

Mennonite Historian

Mennonite Refugee Camps in Germany, 1921-1951: Part I – Lager Lechfeld

by Peter Letkemann (Winnipeg)

In November 1920 German Mennonite leaders met in the city of Ludwigshafen on the Rhine to establish the *Mennonitische Flüchtlings-Fürsorge* [MFF] – Mennonite Refugee Aid organisation (renamed *Deutsche Mennoniten-Hilfe* [DMH] in May 1922). Its immediate aim, as the name implies, was to provide assistance to the hundreds of Mennonite refugees who had fled from Soviet Russia and Ukraine to Germany since 1918.

The movement of Russian Mennonites to Germany began during the time of the German occupation of Ukraine from February to November 1918. Many Mennonites, especially wealthier and “connected” Mennonites (including Johann Esau, the former mayor of Ekaterinoslav, now Dnepropetrovsk), left Ukraine with the retreating German forces after the German surrender at Compiègne in November 1918. Others fled secretly and illegally across Russia’s and Ukraine’s western borders into the newly founded Republic of Poland and from there into Germany.

Once in Germany, some were able to find refuge with family or friends, but most ended up in displaced persons camps scattered throughout the country – housed in cramped, poor conditions along with thousands of other German refugees from the East, from former German and Austrian lands that had been lost to Poland, Russia and Romania at Versailles in 1919. As a result of limitations imposed by this treaty on Germany’s armed forces – limiting them to a maximum of 100,000 men – dozens of military establishments, barracks and training centres had to be closed and vacated.

Leaders of the MFF met with representatives of the Prussian and Bavarian governments in 1920 to negotiate a lease for the abandoned military Camp Lechfeld, located in Bavaria, about 20 km south of Augsburg. The deal was finalized in April 1921, and the first Mennonite refugees began arriving in May-June 1921.

The Lechfeld military base was established by the Bavarian government in the 1850s as an artillery practice range during the Crimean War. After that war, the camp was expanded to include barracks and troop training facilities.

(cont'd on p. 2)

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



August Liebig, portrait, memorial, and tombstone. Photo credit: Abe and Gerry Friesen.

August G. A. Liebig and his North American Legacy¹

by Abe J. Dueck

Mennonite Brethren historians have long noted the role of August G. A. Liebig (1836-1914) in the early evolution of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia. The fledgling movement was strongly influenced by German Baptist leaders. First, there was Gerhard Oncken, the founder of the German Baptists based in Hamburg, who visited the Mennonite Brethren in 1869. Then, even more importantly, August Liebig was invited by some of the early leaders and came in 1866 to spend several weeks to help bring order to the movement, after the turmoil of the so-called “exuberant movement” (*Froeliche Richtung*). In 1871, Liebig took up residence in Andreasfeld, Chortitza and remained for an entire year. It was partly as a result of his counsel that regular patterns of congregational meetings and conferences were organized. In 1872, Mennonite Brethren were the first to organize into a conference with

annual conventions. The larger body of Mennonites (often referred to as *Kirchengemeinden*) had established an informal structure known as a *Kirchenkonvent*, which consisted of church leaders (*Alteste* and *Lehrer*). But not until 1883 did they establish a “General Conference” (*Allgemeine Bundeskonferenz der Mennonitengemeinden in Russland*).²

August Liebig was one of five Liebig brothers, who were very active in ministry in various regions in Europe and beyond.³ The others were Friedrich Wilhelm, Leopold, Hermann, and Helmut. August, the third brother, was born on February 14, 1836 in Bernstein, Neumark, Prussia. He was converted in 1856. He began his missionary ministry in Bucharest, Romania in 1863. From there, he traveled widely into Turkey and southern Russia. In 1874, he took up residence in Odessa.

(cont'd on p. 6)

Lechfeld Camp (cont'd from p. 1)

During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, Lechfeld was used as a POW camp for French prisoners. Later, during World War I, it housed prisoners captured on the eastern Russian Front.

In the first decade of the 20th century it also became home to one of the first aerial training camps of the newly founded German air force. Among the pilots trained here at that time was Rudolph Hess, later deputy Führer to Adolf Hitler. Hitler himself was stationed for a short time in Lechfeld in 1917-18, after he volunteered for service in a Bavarian Infantry Unit.

After the First World War, all POWs kept in Lechfeld were repatriated and the barracks were used temporarily to house German soldiers being demobilized. After the signing of the Treaty of Versailles (1919), military hardware and airplanes were dismantled and aircraft hangars destroyed.

Reverend Michael Horsch and other South-German Mennonites living in the vicinity felt the camp could be used to house Mennonite refugees, and to start a small farming operation and craft centre. Horsch became the first farm manager, but was replaced by Philipp Lichti in January 1922 due to a variety of difficulties.

This occurred during a time of economic crisis and severe inflation in Germany, and the camp was beset with financial woes from the start. The new Mennonite residents also complained. They were glad to have gotten out of Russia, but were impatient to emigrate to Canada, whose doors were still closed at the time to Mennonite immigration.

