



The MHSA Chronicle

Official Publication of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Volume XXIII Number 3

Oct 2020

A Tale of a Black Canadian Female Who Joined a Mennonite Brethern Church

By Cathryn Heslep

My name is Cathryn, and I have attended Lendrum Mennonite Church since 1990. I am a third generation Canadian black female, born and raised in Alberta. The following is the story of how I came to attend and subsequently become a member of Lendrum as an MBC (Mennonite By Choice).



Cathryn Heslep

My Family Background

I consider myself fortunate because I knew both maternal (Chaney) and paternal (Heslep) sets of grandparents. Also, both sets were regular church attendees. I be-

(See Tale on page 11)

My Colonial Roots

by Alvin Lowrey

DISCLAIMER While I am proud of my ancestry, I do not embrace the ideology of colonialism.

At ten years old, it had already become known to me that I am a twelfth generation descendant from some *Mayflower* passengers. Yet the details of the voyage nor the background of my ancestors have never been of concern.

Who were those on board? How many were on board? Were they all Puritans? Were they educated, wealthy or poor? Where did they come from? Were they all English? What were the socio/economic conditions prior to the voyage? How big was the ship? What was its capacity? What was it like being on board? How long were the passengers on board? What were the weather conditions throughout the voyage and upon arrival? What was life like in the settlement?

In 1953 a distant relative, Chester Chandler, compiled a 102-page *Genealogy of the Chandler Family, 1633-1953* which included a 19x34-inch family tree chart of 13 generations of descendants from primarily four progenitors from the Plymouth Colony.¹ My paternal grandmother was a Chandler. So my father and this author had a common great grandfather; hence the connection. While there were no Chandlers on the *Mayflower*, Edmund Chandler arrived at the Plymouth Colony a decade later. And two of Edmund Chandler's descendants (in my line of ancestry) married descendants from the original *Mayflower* passengers.



Alvin Lowrey

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Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta invites you to the

2020 Virtual Annual General Meeting

Date: Saturday Nov 14, 2020

Time: 1 PM

Join our AGM via Zoom - due to the virus pandemic we will not meet in person. Zoom login information, the agenda, annual reports & more information will be sent via email a week prior to the meeting.

Editorial Reflections

by Dave Toews

During this time of isolation, I like so many other people, embarked on that "someday I want to"



Dave Toews

project! I've organized all my family history and genealogy data, working papers from various projects, and writing activity files. What a relief. I almost know where some things are!

A number of years ago our younger son, Everett, mentioned I should write a family history. I was already committed to doing so. He suggested it should be about three pages long. I was contemplating three binders full! How to arrive at a compromise? What I have decided to do is put together some pictorial histories with a limited

amount of text: one for my father's side (Toews); one for my mother's side (Kroeger); one for each of my wife's parents' sides; and one for our own nuclear family. Hopefully these will be brief enough to hold our children's and grandchildren's attention and interest.

The pictorials start with my grandparents' generation. We have a few pictures of my great-grandparents, but none that show them clearly. It would also be nice if there were photos available of the Mennonite land search deputy (Prussia to Russia) Johann Bartsch. He is my 3x great-grandfather on the Kroeger side and my 4x great-grandfather on the Toews side. This is one of our few claims to fame! Well that, and the fact that my mother came from the Kroeger clock-making family.

Writing this history has brought up questions for me. For example, when did the Mennonites living in Prussia (present day Poland) become German speaking? I asked Conrad Stoesz, archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg, for the short answer. He stated that there isn't one. However, he passed on some

thoughts and notes and directed me to Peter Letkemann's article in *Preservings* 2001 and Rueben Epp's "The Story of Low German", both good resources on the topic. Mennonites living in Prussia came from various parts of Europe with different languages. Prussia was a trading center, so German, Dutch, Polish, and English were all commonly used. Living in mixed villages alongside Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists etc. influenced Mennonites' languages also. Furthermore, language used in official situations was not always the same as the local spoken language. For example, High German rather than Low German was used in church settings.

I found Letkemann's article online and ordered Epp's book, so looking into the history of this language matter will be my research project for the next few months.

I'm also interested in the development of Mennonite surnames. In the Sept 2020 Mennonite Historian, genealogist Glenn Penner writes the following about an individual referred to as 'Langen Dirck': ... this means 'tall Dirks'. By the late 1500s nearly all of the Mennonites living in Prussia had taken permanent family names. Here is an example of a Mennonite who had not yet done so. Note that the surnames Dirks, Doerksen, etc., are derived from the first name Dirk. Perhaps he was the ancestor of one of the Dirks or Doerksen family lines.

Toews (Töws, Toevs, Tewffs, Taves), my father's family name, is similarly derived. It is a dialect variant of Thew(e)s, a common contraction of the name Matthew or Matheus. On the other hand, Kroeger (Krueger Kruger Cruger), my mother's family name, is not

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Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta Chronicle

ISSN 1916-6966

is published three times a year.

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Subscription is through membership (\$30.00/year or \$500.00 lifetime).

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Call for Nominations for MHSA Board Members

Dear Members of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Are you passionate about gathering and preserving Alberta Mennonite History and working with a group of dedicated individuals? If so, we would invite you to allow your name to stand with the nominating committee for the MHSA board of directors. Or nominate a friend or acquaintance.

For more information email or call the chair of the nominating committee.

Ken Matis, ken.matis61@gmail.com, 403-345-3570 or 403-929-3604

(Editorial from page 2)

derived from a first name. Instead it means innkeeper or the maker of earthen jars or crocks.

I am not the only one who has been caught up in genealogy lately. This time of quarantine has allowed Chronicle authors as well as the time, energy, and willingness to write good long family stories without too much encouragement! 2020 so far has been a remarkable and unprecedented year in so many ways. And I have had time to have both of my knees replaced between the June and Oct issues.

Thank you to all the authors and contributors to this issue. Your articles are always appreciated. It is a pleasure to work with you. The MHSA welcomes your feedback, emails, letters to the editor, and articles. Contact Dave Toews at dmtows@gmail.com with any suggestions, questions or comments.. ❖

Chairman's Corner

by Ken Matis

Continuing my thoughts in the last Chairman's Corner about the early Reformers' reaction to the Black Plague/Black Death (their "COVID 19), I thought I would share the quatrain hymn of the ear-

ly Anabaptist Reformer Huldrych Zwingli. In this hymn every line is a stanza.

When the Black Plague broke out in Zurich, Switzerland in August 1519, Zwingli left his mineral-springs vacation. Although already weak from his work, he hurried back to the city to minister to its victims. It wasn't long before he himself caught the disease, and it seemed likely he too would die. God, however, was not done with him yet. Zwingli recovered to write his famous "Plague Hymn", which expresses his sense of trust and joy at regaining his health. The following are the words Zwingli penned:



Ken Matis

*Help me, O Lord, my strength and rock. Lo, at the door I hear death's knock.
Uplift thine arm, once pierced for me, that conquered death and set me free.
Yet if thy voice in life's midday recalls my soul, then I obey.
In faith and hope, earth I resign, secure of heaven for I am Thine.*

*My pains increase. Haste to console, for fear and woe seize body and soul.
Death is at hand; my senses fail; my tongue is dumb. Now, Christ, prevail.
Lo! Satan strains to snatch his prey: I feel his grasp; must I give way?
He harms me not. I fear no loss for here I lie beneath thy cross.*

*My God! My Lord! Healed by thy hand, upon the earth I once more stand.
Let sin no more rule over me. My mouth shall sing alone to thee.
Though now delayed, my hour will come, involved perchance in deeper gloom.
But, let it come. With joy I'll rise, and bear my yoke straight to the skies.*

It is interesting to see Zwingli's references to the tongue being "dumb", which could well be a symptom of the Black Death, and to the mouth singing as a sign of strength and recovery. It is of further interest to know that Zwingli wrote stanzas 1-4 when his disease first struck, stanzas 5-8 as his health beginning to fail, and the final stanzas upon his recovery to express his praise and joy. The entire hymn is a testament to Zwingli's unwavering life of faith in a resurrected saviour. May we also be able to sing along with Zwingli between the bad, the ugly, and the good. ❖

(Roots from page 1)

To be more specific:

- John Alden's future wife, Priscilla, was the daughter of William & Alice Mullins
- a son of Myles & Barbara Standish married a daughter of John & Priscilla Alden
- a grandson of Edmund Chandler married a granddaughter of John & Priscilla Alden
- a son of Phillipe de la Noye married a granddaughter of Myles & Barbara Standish
- a great grandson of Edmund Chandler married a granddaughter of Phillipe & Mary Delano who therefore was also a great granddaughter of Myles & Barbara Standish



Painting of the *Mayflower* by William Halsall (1882) (1)

So, the Chandler, Standish, Mullins, Alden and Delano (de la Noye) clans were all eventually related by marriage..., and I am descended from all of the above. Myles Standish, John Alden and the Mullins families came from England in 1620 on the *Mayflower*². Myles Standish and Phillipe de la Noye had sailed from Holland on the *Speedwell*³, but Myles joined the *Mayflower* in Plymouth, England, and Phillipe returned to Holland and sailed to the Plymouth Colony in 1621 on the *Fortune*⁴, the second ship of pilgrim immigrants. Edmund Chandler may have arrived in 1630 on the *Handmaid*⁵, the last known ship to bring immigrants from Holland; however, his name did not appear on any documents before 1633.

Background for pilgrimage and colonization

More than 40 years before the *Mayflower* voyage, Robert Browne⁶ who graduated from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, had been preaching against the doctrines of the Church of England and started his own Congregationalist church. In 1581, Browne and his followers moved to the Netherlands. That original group broke up after two years due to internal

dissensions. But his separatist movement did not fade away, and his followers became known as Brownists. A group of these "Separatists" from the village, Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, moved to Amsterdam, Holland, in 1608 to avoid pledging allegiance to the Church of England and later moved to Leiden, Holland. (Ironically, Robert Browne had by this time become an ordained deacon and priest for the Church of England.)

