

# Mennonite Historian



*Ruth Nickel, Plum Coulee, Arlene Paetkau, Morden, and Linda Blatz, Lowe Farm (l-r) were in charge of microfilming RM of Rhineland records during the summer of 1982. They also gathered materials to assist in researching a history book on the municipality, and completed an index to the obituaries of the Red River Valley Echo (Altona). Author of the publication will be Gerhard Ens of the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Photo: Red River Valley Echo, Altona, Manitoba.*

## Ohrloff-Tiege, Ukraine, as I knew it

By Jacob P. Driedger

Ohrloff, among other things, had a well-established high school (Zentralschule) staffed with a very famous and dedicated group of teachers. They were all elderly men exempted from military service, which was important during World War I. Ohrloff was 100 miles distant and it was decided to make the trip by train. And so in the first days of September of 1916, the three of us, my father, Mr. Isaac and I, boarded the train at our home station, "Haitchur" at about midnight and arrived in Lichtenau at about 9:00 a.m. From here it was another 3 miles to Ohrloff. We found a taxi (one drawn by horses) at the station and for a small charge, the driver agreed to take us to Ohrloff.

When we came over the crest of the hill separating the two villages, I saw Ohrloff, which was to become my second home, for the first time. The village lay before us, stretched out along a winding river, imbedded in a mass of greenery, with only the red-tiled

rooftops and high gables protruding. A very beautiful picture, one I fell in love with at first glance. We had to pass over a bridge crossing the river and entered the village about midway. The first building right in front of us, was the old church, a two-storey structure, surrounded by tall old trees. Right next to it was the school in question. It was a new building just completed before the war started, very modern and impressive, built in a style hitherto not used by Mennonites and unique in all of Molotschna.

The twin villages, Tiege and Ohrloff, were villages, of the Molotschna colonies. Originally they were two separate villages, but in the course of time, the interval between them was filled with buildings of all sorts. Some of the space was taken up by rich land owners, who had come here to retire. They had built their villas there. A new hospital was built here, with a staff of dedicated doctors and nurses serving this and

neighboring communities. A well-stocked and efficient drug store was located across the street.

A little further down the street was the girls high school.<sup>1</sup> After elementary school, boys and girls did not go to the same school. Then there was a stately two storey building, the school for the deaf and dumb. It was a large complex with a number of auxiliary buildings. The students here learned not only how to talk, but were taught a trade, like woodwork, handicrafts, etc. The school drew its students from a wide range of communities and was a real blessing for these unfortunates.

Then there was the village store, and a few smaller shops, books and variety store are not to be forgotten. The church and boys' high school I already mentioned in a previous letter.<sup>2</sup> The village also had its own generating station. For me it was always a treat to pay this station a visit. Two large diesel engines were supplying the power to run the two generators that were generating the electricity. Most of the homes had electric lights and a number of farmers used electricity to run their threshing machines. This at a time when most of rural Russia lived by candlelight or kerosene lamps at best.

The village also had an artesian (overflowing) well. The water from this well was piped into homes and barns and was available at the turn of a tap. And it was good tasting water. Each place had a sizable orchard on its lot with large variety of fruit trees. Behind the orchard was the bushlot. Each farmer had his plot and so the bush stretched from one end of the village to the other in a continuous line. This forest was well managed and a path wound through it from end to end. It was very beautiful there in the fall and spring and we students spent many happy hours in it.

At the far end of the forest was the well-kept cemetery with an olive tree hedge around it and evergreens and bushes between the graves and tombstones. One especially remains in my memory - the high rising column of Johann Cornies, the famous organizer and co-founder of the Molotschna colonies. He had died at a fairly young age, but had accomplished such a great deal. To signify that his work was not completed, his column looked as if it had been broken off at the top. (continued on page 6, col. 1)

## Family Studies

### Recent Reunions

The popularity, and quite possibly the significance, of family reunions are growing. Even the brief notes on some of the gatherings of summer, 1982 are an indication of what is going on.

\*Descendants of the late Abram P. and Anna (Dyck) Braun held a reunion in the Hague School auditorium on July 24-25. About 180 guests attended.

\*An Epp family reunion was held at the Waldheim School auditorium in Waldheim, Saskatchewan on July 4, 1982. These were the families descended from David and Margaretha Epp. A surviving daughter of the Epps, Mrs. Sarah Andres, 91, was able to attend. She resides at the Central Haven Nursing Home in Saskatoon.

