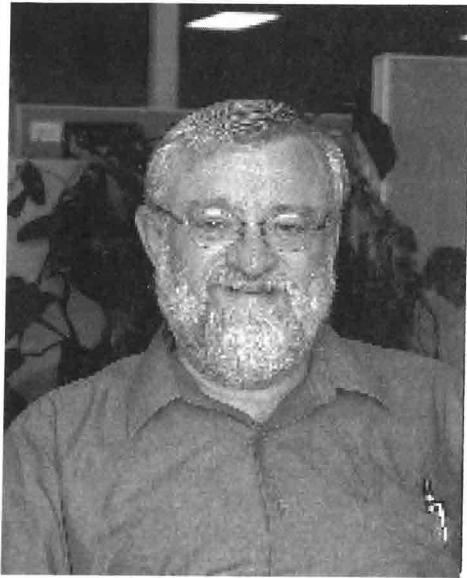
Other traditional expressions that the church has used for this concept include: "Spiritual growth", "sanctification", "Christian discipleship", "Christian Education" and "Christian Nurture".

Reed developed the thesis that Christian maturity is the work of the whole church's ministry and that theological knowledge is not an end in itself but a means to Christian growth. There was also a growing emphasis of God's grace in the process of Christian spiritual growth.

During the afternoon session, each participant was asked to share how what they were doing right now in their program area fit into the mission and purpose of Christian Formation. The final goal of the day was to come up with one "short punchy statement" that would describe Christian Formation. Many suggestions were put on the table, but in the end the statement which resonated with everyone was "Nurturing faith in homes and congregations".

How have you, the readers of *Mennonite Historian*, or users of the Mennonite Heritage Centre archives, found your faith nurtured through the history and archives program?

*Adapted from a report by Ingrid Janzen Lamp, as published in Der Bote, 16 Feb. 2005, p. 2*



## Survey shows 86% of MB's support the collection of historical records

In December 2004 the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches initiated a survey of its members on the direction of the Conference and the services it provides. The feedback was encouraging with over 1000 responses. Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that "it is important for the Conference to maintain historical information about our church's activities to help the church understand its past and thus better plan for the future." We are encouraged by the results, and, perhaps even more so, by the wealth of affirmative comments, including:

"In Deuteronomy Moses constantly says 'Remember...' We all must remember our history so that from it we can see how God was faithful in the past and be encouraged for the future." "We can only move ahead healthily if we look back and change what didn't work and keep what did."

"This is very, very important... What I find disturbing is that those who are walking away from the Anabaptist tradition think that they are getting rid of an extraneous overlay and finally seeing the Bible as it truly is when in fact they are replacing one overlay with another usually 20th century American Fundamentalist Evangelicalism..."

Other comments challenge us to make the material more accessible and show how it can be relevant: "I think the money we put into this may be over-kill. We need a record, but do we really need all the details filed away? How is it helping us move forward? It seems like it's stashed away with no real impact on the future."

CDS

## Ken Reddig named new CMBS Director.

Ken Reddig has been named the new director for the Centre for MB Studies, starting August 1, 2005. This will be Ken's second term with the Centre after a 12-year stint from 1979-1990. After leaving CMBS he continued in the archival field with positions with the provincial archives of Manitoba 1990-1997 and the Mennonite Heritage Centre 1997-1999. Since 1999 Ken has taken on several fund development positions with MCC. His vision includes "mentoring the next generation; speaking, writing and publishing; and the need to create methodology that helps people tell their stories."

CDS

## Accessions

- 1) 3 photograph albums with photos pertaining to Linda Banman's life in Brazil and Canada. -- [193-?] - [199-?]. -- b&w and Color photos.
- 2) C.F. Klassen correspondence 1929-1964.
- 3) The Harder Family Review Index issues 1-64/ Ron Isaak. Also included is an electronic version on CD \* 2003.
- 4) Helen Loewen Warkentin photos and correspondence regarding her time as a missionary in India. -- 1920-1980.
- 5) John Lester Voth fonds (Son of Heinrich S. Voth) including diaries, certificates, photos, correspondence etc. -- 1908-[2003?].
- 6) Nicholai J. Fehderau family documents. -- 1865-1989.