While these Brownists did experience religious freedom in Holland, the secular life and economic situation left them yearning to move to a place where they could enjoy a more palatable lifestyle in line with their Christian beliefs. Dreaming of the New World, they sought a prominent merchant agency, the London Merchant Adventurers, to advance them funding for such a journey from Leiden. The Virginia Company granted them permission to establish a settlement on the east coast of the New World between Virginia and the Hudson River, and King James I granted them permission to leave the Church of England "provided they carried themselves peaceably."⁷

It should be noted that there is a distinction between "Puritans" and the "Pilgrim Separatists"; Puritans desired to reform the Church of England from within. By this definition, the *Mayflower* "Pilgrims" did not call themselves "Puritans"; in fact, they referred to themselves as "Saints". And in reality, they were not even called "pilgrims" until 200 years after the voyage.⁸

The same agent of London Merchant Adventurers, Thomas Weston, was actively recruiting

(See *Roots* on page 5)

(Roots from page 4)

would-be colonists to make the journey on the *Mayflower* in tandem with another ship, the *Speedwell*, to carry the Leiden Separatists. These particular recruits were basically patriotic loyalists who desired to establish a new English colony. While Thomas Weston might be thought of today as a travel agent, these sailing ships were certainly not comparable to today's luxury cruise ships or ocean liners! In fact, the *Mayflower* was a converted merchant ship originally intended for shipping up to 180 tons of cargo and not well designed for passengers or for trans-Atlantic sailing. There were no bathroom facilities nor hot showers and the rooms were cramped! The *Mayflower* had been used previously to import wines from France, Spain, Portugal and the Canary Islands. The *Speedwell* was a converted warship built for battle and had fought against the Spanish Armada. It was built in 1577 and had a capacity of 60 tons and was not much more accommodating for passengers than the *Mayflower*.

Most of these "adventurers" were young families who were willing and excited to establish an English colony and were selected from diverse trades. There were seven families with nine children and eight single male adults boarding as passengers of the *Mayflower*. There were also six indentured servants to some of these Merchant Adventurers for a total of 37 passengers. It is estimated that there were about 30 crew members (not listed as "passengers"). So there were approximately 67 on board in the middle of July, 1620, when they set sail down the Thames and onward to Southamp-

ton where they would meet the *Speedwell* arriving from Delfthaven, Holland, on July 22, 1620.

When the two ships made their rendezvous at Southampton, it was discovered that the *Speedwell* had been taking on water and needed repairs. After making further repairs for the same problem at Dartmouth and Plymouth, a decision was made to transfer most of the *Speedwell's* passengers to the *Mayflower* bringing its passenger total to over 100, plus crew members. Other *Speedwell* passengers would return to Holland. It has been theorized that the *Speedwell* had been refitted with two new masts of which one was too large.

Finally the *Mayflower* set sail from Plymouth, England, on September 16, 1620 (almost a month and a half since first departing from London). Already fatigued from being cramped into small quarters and having fewer provisions remaining, the passengers were in no condition for a 2-month voyage across the ocean. Furthermore, with all these delays winter would be setting in before landfall.

If this painting (ca 1745) by Bernard Gribble is accurate in its portrayal of the boarding in London, it would appear that these English "adventurers" had no idea of what they were getting themselves into. Here they are all dressed up in finery being transported to the ship by a shallop (large row boat) since there was no dock or boarding ramp.

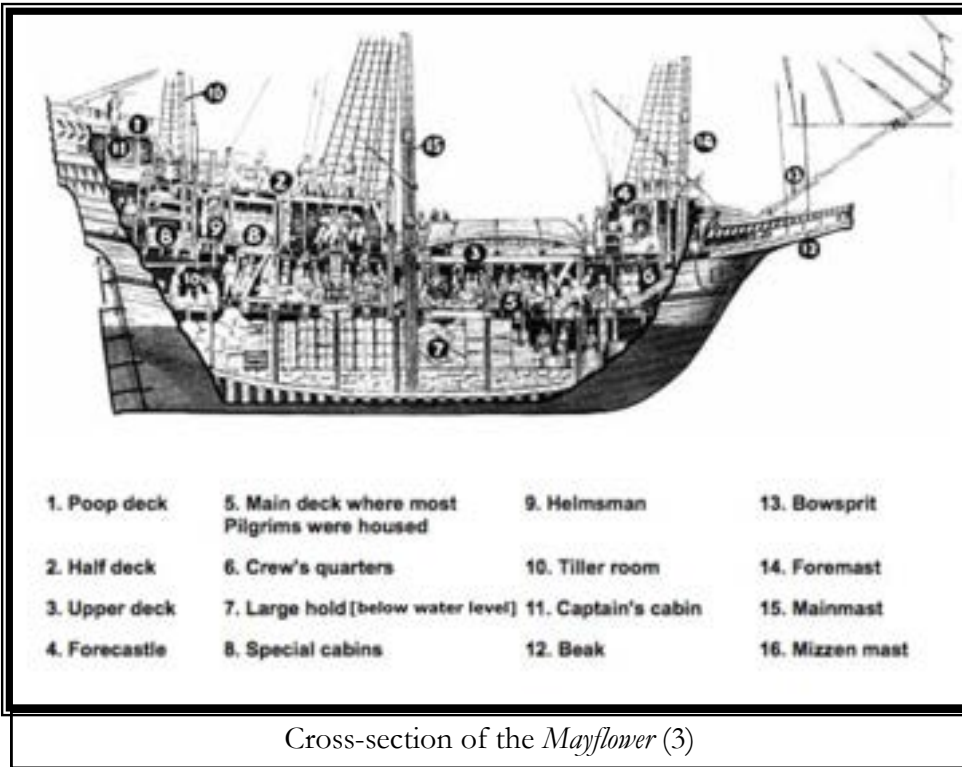


Boarding the Mayflower in London by Bernard Gribble (ca 1754) (2)

So what were they getting themselves into? On board the *Mayflower*, the passenger cabins on the main deck had low ceilings and thin walls, and were very cramped. Passengers would pass the time playing cards or other

(See Roots on page 6)

(Roots from page 5)



games and reading by candlelight. Meals were cooked for a group at a time, and passengers also prepared their own meals from rations that were issued daily. During the course of the voyage, several passengers suffered from scurvy due to the scarcity of fresh food and a deficiency of vitamin C. Those who developed scurvy suffered from bleeding gums, loose teeth and halitosis. Drinking water was often contaminated, so the preferred beverage was beer.⁹

Myles Standish

So who were these intrepid, stalwart, people..., some of whom were my ancestors? My specific ancestors were representatively as diverse as most of the other voyagers.

First and foremost was "Captain" Myles Standish (born about 1584) who presumably had been a Lieutenant in the English military, but had training in military engineering at the University of Leiden. Apparently he had also been stationed in Holland during his English military service. At any rate, he and his wife, Rose, were living in Hol-



Embarkation of the Pilgrims at Deft Haven, Holland by Robert F. Weir (1843) Myles and Rose Standish are identified in the lower right corner. This painting hangs in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C. (4)

land in 1620 and had joined the Separatists/Saints in Leiden. His title of "Captain" was not a rank earned in the English military service but was assigned to him by the Leiden congregation as their security officer to establish and coordinate the Colony's defence against both foreign (French, Spanish, Dutch) and domestic (Native American) threats.

"He led or participated in all the early exploratory missions sent out to explore Cape Cod, and was immensely involved in selecting the site where the Pilgrims would settle. He was one of the few who did not get sick during the first winter, and is recorded as having greatly helped and cared for those who were sick. He organized the deployment of the colony's cannons and the construction of the fort at Plymouth. He led both trading expeditions and military expeditions to the various Indian groups in the region. He led the revenge attacks on the Indians in the Massachusetts Bay after they were caught in a conspiracy planning to attack and destroy the Plymouth and Wessagussett colonies; several Indians were killed or executed, for which Standish received criticism, even from his friends, for being too heavy-handed."

*"Despite the heavy criticism, Standish was well respected within the Plymouth Colony, and held a number of positions of authority. He made several trips to England to bring trading goods back and to negotiate with the Merchant Adventurers who had financially sponsored the joint-stock company that funded the Pilgrims' voyage. In the mid-1630s, Standish moved his family and helped found the town of Duxbury, which was likely named after his ancestral home."*¹⁰

William and Alice Mullins family

(See Roots on page 7)

(Roots from page 6)



Current photo of the Mullins' House in Dorking, England (5)

William and Alice Mullins boarded the *Mayflower* with their two children, Priscilla (18) and Joseph (14), while a married daughter and an older son stayed behind. William was a highly successful entrepreneur as a shoemaker and haberdasher from Dorking, Surrey, England. The Mullins house, built in 1590, had four street-front shops (and still stands today).

He was likely the most wealthy passenger and would have had to travel about 25 miles by horse and carriage from Dorking to board the *Mayflower* in London. He transported over 250 pairs of shoes and 13 pairs of boots plus "oiled leather and canvas suits, stuff gowns and leather and stuff breeches, shirts, jerkins, doublets, neckclothes, hats and caps, hose, stockings, belts, piece goods, and haberdasherie."¹¹ ("Stuff" is any woven material.) Mind you, there was no automated conveyor belt to load all that merchandise onto the ship.

Although the people are not identified in Gribble's painting [see figure 2], I like to imagine that the

prominent figure in the right foreground with hat in left hand and wearing a black cape as William Mullins; next to him on his right, his wife Alice, with their young son, Joseph, between them. Presumably, then, the young girl looking away from the crowd could be their daughter, Priscilla. Also, the man standing in the shallop giving instructions could be Thomas Weston, the agent of London Merchant Adventurers.

Upon arrival in the New World, there was no boarding dock, no ground transportation and no fancy hotel to find comfort, no grocery store, no pharmacy! And the shallop they had used for boarding had been dismantled in order to load it on board the ship. They were destined to remain aboard in close quarters for several more months throughout the cold winter.

