

Mennonite Historian

A PUBLICATION OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES



In May, 2025, The Mennonite World Conference was held in Zurich to coincide with the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism. In the foreground is the Wasserkirche and in the background the Grossmünster Church where a worship service for the anniversary was held with participation from Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed representatives. Photo Credit: Conrad Stoesz.

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Robert Zander: A Doctor in the Molochna Colony, 1852-1854

by James Urry

In 1848, the members of a number of villages in the Mennonite Colony of Molochna agreed to vote on a proposal to hire a medical doctor with payment to come from settlement funds. Although some villagers voted earlier, most cast their votes in late 1850 and early 1851. The outcome was forwarded to the government Guardianship Committee and a doctor, Robert Zander, was appointed to treat each colonist at no extra charge beyond the salary he received from Colony funds.¹ Who was Robert Zander and why were Mennonites so eager to have him?

Robert Zander, the son of a merchant, was born in December 1824 in the Latvian city of Riga, a city on the Baltic, then part of the Russian Empire.² He studied medicine between 1844 and 1849 at the prestigious medical school at the Dorpat Imperial University and, in 1850, was awarded a doctorate after defending his dissertation, *De Succo Entericox*, based on his research into the enteric juices of the body.³ The following year he became the medical doctor in Dorogobuzh, an urban centre of Smolensk Province before being appointed to the post in the Molochna Colony where he remained for two years.

One aspect of Zander's earlier career points to the reason that Mennonites were signatories to a request for a doctor and perhaps why he was selected. In the 1840s, cholera reemerged across Europe. Cholera,

is a bacterial infection of the small intestine spread through contaminated water that causes severe diarrhoea, muscle cramps, and dehydration; it can prove fatal within a short period of time among even healthy people. It is caused by a bacterium, *Vibrio cholerae*, which can become extremely infectious and consequently spread rapidly causing a pandemic. In the summer of 1848, along with other doctors, Zander had been sent to Riga to assist with the

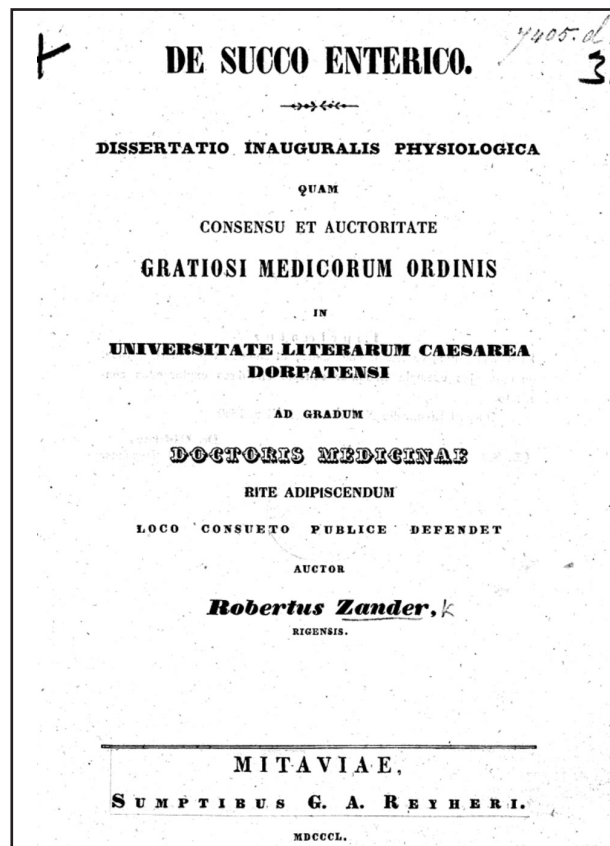
spread across Russia and created a major challenge for the government.⁷ The 1846 outbreak can be tracked through regular monthly reports in the St. Petersburg *Medicinisches Zeitung Russlands*, which records the outbreaks of the disease by province and city, month by month, over several years.⁸ The major cases in the regions where most Mennonites lived were recorded between June 10 and October 4 for Khortitsa in Ekaterinoslav Province, and between June 25 and October 17, 1848, in Molochna in Taurida Province. Out of a population of 870,010 people in Ekaterinoslav Province, 37,414 people became ill and 12,570 died of cholera during this period; in Taurida Province, out of a population of about 572,000, 12,502 fell ill and 4953 died.⁹

Mennonites had not been exempted from the ravages of the disease in earlier outbreaks and more reports of their impact occur in Mennonite and non-Mennonite sources.¹⁰ Less detail has been published concerning the 1848 outbreak. In August 1848, however, reports of the number of people who had been infected, recovered, or died in Khortitsa, Molochna, and Berghthal were received by the Guardians Committee in Odessa.¹¹ By the time Zander arrived in Molochna,

cholera had declined but there was still much for him to do with regard to the health of Mennonites. The vaccination of people, especially children against smallpox, appears to have been accepted by many in the colony.¹²

Little more is known about Zander's time in Molochna. One source suggests he associated with Philipp Wiebe (1816-1870), Johann Cornies' son-in-law who inherited his Yushanlee estate and in many ways assumed his central role in the colony. Wiebe had major interests in science and scientific matters, corresponding with Imperial scientific bodies in St Petersburg. He also played important roles in the development of agriculture, forestry, and education in the Molochna and other

(cont'd on p. 4)



Title page of Zander's thesis which earned him a doctorate. Image Credit: James Urry.

serious outbreak of cholera. According to one report almost 10 per cent of the city's 70,000 inhabitants fell ill with cholera and 2,229 died.⁴ The mortality rate was higher in the poorer suburbs where Zander worked: the *Maskavas forstate* or Moscow suburb which contained a large Jewish population. Later accounts detailed the importance of Dorpat-educated doctors sent to the city in handling the cholera outbreak and a lower casualty rate from cholera compared with elsewhere in Russia.⁵ This outbreak was often known as "Asian Cholera" as it was first reported farther east from Europe and moved steadily westward. It was also known as the third pandemic and lasted from 1846 to 1863.⁶ Two earlier epidemics had occurred: the first between 1817 and 1823 and a second from 1826 to 1837. Both

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Genealogy and Family History

Paul Vogt (1724 – 1809)

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

One of the biggest roadblocks faced by genealogists is the degree to which many of our ancestors moved around. This was particularly true for the large landless class who were not connected to a particular piece of agricultural property. Paul Vogt's (GM#267674)¹ situation was different in two ways: 1) although a property owner, he moved frequently, and significant distances for a Mennonite of his time during his adult years and, 2) he lived to be 85 years old, about 20 years beyond the average life expectancy of a male of his generation.

The first documented appearance of Paul Vogt was in the 1772 census of West Prussia.² This census was carried out by the Prussian government shortly after the Prussian annexation of much of northern Poland into the new province of West Prussia. This new province contained most of the Low-German Mennonites alive at that time. At that time, he was called Paul Facht and was living in the village of Rosenkranz with his wife, three sons over 12, a son under 12, and two daughters under 12. He owned 22 Morgen and 154 Ruten of land (about 31 acres or 12.5 hectares) in Rosenkranz. This amount of land was fairly typical for a West Prussian Mennonite landowner at that time. He also owned an unspecified amount of land in nearby Gross Usnitz where he is referred to as "Paul Vogt" who "lives in Rosenkranz." Rosenkranz property records show that he sold his land in 1773.³

He then moved to the Mennonite community in Lithuania in 1773 or early 1774.