## New Home for CMBS

The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches has built a new office building in south west Winnipeg that includes a new archival facility on the main floor. Tentative move date is mid April. Please note service at the Centre may be disrupted during this time. The new address will be: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies 1310 Taylor Ave. Winnipeg, MB R3M 3Z6



CENTRE FOR  
**Mennonite  
Brethren  
Studies** IN CANADA

1-169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada R2L 2E5



**Missionary Helen L. Warkentin**

Helen Loewen Warkentin was born November 25, 1887 at Hoffnungsfeld (near Winkler, Manitoba), to Rev. John Warkentin and Sarah Loewen Warkentin. She was a sister to Susanna Warkentin, who later married Rev. H.S. Voth. She was converted at the age of fifteen and was baptized and accepted into the Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church on July 17, 1904. Warkentin attended the Normal School at Morden and then taught in various Manitoba public schools. She spent one year at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

She was ordained as a missionary in 1919 by Rev. David Dyck. In 1920, she went to Deverakonda, India, where she was a teacher and the principal at a boarding school, as well as dietitian, and supervisor of gardening, well digging, and carpentry. She spent four terms in India. In 1957, Miss Warkentin finished her last term and went home to Winkler, where she lived with her youngest sister Tien. Helen L. Warkentin died June 25, 1975, at the age of 87.

For more on Warkentin see the file list for the *Helen L. Warkentin Fonds* at CMBS or on our the web site.

# Some Eighteenth Century Units of Measurement For Danzig, West Prussia and Russia For Translation and Interpretation

by Edwin D. Hoeppner

Translators of documents concerning the Mennonite emigration from Danzig and West Prussia to Tsarist Russia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century encounter unfamiliar and sometimes obscure units of measurement for distance, land area, grain, and currencies. An appropriate understanding of the units in question is necessary to facilitate a correct understanding of the relevant statements in the original 18<sup>th</sup> century German language sources and to avoid errors of translation and interpretation. Once such errors do occur and are published, they tend to be republished repeatedly in various writings which use the original publication, or each other, as references thus multiplying the dis-information ad infinitum and ad nauseam, and more importantly, giving rise to erroneous interpretations and conclusions about events in the past which result in a loss of Mennonite historical heritage and which give our historical scholarship a black eye. The late David G. Rempel referred to erroneous interpretations and conclusions as "myths" which, once they have received widespread publication and acceptance

are very resistant to correction.<sup>1</sup> The problem is complex for units of measurement and coinage because these varied from one German land to another and even within regions, i.e. in space and over time. The modern German author and publisher Wolfgang Emmerich notes that "Measures and weights in 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany were even more non-uniform and variable within themselves than the coinage."<sup>2</sup> For us this problem is exacerbated further by the fact that the City of Danzig and its rural area was under the sovereignty of the King of Poland until 1793 and was separated by a political boundary from neighbouring areas of West Prussia since 1772 when the latter area became part of the Kingdom of (Brandenburg) Prussia under Frederick the Great. Both Danzig and the rest of West Prussia including the Bishopric of Warmia (Bistum Ermland), known as Royal (or Polish) Prussia until 1772, were under the sovereignty of the King of Poland since 1466 (a "personal union" with the crown but not part of Poland itself) and thus these areas were also separated by political boundaries from neighbouring German territories to the west (Kingdom of Prussia) and also by a political boundary from the territory of Ducal Prussia (East Prussia), including the City of Elbing, to the East. Although Danzig and West Prussia were Germanic in language and culture these centuries-long political separations under differing administrative and legislative influences tended to result in modifications in some

economic and other administrative features, such as units of measurement and coinage. In practical terms this means that statements about units of measurement in German lands frequently do not apply to Danzig and West Prussia prior to the 19th century because they were, by definition, non-German lands for much of the 18th century. For these reasons an attempt is made in this article to provide definitions and/or correct equivalent quantification for a few selected units of measurement which are specifically relevant to the 18th and early 19th century milieu in which Mennonites emigrated from Danzig territory to what is now southern Ukraine.

Quantification or equivalents will be given in the SI (International System of) units (i.e. metric units) adopted by Canada, and sometimes also in British (Imperial) units.