When the first wave of “legal” Mennonite migration from the Soviet Union began in the summer of 1923, the facilities at Camp Lechfeld were enlarged to provide temporary housing for these new Mennonite immigrants as well. Theodor Block (himself a Mennonite refugee from the Molochna) was appointed as director of the new “Durchgangslager” (Transit Camp).

Because of Canada’s strict medical policies, no person with communicable diseases, such as trachoma or typhus, was allowed entry to Canada. These individuals, and sometimes their entire families, then had to be housed and provided with medical treatment at Lech-



Army barracks in Lechfeld

feld before they were allowed to leave for Canada.

Throughout these years from 1921-1926, the aid operation was constantly beset by squabbles among German Mennonite leaders. As the emigration wave subsided and dried to a trickle by late 1926, these leaders ultimately decided to liquidate the operation and transfer all remaining emigrants to the processing centre in the Atlantic Park Hostel in Southampton, England. At this time, Benjamin H. Unruh was appointed by the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization to supervise this program.

The Lechfeld camp and the MFF/DMH was officially liquidated in November 1926, but disagreements between German Mennonite leaders over how to deal with the remaining assets, and how to apportion the large outstanding debts, led to an accounting and legal quagmire that dragged on for another 6 years until 1932 (longer than the camp itself had been in operation!). The Lechfeld episode showed Mennonites at their best but also at their worst!

Postscript: Camp Lechfeld found new life in 1933 when the National Socialists came to power in Germany. It became one of the centres of the newly formed German Luftwaffe, especially because of its proximity to the large Messerschmitt Aircraft facilities in nearby Augsburg, and an important training facility for combat pilots and for testing new fighter aircraft. In late 1936, test pilots in Lechfeld set the world speed record – a record that stood until the early 1950s, when Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier in New Mexico. During World War II the airbase was attacked repeatedly and finally destroyed completely by American bombers in 1945. But after the re-establishment of the German *Bundeswehr* and *Luftwaffe* in the early 1950s, Lechfeld became the headquarters of a large German bomber squadron. It remains in use today as a

German and NATO training facility. The day I visited the camp in June 2010, NATO “Tornado” jet fighters screamed overhead, performing precision laser-guided bombing runs in preparation for their deployment in Afghanistan.

For a time Mennonites were able to turn “swords into ploughshares,” [Philipp Hege and Abraham Warkentin, “Das Schwert zur Pflugshare,” *Gemeindeblatt der Mennoniten*, 52. Jg. Nr. 11 (1 Jun 1921), 51] as this large military establishment was converted into a humanitarian aid centre in the 1920s; but in the end, the “ploughshares” were again fashioned into even larger and more deadly “swords.”

[Note: I am grateful to retired German Air Force Captain Werner Bischler for sharing of his extensive knowledge and providing me with a copy of his excellent military history of Lechfeld. The files of the MFF/DMH are found in the archives of the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Weierhof, Germany. Further details will be found in my forthcoming book on *Mennonite Refugee Camps in Germany, 1921-1951*.



Immigration Group, Lechfeld, 1924.

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Jacob D. Reimer (1819-1891)

by Henry Schapansky

[editor's note: The following information was submitted in response to the article on Jacob D. Reimer in *Mennonite Historian* (Vol. 38, no. 2 - June 2012, p. 4).]

The parents of Jacob D. Reimer were: David Reimer (b. 1784) married to Maria (NOT Helena) [thanks for the correction, Henry] Neufeld (b. 1788) (she may have been a daughter of Johann Neufeld (b. 1741), living at Neustädterwald in 1776—1 daughter, later Neudorf, 1789—4 Morgen of land.

Children:

1. Gertruda (b. 1810)
2. David (b. 1812)
3. Johann (b. 1813)
4. Jacob (29.1.1817-13.11.1891)
5. Anna (b. 1821)
6. Kornelius (1823-1870)
7. Katherina (1826-1870). She was the wife of MB leader Johann Klassen.

Confirmation of this data can be found in several places.

(a) Peter Rempel's *Mennonite Migration to Russia...* (p. 102) lists David (age 26) and Maria (age 20) as immigrants to Russia in 1810, with no children.

(b) Karl Stumpp's *The Emigration from Germany to Russia...* (p. 874) lists David (age 30) and Niaria (age 25) at Kronsgarten, Old Colony in 1816, with children Gertruda (age 5), David (age 3) and Johann (age 2)

(c) The 1835 Molotschna census for Schönsee, number 28, lists David Peter Reimer (age 51) and Maria (age 46), as well as all the above children. This entry also indicates that David moved to the Old Colony in 1802 (at age 18?), which may be incorrect.

While it may be true that David founded the Felsenthal estate nursery in 1820, the other claims regarding Jacob's parentage should be checked against this data. And while there are slight discrepancies in the various ages reported, which may depend on when the data for the reports were collected, there is no doubt that the above represents the family of Jacob D. Reimer.