Due to these conditions, there was an outbreak of pneumonia and tuberculosis combined with the scurvy. Disease became endemic, and there was no possibility of "social distancing"! Finally, when huts had been constructed by springtime, over half the passengers and half the crew had died. The remaining survivors were not able to disembark until March 21, 1621.

Unfortunately, William did not survive the brutal winter on board the *Mayflower* awaiting housing to be built in the colony. Alice Mullins and their young son died shortly after moving ashore. Thus eighteen-year-old Priscilla was now orphaned.

John Alden

In contrast to the powerful military leader, Myles Standish, and the wealthy Mullins family, John Alden was representative of the other end of the social spectrum in my ancestry. He was neither a Merchant Adventurer nor a religious pilgrim and did not board the *Mayflower* in London nor the *Speedwell* in Delfthaven. He was a 21-year-old blue-collar worker just beginning his career as a carpenter and barrel maker. He was hired in Southampton as a cooper to look after the barrels and containers for food, water and beer. Furthermore, he was given the option of staying in the New World or returning to England. As a crew member, he was part of "the hired help".

Apparently, sometime before



Signing the Mayflower Compact on board the Mayflower by Jean Leon Geromes Ferris (1899). Represented in the portrait are 8 of 41 signatories: Myles Standish is seated in chair on left; John Alden is signing the document (6)

(See Roots on page 8)

(Roots from page 7)

arriving at Cape Cod, he had decided that he would like to stay on as a colonist, and became the youngest male adult to sign the *Mayflower Compact*.¹²

What was the *Mayflower Compact*? And why was it necessary? Imagine the stress of all those on board: the Leiden pilgrims, the London colonists, and the crew. Imagine the difficulty of boarding in the first place and settling into confined quarters; then came delay after delay and eventually having passengers of two ships (with conflicting ideologies and creeds) combined into one vessel; plus the delays of almost two months being onboard and running low on supplies before actually setting sail across the ocean. Then imagine life aboard this singular



Early colonial thatched roof houses (8)

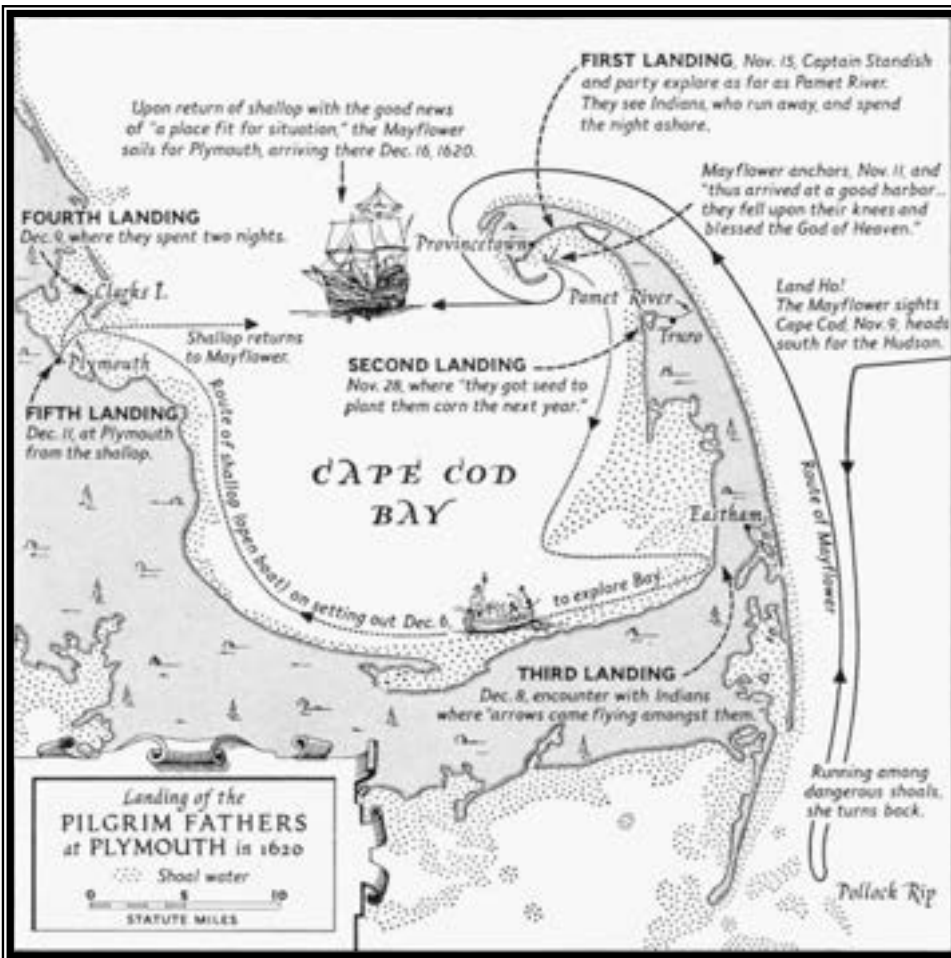
have a legal right to create a settlement in the Cape Cod area as no land patent had been granted.

Thus, it was duly noted in the *Mayflower's* log on November 11, 1620, that there were "hints of disaffection among colonists"¹³ (to put it mildly). On that very day, two of the Leiden separatist leaders, William Bradford and William Brewster, drew up the *Mayflower Compact* which was signed by 41 adult males regardless of social status. This agreement pledged allegiance to the king of England, but also set up a separate form of government. Although this document was not a constitution, per se, it established the concept that each person would be subject to majority rule; i.e., that a legitimate government must be based on the agreement and will of those being governed.

Landfall and Colonization

Following the signing of the *Mayflower Compact*, the ship remained anchored off the coast of the eastern peninsula of Cape Cod at Long Point from November 11 to December 15 while two explorations were made by an armed contingent of 16 men led by Captain Myles Standish. In the meantime, the shallop had to be recon-

(See Roots on page 9)



Cape Cod Explorations (7)

ship with little privacy, contagious disease, and encountering stormy weather for another 66 days. The tension must have been widespread! Added to all the hardships of the previous four months, the *Mayflower* was off-course. The original destination was supposed to be north of the Virginia colonies and south of the Hudson River. The colonists and the pilgrims did not

(Roots from page 8)

structed before a third exploration. After the third exploration, the decision was made to set sail for Plymouth harbour where they would build a settlement.

After reaching Plymouth harbour, winter weather was setting in with freezing rain and snow. Going ashore had to be delayed. The first agenda was to fell some trees, clear the land and construct a community house.

With some work beginning in late December, only a couple of houses were completed by early January including a 20-foot square common house for storage of goods. Also by the end of December, house-plots were assigned to the 19 family groups with each family responsible for their own construction. Each plot was 50 feet front-to-back and 8 feet wide multiplied by the number of family members. (A family of four would be allotted a plot 50 X 32 feet.) Yet due to the harsh winter conditions, the passengers remained on the *Mayflower* until mid-March. By then, 49 passengers had died from the endemic leaving only 53 settlers. With houses yet to be built, they lived in huts. A year later there had only been seven houses built. The earliest of these dirt floor houses had thatched roofs which were susceptible to fire.¹⁴

Such was the life of the Plymouth settlers. Of my ancestors, Myles Standish's wife, Rose, died on January 29; William Mullins died February 21; Alice Mullins and Joseph died after April of 1621. Myles Standish became very prominent as a military leader, and despite his youth John Alden achieved great respect as he served

in many roles in the Plymouth colony (and later married the orphaned Priscilla Mullins).

John Alden served as an elected assistant to the Governor over 50 years; acted as Deputy Governor on two occasions; served as Treasurer three different terms; served on a committee to revise laws in 1645; was appointed on many other minor posts and committees by the Plymouth General Court; and was Deputy for Duxbury to Plymouth; etc.¹⁵

Legendary Romance

John Alden's marriage to Priscilla Mullins is legendary. There was a traditional anecdote relative to Capt. Standish and his friend John Alden cited in *New England's Memorial*¹⁶ by Nathaniel Morton, 1669, which predates Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1858 epic poem *The Courtship of Miles Standish*¹⁷.

"The lady who had gained the attractions of the captain is said to have been Priscilla Mullins. John Alden was sent to make proposals in behalf of Standish. The messenger, though a pilgrim, was then young and comely, and the lady expressed her preference by the question, Prithee, John, why do you not speak for yourself? The captain's hope was blasted, and the frank overture soon ended in the marriage of John Alden and Priscilla Mullins, from whom it is said, are descended all of the name of Alden in the United States."

So this written account was only 46 years after the presumed incident while Longfellow's poem was two centuries later. An interesting bit of trivia is that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a great-great-great-great-great-grandson of John and Priscilla Alden through his maternal grandfather, Peleg Wadsworth. Furthermore, Peleg Wadsworth (through both parents) was a great-great-great-grandson of John and Priscilla Alden (as a descendant from two granddaughters who were siblings)¹⁸. No, I am not descended from either of these two granddaughters and am not related to Longfellow!



Myles Standish House in Duxbury, present day Massachusetts, (Massachusetts & the USA did not yet exist in 1630) (9)



John Alden House in Duxbury, present day Massachusetts (10)

Here are some after-thoughts to the legendary affair. Indeed, Myles Standish was widowed in 1621 at age 37 and would have naturally been a bit nervous in courting a young lady half his age. It is true that Myles and John Alden had become close friends despite their generation gap and had gained each other's trust and respect. So who better than John to be his go-between? With the social class system of that era, the daughter of a

(See Roots on page 10)

(Roots from page 9)

wealthy merchant would not normally marry a tradesman of lower class. So John probably did not think of himself as a worthy suitor, especially compared to the status of Myles. Yet it seems that Priscilla could care less about social status. Besides, John was achieving a fine reputation among the settlers. So it seems only natural that Priscilla would have chosen the younger more attractive lad only 3 years her senior.