\*About 70 relatives gathered for the first Krause family reunion at the Peter I. and Lydia Penner farm near Steinbach, Manitoba this summer.

\*The family of the late Rev. Henry Dueck held a reunion on Sept. 12, 1982 at their old home in Kleefeld, Manitoba. Rev. Dueck was pastor of the Kleefeld EMC congregation from 1916-1944.

\*A group of 254 Friesen descendants gathered at Gretna, Manitoba on July 17-18. Mrs. Helen Buhr of Newton, Kansas is preparing a book to be published on the Friesen family history.

\*The descendants of the late Martin A. (1884-1953), and Mrs. Friesen met at the Kane Community Centre, Kane, Manitoba on September 12. A history book made some years ago was brought up to date for this occasion.

\*Approximately 250 Sobering-Regier Family descendants of Heinrich and Helena Sobering and John and Sebastian Rieger Sr. met at the Friedensfeld Community Centre, near Steinbach, Manitoba on an August weekend.

\*All ten children of the Heinrich H. and Maria Schroeder family were represented at a family reunion held at the Elim Bible Institute in Altona, Manitoba on August 4 - 5. Among the guests were numerous persons from B.C. as well as California (32), and of course many points in Manitoba. All the children were born in the Weidenfeld S.D. area, and came also to attend the Weidenfeld community reunion which took place in the following days.

\*The first family reunion of the Jacob Olfert family was held at Warman, Saskatchewan in the arena and Lions Park on July 2-3, 1982. Mrs. Agatha Neufeldt has prepared a family tree and record book.

\*Well over 700 persons registered for the Braun reunion held in Winkler, Manitoba on July 31 - August 1. A book on the descendants was compiled by Bill Brown and Elsie

Brown, both of Winkler. About 30 cars joined a tour to see early homesteads and gravesites of the ancestors.

\* \* \*

**We are missing reports of gatherings outside Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Send us any others you have from the past year, and we will try to include them in our December issue of MH.**



*Nikolai Isaac, of St. Catherines (right) placed his family papers with the MHC archives this summer.*

### Research Request

I would like any information available on the parents of Heinrich A. Born, born March 3, 1883 (Russia) married November 11, 1908. Died January 8, 1966. All I have are the parents' names but no details: Father: Heinrich Born, Mother: Anna Block. Any information would be greatly appreciated. Write to **Eileen Bornn, Box 152, Fork River, Manitoba R0L 0Y0.**

### Letter from Reader

With much interest I read the article about MARIA D. KOSLOWSKY (1833-1911) because she was my grandmother whose resting place is in the Lost River cemetery, Saskatchewan (70 miles east of Prince Albert). She was the Mrs. Klaas Kroeker, who had moved from Chortitza, Ukraine to Canada in 1903. I was born in 1905 in Chortitza after my father Jakob Kroeker had returned to Russia to marry.

The Klaas Kroekers landed in Manitoba. I have photos of the Klaas Kroekers before they emigrated and also when they had moved to Lost River. The two daughter Maria and . . . married two brothers: Heinrich Paul Neufeld and Gerhard Paul Neufeld. A cousin of these was the prominent Elder Peter Neufeld, of Chortitza, Russia, as described in "FIRST MENNONITE VILLAGES IN RUSSIA" by N.J.K.

I'll be very much interested to continue the genealogy of the Klaas Kroeker family. Please write to:

**N. J. Kroeker  
484 E. 50th Ave.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V5X 1B1**

## Family Records Donated to Archives Through a Will

Handwritten manuscripts, correspondence, certificates, photographs, diaries, and other documents on Mennonites from Russia form an important part of the Mennonite Heritage Centre archives holdings.

A significant recent deposit came through the execution of a will left by the late Helene Peters of St. Catharines, Ontario and formerly of New Halbstadt, in the Ukraine. In the deposit is a gold medallion given to her father, Johann Peters, by Tsar Nicholas II in 1911. It acknowledges his important role in the construction of the Tokmak Railroad in the Ukraine. With the medallion are a number of photos of the Johann Peters family - estate home, family portrait, race horses, two books of poems (autograph style) and several certificates of school grades, health inspection, etc.

This is the first donation to the archives forwarded through a will. We recommend very strongly that books, manuscripts, and personal papers, like other property be disbursed through a will. It insures that such materials will not be destroyed or lost if there is no one to care for such items after the decease of the owner.

Although Helena Peters was not known to everyone in the Conference, we want to recognize her forethought in the care of family records. She is to be commended for disposition of these materials to an archives for preservation and further use by the public.