The father of David Reimer may have been the Peter, living at Elbing in 1810-1816, as recorded in the Ellerwald-Elbing assessment records.

Recent Books

Maria Klassen. *A Village Saga: A Memoir* (Private publication, 2012) 175 pp.

This book contains a memoir by Maria Klassen (Mary Braun) (Nov. 12, 1926-Oct. 1, 2008) who grew up in the southern Manitoba village of Blumenort, near the town of Gretna. Her father, minister Jacob J. Klassen, was instrumental in preparing the Mennonite families of the Schlachtin-Baratov Mennonite Settlement in South Russia for emigration to Canada in 1923. She married Abraham Braun and raised a family in St. Catharines, Ontario, where she died before this could be completed for publication.

The book is almost completely personal stories and anecdotes of village life in southern Manitoba during the 1930s and 1940s. Some examples are: "Our Yard," "Weeding," "Saturdays," "Electricity at last," "Pig Killing Day," "School Discipline," "Restricted Activities," "Christmas," "Transportation" and many more.

The appendices include five additional stories written by Maria's siblings.

Katie Peters † (1912-2012)



Katherina "Katie" Peters, born 26 July 1912 and died 13 June 2012 -- a few weeks shy of her 100th birthday. She never married and had a large extended family of nieces and nephews that survived her. She was born on the Bergtal Estate, Schoenfeld, Russia, attended the Landkrone (Molotschna) village school (the family had to relocate due to the Russian Revolution), and emigrated to Canada in 1925 with her parents and siblings, settling in Grand Pointe, Manitoba. Here she completed her schooling and went on to work as a housekeeper, a nanny and a seamstress in the city of Winnipeg, but her greatest passion ended up being researching and documenting genealogies for many Mennonite families. She donated her extensive genealogical collection to the Centre for MB Studies in 1986. Photo: Centre for MB Studies.



It is believed that the man seated, second from the left, is Peter Lepp (1826-1912). I would be interested in finding out who the other men are. I do not know where this Peter Lepp was born, but his son, my great grandfather, Peter Lepp, was born in 1853 in Osterwick, Chortitza, South Russia. Contact: Charlotte McCrae [mailto:crmccrae@gmail.com].

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



**Mennonite
Heritage
Centre**

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Heritage Centre to receive the Schroeder-Fast Letters



Rudy Fast (left) and Victor Fast (right) with the original letters tucked under his arm; Alf Redekopp, MHC Director in the centre. Photo courtesy of Victor Fast.

In late June 2012, Victor and Rudy Fast visited the Centre and delivered copies of the publication *We Must Adapt: The Schroeder-Fast Letters 1930-1988, Learning to Live in Stalinist Russia. A Collection of fifty letters from Russia written by members of the Peter Schroeder and Johann Fast families.*

The transliteration of the letters from the Gothic script to Latin and their translation from German to English was done by Peter Fast. Editorial comments and background articles were written by Victor Fast. Rudy Fast prepared the manuscript for publication. In addition to producing the letters in German and in English, the introductory material provides biographical information about the writers and recipients of the letters and information about the political context on the times in which they were written. This publication also goes a step further and provides the reader with interpretative comments on each of the fifty letters.

The majority of the letters (42) were written between 1930 and 1934. There are no letters in this collection from 1935 to 1938. One letter was written in 1939, one in 1944, two in 1957, one in 1964, one in 1979 and two in 1988. Twenty-one (21) letters come from the Schroeder grandparents of the compilers – Peter Schroeder (1859-1933) and Katharina (Janzen) Schroeder (1862-1935). Another 21 letters came from the household of Gerhard Fast (1888-1935) and Anna

(Janzen) Fast (1894-1942), the uncle and aunt of the compilers. Three of the Fast brothers married Schroeder daughters, which resulted in additional intertwining of the Schroeder and Fast families. The publication will be added to the Mennonite Historical Library (part of Canadian Mennonite University library).

The original letters will be housed at the Mennonite Heritage Centre and digital copies made.

A.R.

Ed Schellenberg papers

Five boxes of Mennonite-related books (approximately 150 titles) and 10 boxes containing other historical documents, unpublished genealogical compilations in binders, photographs and a few charts were picked up at the residence of the late Ed Schellenberg (1928-2012) in Steinbach in July 25, 2012. Ed was a long-time resident of Steinbach, Manitoba, owned and operated Schellenberg Sales and Services (Steinbach), served as a volunteer in various community organizations, and during his retirement years, spent many hours collecting, compiling and researching Mennonite genealogy and family history. The materials seen in this photo were selected from a larger historical collection.

A.R.



Some of the Ed Schellenberg genealogical collection before it was moved to the Mennonite Heritage Centre in July 2012.