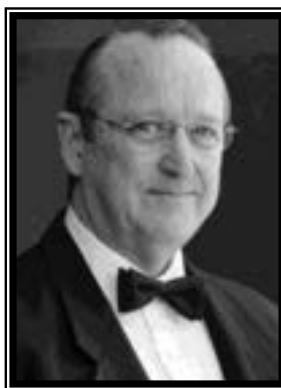
Anyway, the rest of the story is that Myles accepted the outcome and remained friends with John. John and Priscilla were married the following spring on May 22, 1622. Myles found his future bride, Barbara, among the passengers of the *Anne* that arrived the following year and remarried on April 5, 1623.

Around 1630, Myles and Barbara along with John and Priscilla (among others) founded a new village, Duxbury, just north of Plymouth and both families moved there with four toddlers in tow. At this point, Myles and Barbara had 4 sons, and John and Priscilla had 2 sons and 2 daughters. Myles and Barbara ended up with 7 children, and John and Priscilla raised 10 children. One source suggested that they were neighbours in Duxbury; however, current Google maps suggest otherwise. The historic houses of John Alden and Myles Standish are 2.7 miles apart. In any case, it would seem that their children grew up well acquainted as Myles' second son, Alexander, married John's sixth child, Sarah.

And thus began the long ancestral lineage leading up to me..., and millions other descendants over twelve generations and beyond. According to Google, there are 35 million descendants of John Alden alive today (not including those who have passed on).

Alvin Lowrey is a dual citizen who was born in Kansas and moved to Edmonton, Alberta, in 1975. He enjoyed a 33-year career as a member of the Edmonton Symphony performing over 3,300 concerts and is retired as Principal Trumpet Emeritus. During his tenure, he served his colleagues as chair of the players' association, representative to the board, representative on the negotiation committee, and representative to the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians. Alvin also taught trumpet and chamber music at the University of Alberta for 39 years.

Alvin a true Anabaptist, he was confirmed at age 12 as a Methodist and was re-baptized at Lendrum Mennonite Church where he has served on the Facilities Commission as well as Member-at-Large on the Church Board and chaired the Nominations Committee. As a part of his stewardship, he occasionally participates in worship by playing trumpet along with hymns and by singing in the church choir.



Alvin Lowrey

Sources:

¹Chester Chandler: Genealogy of the Chandler Family, 1633-1953:

<https://www.worldcat.org/title/genealogy-sic-particularly-of-the-chandler-family-1633-1953/oclc/13190226>

²Mayflower passenger list: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Mayflower_passengers

³Speedwell passenger list: <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~mosmd/speedwell.htm>

⁴Fortune passenger list: <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~mosmd/speedwell.htm>

⁵Handmaid 1630 voyage: https://familypedia.wikia.org/wiki/Hand_Maiden_1630_voyage

⁶Robert Browne (Brownist): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Browne_\(Brownist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Browne_(Brownist))

⁷The Mayflower: <https://www.history.com/topics/colonial-america/mayflower>

⁸ibid.

⁹Mayflower: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayflower>

¹⁰Caleb Johnson's Mayflower History: <http://mayflowerhistory.com/standish-myles>

¹¹Mayflower: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayflower>

¹²Mayflower Compact (including text): <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mayflower-Compact>

¹³The Mayflower and her Logs [p 116 of 157 pp]: <http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~smason/genealogy/html/mayflog.htm>

¹⁴Houses in Early Plymouth Colony: <http://mayflowerhistory.com/houses>

¹⁵John Alden (most reliable biographical data): <https://mayflower.americanancestors.org/john-alden-biography>

¹⁶Nathaniel Morton: New England's Memorial, 1669 [p 170 of

(See Roots on page 11)

(Roots from page 10)

515 pp]) reprint 1855: <https://archive.org/details/newenglandsmemor00m> [p 202 of pdf]

¹⁷Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (complete epic poem of 9 chapters): https://www.hwlongfellow.org/poems_poem.php?pid=186

¹⁸Direct Ancestors of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: https://www.hwlongfellow.org/pdf/hwl_ancestrychart.pdf

Illustration sources:

- 1 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayflower>
 - 2 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mayflower-Compact>
 - 3 <https://www.pinterest.cl/pin/513762269965728011/>
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 - 5 <http://mayflowerhistory.com/mullins-william/>
 - 6 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mayflower-Compact>
 - 7 <https://twitter.com/natgeomaps/status/1064972208555155458>
 - 8 <http://mayflowerhistory.com/houses>
 - 9 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myles_Standish
 - 10 <http://www.alden.org/>
- ❖

(Tale from page 1)



Obadiah Place (now a museum) Amber Valley, Alberta, homestead of Obadiah Bowen, the author's great-uncle

lieve that it is the legacy of my paternal grandmother that had the most influence on my spiritual background as well as my perception of race relations. My maternal grandfather, especially, spoke often of being treated unfairly in employment, but that did not impact me or my siblings and cousins.

I have a better sense of the journey of my paternal ancestors because their history has been discussed and chronicled. I attribute this information to various books, documents, and reunion events, especially acknowledging the work of fellow Amber Valley descendant Cheryl Foggo. (See Cheryl Foggo, Wikipedia article on the Internet).

My paternal great grandfather Willis Reese Bowen (February 6, 1875 – 1975) was **one of the first black US-born settlers in Amber Valley, Alberta**. He was one of a group of black settlers who arrived in 1911 from the southern United States, ostensibly to escape the Jim Crow laws. His eldest daughter, Mary Cytha Bowen, became my grandmother.

My paternal grandparents Robert Dwight Heslep and Mary Cytha Bowen met and married in Amber Valley, Alberta. Robert had travelled from Texas and Oklahoma north to Amber Valley seeking his fortune as a farmer. He purchased a parcel of land, returned to Texas to bring his parents to Canada, and married Mary. As his father died shortly after arriving in Canada, he moved his mother Jennie, nee Thigpen, to Edmonton. Then with his degree in Agriculture, he began his life's career in the poultry section at Swift Canadian, a meat packing plant.

Robert and Mary Heslep raised a family of six surviving children (a daughter died in infancy) in a small home in north Edmonton. Their children included World War II veterans, the first black teacher for the Correspondence School book branch, and the first black secretary for the provincial government in Edmonton. They welcomed ten grandchildren including Edmonton's first black fire service captain, a human resources



Lonnie Morgan (Scotty) Heslep, the author's father, preparing to serve in Holland 1944

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professional, a city administrator in Denver, a model/actress, and a retired higher education administrator.

Their youngest son became my father, Lonnie (Scotty) Heslep. He and my mother, Joyce, met and married in Edmonton on June 25, 1951. My father had served in World War II in Europe and had been wounded in Holland in 1944. He completed a long career with Canada Post, and my mother enjoyed various secretarial roles in secondary and higher education. They raised my two siblings and me in north Edmonton. Most important for them, however, was their service as church members and leaders. Growing up, we attended a large, predominantly white, Pentecostal church. My grandmother Mary Cytha was an original member of this church, and her legacy of prayer, fasting, and Bible reading was instilled in my family.

My father served on the board and as a deacon, whereas my mother served as a Sunday School teacher and leader in women's ministries. They both also sang in the church choir, including the original Singing Christmas Tree. Music was very important in my family, and each of us took piano lessons and then continued music training on additional instruments. As children and teens, although it was a considerable drive (or bus ride) to church, we participated in Sunday School, youth and teen groups, and mu-



Scotty and Joyce (Chaney) Heslep, the authors parents
Thanksgiving 2014,
sadly both have passed away
since the photo was taken



Descendants of Amber Valley pioneers honoured in recognition of Black History Month hosted by MLA David Shepherd at the Alberta Legislature 2017. The author is in the top RH quadrant.

sical ensembles. My siblings and I were members of various choirs, bands, and groups at the church, and I sang in Centennial Singers, an all-city choir of high school students

One thing was clear to us – our experience in Edmonton was different than that of the relatively recent immigrants from the Caribbean and Afri-

can nations. Our family socialized with and entertained white people without question. As I indicated earlier, my maternal grandfather described negative experiences, such as racism and prejudice, but that was not prevalent in our dealings. We applied for and were successful in gaining employment and did not ever feel that we were not employable because of our race. I found out in my father's last days that he had always wanted to be an accountant but was told sixty years ago that profession was not open to him, a black man.

As an adult, I attended church in a number of faith traditions – from the Pentecostal church of my youth, to Baptist, to Nazarene, and back to Pentecostal. My grandmother and parents left me with the importance of a personal experience of faith, and that legacy has remained with me. About thirty years ago, I had been living in a small town in Central Alberta and had finally found a faith tradition

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there that suited me and my young son. However, after a few months we moved back to Edmonton for my work and so my son would be closer to family. On the first Sunday of Advent (which was a new concept for me), we decided to try Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church, (now Lendrum Mennonite Church) as I had heard from someone that the music was outstanding. I was not disappointed. The amazing anthems of Advent, some sung in German, but all sung in gorgeous four-part harmony were so uplifting. Yes, there was a choir (excellent, as I recall), but what lifted me up was the congregational singing. Not only was the music of highest quality, but it was clearly sung to the glory of God.

The people seemed warm and friendly, and we were later invited to someone's home for a social time. My then husband was a professional musician, and he recognized several people who he had either accompanied or played with in ensembles and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. Previously a non-church goer, he was welcomed and almost immediately invited to play an instrument in the church, which he did on many occasions. As a mixed-race family, we felt very much a part of this congregation of Russian and German immigrants, who possessed a strong ethnicity, culture, and a penchant for sharing great food. Like those of my heritage, these people were immigrants and had a farming background.