*Helena Peters, of St. Catherines, Ontario passed away April 6, 1982.*



In front of this former Mennonite church building at Erwood, Saskatchewan are Albert Schulz (left), and John Kornelson (right), pastor of the Pineridge Fellowship Chapel (EMC) at Hudson Bay, Sask. Photo: Dave Schellenberg, Steinbach, Manitoba.

## A Little-Known Settlement

One of the lesser known Mennonite settlements may well be that of the group who settled north of Erwood, in the Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan area in 1939. They left their homes north of Saskatoon and came out here to try and make a living.

Not long after they came, on January 1941, they organized a congregation and called it Hebron Mennonite Church. Each one of the settlers sold a cord of wood, the proceeds of which were to go toward construction of a church building. This project however never materialized. Services were conducted in homes and later in a separate log building. They held *Jugendverein* and had a choir as well.

When and why did most of the settlers leave? It happened during the war years. The pioneer spirit was not sustained and there was more work available elsewhere. They started leaving around 1943.

Today one can barely locate the little cemetery in a stand of poplar. Two graves are still discernable in the overgrown conditions. The log building which was used for a church for some two years is also still standing. Only one family of the original settlers, the Albert Schultz's, remains as a reminder of this vanished community.

Dave Schellenberg

## Donor Acknowledgments

We are much indebted for support in recent months to a number of persons who have remembered the Centre in their giving. The total of these contributions was \$521.00. Thank you very much!

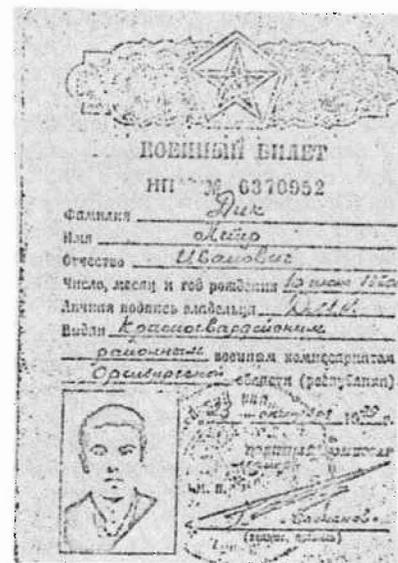
Gary Turcott, Oxdrift, Ontario  
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Ron Lamp, Swift Current, Saskatchewan  
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Garnet Eyjolfsson, Saskatoon, Sask.  
Franz Thiessen, West Germany  
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William and Mary Schellenberg, Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Dr. Victor A. Dirks, Kingsville, Ontario  
John J. Epp, Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Dick Hildebrand, Altona, Manitoba  
A. James Reimer, Waterloo, Ontario  
P. C. Bergen, Kitchener, Ontario  
Walter and Dorothea Kampen, Steinbach, Manitoba

## Afghanistan-Mennonite?

The Russian-language document below has found its way into the files of the German section of the European Conference on Human Rights and Self Determination. It is part of a pass book once held by a soldier in the Soviet army stationed in Afghanistan. It indicates the death of one Peter Dyck who is described as German, and appears to have come from a Mennonite family, or at least of Mennonite background from the Orenburg region. The other portion of the document lists his classification in the army.

The document was first published in the German newspaper *Die Welt*, and was then reprinted in *Der Bote*, October 13, 1982.



All the pastors, former and present, were on the program for the 25th anniversary celebration of the Home Street Mennonite congregation. The commemorative program was held on September 18-19 at CMBC and 318 Home St. in Winnipeg. In the photo seated are (l-r): John R. Friesen, current pastor, David Wiebe, Ernest Wiebe, Edwin Brandt and Clarence Epp. Peter Goertzen, of Elim Bible Institute directed the choir. Photo: Dennis Stoesz.

# MMHS

## Board Meeting Notes

The board of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society held its fall meeting at the Mennonite Heritage Centre on September 29, 1982. The following developments may be noted:

\*Progress is being made on the preparation of a new edition of the works of Arnold Dyck. Erica Ens spent considerable time this summer locating materials in Mennonite and other periodicals, and the editorial committee will be looking at all the written works of Dyck very shortly. A selection will be made for the new edition.

\*The Education and Resources Committee (Chairman Bill Schroeder, Winnipeg) will be checking with other organizations to see how a listing of resources may be made available to teachers and others who are looking for materials on Mennonites to use in schools.