The Lithuanian Mennonite church records show that a son, Johann, was baptized there on May 23, 1774.⁴ This is certainly an error, since son Johann was baptized in West Prussia in 1785.⁵ This son was much more likely to have been Paul whose biographical data fits this baptismal date. The Lithuanian church records also show the births of a daughter (Eva) in 1777, a son Abraham in 1778, and a daughter Marike (Maria) in 1778. A census list and

a church membership list also show him in Lithuania in 1777.⁶ A church membership list from 1782 shows him in the village of Bogdahnen with wife, one child over 12, and 5 children under 12.⁷

He then moved back to West Prussia (between 1782 and 1785):

The Tragheimerweide congregational records show the baptisms of children Johann (1785), Heinrich (1792), and Eva (1792).⁸ The 1789 census of Mennonite landowners in West Prussia shows that he owned 22 Morgen of land in Fuchswinkel (also called Fosswinkel).⁹ In 1795, his wife Eva died in Fuchswinkel at the age of 49 years.¹⁰

He then moved again to Lithuania (in 1795 or 1796).

The Lithuanian church records show that he re-married in 1796.¹¹ These records also show the death of daughter Maria in 1798, birth of son Franz in 1804, and birth of son Friedrich in 1806.

Once again, he moved back to West Prussia (between 1806 and 1809)

According to the Mennonite church records of the Tragheimerweide congregation, Paul Vogt died in Weisshof, in the Marienwerder region on 12 Sep 1809 at the age of 85 years.¹²

DNA analysis and the Mennonite Vogt family.

Members of only two Vogt families are known to have moved to Russia between 1789 and 1870. They were Paul Vogt (#267674, discussed above) and Jacob Vogt (#199217). Two male Vogt descendants of each family have done Y-DNA Tests.¹³ Y-DNA is passed down from father to son, just like traditional family names. They are close matches indicating that there is a common Vogt ancestor. There was also a Gerhard Vogt (GM#419872), who was born in the early 1700s (probably in West Prussia) and who died in the Mennonite community of Deutsch Kazun sometime before 1833. No male member of this

family has done a Y-DNA test. Many Mennonite Vogts stayed in Prussia, whose descendants were still there at the end of the World War Two. We do not yet know how these families fit into the overall Mennonite Vogt family.

Endnotes

1. For more information on the GRaNDMA database information see: <https://mgi.mennonitegenealogy.com/grandma/whatsgrandma.php>.

2. "West Prussian Land Census of 1772." See here for villages containing Mennonites: https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/1772/West_Prussia_Census_1772.pdf.

3. "Property records of Rosenkrantz, West Prussia," https://mla.bethelks.edu/archives/VI_53/Malbork/Rosenkranz/Rosenkranz%20Blatt%207%20Malbork%20Archives%20Fond%20196%20File%205478/

4. "Mennonite church records of Plauschwarren, (Lithuania) East Prussia." [https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/churchregisters/Oestliche_preussische_Provinzen_und_Polen_\(Teil\)/Plauschwarren-Pokraken.html](https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/churchregisters/Oestliche_preussische_Provinzen_und_Polen_(Teil)/Plauschwarren-Pokraken.html)

5. "Mennonite church records of Tragheimerweide, West Prussia." Images can be found at [https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/churchregisters/Oestliche_preussische_Provinzen_und_Polen_\(Teil\)/Tragheimerweide.html](https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/churchregisters/Oestliche_preussische_Provinzen_und_Polen_(Teil)/Tragheimerweide.html)

6. Erwin Wittenberg, and Manuel Janz, *Die Mennonitengemeinde in noerdlichen Ostpreussen* (Bolanden-Weierhof, 2022), 159; Wittenberg and Janz, 172 - 173. https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/Lithuania_List_1777.pdf

7. Wittenberg and Janz, 160.

8. "Mennonite church records of Tragheimerweide, West Prussia."

9. Adalbert Goertz. "The 1789 Land Census/General-Nachweisung of West Prussian Mennonites," http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/1789_Land_Census_West_Prussian_Mennonites.htm

10. "Mennonite church records of Tragheimerweide, West Prussia."

11. "Mennonite church records of Plauschwarren, (Lithuania) East Prussia."

12. "Mennonite church records of Tragheimerweide, West Prussia."

13. For more information on the Mennonite Y-DNA project see:

a) the results and analysis at: <http://www.mennonitedna.com/>

b) an explanation of Y-DNA at <https://mennonitehistorian.ca/44.4.MHDec18.pdf>.

settlements. He appears to have possessed a more inclusive sense of purpose than Cornies, who became increasingly authoritarian toward his death, ironically in early 1848, the year of cholera but before the disease became a major concern in Molochna.

One diarist reported in December 1854, that he took “Mr. Zander” and “Mr. and Mrs. Wiebe and family” to Yushanlee by sleigh and later “Dr. Zander” and Wiebe, his wife, and a Doerksen to Halbstadt “to attend the [Zentral] School closing examinations.”¹³ This suggests that by this time Zander was well integrated into the Molochna Colony and its leading intelligentsia,¹⁴ but later in 1854, Zander accepted a position as the doctor on the estate of Baron Stieglitz at Grushevka (Грушевка) in Ekaterinoslav Province.¹⁵ Here, in January 1856, he died leaving a widow, Sophie (nee Kloberg).¹⁶

In later years, the Mennonite colonies would be served by other doctors, mostly outsiders and many trained at Dorpat like Zander. The most notable was probably Erich A. Tavonius (1872-1927).¹⁷ And in time Mennonites from the empire would study at Dorpat, some in medicine.¹⁸ Apart from minor mentions, however, Zander’s time in the Mennonite Colony appears to have passed without much notice.

Endnotes

1. “Molotschna Mennonite Settlement Voting Lists: 1848-1851,” Odessa Region State Archives, Odessa, Ukraine, Fond 6, Inventory 2, File 11792; Compiled by Steve Fast at: https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/molotschna/Mennonite_Settlement_Voting_Lists_1848-1851.pdf

2. The information on Zander’s life is mainly based on his obituaries and an entry in the record of graduates of his university. See *Das Inland* (Riga), 21 (9), 27 February 1856, 141; *Medizinische Zeitung Russlands*, (St Petersburg), 10 March, 1856, 80; A. Hasselblatt and G. Otto eds, *Album Academicum der Kaiserlichen Universität Dorpat* (Dorpat: Verlag von C. Mattiesen, 1889), 340. On the Zander family and its most famous member, Friedrich, see Gunther Sollinger and Afida Zigmunde, *From Airplanes to Rockets: Friedrich Zander and Early Aviation in Riga*. (Riga: RTU Press, 2018), chapter 1.

3. Robertus Zander, *De Succo Enterico*, Inaugural Dissertation, Dorpat University, 1850; he subsequently published at least two papers on the subject, “Ueber den Darmsaft,” *Annalen der Chemie und Pharmacie*, 79 (3), 1851, 313-27 and “Sur le suc intestinal,” *Journal de Pharmacie et de Chimie*, Series 3, 21, 1852, 73-79.

4. Bernhard Friedrich Baerens, “Geschichtliches aus der Cholera-Epidemie in Riga im Jahr 1848,” *Beiträge zur Heilkunde*, 1, 1851, 115

5. Carl Johann Georg Müller, ed., *Die Cholera in Riga im Jahre 1848* (Riga: Edmund Götschel,

1849); J. L. Staeger, *Die Cholera als Krankheit der Haut* (Mitau and Leipzig: G. A. Reher, 1850); see also Catherine Gibson, “Riga’s Cholera curves: visualising past pandemics,” September 4, 2020 at <https://deepbaltic.com/2020/09/04/rigas-cholera-curves-visualising-past-pandemics2/>

6. “Asiatic Cholera,” in August Hirsch, *Handbook of Geographical and Historical Pathology, Volume 1: Acute Infective Diseases* (London: The New Sydenham Society 1883), 404-13.

7. K. David Patterson, “Cholera diffusion in Russia, 1823–1923,” *Social Science & Medicine*, 38, (9), 1994, 1171-91; John P. Davis, *Russia in the Time of Cholera: Disease under Romanovs and Soviets* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

8. There is a useful summary of the 1848 outbreak in “Nachrichten über die Cholera in Russland,” *Beilage zu N° 11 of Der Medicinischen Zeitung Russlands*, 6, March 1849.