The Canadian Mennonite Office files

In early July 2012, twenty-five boxes were shipped from Waterloo to Winnipeg containing the contents of 4 filing cabinets – the records originating out of the office of *The Canadian Mennonite*, founded in Altona, Manitoba in 1953. The paper was published weekly from October 1953 till February 1971. At a time when Mennonite denominational papers in Canada still used German

almost exclusively, this private initiative sought to reach out to many Canadian Mennonite young people and others who did not or could not read German-language periodicals. The initial publisher was D.W. Friesen; later, The Canadian Mennonite Publishing Company was founded to oversee the publication. Publishers identified the paper as “Devoted to the affairs of Mennonites in Canada.” The first editor was Frank H. Epp (1953-1967).

A.R.

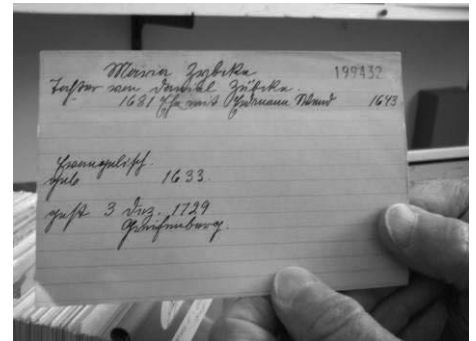
MGI Cards Scanning Project Completed



John I. Friesen with the last card to be scanned. Photo credit: Alf Redekopp

Thanks to the assistance of volunteer John I. Friesen, the scanning of the Mennonite Genealogy Inc. (MGI) genealogical card index was completed this summer. The project began 5 years ago, when the Centre acquired the holdings of MGI and decided that the best way to make this resource available would be via images stored on a local computer in the reading room. It was estimated that the five (5) metal filing cabinets held approximately 200,000 cards, and there was little space to make more filing cabinets available in the research area. John scanned the last card, numbered 199,492 on July 24, 2012. The Centre has appreciated John’s regular volunteering at the Centre this summer.

A.R.

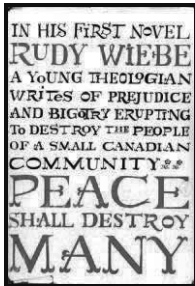


The last card in the A.A. Vogt / MGI “Kartei” genealogical card collection – No. 199,432 – Maria Zybcke b. 1633 d. 3 Dec 1729.



Kate Woltmann. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz

Fifty years of Peace: a request from Prof. Paul Tiessen



This is the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, the first novel by Rudy Wiebe (launched by McClelland and Stewart on Saturday 13 October 1962). Many Mennonites, like other Canadians, became caught up in a wide range of responses to Wiebe's novel. Mennonite Brethren became particularly engaged. Some felt dismayed by its appearance, others felt liberated.

In preparation for a historical recollection that I am writing, I am seeking people's memories of reactions to that event—memories, for example, of conversations and encounters that occurred at particular moments or locations, especially during those early years. I invite impressions of your own experience and/or—given the likelihood that some of today's readers of the *Mennonite Historian* will have observed the responses of people perhaps no longer with us—those of older generations.

My interest extends to the contributions of the publisher (M&S) to the reception of the novel, including its approach to book design and sales strategies. It extends also to a consideration of Wiebe's identity and impact as editor (1962–1963) of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. I hope to publish a short version of my study in *Mennonite Historian*, and a long version in another venue yet to be determined.

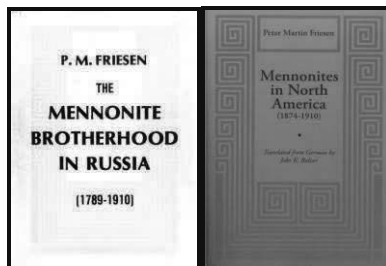
Please email your evaluations, impressions, and recollections to me at ptiessen@wlu.ca or mail them to me c/o Department of English and Film Studies, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo ON N2L 3C5.

The Centers for Mennonite Brethren Studies (Hillsboro and Winnipeg) announce the release of:
Part II of Peter M. Friesen's Mennonite history,
Mennonites in North America (1874-1910),

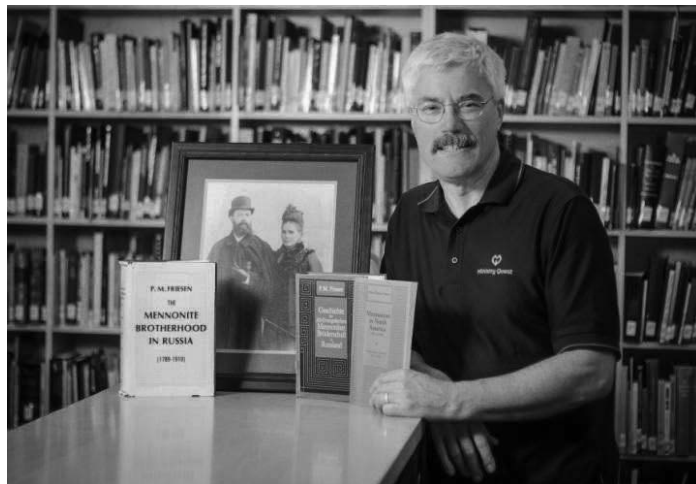
translated from German by Jake K. Balzer
ISBN 13:978-1-894791-30-4 / 238 pp.