## 1. Length and distance

1 Danziger Meile (Danzig, Polish Prussia, and Poland) = 7 560 m = 7.56 km<sup>3</sup>

1 Preussische Meile (Kingdom of Prussia) = 3 766 m = 3.766 km<sup>3</sup>

1 Danziger Rute = 4.26 m<sup>3</sup>

1 Preussische Rute = 3.766 m<sup>3</sup>

1 Danziger Faden (fathom) (6 ft) = 1.83 m<sup>4</sup>

Emmerich notes that the Faden (fathom) can vary from approximately 2 - 3m. In the reference given, Lewald, there is a photo of the Danzig "Eichmasse" (Standard reference measures) of the foot, Elle, and Rute. What Lewald states is the "Rute" appears to be approximately 6 Fuss. Since this does not agree with Keyser and Emmerich, I have tentatively concluded that Lewald has made an error, that it is the "Eichfaden" or standard fathom, and not the "Rute".

In this article I will refer later to the Russian "faden" or "sazhen" which is defined as 1 sazhen (fathom, faden) = 3 arshin = 2.134 m (7 ft)<sup>5,6</sup>

## 2. Area and Land

Erich Keyser defines land area units in terms of "Quadratruten" or square ruten. Although for Danzig this might suggest that 1 sq. rute should equal  $(4.26 \text{ m})^2 = 18.15 \text{ sq.m}$ , Keyser specifically states that for land area units for Danzig the Quadrat Rute = 14.18 sq. m (= 3.766 m)<sup>2</sup>. It would appear that this is an example of what Emmerich refers to when he states that "...measures...were...variable within themselves..."



Drawing of Danzig (Gdansk), 1680, showing its fortified walls and battlements. The City of Danzig was extremely wealthy, being the entry point for trade emanating from the Vistula River basin. Mennonites were not allowed to live and trade in the City. Consequently many Mennonites lived in the suburbs, particularly Schottland and Schidlitz. Credit: *Danzig aufgenommen von der Staatl. Bildstelle* by Erich Keyser (1938), p. 7.

1 Morgen (Danzig, W. Prussia, and Poland) = 300 Quadratruten = 300 X 14.18 = 4 254 m<sup>2</sup>  
Since 1 hectare (ha) = (100 m)<sup>2</sup> = 10 000 m<sup>2</sup>

1 Morgen 4 254 /10 000 = 0.425 4 ha  
1 ha = 10 000/4 254 = 2.35 Morgen  
Since 1 acre = 4 046.685 m<sup>2</sup> = 0.404 685 ha<sup>7</sup>  
1 Morgen = 0.425 4/0.404 685 = 1.05 acre

Erich Keyser's measure for the Morgen should be selected for our use because it is reasonable to conclude that his data are more specifically relevant to the Danzig and West Prussia area. This might explain the difference between the Danziger Morgen (4 254 m<sup>2</sup>) and the figure given by Hilda Matsuo (2 553.23 m<sup>2</sup>) for the Prussian Morgen in the September 1997 issue of *Mennonite Historian*<sup>8</sup>. Emmerich states that the Morgen is extremely non-uniform and ranges from 2 500 m<sup>2</sup> to 3 600 m<sup>2</sup> and even up to 6 550 m<sup>2</sup> in Hither Pomerania (Vorpommern)<sup>2</sup>.

1 Hufe (Flemish = Kulmische) = 16.8 ha<sup>9</sup>  
= 41.52 acres

The Hufe, like its English equivalent "hide" was a quantity of land intended to be sufficient to support a peasant family, and varied due to soil quality, climate, and region. Modern historians, after much research, have concluded that for the Prussian area originally (in 1230/31 A.D.) this was the Flemish Hufe, equal to 16.8 ha, which also became known as the Kulmische Hufe in Prussia.

At the time of the colonization of the trans-Vistula River area by the Order of Teutonic Knights in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the term "Haken" or hook identified the hook plow used by the old Prussian inhabitants and also by the neighbouring Slavs. The Haken merely scratched or ripped open a furrow but did not turn the sod, so that a field had to be plowed both length-wise and across, twice the amount of labour and time compared to the German wheeled plow with coulter blade (Sech) and moldboard (Streichbrett). Only light soils could be plowed with the Haken - heavier soil areas could not be brought into production. The term Haken eventually came to denote the amount of land plowed (or farmed) in this more primitive way by a peasant - and later simply a unit of farm land. Initially frequently 1 Hufe = 2 Haken<sup>9</sup> but this was not uniform and varied considerably over time as well. For example at Bohnsack on

the Danziger Nehrung 1 Haken = 2/3 Hufe = 11.2 ha around 1400 A.D.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Volume or dry measure (grain)

The Scheffel (abr. Sch or Schef) is a volume measure for dry goods such as grain. Emmerich notes that this unit is also extremely variable regionally, ranging from 34.71 litres (l) in Lübeck to 114 - 234 l in Saxony, in Prussia 55 l, in Württemberg 177 l, in München 222 l, in Hamburg as much as 1 100 - 1 650 l. It seems reasonable to use the figure for Prussia, about 55 l which is given more precisely in *Der Grosse Brockhaus* as 54.962 l.