9. “Verbreitung der Cholera in Russland während des Jahres 1848 nach officiellen Berichten zusammengestellt von Frettenbacher in Moskau,” *Vierteljahrsschrift für die praktische Heilkunde* (Prague), 6 (3), 1849, 108-09.

10. On the second outbreaks, especially in Molochna, see Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, “A Mennonite Pandemic Spirituality, 1830-1831,” *History of the Russian Mennonites* (blog), May 29, 2023, <https://russianmennonites.blogspot.com/2023/05/a-mennonite-pandemic-spirituality-1830.html>

11. Odessa Region State Archives, Guardianship Committee for Foreign settlers in Southern Russia, 29, at https://www.mharchives.ca/holdings/organizations/Odessa_Archive_F6/F6-2.pdf

12. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, “Vaccinations in Chortitza and Molotschna, beginning 1804,” *History of the Russian Mennonites* (blog), May 29, 2023, <https://russianmennonites.blogspot.com/2023/05/vaccinations-in-chortitza-and.html>.

13. Martin Klaassen (1820–1881) *Diary November 1852—June 1870 August 1880—October 1881*. Translated by Esther C. (Klaassen) Bergen, (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1993). Revised at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 2011, 40, 42: at https://ptolemy.phas.ubc.ca/klaassen/Martin_Klaassen_Diary.pdf.

14. The Doerksen frequently mentioned in Klassen’s diary was undoubtedly Jacob Doerksen who with Wiebe made extensive notes on the climate and bird and animal life in Molochna, see “Tagebuch von Jacob Dörksen aus Kolonie Orloff, Molotschnaja,” in Dr. Ludwig Friedrich Kämtz, “Über das Klima der südrussischen Steppen. Sechster Abschnitt. Betrachtung auffallen hoher oder niedriger Temperaturen.” *Repertorium für Meteorologie*. 3 (2), Dorpat. 1863, 142-58 at: <https://media.chortitza.org/pdf/viewer.php?file=Buch/Derks.pdf>; Wladimir Koepfen, “Über die Regen- und Wind-verhältnisse Tauriens.” In Heinrich Wild, ed., *Repertorium für Meteorologie*, Volume 1 (St. Petersburg, Imperial Akademie of Science, 1870), 3; A. V. Middendorff, “Die Isepiptesen Russlands. Grundlagen zur Erforschung der Zugzeiten und Zugrichtungen der Vögel Russlands.” *Mémoires de l’Académie Impériale des sciences de St. Pétersbourg*, 6 *Sciences Naturelles*. St Petersburg, 1859, 130.

15. Ironically perhaps the estate might later have been purchased by a Mennonite, Kornelius Isaak Heinrichs. See <https://chortitza.org/FB/vpetk33.php> and Helmut T. Huebert, *Mennonite Estates in Imperial Russia*, (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 2008), 67.

16. No cause of death is given, but he might have been a victim of the numerous diseases spread by soldiers evacuated from the Crimea during the war between Russia and British, French, and other troops; wounded and sick Russian soldiers were treated at numerous settlements (including Mennonite) during the conflict and epidemics, particularly of typhus were common. as a doctor he would have been involved and vulnerable. See contemporary report on the role of inland medical centres, C. O. Rosenberger, “Bericht über die nach dem Krimm’schen Kriege

in dem Gouvernement Taurien im Jahre 1856 aus geführten Reinigungs-Maassregeln. *Medizinische Zeitung Russlands*, 15, 12 April, 1858, 113-15.

17. Huebert, Susan. “Tavonius, Erich A. (1872-1927).” *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. March 2009. Web. 3 Mar 2025. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Tavonius,_Erich_A._\(1872-1927\)&oldid=143090](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Tavonius,_Erich_A._(1872-1927)&oldid=143090)

18. Viktor Krieger has produced a listing of “German” colonists who attended the University of Dorpat between 1802 and 1918 that includes Mennonites and some who studied medicine; The series begins as the “Universität Dorpat und deutsche Siedler im Zarenreich.” *Volk auf dem Weg*, 7, 2020 and follows in later editions; see also, Albert Obholz, *Medizinische Betreuung der deutschen Kolonisten in Russland* (novum Verlag, 2016).

Letter from Klaas Wall to Friends Still in Imperial Russia, 1876

Translated with an introduction by Bruce Wiebe

The following letter was written in early 1876 by Klaas Wall (1820-1896, GM#229623), of the newly settled village of Neuhorst, Manitoba, to unnamed friends still in Russia; it also addresses an unnamed brother-in-law.¹ Wall, who accompanied his aged mother and two sisters, arrived in Canada July 20, 1875, on the SS Quebec. Although in the letter he mentions leaving Neuendorf in Russia, the widow Klaas Wall, with four individuals in total, is actually recorded as being from Neuhorst, Russia.² Although Wall does not mention the journey, he does provide some resettlement details. He implies that 18 villages have been settled but then names only 17 of them, each one with a number, including No. 20 Rosenbach,³ a name that did not initially survive.⁴ Wall’s listing of the village name and its village number is significant. It confirms that the initial intent in Manitoba was to continue this village numbering practice, as had been done in Russia and continues to this day in Mexican and other Latin American Mennonite communities. Manitoba West Reserve Colony Secretary Peter Wiens’s account books initially confirm these number and village-name combinations, and adds No. 22 Rosenfeld, as well as No. 17 which was recorded as Friedensfeld.⁵ This latter name was quickly dropped and the number 17 was subsequently used for Gruenfeld.⁶ Wall’s omitted numbers, three, four, and six, are not named elsewhere as villages, but already in August 1875 Surveyor Lachlan Kennedy in his Field Notes for Township one in Ranges three and four

noted various Mennonite encampments at several locations⁷ other than those subsequently identifiable as villages. Interestingly, most of the people named in the initial Rosenbach and Friedensfeld lists do not appear together as villagers in the 1880 village census.⁸ This suggests that, while village formations were being organized, perhaps at Fort Dufferin or in these early encampments, people may have changed their minds about where and with whom they intended to settle in a village. The continuity of the village specific numbers was itself of brief duration. Peter Wiens's subsequent village listings in his account books are in random order and number prefixes merely a numeric order.

In order to retain the letter writer's style and meaning, this is more of a direct translation of the German original. Translator's comments and clarifications are in brackets.

In the grace of God, beloved friends.

I have often thought of you to let you know how we are doing in this new homeland. Yes, we often talk about you, how all of you friends there are doing, whether you are all still alive and well which, being so far away from you, we cannot know, but wish you from the bottom of our hearts, and that this finds you in the best of health, both in body and soul. We in our family are all still quite healthy, but I cannot work as much as is necessary here where everyone has to construct accommodations for themselves and their livestock before winter.

At first I was unable to get anyone to help, but later I had two men who helped for over a week building the house.

Yes, I will briefly describe how we constructed our buildings: we dug the 29 ½ feet long and 12 feet wide dwelling 2 ½ feet into the ground and nailed [sheathed] the interior with boards, as well as the floor of boards. However, we first laid split oak wood on the roof and nailed it down, plastered it with lime, and then covered it with earth. We believe that we have a nice, warm room ready for winter. We get the

wood about eight *Versts*⁹ from us, most of which is oak, very good heating [fuel] for our iron stove.

We also dug the 16 feet in length and width cattle barn into the ground somewhat, and then laid [stacked] split wood aboveground, and then surrounded it with earth. However, since it had already been quite cold at times and would take me too long, the roof is only of hay without rafters and slats [purlins].