"P.M. Friesen's account of Mennonite immigration, cultural assimilation, and spiritual development in the United States and Canada, Part II, consists of a diverse collection of documentation and data, taken from published and unpublished sources, including both anecdotal and formal presentations. Some authors and submitters were widely-known, some lesser known. Some had clerical credentials, some had spiritual zeal. Friesen's efforts to focus on the good, yet maintain integrity, give us a genuine history, rather than a sanitized history."

—Peggy Goertzen, CMBS Director (Hillsboro)



- Web price \$20 plus shipping; see <http://www.kindredproductions.com>
- **Special offer:** For a limited time, book purchases will include a CD of digital copies (completely searchable) of both the 1978 translation of Part I concerning Russia (book on left—1,098 pp.) and the 2012 translation of Part II concerning North America (book on right—238 pp.)



Jon Isaak with new P.M. Friesen publication.
Photo credit: Kyle Thomas



CMBS Update

This year's summer assistant is Kate Woltmann (BA History, University of Manitoba). In addition to scanning documents, updating finding indexes, and receptionist duties at the front desk, Kate completed two large fonds description projects this summer—the personal papers of ministers Roland Marsch (1938-2008) and Dr. Rueben Baerg (1914-2001). The descriptions of the contents of these fonds are accessible on our website under "Personal Papers."

The documents Kate scanned are part of three larger projects that we are working on and soon ready to be launched: 1) A CD collection of *Mennonite Brethren Herald* (1962–2012) that is completely searchable, 2) A CD collection of the *Christian Leader* (the US MB denominational magazine), also searchable, and 3) ongoing digitization of the 177 volumes of genealogies compiled by Katie Peters. The descriptions of these compilations are accessible on our website under "Genealogical Collections."

Note: Katie Peters, long-time genealogist, passed away June 13, 2012. She was almost 100 years old, born July 26, 1912. Our extensive genealogical collection, including her works as well as others, is named in her honour (see *MH* Vol. 12, No. 1-March 1986, pp. 1-2; *MH* Vol. 29, No. 4-December 2003, p. 5, and p. 3 this issue).

Thanks for your good work this summer Kate! We wish you much joy as you continue your studies in artifact restoration.

J.I.

August Liebig

(cont'd from p. 1)

Then, in 1887, he moved to Lodz, Poland, where he became pastor of a congregation.⁴ But he was deported in 1890 and spent a brief period helping his brother Hermann in Stettin, Germany, before moving to America in 1892 and settling in the Dakotas. After his departure from Europe, little was reported in Europe about his activity and ministry.

Mennonite Brethren historians have also paid almost no attention to Liebig's later ministry, his migration to North America, and his further contacts with Mennonite Brethren, or to his family's ties with Mennonite Brethren. Peter M. Friesen, in a letter to John F. Harms, the editor of the *Zionsbote*, makes a brief reference to Liebig's move to America.⁵ Friesen comments that he was very pleased that the American brothers were fostering relationships with the German Baptists and again, in the old Russian manner, sitting in "Bible school" at the feet of the dear honorable brother, August Liebig. Evidently, these were Bible study sessions, probably held in homes. In Part II of his monumental history, Friesen refers briefly to Liebig's daughter,

Martha, and to August Liebig himself, who, he believes, is "now (?) residing in Bridgewater, South Dakota."⁶

The Liebigs left for America in 1892.⁷ The subsequent 22 years were spent in the Dakotas. Liebig's wife's maiden and given names are unknown, but she died on February 4, 1912.⁸ They had four children. The oldest daughter was married and is only referred to as Mrs. (or *Schwester*) Lutz. Another daughter, Martha, was first married to Peter H. Wedel (1865–1897), who was the son of Mennonite Brethren minister and elder, Cornelius P. Wedel, and the brother of the first president of Bethel College in Kansas, named Cornelius H. Wedel. There were also two sons in the Liebig family, named August and Johannes, who at the time of their mother's death were referred to as "unbelievers."

Although August Liebig continued to minister primarily to various German Baptist congregations in the Dakotas, there is considerable evidence that he was a frequent guest at Mennonite Brethren congregations in the area. Reports in the *Zionsbote*, from McClusky in particular, indicate that he was well known there and that MBs sometimes attended his services in the Baptist church.⁹

Liebig died on August 19, 1914 in the home of his eldest daughter in Pleasant Valley, North Dakota. The funeral took place in her home on August 20 and he was buried near Denhoff, next to his wife, on August 23. A report of the funeral was published in the *Zionsbote*, as well as *Der Sendbote*, a German Baptist periodical.¹⁰ One of the speakers at the funeral was Ludwig Seibel, a long-time Mennonite Brethren leader and minister in the area. An inquiry to the Bureau of Vital Statistics of North Dakota in Bismark yielded a copy of his Certificate of Death. On the basis of this information, recent visits to the area led to the discovery of the grave site (see photos on p.1).¹¹