1 Scheffel = 54.962 l

Since 1 bushel (British) = 36.368 74 l<sup>7</sup>

1 Scheffel = 54.962/36.368 74 = 1.51 bushel

### 4. Coinage/Currency

Emmerich notes that it is extremely difficult to provide approximate equivalent values for monetary statements from the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the reader of today. This is due to varying historical statements about prices, wages, and transfers of money (insofar as these even exist), over regions and time. His information is limited to the area of Germany at that time - which, as stated above - excludes Danzig and West Prussia. Danzig had its own mint and monetary system which, at times, had to be compatible with, perhaps in conformity with, the Polish coinage.

For the 16 to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Keyser gives the following relationships:

1 pol (nischer) Gulden = 1½ pr(eussische)

Mark (Mk) = 30 Groschen<sup>3</sup> = 540

Pfennig (pf).

1 T(h)aler = 30 Silbergroschen = 360

Pfennig

Silbergroschen or "Gute Groschen" had a greater purchasing power or exchange rate than plain Groschen. Keyser does not provide a relationship between the Gulden and Thaler directly. Emmerich states that after 1750 A.D. the following relationship was established (but that it was slightly altered in 1764) for Brandenburg - Preussen:

14 Reichstaler = 21 Gulden, i.e. 1 Gulden = 2/3 Reichstaler

It is not clear how a Reichstaler compared to a preussischer Taler, but it seems likely that they were more-or-less equal.

At various times Poland, and Danzig and other countries also minted coins known as Dukaten. These were usually equal to approximately 2 or more Gulden but the exchange rate varied throughout history particularly during times of war when coins tended to become debased in order to finance the hostilities - and this applied to all coins such as Taler and Gulden as well.

Beginning in 1772 Frederick II the (so-called) Great, frustrated by not having been allowed (by Catherine II, also the Great) to incorporate Danzig at the time of the first partition of Poland, initiated aggressive and hostile trade policies vis-a-vis Danzig designed to ruin the city economically in order to facilitate an eventual absorption, with correspondingly negative effects on the value of the Danzig coinage - and this continued after his death in 1786 until the Prussian incorporation of Danzig in 1793. In 1793, 3 Gulden preussisch Kurant = 4 Gulden Danziger Münze.<sup>3</sup>

The term "Kurant" (also Courant abbreviated C) is a monetary technical term related to the weight of noble metal (gold) in the coin.

Many modern dictionaries do not contain this term but I have found a definition of

sorts: "Besonders für die alt-preussische Epoche ist ferner



Mennonite banker Abraham Dirksen of Buttermarkt weighing coins on a scale as sketched by Daniel Chodowieckis during his Danzig trip of 1773.

zu bedenken, das alle Gehälter zu einem Viertel in Gold, also *Talern Courant* gezahlt wurden, die einem um 13 1/3 (13.33)% höheren Kurswert als die Silbertaler hatten" (trans.: Particularly for the old Prussian epoch it must also be remembered that one quarter of all salaries was paid in talers courant which had a 13.33% higher exchange rate than the silver talers)<sup>11</sup>. The salaries were those of military officers and the term "old Prussian epoch" refers to the time prior to the military and political collapse of the Kingdom of Prussia due to Napoleon's victories over it in 1806. Whether the term "preussisch Courant" as defined in this source also applies to the use of Courant/Kurant in other jurisdictions is debatable. Wolfgang Emmerich's discussion of it, emphasizes that Courant is related to the *silver* content of the coin(s) for German lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. What we can conclude is that a preussischer Taler Kurant (pr T(h)lr C) is a coin, apparently a gold coin, which has a value of 113.33% of that of an ordinary silver pr.Tlr prior to 1806/07.

In Peter Hildebrand's *Erste Auswanderung* reference is made to the "Florin" (symbol fl, plural floren) in Danzig in 1786. Keyser does not mention it but I have found a reference which indicates that the Florin was equal in value to the polnischer Gulden, i.e. 1 fl = 1 (pol) Gulden<sup>12</sup>

The whole coinage question is so complicated that further research is necessary.