In addition, we were fed spiritually. Never before, since my youth, had I experienced such strong, Bible-focussed teaching, and I marvelled at the adult Sunday

School topics and focus on adult learning. We felt that we were soon among friends and were embraced in the fold. Their friendship and caring was so evident when my husband died suddenly. They were not only present for me, but they prayed for me even when I was so grief-stricken that I could not pray. I became a member by virtue of previous baptism and Christian testimony and began to be involved with church governance. I learned quickly the importance of the congregational model and was impressed by the engagement of the entire church when decisions such as hiring of pastors, budget allocations, and facility needs were brought before the congregation.

After a few years, I met my husband. As we were dating, I invited him to attend church with me. He was quickly embraced as someone who makes me happy. He decided to become a member and was baptised and shared his faith story. Now, he too has become involved in various ways of caring for our church family. Lendrum has become our community, and we love and appreciate it.

Why have I remained at Lendrum?

Just as any church, the people are not perfect, but we serve God together in love. It is a community built on faith that provides learning about faith and so much more. They have welcomed and accepted us, sometimes whole, sometimes broken. The opportunities for service are myriad – whether in the sanctuary, in Fellowship Hall, in the classrooms, or in the kitchen. The sheer joy of singing great, quality music together accompanied by gifted musicians brings me grace, peace, and contentment.

As I write this, I cannot help but think of this era of racist acts against black, Indigenous, and other people of colour. We are experiencing terrible acts of racism, yes, here in Canada. Have I ever experienced racism at Lendrum? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. While I was subjected to racist remarks only twice, I was shocked that my fellow Lendrum congregants would say such hurtful things. I genuinely thought that they were beyond these remarks made to me. At the time, I chalked it up to lack of understanding and knowledge. Is racism rampant at Lendrum? Absolutely not. However, I would be remiss if I did not share some hints for Gentle Mennonite readers on how I would like racism in the church to be handled.

First of all, engage in conversations. Ask questions. Read books written by black, Indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC). Watch movies and documentaries written, directed, and produced by racialized individuals. Recognize systemic racism and take steps to address it and call it out. Teach your children and grandchildren about fostering excellent race relations. Stand up and support individuals when you observe racist behaviours.



Cathryn Heslep and husband
Doug McLaughlin

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I encourage you to access and read the many resources available about Amber Valley and its rich history.

Yes, I declare that I am honoured and privileged to be a Mennonite By Choice.

For more on Amber Valley see <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/amber-valley>

Cathryn Heslep, was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta. She is a graduate of the University of Alberta and Royal Roads University (Victoria), and she did additional studies in higher education administration at the University of Calgary. Until her recent retirement, she worked at MacEwan University in Edmonton as a Vice President Student Services and then Student Ombudsperson. She is a member of Te Deum Singers, a member of the board of Lendrum Mennonite Church, and a current member of the board of Canadian Mennonite University. She enjoys golf, reading for pleasure, and travel with her husband. ❖



Cathryn Heslep on her last day of work as Student Ombudsperson at MacEwan University, Edmonton April 30, 2020

Mennonite Central Committee in Alberta (MCCA): A Tour from 1996 to the Present

By Abe Janzen

It's 2020. MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) International is in our 100th year, and a pandemic has messed it up. No celebrations. No place to have birthday cakes and stories and singing and shaking hands and visiting ... the kind of stuff that should happen at 100. In 2007, MCCA (Mennonite Central Committee Alberta) turned 40, and we did celebrate with a well-



40th Anniversary Celebration of MCCA in Medicine Hat 2007

attended annual general meeting hosted by the Crestwood Mennonite Brethren Church in Medicine Hat. We had singing and drama and speeches and sharing of memories and food with people who had been and continued to be with MCCA.



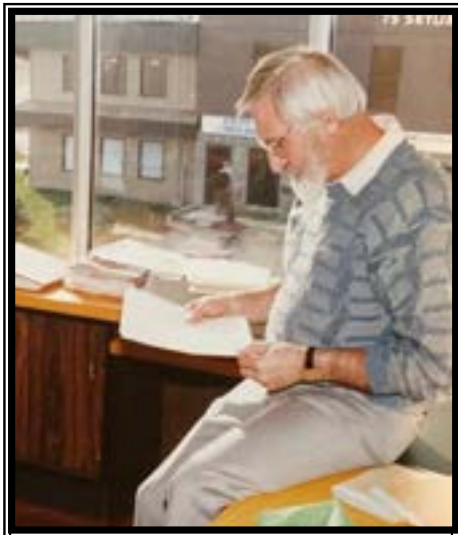
Abe Janzen

My own experience with MCC in Alberta dates back to 1996, when Kathy and I came to Calgary after a five-year term in Bolivia. Until then, we mostly saw Mennonite Central Committee as an overseas mission. We had worked with MCC in Bolivia and would again, but we had little awareness of MCC 'at home'. When we arrived in Calgary in mid-June of 1996, I was preparing to take over as MCCA Executive Director from Dick Neufeld who was completing his own four years of service. I would be following also in the footsteps of Bill Thiessen (14 years service) and Bill Janzen (two years in the role preceding his call to an assignment in Mexico with MCC), and I very much needed an orientation. I had met most of the staff a year earlier during some interviews, but now, with Dick, I traveled for one week from Calgary to Edmonton, to Lethbridge, and back to Calgary to meet a lot of people and see MCCA programs at work.

In 2020, MCCA looks a lot different than it did in 1996. I'm sure also that in 1996 MCCA

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Dick Neufeld, Executive Director, 1992 to 1996.

looked a lot different than it did in 1967, when it was first incorporated in Alberta. Even before that Mennonite Central Committee was active in Alberta as part of the '*hilfs Komitee*' (Help Committee) with what is now Mennonite Mutual Insurance (MMI). What follows are some of the things I learned about MCCA during my orientation trip in 1996 along with some extra information and personal reflections about what has happened since.

1. In 1996, MCCA was active selling fair trade products locally. What we have known until recently as Ten Thousand Villages was called Self Help Crafts at that time, and there were stores and seasonal stores in a number of places, around the province. Even La Crete had a small shop for a while. So did Medicine Hat.

2. In 1996, there were two thrift stores in Alberta: one in Lethbridge and one in Calgary, tucked away in a house in Inglewood. A few years after 1996, the people in southern Alberta

(Lethbridge and Coaldale) decided they would purchase a building for the Lethbridge store, and they did, borrowing money from MCCA, all of which they paid back in just five years. A few years later, the Calgary store was relocat-

ed to our Skyline building on 17th Avenue. Now it operates out of our 32 St. NE location. The thrift store in Edmonton would come a few years later thanks to the leadership of people like Jake Baergen and others with him.



Skyline Office Building

3. In 1996, MCCA was involved in protecting the environment. In Edmonton there was a Recycling Program, initiated through the work of MCC Canada with Dave Hubert, and Herb Penner was managing what was called the Green Ribbon.

4. In 1996, MCCA was involved in supporting workers and the workplace. The Calgary Employment Development Program was in its early years. Later it would become Momentum. By the early 2000s, it had outgrown MCC Alberta in numbers of staff and budget, and eventually it provided assistance to Albertans as an independent organization. The Edmonton Employment Development Program had ended by 1996, but during our brief tour I was introduced to leftover files, boxes and boxes of which eventually made their way to Calgary, and some, eventually, into the archives of Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta (MHSA). MCCA still owned two houses in Edmonton at that time, part of the story of the Edmonton Employment Development work, but they were already in the process of being sold, a procedure which Nancy Mark, a very helpful Edmonton lawyer, was overseeing for the MCCA Board.

5. In 1996 MCCA was involved in working with victims and offenders. In Edmonton I met staff and volunteers involved in what was then called Community Justice Ministries. They visited inmates in the Edmonton Max, and the Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW). We never did see the Youth Orientation Unit (Y.O.U.) near Edmonton, because MCCA was in the process of winding down involvement that year. However, the sale of the Y.O.U. land netted MCCA about \$407,000, money which was set aside (at an AGM held in Coaldale soon after the sale) for significant MCC-in-Alberta projects over quite a few years that otherwise would not have happened. One example was the launching of Community Conferencing, a program initiated with four other partners in Calgary to work

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(MCCA from page 15)

with victims and young offenders. It's now called Restorative Action for Transformation (RAFT) and has helped hundreds of young people and those whom they harmed. We used that Y.O.U. fund as a kind of starter bank for a long time.

6. In 1996 MCCA was working with newcomers to Alberta communities. By then the Edmonton Mennonite Center for Newcomers (EMCN) was outgrowing MCCA quickly. Although they still received a small grant from MCCA each year and reported at the MCCA Annual General Meetings, they were already independent. The Calgary Mennonite Center for Newcomers (CMCN) was also growing, and over the next years, like EMCN they would move several times, each time needing more space. Eventually, MCCA stopped giving grants to either of the Newcomer Centers. Both CMCN and EMCN now have budgets in the millions of dollars with well over 100 staff each, very few of whom are from the traditional Mennonite constituencies in those cities. In southern Alberta, I met the committee and staff who were managing what we then called the Kanadier Concerns Program, another outreach to newcomers. Ten years later, we moved that office to Taber, where most of the Kanadier – today more often known as Low German speaking Mennonites - coming north from Mexico or west from Ontario were settling.



Kanadier Mennonites meeting at an MCCA 'Faspa and program' near Taber, in the late 1990s.

7. In 1996, MCCA workers were present in the community of Little Buffalo, just east of Peace River. Dick didn't take me to Little Buffalo

on my orientation week, but I met Elaine Bishop, who was working in the community at the time, the following month in Tofield at the first Relief Sale I ever attended. (It was on a rainy weekend and they raised a net of \$88,000.) Elaine had spent 8 years in the community, but this was her last week. Her replacements, Dean and Cia Denner Verschelden, were on their way to Alberta from the USA. The Denner Verscheldens worked in Little Buffalo for two years. They were not replaced when they left, but Chris and Louise Friesen, who lived and worked there as teachers in the school, agreed to represent MCC in the community for several more years. After that Chief Bernard Omniyak told us that they didn't really need MCCA workers in the community and that our job should really be to educate our own people.