The Liebigs had other significant connections with Mennonite Brethren through daughter Martha (1866–1915). Martha was married to Peter H. Wedel (June 27, 1895), as already noted above. Wedel was an evangelist who served the Mennonite Brethren conference. A brief biography was written by A. E. Janzen.¹² Wedel is frequently referred to in the minutes of the annual conventions and was considered a very gifted man. He attended Rochester seminary, a Baptist seminary in Rochester, NY, known for its academic rigor and social witness. From 1888 to 1895, he conducted many evangelistic campaigns in Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Minnesota.¹³ During the 1890s, Mennonite Brethren were often debating what to do about their involvement in missions—whether to send candidates to the mission field under the Baptist board or to begin an independent Mennonite Brethren venture. Before the issue was fully resolved, the Wedels applied to the Baptist board and, in 1895, left for Cameroon in Africa. The Wedels were given a certain amount of financial support by the Mennonite Brethren Conference and were considered Mennonite Brethren missionaries, although the Baptists also considered them to be their missionaries. Their photo and a brief summary are included in the Mennonite Brethren *Missionary Album* (see photo on p.7).¹⁴

Shortly after their arrival in Cameroon, Martha became ill and, after only eight months, had to return with her infant son, Herbert, who was born in Africa.¹⁵ Then, in 1897, Peter fell ill with malaria and boarded a ship, the *Lothar Bohlen*, bound for America. He died on board the ship on August 10 and was buried in the Atlantic.

Martha later remarried, although the date

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS		MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH							
Sex	Male	Color	White	Date of Death (Month)	August 20	(Day)	20	(Year)	1914
Date of Birth (Month)		(Day)							
Age	77 years, months, days								
Single, Married, Widowed or Divorced	Married								
Age at Marriage									
Number of Children	If married, age at (first) marriage								
	Parent of children, of whom are living								
Birthplace (State or country)	Russia								
Name of Father									
Birthplace of Father (State or country)	Russia								
Maiden Name of Mother									
Birthplace of Mother (State or country)	Russia								
Occupation	Preacher								
The above stated personal particulars are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.									
(Informant)	Mr. Hallbricht								
(Address)	Denhoff N.D.								
PLACE OF DEATH		STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA							
County of Sheridan		BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS							
Township of Denhoff		CERTIFICATE OF DEATH							
or		2884							
Village of		Registered No.							
City of		(No. St. Ward)							
		(If death occurred in a Hospital or Institution, give its NAME instead of street and number. If away from usual residence, give Special Information below.)							
FULL NAME August L Liebig Sr									
Date of Burial		August 23		1914					
Place of Burial or Removal		Denhoff N.D.							
Undertaker									
Filed		100		Registrar.					

August Liebig death certificate

of her marriage is not known. Her husband was Jakob Wahl.¹⁶ The Wahl name was not uncommon among North Dakota Mennonite Brethren and German Baptists. Jakob already had two sons from a previous marriage, one of whom was E. P. Wahl. Martha became his step-mother, during some of his formative years.¹⁷ E. P. Wahl eventually became the founder of the German Baptist Christian Training Institute, later known as the North American Baptist College in Edmonton, Alberta. As early as 1923, Wahl's name emerged in connection with efforts to organize a series of short courses in Leduc, Alberta.¹⁸ These courses were very successful and, in 1937, Wahl was appointed the full-time director of the Northern Conference Bible schools. In 1939, construction of a training school began and, in January 1940, classes began with Wahl as the first President. He continued in that role for the next several decades.



Peter Wedel and Martha Liebig

Martha Liebig died in 1915, only about one year after the death of her father. The *Zionsbote* reported on the deaths of each of three Liebig family members. It is not known whether Martha was a member of the Mennonite Brethren or Baptists at the time of her death.

The Liebig story has always been recognized as an important chapter in the early evolution of the Mennonite Brethren in Russia. But neither the German Baptists nor the Mennonite Brethren have recognized the full extent of the subsequent influence of August Liebig or the Liebig family in North America. Undoubtedly, the influence of Liebig was felt particularly in the Dakotas, but also in educational developments among Baptists and in missions in both denominations as a whole.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this essay appeared in the *Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies Newsletter* [Tabor College, Hillsboro, KS] 17 (Spring 2004): 1–4 and is reproduced

here with permission from the editor, Peggy Goertzen.