We have sufficient hay for our four head of cattle. The cattle are quite expensive because they had already been bought up by the time we arrived: the two oxen cost 145 [dollars] and the two cows 75 dollars, but they are also very good cattle. The crate with the wagon was very expensive for me, namely 92 rubles. It is better not to bring any wagons.¹⁰ I bought 27 bushels of potatoes for the winter, three 'Mirkin'¹¹

the summer. The water here is mostly shallow in the ground. I believe that in our village no well is more than 15 feet deep, and good water everywhere in the village, the same as in the other villages, shallow and good. Almost all of the villages have 16 landowners, I mean 18 [villages] in total, namely: first, Blumenort, second, Neuendorf, No. 5 Blumengart, No. 7 Ebenfeld, 8th Schoenwiese, 9th Rosengart, 10th Reinland, 11th Neuenburg, 12th Osterwick, 13th Schanzenfeld, 14th Rosenthal, 15th Hochfeld, 16th Blumenfeld, 18th Neuhorst, 19th Rosenort, 20th Rosenbach, and 21st Chortitz. The landowners in our village are Isaak Miller, Jacob Thiessen, Jacob Boschmann, Isaak Miller, Bernd Wiebe, Bernd Wiebe, Klaas Wall, Josep Miller, Jacob Wall, Johann Heide, W[idow] Johann Esau, Johan Dueck, Jacob Wall, Johann Miller,

Gerhard Rempel, and Peter Klassen. Dear brother-in-law, what more should I tell you? Since I am very inexperienced at writing letters, I would really like to speak with you in person sometime, and if you give me some direction, I would like to tell you a few more things. But now the trip and everything we experienced seems only a dream. I also remember that we talked between ourselves about whether the sky and the stars would appear different here than there, but they don't. When I am not thinking about that I am in America, it often seems to me as if I am near you and might speak with you all again

sometime, but there is still much that lies between us.

And when I think about it, Job's words still come to mind again, just like when I said goodbye to you: I am going the way which I will never return. Yes, I and we all wished much rather, that if it were God's will, to see and speak with all of you here. Yes, I can say that it is so proper and right here for me and that I am so happy to be

(cont'd on p. 7)

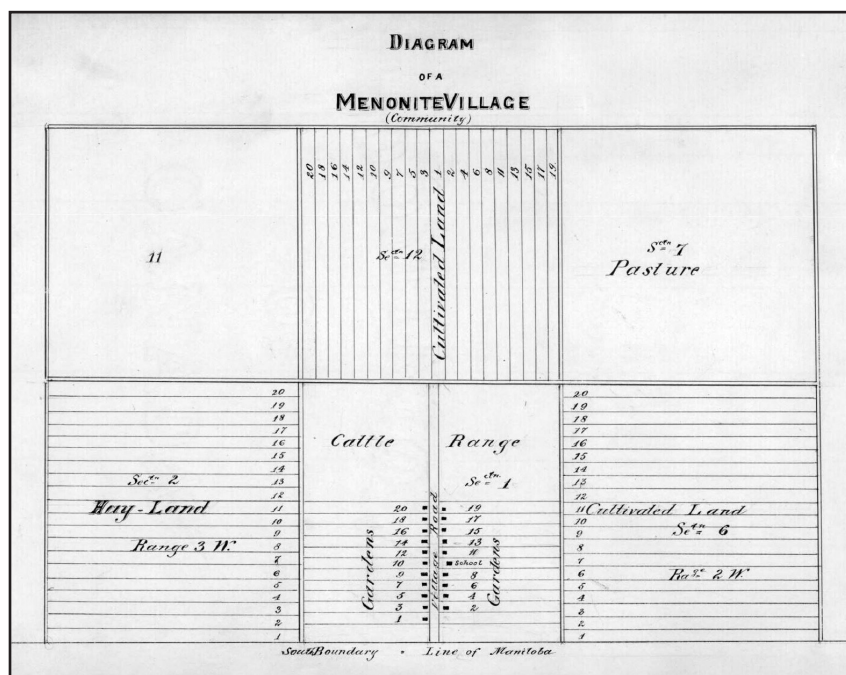


Diagram of the village of Neuhorst, West Reserve by Deputy Land Surveyor Rudolf Rauscher in a report to Surveyor General Lindsay Russell, October 22, 1881. Source: Library and Archives Canada, RG15-D-II-1, Volume number: 233, Microfilm reel number: T-12181, File number: 3129, File part: 2A, Item number, 1470476.

are about two bushels, for 20 dollars and 25 cents. In general, food is amply available although somewhat expensive, except not for the rye bread.

Regarding the soil conditions, I can report that the land here is very flat, so that in clear weather we can probably see ten of our villages. Yes, the land here seems very good, and although there are no high mountains [hills] on our settlement plan [property], there are still some fairly low-lying-areas [ponds] here and there, which in some places retain water throughout

MHA Update

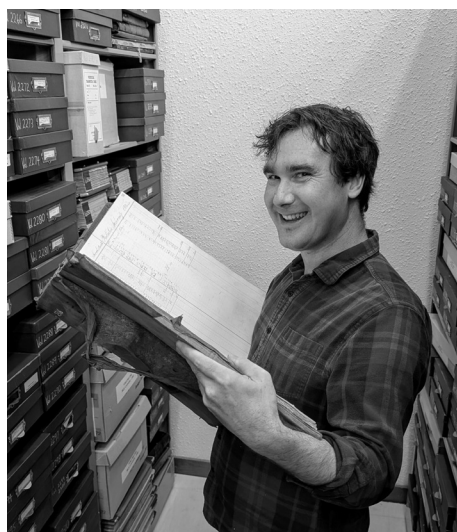
by Conrad Stoesz

Part of the success of the Mennonite Heritage Archives comes from the people. For the past three years, Graeme Unrau has been the Administrative Assistant. He is the friendly face people first see coming to the archives. He has admirably taken on all manner of tasks thrown his way from invoicing, book sales, helping researchers, web updates, copy editing, tracking donations, and adding to our serials and periodicals collection. He will be missed at MHA, and we wish him success in his new adventure studying architecture at the University of Manitoba. Graeme spent his last week getting our new Admin Assistant David Klippenstein up to speed. David is a graduate of Canadian Mennonite University with a focus on history. He most recently worked at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Another new face at MHA is Sofie Treble. She is a student at the University of Manitoba and describes herself as an “aspiring archivist and library professional.” She comes to MHA “seeking to gain hands-on experience in archival practices and community heritage

preservation.” Her current project is cataloguing videos created by Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

In May the MHA’s 5-minute radio program “Still Speaking” on Golden West radio was honored with the Association for Manitoba Archives’ Manitoba Day Award. The judges said “Still Speaking” “brings the archives to life and shows the rich connection between historical subjects and



David Klippenstein is the new Administrative Assistant at the Archives, replacing Graeme Unrau who is taking up his studies in Architecture. Photo Credit: Conrad Stoesz.

the archival records that authenticate that history.” Judges noted the unique reach of the program:

“This program highlights archival materials held by the archives by exploring various historical themes. Because they [were] broadcast, they reach a much wider audience than typical for in-house productions. Further, all episodes are located on the Mennonite Heritage Archives’ website which also feature an accompanying online exhibit of the materials that informed the episode. In addition, to increase accessibility, these episodes are being

translated into Low German that appear as podcasts of the Mennonite Community Services of Southern Ontario. This further extends the reach and accessibility of the program and the archives. ...This is an interesting way to enhance the archives and the archival finding aids.”

MHA is pleased to partner with Helen Bergen of MCC’s Mennonite Community Services of Southern Ontario. She is translating these pieces for a Low German speaking audiences in La Crete Alberta, Bolivia, Mexico, Belize, Paraguay, and Germany, and are available on the MCC and MHA websites.

Golden West also noted the success of the program and was key to starting MHA’s “Tales from the Mennonite Heritage Archives” program. Communications expert Dan Dyck hosts the 15-minute program weekly. The program has over 40 episodes and is a mix of story telling and interviews. If you miss the program on Golden West stations 950, 1220, and 1250 AM at 9:15 am Sundays, you can catch past episodes on our website at www.mharchives.ca/tales-from-the-archives/. Recent topics include murder in Old Altona, Maria Kroeker—Letters across a divide, a conversation with author David Elias, and a focus on 150th anniversary celebrations for the communities of Reinland and Chortitz, Manitoba.