\*There was much interest in publishing an English translation of **Die Bergthaler Mennoniten** written by Klaas Peters around 1900. It may become a part of the document series with Gerhard Wiebe's **Causes and History**, translated by Helen Janzen, and published by MMHS several years ago. An English translation of two books from the Echo Verlag, **Auszug aus Mittelasien**, and **Flucht ueber den Amur** is being prepared by Elizabeth Peters. Publication will be considered upon completion of the manuscript early next year.

\*The current membership of MMHS is 143. Renewals for the new year are invited. New members may receive a copy of **Causes and History** free of charge. Write to MMHS, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4 Canada.

\*Assistance and affirmation was decided on for the project of moving the Altbergthal school to Altona, and for the publication of an art book by Ken Loewen, Altona. Strong interest was expressed in the book proposal of the Bicentennial Commission of Ontario, a biography of Jacob Y. Shantz. Collaboration of some kind was proposed by several members of the board.

\*Died. Klassen of Gretna has repaired the Heinrich Wiebe marker at Cairn Corner near Gretna, Manitoba. Location of Mennonite cemetery sites in the province is still continuing.

\*The board is prepared to co-sponsor a workshop which is being planned for the Rhineland Municipality area in southern Manitoba this fall.

**Materials on this page were provided by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.**



*The Altbergthal school building (at one time in S.D. 1296) will be moved to Altona this fall to be preserved as a museum. Persons who wish to help with the project may send donations to Jacob G. Wiebe, Altona, Manitoba R0G 0B0. Cheques should be made out to Rhineland Agricultural Society. Tax deductible receipts will issued. Photo: (1980) Bernie Wiebe, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

### MMHS - MHS Joint Meeting

The regularly scheduled fall meeting of MMHS members and friends will be held jointly with the Manitoba Historical Society on November 16 at 8:00 p.m. in the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The guest organization has asked for a tour of the Centre, and all persons present will be invited to join. Speaker of the evening will be Lawrence Klippenstein, historian-archivist at the Heritage Centre, on the theme, "Indian-Mennonite Relations in Southern Manitoba: Establishing the Reserves."

### Chaco Film Premiere

**Pioniere im Chaco**, a new film by Otto Klassen and relating to the Mennonite experience in South America, was premiered before a full house at the Playhouse Theatre on Friday, March 19, 1982. It was shown the following week at the Winkler Bible Institute auditorium in Winkler. Presented by Faith and Life Communications, proceeds from the showing went to the Leprosy Hospital at Kilometer 81.

Otto Klassen, the producer, released his first significant film in 1974 at the occasion of the Mennonite Centennial in Canada. It was dedicated to the first pioneers in Western Canada. After a number of shorter films he has focused his entire effort toward filming the story of Canadian Mennonites who sought a livelihood in the Chaco. The first fruit of this endeavour was the film **Pioniere**

**im Chaco**. It is also to be available in English. The German version of the film is a 90 minute presentation depicting the settlement and agriculture of the Canadian Mennonites in three main parts.

The first part portrays early Mennonite life in Manitoba and concentrates on the reasons for the subsequent immigration, the scouting of land in Paraguay and the eventual journey via rail, oceanliner, river boat and oxcart into the heart of the Gran Chaco wilderness.

Part II details the arduous task of claiming the land of the Menno Colony for agricultural purposes. Unmitigated dedication to hard labour was required to clear the land of its brush and tall hardy grasses, at first with the most primitive equipment.

The final part reflects upon the impact that the Canadian Mennonites have made in Paraguay, particularly as it has affected the livelihood of the nationals. The entire film was produced with the full and enthusiastic participation of the Menno Colony itself.

The film's only deficiency may be in the last part - somehow it seemed somewhat cut off at the end, a little unfinished, as is of course the story of the Mennonites in the Chaco.