One example of a mistake in giving a modern equivalent quantity for an old measurement concerns the dimensions of the oak timbers supplied by the Russian government to the settlers of the Chortitz Gebiet for home-building. In his article in *Mennonite Life* (January 1969) David G. Rempel states that each settler was to receive 120 oak planks each 12 feet in length (p.10).<sup>13</sup> In the German language of the original Bartsch/Hoeppner petition to Potemkin, as published in D.H. Epp's *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten* (p.28)<sup>14</sup> it is clearly stated that the planks were to be "vier Faden" long. Four Faden presumably means four sazhens - since this was Potemkin's response to the request for the timber; in this case the length of the planks would be 28 feet. If we use the Danzig Faden we still get a length of 24 feet. When one considers the amount of timber required to build a Mennonite long house (i.e., house-barn) of the apparent size of those days a plank length of 24 - 28 feet appears much more plausible than 12 feet. D.G. Rempel's works normally are authoritative and I am unable to account for this slip in his article. We must, however, take him quite seriously when he writes that "...the Mennonite historian has to labour diligently in what has hitherto passed for historical fact. We must test it on the basis

of scholarly study of old and new documentary materials and then, where warranted, point out that *so ist es (nicht) gewesen* (that's not how it happened)." Indeed. Rempel's German quotation here notifies us that he has read his Leopold von Ranke.

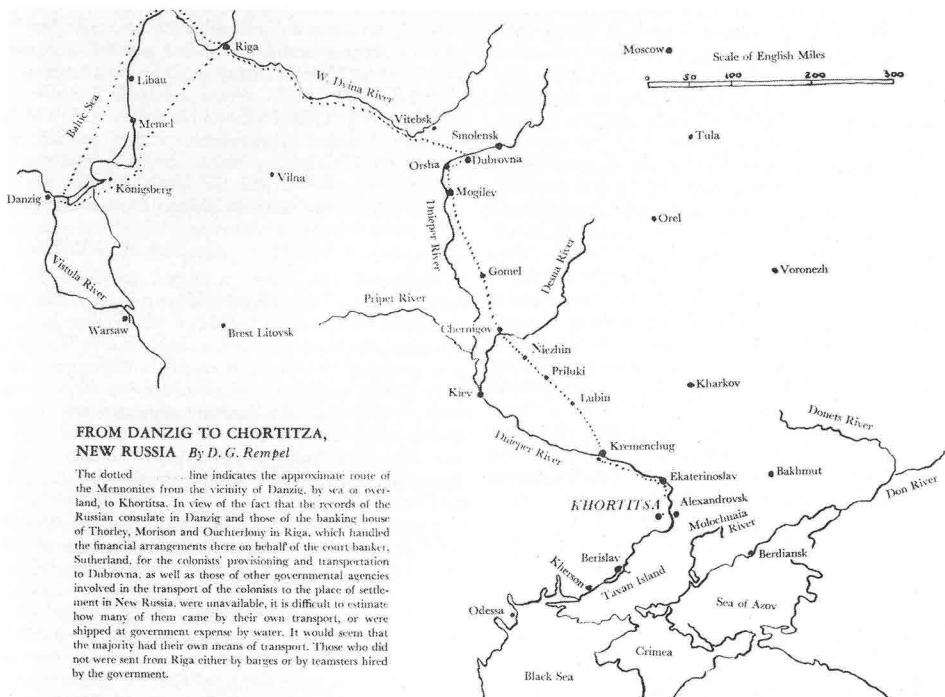
Readers of Rempel's wonderful article should also take note of the corrections to that article, noted on the Table of Contents page of the following issue of *Mennonite Life* (April 1969), plus his map, on page 69 of that issue, of the route of the initial immigration to New Russia<sup>15</sup>. This map is not noted in the list of corrections to Rempel's article, which may explain why subsequent authors on this subject have overlooked that map. It is unfortunate that the compilers of the *Mennonite Historical Atlas* and also the translators of Peter Hildebrand's *Erste Auswanderung* have chosen to base their maps on the erroneous map by Victor Peters in *Zwei Dokumente*. These maps are not in agreement with the itinerary of the initial six families plus Hildebrand i.e. going from Chernigov through Nizhchin, whereas Rempel's map is more convincing.