The 150th anniversary of the Mennonite communities in Manitoba continues to be marked this year by churches, communities, and families. Conrad spent part of a day in Lowe Farm at the end of July and spoke at the Blatz family reunion about the push and pull factors bringing Mennonites to Manitoba in the 1870s.

The 100th anniversary of the Russlaender Mennonite migration to Canada 1923-1930 brought a renewed focus on the importance of the periodical *Der Bote*. The MHA has collected a complete set of the paper and thanks to a grant from Mennonite Genealogy Incorporated, we have scanned and made accessible this community resource. The years from 1924-1949 are now available. Plans are under way to continue digitizing the periodical so that the whole run from 1924-2008 is available and word searchable on our digital collections site <https://collections.mharchives.ca/>



Sofie Treble is a student at the University of Manitoba and an aspiring archivist. She is gaining hands-on experience cataloguing videos created by Mennonite Disaster Service and Mennonite Central Committee. Photo Credit: Conrad Stoesz.

Voices from EMC, EMMC and MB Pasts

Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church

Wilhelm H. Falk was born in 1892 in the village of Schoenthal, northwest of Altona, Manitoba. In his early years of ministry, he showed promise of the things to come, yet he struggled with



feelings of inadequacy for the role of minister, and leader. He was ordained on October 2, 1927, in the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church.

Falk, together with three other young ministers encouraged change within the Sommerfeld church. To divide the church was entirely contrary to the desire of the four. They had hoped that the whole church would catch the vision of spiritual renewal. That was not to be. Nearly

Mennonite Brethren



Winnipeg's Ben Horch (1907-1992) was a prominent musician who taught music at Winkler Bible School, Winnipeg Bible College, and Mennonite Brethren Bible College. He founded the Mennonite Community Orchestra and worked in broadcasting with CFAM and the CBC network. In 1945, Horch posed with the All Mennonite Young People's Symphony Orchestra before one of their performances. Horch had a significant influence on music throughout the Mennonite community and served as an inspiration for many young musicians, both within the Mennonite community and beyond. Photo Credit: CMBS NP083-01-4

1100 members left the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church, willing to embark on an uncertain future. Wilhelm H. Falk was ordained as bishop of this newly formed Rudnerweider Gemeinde on February 4, 1937.

Jack Heppner, *Search for Renewal: The Story of the Rudnerweider/EMMC 19387-1987*.

Evangelical Mennonite Church

Conventions were an important part of EMC life in the 1980s with regional as well as national events being held. Here the Northern Manitoba-Saskatchewan region is meeting in the Birch River Legion Hall in Birch River, Man. (Oct 1980) and



includes EMC churches from Arabelle, Birch River, Creighton, Endeavour, Hudson Bay, Kamsack, Pelly, Swan River, and Keesee Moose Reserve. These churches had a combined membership of around 200, so the attendance of 166 adults and 53 kids was impressive! It seems that the Kola EMC church was invited to bring music.

Wall Letter

(cont'd from p. 5)

here, that I don't have the slightest desire to exchange my homeland with the previous one. Yes, I still remember very clearly how it felt like a heavy stone fell from my shoulders as I drove out of Neuendorf, where I had enjoyed so many kindnesses. Yes, that I had no thoughts about remaining in Russia any longer. Yes, I have endured such fear because of the services expected,¹² which is best known to the all-knowing God, and it still constantly resounds in my heart. So persevere now in the freedom in that Christ has set us free, and do not allow yourselves to be caught in the yoke of servitude. Yes, I think of how many will perhaps too late regret having preferred the earthly to the heavenly, especially those who are supposed to blow the trumpet on the walls of the spiritual Zion. I cannot understand how one should have more freedom than another in this matter, since we all should follow the same rule; yes, we have all made the same promise. Yes, I think if we all really examined ourselves in the presence of God, we would all soon agree on this, for the prophet Jonah says of the living children of God: They will all together hold on to one head. Chapter I:II.¹³ Therefore let us all be united and walk hand in hand and try to strengthen one another in love, while we are still living in the time of grace, for soon we will no longer have the opportunity to love and serve one another as we have received a commandment from the Father. Yes, regrettable that we have not sufficiently cleared away the obstacles, I unfortunately experience it myself, and you will also find how easily and unnoticed we allow ourselves to be lured and held back, with good intentions, in other things that don't focus on the one necessary goal, through which then our minds through much destruction and alienation are keeping us from the Lord. May the Lord make us particularly wise in this matter, so that we may in no way hinder his work in us in our short days. We know that everything depends on God's power and grace, which alone can lead us into the true death of our self and all things, and into the true life of the spirit as exists in community with God. Yes, my dear ones, out of mercy he has called us as redeemed from the earth to be completely for him

cont'd on p.8

Klaas Wall Letter

(cont'd from p. 7)

and to be with him, in the [indecipherable word] of our hearts. Let us then see this call as a high honor and, through a solitary seclusion of our hearts, and thoughts, and frequent contemplation, diligently try to enter within ourselves, where our true good and dearest soul friend can be found, and who through love will reveal himself, to lead us from strength to strength until we come to God in Zion, as the blessed Gerd Tersteigen teaches us.¹⁴ Now my dear friends, I will close by reporting that we have had winter since October 13. We were hoping it would thaw once more, although we were already beginning to have doubts, because yesterday, Sunday, it was already up to six degrees warm, but this morning it was again nine degrees of frost. The week before the snow was such nice weather, between 18 and 24 degrees warm according to the Russian thermometer.¹⁵ Finally, you friends are without exception all heartily greeted by us and remain in love.

Your friend, Klaas Wall, Neuhorst, 1876.

Endnotes

1. MHA Volume 4354, Folder #3, acc 95-072, from Jake E Friesen, Hague, Saskatchewan.

2. "Anschreibe Buch der Auswanderer welche nach Amerika ziehen wollen angefertigt von Peter Wiens Kronsthal." By village names of emigrating household heads including number of full fares, Gebietsamt Records, GAKMM-K-001-01.

3. "Gemeindebuch-Reservierten Lande-Fuerstenlaender-Alt Kolonie-Ansiedler"; Rosenbach list of debtors, GAKMM-K-001-04. "Gebietsamt Verschiedene Anmerkungen beginnend 1875," Rosenbach appears in an unnumbered list of villages, GAKMM-K-001-06. "Gebietsamt, Untitled --Buch B -Gebietsamt Konten der Einzelpersonen," By Village lists, including Rosenbach #20, of residents drawing on supplies, GAKMM-K-001-10.

4. The name was later used for a village on NE 9-3-4W. Library and Archives Canada: RG15, D-11-1 vol 282, file 50322.

5. "Gebietsamt, Untitled - Buch B -Gebietsamt Konten der Einzelpersonen," GAKMM-K-001-10; By Village lists, including Friedensfeld #17, of residents drawing on supplies.

6. Ibid.

7. "Survey Field Notes," Archives of Manitoba, NR0 157 GR1601, G14349; Township Plans & Plats NR0212-GR240-G10659.

8. John Dyck & William Harms, eds, *1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve*, (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1998).

9. A distance measurement, 1 Verst equals 0.663 miles; Wall's approximately 8 Verst equivalent is the distance to timber lots on the Pembina River, see Bruce Wiebe, "The Timber lots of the Manitoba Mennonites in St. Joseph Township, Pembina County, Dakota Territory," *Preservings* No. 27

(2007), 47–52.

10. Bruce Wiebe, "Russian Mennonite Wagons in Manitoba," *Mennonite Historian* Volume 39, No 1, March 2013.

11. An as yet unidentified dry volume measure.

12. It is unclear which expected services in Russia the 55 year old Wall feared since, because of age, he was unlikely to be affected by revocation of military service exemption.