Overwhelmingly positive though is the fact that Otto Klassen has done a significant service to our people in permitting them a glimpse of life in the Chaco - the next best thing to being there. He has demonstrated remarkable skills in the production of the film and well deserved the recognition of an honorary plaque presented to him prior to the showing. *Peter B. Paetkau*

# CMBC

publications

# price list

**Heritage Remembered.** 2nd ed. (1977)  
By Gerhard Lohrenz

*Enlarged and revised. 300 pp. Includes a number of new photos and maps, an index, as well as short essays on Mennonite life in Russia and Prussia. .... 20.00*

**Damit es nicht vergessen werde.** 2nd edition (1977). By Gerhard Lohrenz.

*A German translation of Heritage Remembered, reprinted in 1981 ..... 20.00*

**Wer Nimmt Uns Auf?** (1977)  
By Olga Rempel

*A 29-page trilingual drama about Mennonite immigration to Canada. Suitable for amateur drama groups ..... 2.00*

**Der Bote Index** Vol. 1 1924-1947 (1976)  
Eds. Peter Rempel and Adolf Ens.

*A 262-page bilingual index to the Vol. 1-23 (1924-1947) issues of Der Bote ..... 12.00*

**Das Maerchen vom Weihnachtsmann**  
By Johannes H. Janzen (1975)

*Edited for publication by Waldemar Janzen. Reprint of a 36-page Mennonite Fairy Tale complete with original illustrations ..... 2.50*

**Canticles and Psalms** (1979)  
By Esther Wiebe

*Seventeen settings of Scripture themes for church choirs ..... 3.25*

**Fill My House** (1975)  
By Esther Wiebe

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**Call to Faithfulness** (1972)  
Eds. Henry Poettcker and Rudy Regehr

*Twenty essays on Mennonite history and thought ..... \$1.00*

**Anleitung zum Glauben** (1981)  
By Helmut Harder

*A translation of Guide to Faith, published in 1980 ..... 6.50*

**Walk Humbly with Your God** (1979)  
By William Janzen

*Twelve sermons preached by the author in the Ottawa Mennonite Church ..... 5.00*

**Immer Weiter nach Osten** (1981)  
By Abram J. Loewen.

*The story of Lili Goossen's seventeen-year trek from Russia through China to Canada after 1929 ..... 6.50*

**Waffen der Wehrlosen** (1980)

*Edited by Hans Rempel and George K. Epp. Accounts of alternative service by CO's in the Soviet Union, during the period 1917-1935 ..... 9.00*

**Die Altkolonier = Mennoniten in Mexiko.** (1982)

By Walter Schmiedehaus

*Revised from, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott. Story of Mennonite settlement in Mexico, 1922-1948. .... 10.00*

**Go Ye** (1980)

By Esther Wiebe

*A cantata for mixed choir, soloists and congregation ..... 3.25*

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*Recorded music by the CMBC choir ..... 6.00*

**All items except the Gerhard Lohrenz books and the CMBC record are paperback editions.**

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# MHSC

## Mennonite "State of the Art" Conference

The Toronto Conference of Mennonite Studies is now history. What all will come of the papers read at the June 10-15 sessions remains to be seen. Billed as a "first-ever" enterprise, the conference brought together nearly a hundred scholars and interested persons who wanted to see what the topic would bring forth.

The papers covered a wide range of disciplines and themes, mostly matters related to Mennonites in Canada, but in some instances going to the entire North American scene (as the heading for the conference actually suggested they would). The generous support of two of the three sponsoring bodies, The Multicultural Society of Ontario, and the Ethnic and Immigration Studies Program of the University of Toronto made possible the use of spacious facilities on the Toronto University campus, and the resources of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, a third sponsor, provided direction, and a banquet to finish off the experience.

Guest speaker of the banquet, Dr. John Lapp of Goshen, Indiana concluded that a good base of research had been established, but that scholarly efforts had been more "inner" than "outer" directed. A number of the scholars, it was apparent, had nevertheless done their work more on the outside, and were much interested also on the "inner" workings of these various research endeavors.

Special attention focussed during one evening on an evaluation of the second volume of **Mennonites in Canada**, written by Dr. Frank H. Epp, of Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario. Though not available at the time, the publication has since that date reached the reading public.

The whole question of "Mennonite identity" naturally came to the fore once again. It seems to be an ongoing search.

Perhaps that discussion will continue more directly in other circles when the papers of the conference appear in the first issue of the new **Journal of Mennonite Studies** early in 1983.

*(continued from page 1)*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This school is the only building left standing after World War II.

<sup>2</sup> These notes are from a series of letters written to grandchildren of the author.

**Materials on this page provided by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.**



*The archives display which was prepared for the Mennonite State of the Arts Conference in Toronto, Ontario. Conrad Grebel College, the Mennonite Heritage Centre and Centre for MB Studies (Winnipeg) were represented. Photo: Mennonite Reporter.*

### For Sale

#### Books of Poetry

<b>Lindenblaetter</b> (n.d.)	84 p., \$4.00
<b>Heimatglocken</b> (1962)	103 p., \$4.00
<b>Friedensklaenge</b> (1971)	95 p., \$4.00
<b>Abendlicht</b> (1977)	130 p., \$4.00
<b>Eichenlaub</b> (1981)	140 p., \$5.00
<b>Glockenlaeuten</b> (1982)	176 p., \$5.00

For copies write to the author:

Valentin Sawatzky  
244 Neilson Ave.  
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N2J 2M3

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## Milestones of First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask.