8. In 1996, as now, Relief Sales were an important MCCA activity. I met a lot of people at that first Relief Sale in Tofield. Good Alberta people who were generous and filled with history and hope for MCCA. 'Make us proud', one pastor said to me. I learned there, and at every sale after that, that Relief Sales are a kind of revival event. Since the first Alberta event in Coaldale in 1975, they have been a key to building an MCC DNA in this province: a DNA that includes staff, boards, churches, and volunteers; a DNA about service, about being generous, about compassion, and about fellowship. One constituent said to me that Relief Sales are far too much work for the amount of money they generate. But I

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learned quickly that while it's true, they are a lot of work, and they may be an inefficient way to raise money, people who volunteer to make them happen, and the thousands who attend, almost always go home feeling good about the event and about the ministry of MCCA. And that all leads, year-round, to generosity and participation in other ways. It's not efficient, but it's effective!

Working Together Onsite

Making all these MCCA activities viable has involved a lot of working together, both within our own communities and between communities. And that has necessitated centralization of personnel and resources in one location. On our trip, Dick Neufeld introduced me to the two-storey Skyline building on 17th Street in Calgary that had hosted MCCA and MMI since about 1982. By 1996 MMI took up about half of the second floor, and Community Justice Ministries (CJM) and the MCCA Finance Offices took up the rest of that space. On the main floor there was a reception area, a small library, the offices of the Executive Director and the administrative assistant, the Refugee Sponsorship office and the bathrooms. Downstairs was dedicated to storage and Material Resources. There was no lift, no elevator. Materials marked for shipping overseas were carried down the stairs, sorted, packed up, and about every three months or so, Gerhard Bartel and John Penner would send some workers over, and MMI staff would help us pack boxes up the stairs to a waiting Semi, for shipping to MCC warehouses in Vancouver, for



Sherwood Park MCCA (Summerfest & Auction) Relief Sale Spring 2017

eventual overseas distribution.

Skyline was a busy place, but it was tucked away into kind of a corner location and people didn't come there unless they had business to do with MMI or MCCA. Casual traffic was not plentiful. In 2004, having sold the Skyline offices, MCCA, along with MMI, MHSA, Mennonite Foundation of Canada, and MCCA Material Resources moved into a new three-storey building that we had purchased on 32 St. NE. As the 32 St. location is in the middle of a busy commercial district, and the Thrift Store that has relocated there attracts a lot of daily visitors, many more people started to drop by. It was the good will and enthusiasm of the constituency from La Crete to Edmonton, to Calgary, Lethbridge, and Coaldale that made this all happen.



Luella Siebert and Sandra Friesen, shared reception and other duties for years at the Skyline Office.

Working Together and With Others

My week of orientation with Dick Neufeld was mostly spent on the road and that, in itself, says a lot about Alberta. We are a very big province (about 4.3 million people today), and we are unique in Canada in that we live across the entire province; only in our province are farmers able to raise wheat and canola pretty much all the way from north to south. That also means that Mennonites and other supporters are spread out thinly across this province. It's costly and it takes time to connect and build a supporting

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and participating constituency. In 1996 when Dick took me to on my orientation tour, I had the impression that we had mostly explored Mennonite Church Alberta in this corridor we had travelled: Edmonton/Tofield through Didsbury/Calgary and down to Coaldale/Lethbridge/Pincher Creek.



Ice bridge across the Peace River to La Crete

But that impression soon changed for me. In 1999 MCCA hosted our Annual meeting for the first time in La Crete at the Ridgeview Public School. As is always the case in La Crete, they did an amazing job of organizing and hosting the busload of people who came up from the south. At the Friday evening event, where Elda Martens from Oklahoma told her beloved quilting stories, there were 400 people present. Soon after that event, Jake Elias joined the MCCA board representing both northern Alberta and the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. Jake, representing La



Abe Janzen & Joe Clarke after an MCCA Event in Calgary Nov 2014

Crete and High Level and the EMC, became an important voice from "the north" as MCCA made some major decisions during those years.

Drawing people together also means drawing members from different constituencies to sit on the MCCA Board. Four Mennonite Conferences share legal ownership of MCCA: the Mennonite Brethren, the General Conference (now Mennonite Church Alberta), the Northwest Conference, and the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC). In 1996 each Conference had members on the Board, but there was also an allowance in our bylaws to add five co-opted members to a maximum total of 15. That meant we could look for Board members around the province, outside or inside the corridor, so long as they came with a commitment to Anabaptist values, to the ministries of MCC, and a faith in Christ. Mostly those additional five continued to be recruited from the four owner groups, but not always.

My understanding was that the bylaws had been written with the hope that broader participation in MCCA would begin to happen. In 2017, they were adjusted at the Annual General Meeting in Springridge Mennonite Church (Pincher Creek), so that the four original owners would have a minimum of one representative on the board, leaving 11 to come from any of those four, but also from other church groups around the province, provided they are committed to Anabaptist understandings of the teachings of Christ. My own hope is that MCCA will find ways to build stronger rela-

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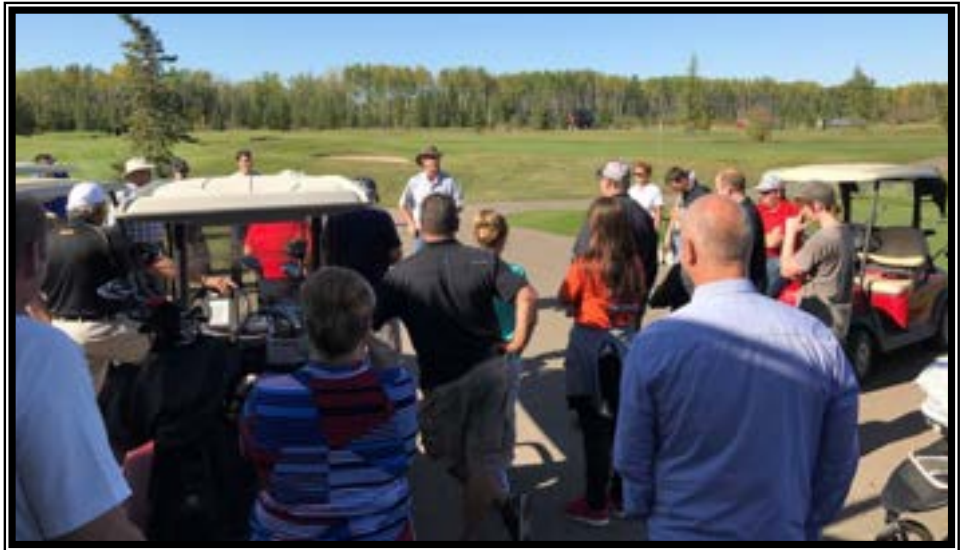
(MCCA from page 18)

tionships with the Spanish Mennonites, the Vietnamese and Chinese Mennonites, and other Newcomer groups, as well as with more of the Low German Mennonite communities.

MCCA Board work in those days was very complicated. There were lots of programs with their own boards and committees, and MCCA had to find people to serve on those boards. We even had a Women's Concerns Program, a Mental Health and Disabilities Program, and a Peace and Justice Committee. At times it was difficult to know to whom programs were accountable. In addition, MCCA had to send a representative to be on the Board of MMI and the two Newcomer Centers, none of which were under any MCCA jurisdiction by then. (We used the word 'affiliated' to describe those relationships.) It felt a bit messy and eventually most of the program boards (except Thrift Stores) were disbanded, and we ended the MCCA presence on the boards of programs that were independent. It felt messy, but it's important to remember that the other side of that messiness was a high level of ownership and participation in the work of MCC here in Alberta and around the world.

Yesterday and Today...

Alberta is a fairly young province, but much has been built and much has changed already. There aren't many Mennonite institutions in Alberta now; we don't have Mennonite high schools, colleges, seminaries, or mental institutions. But there are Mennonite churches all over this province, and individuals in other church populations



Johnny Wieler issuing instructions at the La Crete MCCA Golf Tournament 2017.

who participate in the work of MCC in Alberta.

Albertans are innovators. Over the years, MCCA has been able to facilitate a lot of major and smaller initiatives that affected the lives of hundreds of people here, and around the world. MCC Alberta, with broad constituent participation now has four thrift stores, a rotating relief sale, and golf tournaments. We also have a growing outreach in ministry to needs overseas. For example, we have responded in a prolonged and creative way to the



Sand Dam construction in Kenya including a group from Alberta spring 2013

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AIDS epidemic; we have been of assistance following the 2004 Tsunami and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti; we have supported Sand Dams and Water Resource Development in East Africa; and we have responded in a major way to refugees fleeing Syria in 2015.

The faithfulness of many has made MCCA a uniquely and I hope, widely welcoming place during its now 53 years in this amazing province.

'Most names have been omitted. Those that are included may help readers to place a part of the story, but even as such, this is not meant to be a historically detailed account. It's more a personal reflection about MCC in Alberta.' Abe Janzen

Abe Janzen is the former Executive Director of MCCA. He is married to Kathy. They have two children, one in Calgary and one in MacGregor Manitoba. Abe's favorite activity is anything to do with their five young grandchildren. Before coming to MCCA, Abe and Kathy lived in Northern Alberta and in Bolivia. Abe was raised on a farm in the village of Blumenheim, Sask, just East of Osler as part of the Old Colony church community. ❖

Menno Simons and the Dutch Mennonites

By Anne Friesen

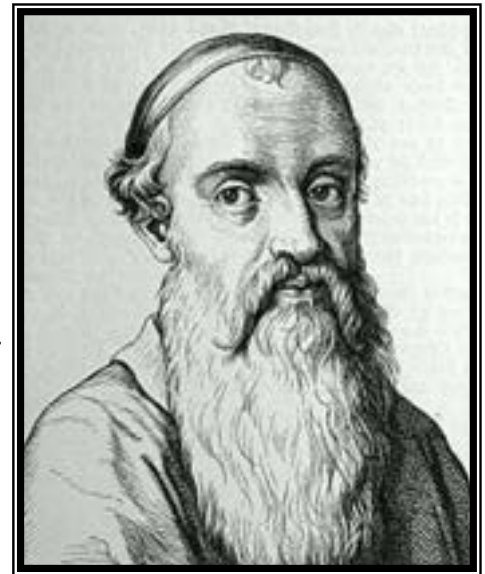
Several months ago I was asked if I would be interested in making a presentation on Menno Simons and the Dutch Mennonites as part of a Saturday series on Mennonite History at Lendrum Mennonite Church. Yes, I was interested. My parents are from the Netherlands, and I grew up with all things Dutch, including the language. This is a summary of the presentation I would have made had Covid not intervened and cancelled the series. It is not a detailed history, nor a description of the beliefs and practices of the diverse Mennonite groups of the time. Rather, I chose to highlight people and events of interest to me and which I thought others would enjoy and appreciate.