13. Unclear which Bible book, chapter or chapters, and or verse Wall is referring to.

14. "Gerhard Tersteegen, (1697-1769), a leading German Pietist known as the father of Pietism along the Lower Rhine..." [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Tersteegen,_Gerhard_\(1697-1769\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Tersteegen,_Gerhard_(1697-1769)).

15. The Reamur scale as used in Russia.

The Saga of Peter and Frank

by Edward Krahn

Sacred cows make the finest hamburgers"
—Abbie Hoffman

Every saga has a beginning and an end, as this one does. This saga began in November 1973. The Chair of the Mennonite Village Museum (now MHV) was Eugene Derksen the editor of the *Steinbach Carillon News*. The Derksens were friends of my parents and at a party Mr. Derksen approached my mom. He had heard I was taking courses in a Museum Program at the University of Winnipeg with Professor George Lammers, one of the Curators at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature (now the Manitoba Museum). He asked my mom to have me drop by the office next time I was back in Steinbach, so I did.

Derksen pulled out an application form from his desk for a federally funded Summer Student Program—Opportunities for Youth (OFY). It was to be a "Student initiated and managed project deemed to be socially relevant, with the goal of fostering creativity and engagement among young people." The thrust of encouraging community involvement and social activism was to address high youth unemployment rates and social unrest.

There were soon mutterings that the

program was being run out of Ottawa by activist bureaucrats with little oversight. When Liberal MPs started to complain that action committees were being formed with the goal to defeat them at the next election, the program was redesigned. Now the projects would be reviewed prior to funding, and MPs would be notified prior to funds being allocated for their ridings. Rural projects were to get a favourable ranking along with those that would have a lasting benefit, as many of the projects were "one offs"—one-time only. So, what happens when a conservative Mennonite institution meets a counter culture funding youth employment program?

Well, the museum had reached the stage where it needed funding to operate beyond being a solely volunteer organization. The Museum Committee of the MMHS (in particular Eugene Derksen) was open to seeing what would happen if they applied for funding. The promise for me was that if the application was successful, I could be the manager, and get paid slightly more than the other participants. The museum contributed to the project by providing some funding, materials, and doing the project's books. It was a risk for the museum.

I filled out the application form, got



Eight of the original ten Opportunities for Youth participants in 1975. The other two had the day off when the photo was taken. Photo Credit: Phil Brown

nine other university and high-school students to sign on, and put together a work plan for construction projects, interpretive programs, and some experiential workshops to meet the training requirements of the program.

I was informed in late spring of 1974 that I was successful in obtaining

the funding for 10 students (while the project received the money it was the first government grant the Museum received for operations). The winds were favourable—a rural project dealing with museums. In March 1972, Secretary of State Gerard Pelletier had announced *The National Museums Policy*,¹ with one of the themes being “The Democratization and Decentralization of Canadian Museums” (not all of Canadian Treasures were housed in Ottawa). This greater emphasis on the importance of museums led to enhanced funding, and a higher profile for museum projects. OFY was now funding museum projects.

How did the project roll out? The university students started first, followed by the high-school students a month later. Now I’d be able to put my theoretical training into practice. About a month into the project a car drove up to a group of us working on a fencing project. Eugene Derksen and Ed Friesen came to talk to me. The summer manager John Schellenberg had resigned over a disagreement with the board. Would I be willing to take over his job? With the full hubris of youth (I was 20), I jumped at the opportunity without hesitating. Another student would step into the project management role and we would just hire another person. Even before beginning the project, some of the students who had signed on had gotten better jobs so new ones were slotted in. Soon I was deep into human resource issues, time schedules, Pioneer Day Planning, organizing tours and volunteers, bookkeeping, and payroll and all those “fun things”! This included being at all the museum committee meetings AND keeping the minutes.

Many of the Museum Committee Members came from the Steinbach

business community. They had travelled extensively and, as members of the museum committee they often took the opportunity to visit outdoor museums to see how they ‘did it.’ A lot of discussion around the table was about using a team of oxen to bring the village alive. The Upper Canada Village had oxen, Colonial Williamsburg had oxen—and so should the Mennonite Village!

In my new role as manager, I attended committee meetings where it was noted that local cattleman D.U. Dyck and his son were training a team of oxen. He would demonstrate them at the Pioneer Days at the Museum and was offering to sell them to the museum for the sum of \$700 for oxen and cart and would throw in a Highland ox to sweeten the deal. The purchase was made and the oxen were housed at the corrals we built. At the end of a successful summer, I went back to university to continue my studies. I received a stipend to check the mail occasionally and to apply for more grants!

I returned the next summer in 1975, along with the next batch of summer students. The oxen were now on the village street being trained by Jacob Kroeker. At a June committee meeting the topic of how to use the oxen to advertise the museum came up for discussion. Harold Unger suggested we should enter our ox team in parades. Discussion took place noting that it would be good advertising, could involve Mr. Kroeker, and another person could walk alongside to hand out pamphlets. A motion confirmed attendance at the Morris Parade on July 16. Soon signs were made for the wagon offering “Mennonite Village Museum, Free Ox Cart Rides” and providing the dates for the Pioneer Days in August. Someone had seen oxen

with brass balls on the tips of their horns; our oxen should have them as well. An old harness with brass balls was found that would be suitable.

How were we going to do this? Well, the vet clinic, only four miles away, had facilities that would make the operation easier to undertake. Mr. Kroeker poked his head into the office and asked if I wanted to ride along. It had been a long week and I needed a break so

we were soon on our way. The oxen still had ropes on them as they had not fully embraced the concepts of Whoa, Haw, and Gee, as they had not been used over the winter months. As we slowly travelled the distance to the vet clinic, Mr. Kroeker filled me in on the team’s winter. They had been in a pen with some mules and the Highland ox and had been beaten up by the other animals during feeding, in particular the mules had given them a hard time.

The operation at the clinic went smoothly, and soon the balls were mounted on the horns. As we got on the wagon for the trip back, Mr. Kroeker asked if I wanted to drive the team as his rear hurt from the rough ride and he wanted to walk. As I got up on the wagon and grabbed the ropes, some horses in the nearby fence came running up to see what was happening.

The oxen saw the horses, and being oxen they equated horses to mules. They took off down the driveway. I never knew oxen pulling a wagon could move so swiftly. I was yelling whoa and pulling on the rope, as we crossed over highway 52 and into traffic. Peter on the right fell and broke his yoke and rolled aside, while Frank carried on as fast as he could run. I saw the ditch on the other side, and the cars. Somehow all the cars all were able to stop, and now we were in the ditch heading toward a hydro pole. I saw in my mind’s eye a smashed wagon, and no Morris Stampede Parade. I just wanted to slow Frank down enough to jump off, make him circle, and slow down, except now the hydro pole was closer, but it looked like we would just miss it. Then it happened! The right wheel hit the guy wire. As the wagon started to roll over, I launched myself from the seat not wanting to end up with the wagon on top of me.

I hit the ground hard on my buttocks. My glasses went flying. I lay there not feeling much below my waist. Was I ok? Was I paralyzed? I slowly moved my hands. My glasses were right next to me; I put them on and tried out my legs, they could still move. The wind had been knocked out of me. I was in a lot of pain. By then Mr. Derksen had come up in his car and shouted if I was ok. He was busy snapping photos. Oh great, I thought, now I would be in the *Carillon News*! He helped me to the car and drove me to emergency. There they took x-rays and found that three

cont’d on p. 10



The oxen Frank (foreground) and Peter (background) on the Mennonite Heritage Village Street. Photo Credit: Peter Dyck

The Saga of Frank and Peter

(Cont'd from p. 9)

of my vertebrae were compressed. Next, I was wheeled upstairs and into the ward, where I lay in traction for two weeks.

Mr. Kroeker would show up regularly and was so apologetic. I kept telling him it was not his fault. After that whenever I ran into him on the street we would have a good chuckle. Then I began to have visits from guys I did not even know, telling me stories of how they had been in ox-cart accidents in South America with run-away ox teams, especially during fly season. They said it was not too bad in the Chaco because it was flat and the team just tired out after a while. I'd just had bad luck because of the ditch.