By Esther Patkau

### Part III

Changes come, and they came to the Girls' Home. For 25 years it had served as a "home away from home" for more than 500 girls, but now they had changed work and life styles, and the resources of the Home were not as needed. January 29, 1956, the 25th anniversary of the Home was celebrated and with that closed its doors.

With the congestion problems solved, new concerns surfaced: leadership and language. In many families English had become the language of the home. Gradually Sunday School classes had shifted from one language to another. So also the change was becoming more evident in the Christian Endeavor programs, the Sunday evening services and also in the worship service. Two messages, one German and the other English, were part of the worship.

Rev. J. J. Thiessen was deeply involved in Conference work and activities that involved the larger world Mennonite community. The congregation was growing and demands were too much for one leader. Both ordained ministers and lay leaders had assisted in the work of ministry through the years, but additional help was needed. During 1959-1961 Nick Dick served as assistant minister, and then left to become pastor of the congregation in Toronto. In 1962-1963 the deacons recommended calling lay ministers from the congregation. Several were nominated. At the request of Rev. Thiessen consideration was given to calling a younger man to take on the pastoral responsibility, and Rev. Edward Enns was called. On January 1, 1964, he was ordained as Elder, with Rev. Thiessen becoming Elder Emeritus, and Menno Nickel ordained as lay minister.

In 1964 the membership crossed the 500 mark and plans were made for expansion. The building debt had been paid off in 1959 but the Building fund had been kept open. The younger families were establishing their homes in Nutana, a newer part of the city. Instead of enlarging the building, plans shifted to constructing a new building in a new location. The construction began in 1964 and on June 13, 1965, the Nutana Park Mennonite Church building was dedicated.

On January 3, 1966, that congregation organized formally, and 106 signed as charter members. Of them 76 were transferring their membership from First Mennonite to the new congregation. They called Rev. Jake Nickle as their first pastor.

At First Mennonite it left a large vacancy for many of the younger families had transferred, but growth again was evident and others filled the positions and pews. (To be cont'd.)

## Book Reviews

Maria Foth. **Beyond the Border, Maria's Miraculous Pilgrimage.** Burlington, Ontario, G. R. Welch Company, 1981. 140 p., \$8.95

Florence Schloneger. **Sara's Trek.** Newton, Kansas, Faith and Life Press. December 1981, 105 p., illus. \$4.95 U.S.; \$6.19 Canada. Reviewed by LaVerna Klippenstein, *Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

These two accounts of the experiences of young girls during the trauma and terror of Communist upheaval are among the best-written of recent Mennonite stories coming out of remembered World War II experiences.

Maria Foth has written an autobiography for young people and adults. Her book includes several pages of photographs and a foreword by John H. Redekop, professor of Political Science, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Florence Schloneger has written a story for children of all ages, based on real-life incidents from interviews. The illustrations by Sydney Quinn make the book especially attractive for younger readers.

Both books demonstrate the courage and convictions of Mennonites who fled their homes in Russia, and of the trauma and tears of children who were separated from their families. Both books refrain from overwhelming gloominess by including delightful bits of humor and moments of joyous relief.

The style of both is fast-paced and smooth, and few will stop reading without reluctance before the end. Although the experiences in these stories will not be shared by many readers, most will readily identify with the thoughts, emotions and struggles of the sensitive young protagonists who stumble and soar, doubt and trust, and who mature emotionally and spiritually during their wanderings.

Maria's story reveals insights into various stages of Soviet society while **Sara's Trek** is seen largely through the eyes of a child. Those who remember Barbara Smucker's **Henry's Red Sea**, those with an interest in Mennonite migration from Russia to Canada after World War II, and those looking for outstanding historical novels for children and young people, will welcome these books. They are sure to impress readers with their demonstration of God's presence in the midst of extreme difficulties and evoke deep gratitude to Him for His protective care.

**Sara's Trek** lends itself well to reading aloud in the family, school or retreat setting. Both books would make excellent Christmas gifts.