Anne Friesen

Menno Simons, contrary to popular belief, was not the sole founder of an entirely new church during the Protestant Reformation. The Anabaptist movement was already underway in the Netherlands during the early 1500's. Menno became one of its leaders. We refer to the rise of Anabaptism as the Radical Reformation.

Why were the Dutch open to the teachings of the Anabaptists in the 16th century? In my opinion, there are three main reasons. The first is the character and history of the Friesian people who lived on the islands and shores of northern Holland where the early Anabaptists made their initial inroads into the country, and where Menno Simons was born. The second is the power wielded against emerging Protestant groups by the Holy



Menno Simons

Roman Empire ruled by Charles V. The third is the great political and religious unrest that characterized the 16th century in Europe.

The Friesians (called Frisii by the Romans because of their frizzy hair) were a fierce, independent people. Their motto was "Better Dead than a Slave". They were tall, big-boned, and not afraid to challenge authority. Today the Friesians are still known for their opinionated views, and their strong sense of community responsibility is still evident in Dutch society. The Friesian language survives to this day as well.

The Friesians had a history of successful living in their environment. In prehistoric times they built mounds called terps upon which they built their homes and buildings to escape floods and changing sea levels. In later years they became adept at draining their lands by surrounding their fields with dikes and using sluices and windmills to remove the water. They worked the land and raised cattle, fished, and traded through-

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(Menno from page 20)

out the Baltic region. However, when early Anabaptist missionaries arrived in the North of Holland from Germany, life had become very stressful. Endless wars had disrupted shipping, and armies constantly crossed their lands. The Friesians were facing floods, poor harvests, cattle disease, vestiges of the plague, and starvation.

The second variable that encouraged Dutch openness to Anabaptism was the power wielded by the Holy Roman Empire to which the Netherlands belonged. The Pope and a Holy Roman Emperor elected by Catholic princes and archbishops ruled the Empire. The church at the time was the largest landowner in Europe, and the clergy were wealthy political as well as religious leaders. The Emperor at the time was Charles V. Born a Catholic prince in Ghent, he had

become the ruler of the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Spain through intermarriage. Financed in part by taxes extracted from the Low Countries, Charles V spent most of his reign forcefully defending the integrity and lands of the Holy Roman Empire from the Protestant Reformation while dealing with the threat of the expansion of the Turks and constantly battling France.

Due to the power of the German princes, Charles was unsuccessful in his persecution of the Protestant Reformation in Germany, but he unleashed his full authority in the Low Countries, determined to prevent any growth of the Anabaptists. He established an Inquisition in 1522, and a series of macabre death penalties for Anabaptists and their associates, including drowning in rivers and barrels full of water, beheadings, torture unto death, and burning at the stake. Menno Simons himself had a price put on his head in 1542.

Thirdly, Dutch openness to Anabaptism at the time was encouraged by profound changes in Europe in the 1500's and 1600's. Christendom was being replaced by a rise in nationalism. The Germans did not like being ruled by foreign Italian Popes. Humanism, which promoted education, criticized the clergy, undermined superstition, and questioned the authority of the pope, supported reform. There were changes in economic systems as well. Precious metals from the Americas replaced land as the most valuable commodity. This led to inflation and debt for the lower classes while merchants, businessmen, and educated professionals improved their wealth and influence. These factors and others prepared the Netherlands and other European countries for the message of hope surrounding the Anabaptist principals of practical and biblical Christianity, justice for all people, non resistance, the importance of community, sharing of goods, and following Jesus in all aspects of life.

Such ideas were emerging from many of the early Anabaptist leaders, who were often university-educated ex-monks and priests. Unfortunately, however, in Northern Germany and Friesland between 1529 and 1535, many of these ideas were eclipsed by the teachings of a group of fanatics, who were mainly self-appointed, uneducated lay preachers and missionaries.

The first of these was Melchior Hoffman. He was a German furrier and tanner. A former Lutheran, he became interested



Jan Van Leiden



Emperor Charles V

(See Menno on page 22)

(Menno from page 21)

in the Anabaptist movement because of its emphasis on biblical faith and disciplined living. Hoffman made his first conversions in East Friesland, which was part of Germany at that time, and baptized hundreds of converts in the city of Emden. He was a ceaseless missionary and mystic who emphasized the end times. He calculated that the world would end in 1533 in Strasbourg, claimed to be the prophet Elijah, and willingly went to jail in Strasbourg awaiting his imminent release. He died, still in prison, 10 years later.

Two other men, very probably disciples of Hoffmann, were also convinced of the imminence of the Millennium. One, Jan Matthijs, was a baker from Haarlem, and the other, Jan van Leiden, was a tailor. Matthijs taught that the wicked should be destroyed before the return of Christ. With Hoffman in prison, Matthijs seized control, and together with van Leiden exiled the harsh bishop of the German city of Muenster, converted the radical Lutherans in the city, and established an Anabaptist government and so-called church. They sent apostles throughout the Netherlands, encouraging thousands to immigrate to Muenster to await the New Jerusalem about to arrive in 1534!

The Catholic bishop eventually returned to the city with a small army and laid siege to it. Living conditions deteriorated, and food supplies dwindled. Matthijs was killed attempting to break through the lines. Van Leiden took over and made himself an absolute monarch with the power of life and death over the citizens. Anyone trying to escape was executed. The death penalty was instituted for disloyalty.

In June 1535, the siege of Muenster ended, and the Catholics resumed control. Anabaptists remaining in the city were massacred. Their leaders

were exhibited throughout north-west Germany as criminals. After severe torture, they were executed, and their bodies were placed in iron cages suspended from the spires of the St. Lambert's church. This object lesson was intended to warn those wishing to challenge the established authorities of church and state. The cages remain there to this day.

These unfortunate incidents had the result that all over Europe groups practicing adult baptism were submitted to a period of terrible persecution that lasted for nearly another full century. No matter how insistently the non-resistant groups of Anabaptists complained at being classified in the same group as the Muensterites, authorities now possessed and wielded a powerful weapon in their fight against them.

Menno Simons was born in 1496 in Witmarsum, West Friesland. Menno came from a peasant background, and not much is known of his early life. However, he could not help but witness how the warfare, plunder, and natural disasters of the early 16th century were affecting his fellow citizens. At the age of 28, Menno was ordained into the Roman Catholic priesthood. His first parish was in his father's village of Pingum where he enjoyed the easygoing lifestyle of a country priest: religious duties were sandwiched between playing cards, drinking, and other leisure activities. Any study of the Bible was secondary to rituals and doctrine.

Menno and his priestly associates could not hide, however, from the sharp criticism being levelled at the church, especially through the

(See Menno on page 23)



Mennonite House Church in Witmarsum

(Menno from page 22)

printed word. After a year in the priesthood, Menno began to doubt the doctrine of transubstantiation, which stated that the bread and wine of the Mass became the actual body and blood of Christ. He was able to obtain a copy of Luther's translation of the New Testament and concluded: "how far we have been deceived". Nevertheless, he was a popular priest who was even-tempered and expressed himself well, and he was promoted to the rich parish of Witmarsum.

Publicity surrounding the case in Leeuwarden of Sicke Snijder, who had been beheaded for being rebaptized as an Anabaptist, caused Menno to become curious again about church doctrine, this time about the biblical basis for infant baptism. He studied the early church fathers and contemporary theologians, and again was not convinced that there was a sound basis for this practice. However, when envoys from Muenster began circulating in his parish in 1553, in alarm he advised staying home and remaining true to the church. Despite his growing interest in Anabaptism and his increasing doubts about Roman Catholicism, he remained outwardly committed to the Church and his comfortable life in the priesthood.

After the fall of Muenster, Menno's brother Peter was killed when a group of radical Friesian Anabaptists tried to overtake an old monastery near Bolsward, not far from Witmarsum. Menno felt that the Anabaptists were sheep without a shepherd. He wrote, "the blood of these people felt so hot on my heart that I could not stand it, nor find rest in my soul. I saw that these zealous children,

although in error, willingly gave their lives for their doctrine and faith". Menno realized that he had come to an understanding of God's word and the gospel of peace, but that he had kept quiet, not wanting to make trouble for himself "simply in order that I might enjoy physical comfort and escape the cross of Christ." He felt he could no longer keep silent. In January 1536, Menno left the priesthood to start an underground existence. Among demoralized and persecuted people, Menno found a new spiritual home and his most important life's work.

Fleeing Witmarsum, Menno hid first in Groeningen for approximately a year, writing and studying. He was likely already known to Anabaptist leaders in the area, such as Dirk and Obbe Philips, from the city of Leeuwarden. It is believed that he married during this time. He and his wife, Gertrude, had three children. They constantly moved from one village, city, or country estate to another to evade capture.