Since the valley of the Desna River was flooded near Chernigov, where Jacob Hoeppner's party had to be ferried across a 9-verst (approx. 9 km) wide expanse of water immediately after their departure from Chernigov it is obvious that the river valley would be flooded downstream all the way to its confluence with the Dnieper River near Kiev and the Dnieper valley below the confluence would also be flooded. It would have been physically impossible to go by the route, from Chernigov to Kiev, as indicated here on the maps based on the Victor Peters map. The logic of the shorter route from Nizhchin via Priluki - Lubni - Kremenchug is convincing - and Peter Hildebrand's text states that they went via Nizhchin. The route via Nizhchin is approximately 85 km shorter. Those maps urgently require revision. *So war es (nicht) gewesen!*

It is also evident that all distances given by Peter Hildebrand in "Meilen" are in the Danzig Meile of 7.56 km - as are all distances in the Gerhard Wiebe Verzeichnis - portions of which I have transliterated and will be translating.

#### Endnotes / Bibliography

1. David G. Rempel; "Zum 200 jährigen Jubiläum Mennonitischer Einwanderung in Russland," *Der Bote*, 3 Apr. 1991, p. 4.



Map of route taken by first Mennonite settlers from Danzig to Chortitz, New Russia, 1788.  
Map by David G. Rempel, as published in *Mennonite Life*, April 1969, p. 69.

2. Wolfgang Emmerich (publisher and commentator); Karl Biedermann, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*.
3. Erich Keyser; *Danzig's Geschichte*, 2nd ed (Modern reprint of the 1928 edition), p.284.
4. Hans Lewald; *Danzig - So wie es war* (Droste Verlag, Düsseldorf, 1974) p.15.
5. Donald F. Lynch; *The Conquest, Settlement and Initial Developement of New Russia 1780-1837* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University 1965) p.209.
6. D.H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten* (Odessa, 1889) p.28 (1984 reprint p.21).
7. *Canadian Metric Practice Guide* (National Standard of Canada CAN3 - Z234.1 - 79) p.34.
8. Hilda Matsuo; "Prussian Mennonite Land Measurements," *Mennonite Historian*, September 1997, p.11.
9. Walter Kuhn, "Der Haken in Altpreussen", p.184 in *Studien Zur Geschichte des Preussenlandes* - Erich Keyser zu seinem 70. Geburtstag (Ernst Bahr, ed, 1963, Marburg).
- Francis L. Carsten, *Die Entstehung Preussens* (New edition 1979, 1981, Ullstein) p.50/51.
10. Johann Reinhold Sellke, *Die Besiedlung der Danziger Nehrung im Mittelalter* (Zeitschrift des westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins 63, 1922 p.14).
11. Otto Büsch, *Militärsystem und Sozialleben im Alten Preussen 1713-1807* (Ullstein, 1981) p.121.
12. Hans Maercker, *Eine polnische Staroste und ein preussischer Landrathskreis. Geschichte des Schwetzer Kreises 1466-1873* (Zeitschrift des westpreussischen Geschichtsvereins 17, 1886) p.30. (I am indebted to my wife's good friend Angela Weckler M.A. (Oxon) BDÜ., of Hamburg, Germany, for locating this source for me.).
13. David G. Rempel, "From Danzig to Russia - The First Mennonite Migration," *Mennonite Life*, Vol.XXIV, No.1, January 1969).
14. D.H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten. Versuch einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges derselben* (Odessa, 1889), p.28.
15. David G. Rempel, "Corrections and Additions", *Mennonite Life*, Vol.XXIV, No.2, April 1969), p.49, 69.

*Edwin D. Hoeppner is a retired meteorologist and lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba..*

## Book Notes

by Adolf Ens

**W**hen the Old Colony Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan elected a new manager of its Orphans Bureau (*Waisenamt*) in 1951, his assignment was to wind up its affairs. Abram G. Janzen, *Memoirs of an Old Colony Waisenamt Manager* (Hague: by the author, 2004), recounts that process in a 43-page booklet. His account shows not only the painstaking care taken to deal fairly with the widows and orphans whose assets the Bureau was managing, however; it also opens a window on a quarter century of Old Colony life in Saskatchewan. This well-written, fascinating account makes a good companion piece to Jake Peters institutional history of the *Waisenamt*, and to Leonard Doell's history of the Saskatchewan Mennonite mutual fire insurance.