David A. Haury. **Prairie People: A History of the Western District Conference.** Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1981, pb. \$17.95 hdc., \$25.95 (US), 532 pp. C. Henry Smith. **Smith's Story of the Men-**

**nonites.** Fifth ed. revised and enlarged by Cornelius Krahn. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1981, pb., \$19.95, 589 p. Reviewed by Dennis Stoesz, *Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

This regional conference history of the Mennonite experience in Kansas and Nebraska from 1887 to 1979 is very readable. Haury constantly helps us to surmount all the narration details by explaining how these 106 congregations have tossed and turned in the waves of time. These themes are the strength of the book.

At the beginning, Haury clearly outlines his assumption that the Anabaptist heritage and principles have "been significant in shaping" (p. 5) the ideas and practices of the Western District Mennonites. These distinctives include 1) community, 2) non-conformity to the world, 3) non-resistance, and 4) evangelical mission. Haury then uses these four religious tenets of faith to interpret the Mennonite experience on the prairies. He concludes that evangelical mission and non-conformity to the world's practices and outward forms "were never a primary concern of the immigrants to Kansas," (p. 418) and that the community spirit of the late nineteenth century disintegrated. Only the principle of non-resistance "became more pronounced in its significance and developed to include not only a negative opposition to military service but also a positive endorsement of social concern and action." (p. 418)

In further explaining the story, Haury feels that the conference has played a unifying force among these congregations in the areas of education, peace and home mission work. He prepares the stage for this theme of unity by first setting the record straight that these "Kansas" Mennonites originated not only from Russia, but from Switzerland, South Germany, Galacia, Prussia, and the eastern United States. This diverse community then rallied together under the cause of education by supporting Bethel College - in spite of much controversy. The witness for peace became a united positive and social response to the World Wars and the Vietnam War. And the itinerant ministers journeyed far and wide to keep contact of the ever migrating and expanding congregations. One also senses that the prairie geography of Kansas and Nebraska played a cohesive factor in giving birth and growth to the conference.

One of Haury's explanations, however, seems too restrictive. In interpreting education and non-resistance, Haury tends to see the Mennonite church moving either in a liberal direction or an evangelical/conservative direction. (Theron F. Schlabach points this out in his review in **Mennonite Life** (Sept. 1981). One may ask whether he has not left out a third group within this conference: the "maintainers" of tradition, i.e. the conservative groups who did not buy into American fundamentalism. The viewpoint of this group may come out most clearly (continued on p. 8)

## Book Reviews (Cont'd.)

from their sermon material of the late nineteenth century and from those congregations who were eventually won over to the General Conference at a later date.

Nevertheless, Haury's balancing of explanations and narrations certainly makes this fairly fat volume an enjoyable evening's reading (or possibly several).

In reading **Smith's Story of the Mennonites** one is awe struck by the chronological and geographical comprehensiveness of this history of the Mennonites from 1525 to 1981 and covering Switzerland, Netherlands, Northern and Southern Germany, Russia, and America. C. Henry Smith also does not step too quickly over the European Mennonites in order to get to the North American experience. He tells us first about the story of the Anabaptists, and then traces the history of Mennonite congregations to the present in each of the countries. One senses the real ebb and flow of the Mennonites, as they decline in one area and grow in another. Smith does not only tell the success stories, but interprets when he can the reasons for physical and spiritual decline and growth. At many points, Cornelius Krahn has rewritten and updated the history of the congregations to tell us of the present state of Mennonitism around the world.

This book still stands as a good introduction to Mennonites, and was for this reader stylistically more interesting to read than C. J. Dyck's edited **Introduction to Mennonite history**. One must note, however, that Smith (1875-1948) did most of his writing in the early twentieth century. The general optimism that prevades the book, as well as the scholarship, certainly bears this out.

Nevertheless, I doubt whether another such a good encompassing volume on the Mennonites will be written in the twentieth century. I am glad that Cornelius Krahn has reworked the book, for the third time now, in order to present it to a contemporary popular and scholarly audience.

Lawrence Klippenstein, **David Klassen and the Mennonites**. In the "We Built Canada" series, with Keith Wilson, gen. ed. Agincourt, Canada: The Book Society of Canada Ltd., 1982. 76 pp., illus. pb. \$4.95. *Reviewed by Victor Kliever, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

**David Klassen and the Mennonites** is an excellent introduction to the story of the Manitoba Mennonites. In five compact chapters this story is portrayed beginning with the arrival of the first immigrants at Upper Fort Garry in 1874. From the immediate settlement problems the narrative moves to a quick flashback to the settlers' historical antecedents before returning to examine the developing agricultural practices and community life. A separate chapter deals with the religious and educational concerns and the growing impact on their self-sufficiency by

the newly established provincial government and the surrounding society. Changes in consequence of World Wars I and II are dealt with briefly, especially the increasing urbanization. A final chapter surveys the contemporary Mennonite scene in all its variety and abundance.