2. This “General Conference” should not be confused with the General Conference that emerged in North America in 1860.
3. I am grateful to Herbert Klukas of Vancouver, BC, who is a descendent of the Liebigs. He provided me with some helpful information about Liebig and his brothers, including a 145-page copy of Wolfgang H. Mueller, “Die Fuenf Brueder Liebig: Missionare und Prediger der zweiten Generation des deutschen Baptismus” (Semesterarbeit, Theologischen Seminar der Evangelisch-freikirchlichen Gemeinden, Hamburg-Horn, Germany, 1982); that copy is now part of the library collection at CMBS, Winnipeg.
4. See Eduard Kupsch, *Geschichte der Baptisten in Polen, 1852–1932* (Selbstverlag, 1932?), 159 ff.
5. “Ein Brief,” *Zionsbote (ZB)*, 18 (May 14, 1902): 2–3.
6. *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruederschaft in Russland (1789–1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte* (Halbstadt, Taurien: Raduga, 1911), Part. II, 14. See English translation of Part II, *Mennonites in North America (1874–1910)*, trans. Jake K. Balzer (Winnipeg, MB; Goessel, KS: Kindred, 2012), 13.
7. *ZB* 30 (September 16, 1914): 4.
8. Report by Ludwig Seibel, *ZB*, 28/1 (February 14, 1912): 4.
9. See e.g., *ZB* 22 (February 28, 1906): 2.
10. *ZB* 30 (September 16, 1914): 4; *Der Sendbote* (September 9, 1914).
11. On the basis on this information, the author consulted with Gerry and Abraham Friesen, who have family connections in this area. They were able to find the grave and took photographs. My attempt to get the cemetery in early November 2003 was unsuccessful, because the accumulation of snow made it impossible to get to the remote site which has no road access.
12. See unpublished essay in the Peter H. Wedel Personal Papers fonds at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Hillsboro, Kansas. Copy also at CMBS, Winnipeg, filed in Peter H. Wedel Personal Papers fonds.
13. *Mennonite Encyclopedia* IV: 908; “Wedel, Peter H. (1865–1897),” *GAMEO*, accessed July 16, 2012, <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/W4388.html>.
14. *Missionary Album 1889–1963: Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conferences* (Hillsboro, KS: Board of Missions of the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, 1963), 5. See also Clarence Hiebert, “Mennonite Brethren-Baptist Relations in the United States” in *Mennonites & Baptists: A Continuing Conversation* (Winnipeg, MB; Hillsboro, KS: Kindred, 1993), 146 ff. Hiebert does not mention Peter Wedel's wife, Martha Liebig, or her connection to August Liebig.
15. *ZB* 13 (September 29, 1897): 4.
16. *ZB* 31 (August 18, 1915): 4.
17. The *Zionsbote* (December 4, 1935, p. 11) has an obituary of a Jakob Wahl (1865–1935), who was baptized by August Liebig in 1879 and received into membership of

the Baptist Church in South Dakota. In 1902, the family moved to North Dakota and settled near Goodrich. In 1917, they joined the Mennonite Brethren Church in Stark and later moved again and joined the Harvey MB Church. The couple had four sons and four daughters. It is possible that one of the sons was the Jakob Wahl who became the second husband of Martha.

18. See Bruce L. Guenther, “Training for Service: The Bible School Movement in Western Canada, 1909–1960” (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, 2001), 191 ff.

Book Notes

(cont'd from p. 8)

conflicts that are quite removed from the local community, the War of 1812 would bring harsh external forces to bear on the community that would force each family to take a stand. Contact: Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum, Box 572, Port Colbourne, ON L3K 5X8.



Verbannt und ohne Heimat: Deutsche Auswanderer in Russland: Familiengeschichte und Lebenserinnerungen by Maria Reichert (Geschichtswerkstatt Büdingen Joachim Cott, 2012) contains the

personal account of Maria Reichert (b. ca. 1926), whose German ancestors settled in the Volga region at the end of the 18th Century. Displaced due to political policies to the Altai region in 1941, at age 17 she was forced to work in the Soviet Gulag stripped of all rights. Hundreds of fellow internees died either from the extreme cold, work conditions, lack of food or adequate medical attention. Eventually, she moved with her children from Siberia to Kasachstan, to Latvia to Germany—in search of freedom, away from starvation and discrimination. The story parallels that of many Mennonite families during the same period.

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Book Notes

by Jon Isaak and Alf Redekopp



Pastor Kevin Koop, in a 14-page commemorative booklet with photos, **Blaine Lake Gospel Chapel: Centennial Celebration** (www.lemonproductions.ca, 2012), narrates the church's growth and development through its 100 years. It is an interesting example of collaboration between the Mennonite Brethren and the Russian Baptists in the area. While the church began as a MB congregation in 1912, from 1924 until 1967 the two groups joined as one congregation under the name, *Baptist Mennonite Union Church of Blaine Lake*. Services were held in Russian and English. In 1967, the church transitioned to English only and became known as Blaine Lake Gospel Chapel. That was also the year the church was accepted as a member of the Saskatchewan MB Conference. Contact: Pastor Kevin Koop, Box 15, Blaine Lake, SK S0J 0J0.