How do Mennonites make it into a Gaelic-language magazine published in

\* \* \* \* \*

## Chortitz Church Records

(cont'd from p. 5)

### Schoenwiese

*The village report for Schoenwiese has not yet been found.*

### Other Church Records

A pair of Family registers, written in Russian, were discovered in the Zaporozhye archives in 2000. These records were started around 1888 and continue until about 1934. They cover the villages of Chortitz, Nieder Chortitz, Burwalde, Einlage, Rosenthal, Insel Chortitz and Blumengart. English translation copies of these registers, together with scans of the Russian originals, are available on CD and can be purchased from various sources.

If anyone has further information regarding the last known whereabouts of any of the Chortitz Colony church records, please contact me at the address below.

† *This article is dedicated to the memory of John Dyck in recognition of his many contributions to Mennonite history and genealogy.*

Glenn Penner: 306-27 Cardigan St. Guelph, ON, N1H7V6. or email: gpenner@uoguelph.ca .

Scotland? The summer 2000 issue of *Gath*, credits Alf Redekopp (Mennonite Heritage Centre), Wes Berg (University of Alberta) and Sam Steiner (Conrad Grebel College archives) with information for an article by Norman Campbell on variations of the "lining out" style of singing hymns. Through this practice the author links some Gaelic-speaking groups with Creek Indians of Oklahoma, Baptists of Florida, some congregations in Trinidad, and Old Order and Old Colony groups of Mennonites. How do you say "Mennonites" in Gaelic? I don't know, but you write it *Meananaich!!!*

## Other Publication Notes

by Lawrence Klippenstein

**N**ew! *The Quiet in the Land: A Volga German's Christian Journals: Russian Revolution Years 1916-18* by Henry P. Wieler. Edited and abridged by Arthur L. Pavlotos and Michael C. Upton. Translations by Bert Friesen, Winnipeg. The first part of a 1,500-paged diary from Siberia. Published by Trafford Publishing, Victoria, B.C. 2005, hc., 127 pp., 15.95 US, 20.00 CND. Order from Trafford Publishing, 2333 Government St., Suite 63, Victoria, B.C. V8T 4P4 or see [www.trafford.com](http://www.trafford.com).

Extensive reports from *Molotschna 2004* have appeared in *Preservings* No. 24, December, 2004, and in *Plautdietsch Frind* [in Low German], No. 13, Summer, 2004. For copies of the former contact [klippensteinL@aol.com](mailto:klippensteinL@aol.com), and the latter contact [info@plautdietsch-freunde.de](mailto:info@plautdietsch-freunde.de).

Ted Friesen has published *D.W. Friesen: A Tribute* (Altona, n.d.) pb., 22 unpaginated pages. For further info contact Ted Friesen, Box 720, Altona, MB, ROG OBO or [tedf@friesens.com](mailto:tedf@friesens.com).

For those wanting a thorough look at the background of the area where Mennonites first settled in Saskatchewan, one should look at Victor Carl Friesen's *Where the River Runs: Stories of the Saskatchewan and the People Drawn to Its Shores* (Calgary, Fifth House Ltd., 2001), pb., 480 pp., 21.95. Order from Victor Carl Friesen at Box 65, Rosthern, SK, SOK 3R0.

Upcoming publication. In *German Canadian Yearbook, 2005*, edited by Dr. Lothar Zimmernann, an article by Lawrence Klippenstein entitled "Aspects of Mennonite Education in the Manitoba West Reserve, 1880-1925."

## Book Reviews

Gerhard Ratzlaff. *Vater Abram: Von der Ukraine über Sibirien und China nach Paraguay und Kanada. Ein mennonitischer Lebensweg* (Asuncion, Paraguay: Im Selbstverlag, 2004), pb., 150pp.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

The title here, *Vater Abram* (Father Abram), is aptly chosen—a long, long and difficult trek into the unknown, taken by faith that God was with him and his wife, Anna, and finding a blessed resting place in the end. In tsarist Russia the Razlaff family really began its moving in 1909, when Father Abram was only four years old, with departure from the rental land of Trubetzkoe, near the colony of Sagradovka, to Alexanderkrone, a village in the new settlement begun in the Slavgorod area of West Siberia around 1907. Their next move took place in 1927. Father Abram wrote up a detailed account of the trip which took them via Blagoveschensk to a very new village near the Amur River called Schumanovka because a number of families recently settled there came from Schumanovka, a neighbouring village of Alexanderkrone, in the Slavgorod settlement.