Critically, one might ask why the book focuses so heavily on the early pioneer years and almost totally excludes the more recent developments; certainly the contribution of the later immigrants was not insignificant! One might also question the appropriateness of the title, as it implies a broader scope than the author actually covers ("David Klassen and the Manitoba Mennonites" would have been more correct); further, the name "David Klassen" in the title implies major leadership and leaves one wondering whether other persons might have been more suitably selected (the epilogue does indicate that Klassen's name was chosen primarily because he was typical of the earliest Mennonite pioneers).

The book is intended for younger readers and classroom use. As such, it is a most helpful survey, including carefully compiled data, maps, photos, as well as numerous discussion questions and research projects. Further references are also suggested, although these are somewhat limited. The layout and general production are of excellent quality (a few typographical errors), so that the book is attractive and interesting to read. All in all, Lawrence Klippenstein is to be commended on this work: an excellent introduction for the younger reader and newcomer to the subject matter, it also contains some items of information that may be new to one already well-acquainted with the Mennonite story.

Nick J. Kroeker, **The First Mennonite Villages in Russia, Chortitza-Rosental**, Vancouver, B.C., 1981. 279 p., \$20.00. Hdc. *Reviewed by George K. Epp, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

Nick Kroeker has added another book to the series of Mennonite local histories, supplementing the earlier books on Chortitza, like H.D. Epp's **Die Chortitzer Mennoniten**, and Gerhard Fast's, **Das Ende von Chortitza**. Kroeker has made sure that his book should reach a maximum of readers by publishing his contribution in both English and German. The early part draws heavily on David Rempel's research and thus offers very reliable information. In the second half of this Chortitza-Rosental book, Kroeker offers a unique combination of history and ethno-sociological information. He introduces the reader to leading personalities of the two villages, to the number of settlement problems they had to face and also to their social and cultural interests.

The reader is introduced to the "Schultibott," the "Volost," the functions of various appointed and elected representatives, the school system, and the role of the

church in that unique society where the state intervened very marginally. Kroeker also traces the gradual development of a more complex society with the industrialization of the late nineteenth century. Throughout the book the reader will sense that the author is taking him through the streets of his beloved home villages, telling their story as he walks familiar territory.

The organization of the material might have been somewhat different had the author not taken that stroll down those streets. The reader will be surprised by the order in which the various aspects of village life are presented. e.g. Experiences in the "Volost" are followed by "Mennonite Foods," and then a description of the outdoor baking oven, and then again the "Speisezettel." However, this will not disturb the reader, if he is willing to take the same stroll through the old Mennonite village, because on the whole this walk through these villages is very informative and educational.

The **First Mennonite Villages in Russia** helps to fill another gap in our Russian Mennonite studies and thus the author must be lauded for his significant effort.

## New Books Received

- Cornelius C. Funk, **Escape to Freedom**. Translated and edited by Peter J. Klassen. Hillsboro, Kansas: MB Publishing House, 1982, 125 p., pb., illus.
- Frank H. Epp, **Mennonites in Canada 1920-1940. A People's Struggle for Survival**. Vol. II. Toronto, Canada: MacMillan of Canada, 1982, 639 p., hc., \$25.95
- Lenore Eidse, ed. **Furrows in the Valley. A Centennial Project of the Rural Municipality of Morris, 1880-1980**. Morris Manitoba, 1980, 891 p., hc., illus. \$29.95(?)
- Katherine Schroeder, ed. **Karl Hildebrand: Family Tree**. Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1982, 190 p., hc., illus. \$20.00. Order from K. Schroeder, 528 Manchester, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 1N8.
- Gertrude Regier and Committee. **Through 50 Years at Bethany Mennonite Church, 1932-1982**. Watrous, Saskatchewan, 1982, 88 p., hc., illus.
- Sylvia Regier. **Through the Years with the C.W. Regiers**. Laird, Sask. 1982, 160 p., hc., illus.

### Note:

All books mentioned in book reviews and NEW BOOKS RECEIVED may be ordered from:

**Mennonite Heritage Centre  
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