And those photos that Eugene Derksen took? They never saw the light of day. While it was a great news story, the museum was advertising to come to the museum for free ox-cart rides! Being chair of the Museum Committee won over being editor of the *Carillon*.

I got back in time for Pioneer Days, and when fall came I was back in Winnipeg taking the "On Job Training Program" at the then Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, with the aim of returning to the Steinbach Museum as its first year-round, paid curator.

Part of my stint included a practicum, which I did at the museum. So, when I arrived, I looked for Frank and Peter. I was told that there had been another incident in fall, again with horses. So, the decision was made to replace them.

Every good saga has an ending that imparts knowledge and often has a moral. My Uncle Ike speaking of his experience with oxen in Russia told me "in church and in school we spoke high German, at home and in the village Low German! But to the oxen we spoke Russian."² I did enjoy eating *Holubshi* at the restaurant. Indeed, sacred oxen do make the best hamburger.

Endnotes

1. *National Museums Policy* - https://publications.gc.ca/site/archiv-ee-archived.html?url=https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/bdpl/bp/YM32-2-2013-6-eng.pdf.

2. "In der Kirche und in der Schule sprachen wir Hochdeutsch, zu Hause und im Dorf Plattdietsch! Aber mit den Ochsen sprachen wir Russisch."

500 Years of Anabaptism—A Tour

by Conrad Stoesz

Mennonite Heritage Tour

In late May and early June I was a co-leader on an Anabaptist heritage tour with the tour company TourMagination. The bus tour of 30 people from US and Canada, began in Switzerland and moved north through Germany and the Netherlands. We participated in the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) event held at the *Grossmünster* Church in Zürich. Five hundred years ago at this church, young Anabaptist leaders Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz conducted Bible studies under the watchful eye of mentor and pastor Ulrich Zwingli. While Zwingli championed several reforms, the young men fell out of favour with Zwingli, the church, and civic authorities when they advocated for church reforms such as adult baptism, which threatened the union of church and state. Despite the consequences, George Blaurock baptised Conrad Grebel on January 21, 1525. Grebel then went on to baptise others, such as Felix Manz, in Anna Manz's home (Felix's mother) in Zürich. Their views were so threatening to the establishment that in 1527 Manz was drowned in the Limmat River, within sight of the church where he once taught.

Five hundred years later, the Mennonite World Conference service in that same 1,200 seat church was packed. An estimated 3,500 Mennonites were in Zürich that day. The service included high ranking officials from the Reformed, Lutheran, and Catholic churches. Before the church service, I sat beside a woman whose home congregation was this *Grossmünster*. When she saw Cardinal Kurt Koch walk into the service, she sat up straight, leaned closer to me and exclaimed "Oh this is going to be an important service!"

Cardinal Koch delivered a message from newly elected Pope Leo XIV, who focused on the MWC theme "The Courage to Love." The Pope "...reminded Catholics

and Mennonites alike to show love, seek unity and serve others... It likewise points to the need for honesty and kindness in reflecting on our common history, which includes painful wounds and narratives that affect Catholic-Mennonite perceptions up to the present day," Koch read. As a sign of reconciliation, the Reformed church offered the church free of charge and after the service the bells of the churches in old Zürich tolled for what seemed like half an hour celebrating the service. Where once leaders of churches called for death of the Anabaptists, they now they washed each

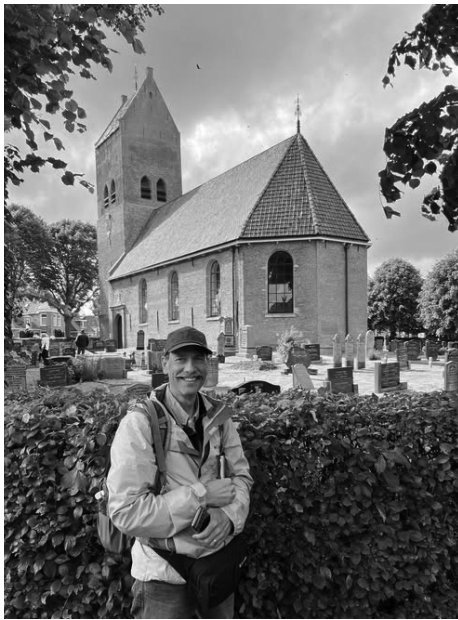


Clarissa Unger looking at a 1550 copy of the Schleithem Confession at the Schleithemertal Museum. Photo Credit: Conrad Stoesz.

others' feet.

With a walking tour of Anabaptist sites in Zürich and the church service, the tour spread to the rural areas where Anabaptists had fled into hiding. We visited an Anabaptist cave, the village of Schleithem, where the Schleithem Confession was drafted in 1527. It would become a unifying force in the young Anabaptist movement.

We visited the Mennonite Research centre at Weierhof, Germany, the Luther monument in Worms, the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz, and we walked the streets of Muenster, Germany. Here we saw the infamous cages that once held the remains of Anabaptist leaders, the sight warning people against joining the Anabaptist movement. We continued north



Conrad Stoesz with the Pingjum Church and cemetery in the background. The Pingjum Church was where Menno Simons served as priest before becoming an Anabaptist. Photo credit: Nina Schroeder-van 't Schip.

into the Netherlands to visit Witmarsum and Pingjum where Menno Simons was born and where first served in the Catholic church.

We visited castles that once held Anabaptist prisoners, seven Anabaptist churches, nine quaint country churches, and majestic and colossal city churches. We ascended to the top of Mount Stockhorn, 2190 meters above sea level, and down to two meters below sea level at Amsterdam. Over the 13 days of the tour, we rode the bus for over 1200 km; my step-counter recorded just shy of 180,000 steps, with a high of 20,000 and low of 7,000 daily steps. The tour was a highlight of my summer and I am considering hosting another tour in the future.

A Manitoba *Blaudrucker* Found

by Rachel Pannabecker

In the June issue of the *Mennonite Historian* I queried whether the Mr. Neufeld of Plum Coulee (referred to in Klaas R. Reimer's diary) was a *Blaudrucker* or an importer blue-print aprons from Russia. While researching the history of Mennonites and silk reeling, I came across the following information in an article from 1895 by E. Cora Hind, "The Mennonites of Manitoba," that was reprinted in *The Outsiders' Gaze*, compiled and edited by Jacob E. Peters, Adolf Ens and Eleanor Chornoboy

(Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2015), 105-106:

"A few years ago Mr. Carl Neufeldt, of Schanzenfeld, started to make printed cottons. He purchased the unbleached cotton and dyed and printed it. The whole process was by hand. The pattern blocks from which the goods were printed were also hand-made, the process being extremely ingenious and laborious. The goods so painstakingly manufactured were both pretty and durable; but alas for Mr. Neufeldt, the hearts of Mennonite women, like the hearts of all women, craved bargains, and these prints, owing to the duty on the dyes, were much more expensive than imported goods. Mr. Neufeldt was compelled to abandon his scheme, and his carefully wrought patterns lie rotting in a heap in his front garden, a sad reminder of the vanity of human hopes."

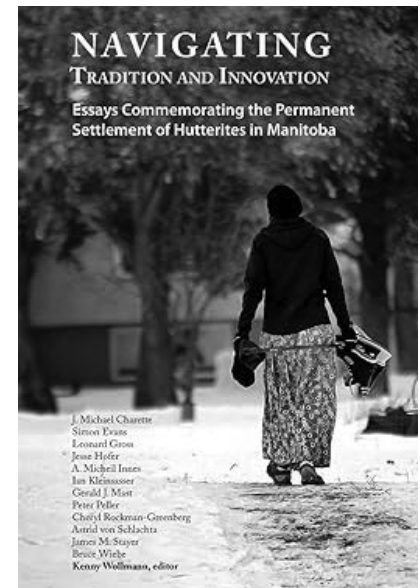
Hind's story fits both the blue-printing process and Karl Neufeld (GRanDMA #184023, 1832-1905). Ernest Braun supplied additional information on Neufeld: "Karl and Helena Neufeld lived in Schoenthal of the Berghthal colony from where they emigrated in 1874 on the S.S. Peruvian. They first homesteaded in the short-lived village of Tannenau on the East Reserve. applying for SE 4-7-5E in late August of 1874, and actually obtaining the patent in September 1883. By 1881 he and his family were listed as living in Schanzenfeld according to 1881 census #551 where his name is given as Corl Neufeld, age 46."