John N. Klassen and Johann Matthies, eds., **In Gott leben wir, bestehen wir und sind wir! 150 Jahre Mennoniten Bruedergemeinden** (Lage: Lichtenzeichen, 2011, 265 pp.) is a collection of 12 German essays, given first as presentations at the Symposium zur Geschichte und Theologie der Mennoniten Bruedergemeinden (May 13-14, 2010, Orlinghausen, Germany). The occasion was the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the MB church (similar celebrations were held in Langley, BC [July 12-14, 2010] and Jadcherla, Andhra Pradesh, India [Jan 17, 2010]). The contributors to the German volume include: John N. Klassen, Johann Matthies, Johannes Dyck, Heinz Dieter Giesbrecht, Alexander Neufeld, Doug Heidebrecht, Abraham Friesen, Victor Wall, Larry Miller, Ray Harms-Wiebe, and I. P. Asheervadam.



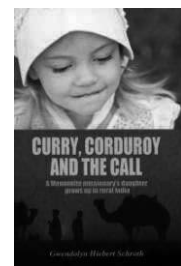
Herbert J. Brandt, **Transitions: Whatever happened to Mennonite Brethren Churches** (Winnipeg: Windflower, 2012, 81 pp.) is an account of the changes in the MB church from Herb's perspective.

With over sixty years of pastoral and conference ministry experience among

MBs, Herb makes observations regarding changes in the following topics: social standards (clothing, amusements, and weddings), ethnic and cultural barriers (language, ethnicity, inter-Mennonite relations), political involvement (voting, holding public office), biblical/life issues (marriage, sexuality, divorce, peace witness, materialism), pressures to conform (music, baptism, communion, Sabbath keeping), leadership (changing styles, conference structures), doctrine/theological issues (eschatology, ecclesiology, atonement, biblical authority). Contact: Windflower, 67 Flett Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2K 3N3.

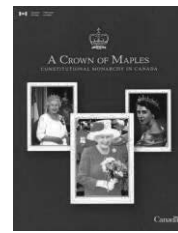


Kathleen Francis, **Conversations with Monuments in Winnipeg** (Winnipeg: Kindred, 2012), offers a 40-page photo-journal of several unique Winnipeg monuments (Timothy Eaton, Gandhi, Selkirk Settlers, Famous Five [Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby], and Louis Riel). The narrative thread that ties these five vignettes together is Kathleen's journey during the winter of 2011, when she was passing through a particularly lonely and difficult period in her life. To her surprise, she found that these statues each had a story to tell; and as she listened she found profound insights that opened up paths for transformation in her own life.

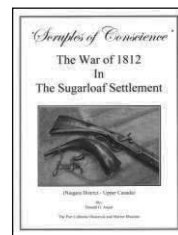


Gwendolyn Hiebert Schroth, **Curry, Corduroy, and the Call: A Mennonite missionary's daughter grows up in rural India** (Denver: Outskirts, 2011, 183 pp.) tells the story of the J. N. C. and Anna Hiebert family, who served as MB missionaries in India (1929-1952). With much humour, lots of pluck, and loads of insight, Gwen tells how the missionary zeal of her parents appeared to her as a six-year-old and as a teenager. Both the faith of her parents in "the Call of God" and the austere, rigidity of Mennonite community life are told with brutal honesty and yet, with appreciation. The narration of her boarding school experiences is equally hilarious and haunting. In the end, all nine Hiebert children (Phyllis, Grace, Helen, Paul, Elizabeth, Gwendolyn, Joanne, Margaret, and Lois) embrace their own

"calling," valuing education and service to others. "Interestingly," Gwen observes, "most of us left the Mennonite faith, yet each of us raised our children with good old-fashioned Mennonite values" (181).



A Crown of Maples: Constitutional Monarchy in Canada (Gatineau, Québec: Canadian Heritage, 2008) freely distributed by the Government of Canada to mark the Diamond Jubilee of the reign of Queen Elizabeth of Canada. "Canada has always had a monarch, since the time of King Henry VII of England and King Francis I of France. Today the Queen and her eleven representatives, the Governor General and the Lieutenant Governors, form the institution of the Canadian Crown – an institution that remains the heart of our parliamentary democracy..." (The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, in the introductory letter). In addition to 8 chapters on the role and nature of the constitutional monarchy in Canada and many photographs, the appendixes contain lists of the Sovereigns of Canada from 1485-2012, Governors/Governors General from 1627-2012, and details of every Royal Visit of Queen Elizabeth to Canada (23 visits from 1951, as Princess Elizabeth, to 2010).



'Scruples of Conscience': The War of 1812 in the Sugarloaf Settlement (Niagara District - Upper Canada) / by Donald Anger (Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum, 2008) is the book for anyone interested in the subject of conscientious objectors in Ontario during the period from 1812-1814. A study which began as an investigation into what happened during the War of 1812 at Gravelly Bay on the shore of Lake Erie at present day Port Colborne turned into a book. There are separate chapters on the campaigns of 1812, 1813 and 1814, and an extensive prologue to the War of 1812 and a final chapter entitled, "After the War." At the eve of the War of 1812, the Sugarloaf Settlement consisted of roughly three groups of equal size – Mennonites, Quakers and the rest. They lived in relative quiet harmony beside one another. Sadly, as so often the case with

(cont'd on p. 7)