The pressures of collectivization and with it other repressive Communist measures, reached the community by 1929. By 1930 the village, led by Jakob Siemens, had basically agreed to attempt a flight across the Amur to rid itself of Soviet control. That odyssey, as Dr. Wilmer Harms has called it in his volume on several of these escapes, rather famous in the annals of Russian Mennonite history, took place in mid-December, 1930. It involved a group of 217 individuals travelling on 56 sleds, and managing to escape detection till they were safe on the other side.

Then, ultimately, after some harrowing early travels in China, came a long stay in Harbin. That episode too, as presented here, offers some very helpful hitherto unknown insights and data on Mennonite life in that quite international city where Russian influence (and hence danger of betrayal for the escapees) was strong at the time.

For the Razlaffs that departure would ultimately take them to Paraguay, to participate in most difficult pioneering and mission life with the Mennonite

Brethren community in the Chaco, till in due time they would enter the final phase of their moving on, and arrive in B.C., Canada. Abram's own journals, and those of other family members have been a significant source for the story. Many photos and sketches, some clearly left by Abram and his family also, help to dramatize the story even more.

This is a book of inspiration and tribute to an unassuming, yet unbelievably energetic and much-loved father and family. It is thoroughly researched, very well organized and written, and helps to fill in gaps that other similar accounts have sometimes left untouched. The family tree and brief bibliography are most useful appendices for the book. Maps, often missed in stories like this, are not lacking here. It is also a notable feature of the biography that Mother Ratzlaff, Anna, to whom too, the family owed so much, should get her own chapter here. Altogether, we are richer for having this story, all of us, and must thank Gerhard for getting it down for all to benefit from.

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Sergei I. Zhuk. *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), hdc., 457pp.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

We are told that this book is a "study of the forgotten Russian and Ukrainian pioneers of the radical evangelical tradition, seeking to reform Orthodox Christianity, according to the Divine law of justice and equality which led to new social and cultural experimentation in the Russian Empire under the slogans of the Western Radical Reformation" (xvi-xvii). That catches the attention of Anabaptist-Mennonite ears, among others.

The Russian sectarians have formed a klaidescopic scene on the religious screen of that country. They have not been given a well-researched and scholarly assessment on the whole, but Zhuk puts such an enterprise well on the way. This is true at least for a sizeable segment of these dissenting sentiments and movements. Shalaputs will be a new reality for most western readers; Stundists, being closely related to the

evangelical Baptist renewal of nineteenth century Russia and Ukraine, perhaps less so. Both groups were among the most persecuted of dissenters who emerged during the 1830s to the 1860s. They operated in tandem, at least to a degree, with traditional indigenous groups like the Molokans, Khlysty and Skoptsy, who were all part of a "protestantizing" stream of activity which came to characterise the southern frontier region.

In the space and context given for this review, Chapter 3, dealing with the Stundists and their relationships to Mennonite renewal movements of the middle and late nineteenth century will be of special interest to *Mennonite Historian* readers. As Zhuk sees it, "Mennonites played the most important role in this movement", with millennial expectations holding a central place within the theological spectrum of pietistic thinking which prevailed here. That it was this pietism which caused the division between "conservers" and "progressives" (James Urry's terminology), as Zhuk states, requires further exploration, with the story of the Mennonite "Jumpers" and related features not yet clearly delineated.. Connections to Shalaput groups in this cauldron of activity are explored by Zhuk, and one senses much room here for following up the nature and importance of the ties which he has proposed.

Much serious research underlies this major study. With his focus on a "lost Reformation" (was it really lost?) Zhuk has brought all this activity under a broader Western European umbrella than has been done hitherto, and has also raised it to a significance not attempted earlier. That this activity was essentially a peasant phenomenon makes the matter of sources a challenging one. Peasant religious leaders do become more visible here however. At the same time this self-taught feature of religious thought and action explains why the logic of systematic theology could not always prevail, as it might in more theologically articulate settings. The socio-economic implications of the movement, and the way millennialist thinking mixed in here, will be of special interest to many.

Mennonites studying their Russian religious background are indeed aware that they have more research to do on their home territory as well. Zhuk has certainly given strong encouragement to do this, and helped understand the broader Russian context for doing so much better than others have done till now.