While Hind indicated that Neufeld's printing blocks were not being preserved, additional information on Neufeld and his work as a blue-printer would be appreciated. Send to Rachel Pannabecker, Kauffman Museum, Bethel College, 300 E. 27th Street, North Newton, KS, 67117, USA or rpann@bethelks.edu.



Detail of apron, dark blue, medium blue, white, chrome orange. (KM 86.198.3) Photo Credit: Weldon Schlonegger/Kauffman Museum

Book Reviews



Kenny Wollman, ed., *Navigating Tradition and Innovation: Essays Commemorating the Permanent Settlement of Hutterites in Manitoba* (MacGregor, Mb: Hutterian Book Centre, 2024). 401 pp.

Reviewed by Ed Boldt

This book is intended to commemorate the centennial (1918-2018) of the arrival of the Schmiedeleut Hutterites in Manitoba. It consists of an introduction and extensive bibliography by editor Wollmann and nine essays. Two of the essays outline the origins and early history of the Hutterites.

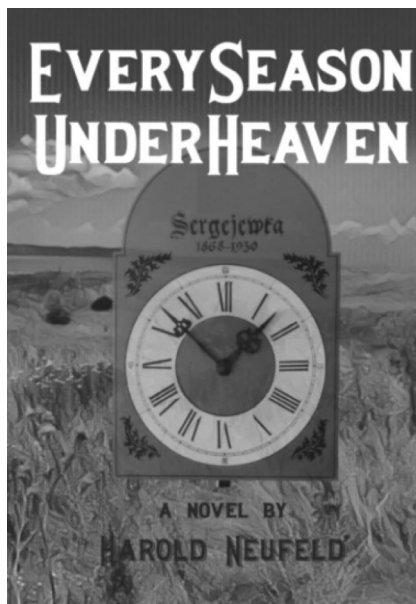
First, Astrid von Schlachta focuses on the life and death of Jakob Hutter (c.1500-1536), the charismatic Anabaptist preacher and founder of the Hutterite movement in Tyrol. James Stayer then continues the story in Moravia through an examination of the writings of Kasparov Braitmichel (c.1520-1573), described as the first historian of Anabaptism. Bruce Wiebe shifts the narrative to the more contemporary period during which the Schmiedeleut first settled in Manitoba by outlining in great detail their land transactions. The fact that the Hutterites are all descended from a very small number of individuals makes them particularly well suited to the study of genomic medicine. Such research, however, depends on the willingness of individuals to provide DNA samples, and the essay by Cheryl Rockman-Greenberg, et.al., describes the very valuable cooperation of the Schmiedeleut in furthering this research in

their communities.

The book's title, *Navigating Tradition and Innovation* points to the theme that underlies the individual essays. The tension between adhering to basic principles and adapting to changing circumstances has been a concern ever since the Hutterites' origin in the 1500s. Recently, however, it has become a more pressing issue and the source of some dissension and even division, particularly among the Schmiedeleut. Gerald Mast illustrates this tension through an examination of their response to the internet and smart phones, while Simon Evans and Peter Teller explain how population growth and the escalating cost of farmland have forced them to move from an almost exclusively agricultural economy to an acceptance of light manufacturing and more computerized technology. In the past the Hutterites have adapted to changing circumstances through a process that has been termed "controlled acculturation." However, as the pace of change (particularly technological) has quickened, controlling it has become more difficult and disagreements as to how to respond have emerged, culminating in a bitter formal division of the Schmiedeleut into two groups: the more progressive S-Leut 1, and the more traditional S-Leut. This schism forms the basis of the remaining three essays.

Leonard Gross presents excerpts from a previously unpublished 1998 manuscript by Samuel Kleinsasser (1927-2014) titled "Community and Ethics." Kleinsasser was a former minister of an S-Leut 2 colony. While he does not specifically mention the schism, it clearly forms the backdrop of his analysis in which he outlines what he regards to be a fundamental problem facing the Hutterite Church, namely, an over-reliance on temporal rules at the expense of an internal personal commitment to the principles upon which it is founded. The Ian Kleinsasser and Jesse Hofer essays provide detailed accounts of the events leading up to the schism. Both offer hope and suggestions for an eventual reconciliation, though it must be noted that they are members of S-Leut 1 colonies (as is editor Wollmann) and it is unclear whether members of S-Leut 2 would be so inclined.

Ed Boldt is a retired University of Manitoba sociology professor, with a special interest in Hutterites.



Harold Neufeld, *Every Season under Heaven*, (Winnipeg: Gelassenheit Publications, 2024). 246 pp.

Reviewed by Ralph Friesen

This book declares itself to be a novel. and so it is, with certain qualifications. The author's note at the end informs readers that it is a work of historical fiction that uses the actual names of the principal characters, while key events are based on historical source material.

Other parts, particularly the dialogue, are invented. Also the writing style belongs more to fiction than to history, as in the opening line: "Johann stands in the falling dark and hunches his shoulders against the gale." The setting is the bald Saskatchewan prairie in the middle of winter, 1928.

For the most part, though, the setting is the Mennonite colony of Fuerstenland in South Russia, and specifically Sergejewka, the village where a foundry was established in 1876 by Kornelius Klassen, who invited Jakob Janzen to become his partner. After a few years, Klassen sold his share of the business to his nephew Abraham Neufeld. They parted ways amicably, and Janzen was joined by Abraham's cousin Kornelius—and thus Janzen & Neufeld Ko. was born. The company prospered and became a leading producer of farm implements for the region.

These are Harold Neufeld's ancestors. A family tree at the end of the book provides a useful—or really, indispensable—reference to the considerable array of characters the reader encounters. It's like a

novel by Tolstoy or Dostoevsky; you need a list. Nevertheless, these characters are real people; the author is the great-great-grandson of the patriarch Jakob Janzen, and the "Johann" whom we meet in the first chapter is his grandfather.

At least, I think I have all that straight. Historical fiction has its advantages—the writer can exercise his or her imagination, can "fill in" so much that the diaries and memoirs that form the foundation of the narrative leave out. And then a potential hazard arises in sticking with the facts, which may be so complicated that the reader is sometimes lost, unsure of which generation is being represented.

On the whole, though, Harold Neufeld does a very good job of navigating through the bays and inlets of these fictional historical waters, moving back and forth in time and place as the story progresses. *Every Season Under Heaven* presents the story of particular individuals, and in doing so, also provides an overview of the experiences of so many Mennonites in South Russia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Whether it is the challenges facing the founders of the Mennonite Brethren church, the building of a prosperous enterprise, the creation of a culture of racial superiority, the terrible suffering of once-prosperous communities and families, or the beginning of a new life in a new land—it's all there.

At the novel's end, on Thanksgiving Day, 1931, Johann is "struck by a sudden persuasion that the trials and sorrows of this life, severe though they might be, were not more true than the immeasurable blessings of the Lord." The reader is left to ponder this conclusion in the light—or darkness—of all the events preceding that moment.

In telling this story, Harold Neufeld makes an important contribution to the greater Mennonite story, and even the greater human story. He has brought his characters, who would otherwise have passed from this world and been forgotten, to life. He exhibits a skillful, lyrical writing style which successfully evokes the landscape of a place and time otherwise lost to us.

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