In 1537, Menno was asked to join a peaceful and soundly biblical wing of the Anabaptists led by Obbe Philips, who ordained him as an elder. Menno's pastoral concern, leadership skills, and writing ability were instrumental in establishing the Anabaptist movement in the Netherlands. He met with scattered churches in barns, open fields, boats on canals, or in the woods, and often at night. The worship service consisted of hymns, a sermon, a scripture reading, and perhaps a baptism and the Lord's supper. Afterwards there would be a silent and cautious dispersion. Elders were named as leaders for the various congregations. Later, some of these elders formed their own groups and challenged the agreed-upon doctrine established earlier.

Each of Menno's writings was prefaced by 1 Corinthians 3:11 "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ." He composed treatises on matters such as Anabaptist doctrines, records of debates, and attacks by various theologians. He was extremely critical of both Roman Catholic and newly formed state Protestant churches and their clergy. The purpose of some of his early works was to persuade state and church authorities that his Anabaptist teachings had nothing to do with expansion of Muensterite violence. Printers risked their lives to publish his articles, and many of his works were not widely published until the 17th century.

Menno's most famous work was *The Foundation of Christian Doctrine*. This document elaborated on the following: 1. Baptism was to be performed on confession of faith and thereby limited to adults. 2. The Holy Supper was a sign of the body and blood of Christ and of fellowship with him. 3. Teachers and preachers were to be called from within the congregation without a salary except in case of need. 4. Church discipline, including the ban (excommunication and avoidance), was essential to maintain the purity and security of the church.

(Although much of what has been preserved of Menno's thinking deals with doctrine, it should be remembered that the early Mennonites felt that "true religion was not merely a set of dogmas or practices. It must bear fruit in a purified life." The corruption of the state churches and the moral laxity of the general population were also issues for them.)

(See Menno on page 24)

(Menno from page 23)



Menno Hof: Traditional last Home of Menno Simons in Bad Oldesloe

done. The three leaders of the peaceful Mennonites were Menno Simons, Dirk Philips, and Leonard Bouwens. Their biggest problem was the enforcement of the ban, especially the concept of marital avoidance. (If one's spouse had been banned for example, one could no longer eat or sleep with them). Menno was the most lenient, Dirk was more conservative than Menno, but Leonard Bouwens was extremely strict. In his later years, Menno regretted his support of the ban. Leonard Bouwens at one time threatened to ban Menno himself.

In 1555, Menno made his last move and settled on the estate of Bartholomaeus von Ahlefeldt in Wustenfelde near Bad Oldesloe in Holstein, Northern Germany.

By 1542, Anabaptists were being reported to the state for a fee, and the authorities were on a fierce hunt for them. Dirk Philips led a group to the Vistula River Delta in Poland to escape the constant persecution. Menno had by this time moved to East Friesland under the protection of a German Aristocrat, Countess Anna of Oldenburg. She supported the peaceful Anabaptists and called them Mennists. Hence the term Mennonite was born. An unwise public debate, along with the price on his head, eventually also made East Friesland too unsafe for Menno and his family, and they moved for a short time to Cologne and Wismar. Again, his public appearances caused problems for him, and a secretly published debate with a prominent Reformed theologian resulted in the expulsion of both the Anabaptists and the Reformed Church from Wismar.

Despite persecution and forced relocations, the early Dutch Mennonite leaders managed to communicate regularly and worked diligently to maintain the purity and discipline of the church regarding membership and moral behaviour. However, they did not always agree on how this was to be



Martyrs Mirror, burning of Maria and Ursula van Beckum

Bartholomaeus purchased a printing press for him, which was put to good use. In 1557, Gertrude died. In January 1561, in failing

(See Menno on page 25)

(Menno from page 24)

health and exhausted from constant travel and attempts to preserve peace and unity, Menno died and was buried in his garden. He was sometimes depicted with a crutch. Modern scholars have postulated that he may have had a mild stroke in his later years. His exact resting place is unknown.

During the last half of the 16th century, Mennonites held secret meetings to discern applications of their faith and life within the world. These rules were circulated among congregations for discussion. By the 1600s the Mennonites had formed groups in Friesland, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany.

Although the Netherlands was the first European country to stop killing Anabaptists, believers were still not completely free there and still somewhat suspect. However, in 1571, an important date in Dutch history, the Dutch Prince, William of Orange managed to expel the Spanish from the Northern Netherlands and to form the Dutch Republic. William was a friend of the Mennonites. By this time, many Friesian and Flemish Mennonites had dispersed, especially to Poland. but in Amsterdam and the surrounding coastal areas, the Waterlanders, a much more liberal group of Anabaptists, remained. By and large well-educated businessmen, professionals and industrialists, they did not believe in the harsh application of the marital ban, and they were much more likely to associate and do business with non-Mennonites.

The Waterlanders became beneficiaries of the Dutch Golden Age. A study of the popular portrait of the 1600s will yield

many paintings of prominent Dutch Mennonites, one of whom helped found the Dutch East India company. He left the board of directors when company ships were equipped with cannons! The Waterlanders were instrumental in collecting and publishing Mennonite writings and preserving Mennonite history. A young Flemish minister, Thieleman Van Bracht, collected stories of Christian martyrs of Anabaptist and other groups and published them in 1660 under the title *The Martyrs Mirror*. A second edition in 1685 contained engraved illustrations by Jan Luyken, a Dutch artist. It is still in print today. The Waterlanders never adopted the name Mennonite and called themselves the Doopgezinden (literally: baptism-minded), which is the term Dutch Mennonites use today.

Pete Visser, in his book *Menno Simons*, describes the Menno's last days:

"The priest who had always bathed in luxury and prestige had exhausted the last 25 years of his life as a poor and hunted heretic upon whose head stood a price. With pain and difficulty, he had earlier shown the peaceful way to a divided Anabaptism. He gave his followers their own voice, but the reward of his work was that his Mennonites had outgrown him."

Regardless of Visser's opinion, the fact that the Mennonite movement did not disappear after Menno's death is a testament to the enduring principles and organization of the Anabaptist/Mennonite church.

Menno Simons probably deserves a higher rank than many reformers of the 15th and 16th centuries. He had a much more difficult task than the founders of the state Protestant churches who by and large enjoyed more political support. He rested his appeal on the persuasive power of love and the simple truth of the gospel. He was centuries ahead of his day on the fundamentals of religious and civil liberty, religious toleration, separation of church and state, and universal peace.

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Anne Friesen is a retired schoolteacher. She attends Lendrum Mennonite Church, Edmonton and serves the congregation as the Church Librarian. She is married to Gary Friesen, grandson of Bishop David Toews. She has an abiding interest in history, wildflowers, and gardening for pollinators. ❖

Mary (Klassen) Unrau's Sojourn from Russia to Canada

By Daughter Mary Anne Unrau 1998

There is an Edmonton connection to author Mary Anne Unrau's story. Her mother, Mary (Klassen) Unrau met her father, John Unrau, while they were still both living in the Mayfair district of Saskatchewan. Later in Saskatoon Mary studied art under Ernest Linder and John was enrolled in Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan. Mary and John married in 1940. In 1949 they moved to Edmonton and John would go on to become a world renowned plant geneticist, with Mary as a supportive wife and mother of their four children. Her painting career would have to wait.



Mary (Klassen) Unrau
Brodie

Dr John Unrau is commonly known as the founder of First Mennonite Church (FMC), Edmonton. Shortly after moving to Edmonton John and Mary invited rural students attending university into their home for coffee and Bible discussions. And from this modest beginning was the start of First Mennonite Church, incorporated April 1959. John Unrau died suddenly of a brain aneurism on March 1, 1961 at age 45. In 1970 Mary married Harold Brodie and continued her painting career in Victoria and Ottawa. Mary passed away in 2009 in Pembroke, Ontario, her memorial was held August 1, 2011 at FMC. Mary (Klassen) Unrau was the first cousin of Dave Toews. Foreword by Dave Toews



Mary Unrau 1960s



John Unrau 1960
photo credit FMC History Book

My mother was Mary (Klassen) Unrau. Her parents were Peter and Maria (Toews) Klassen. Her grandparents were Isaak and Maria (Sawatsky) Klassen and Johann and Maria (Braun) Toews. My mother came with her

family to Canada from Russia as a young child.

What follows is my mother telling me in her own voice the story of that journey from what she remembers and from what she learned from her father when she visited him in the seniors home in Vineland, Ont. She concludes her story with reminding me of a visit we all took as a family many years later to Europe.

"My grandmother Maria Toews lost her mother at an early age and was herself a consumptive. She had to stand with her back to the blue-tiled Dutch oven to find relief in the winter. Many times, the Bolsheviks confronted her with a firearm and threatened to end her life or that of her sons because she lived in a very large home. They felt she had many things still hidden even though she had already been robbed many times. My (Mary Unrau's) grandfather Johann Toews died quite young [age 52] during the typhus epidemic of 1918-1922. Peter Klassen's parents [Isaak and Maria (Sawatzky) Klassen] were buried during the same epidemic in 1920 while Peter himself was in a coma.

I was born in 1918. My mother had no doctor, and it was already being reported at the other end of the village that she had died. It was in the depths of famine, and people were very weakened by lack of food and all the violence in the land. People were dying of typhus. My Grandfather Toews died shortly after, I was three months old. A lot of people wanted to emigrate at this time, but there was no way of leaving because of the upheaval everywhere. Once the Bolsheviks were fully in power, they closed

(See Unrau on page 27)

(Unrau from page 26)

the borders.

The Bolsheviks were voted in democratically (1), but as soon as they were in power, the hard-liners took over, and the moderates were either shot or sent to the Gulag. In 1925, my father applied to leave and was told (at the last minute) "NO!" In 1926, he heard that another opportunity was being offered for them to leave. He quickly applied, and I will never forget leaving the scene at the train station when we left. Everyone sang in three-part harmony "Gott mit euch, bis vier uns wieder sehen" (God Be with You Till We Meet Again). I was told that ours was the last passenger train out. After that time, it was freight trains only (1).

We got to the border and crossed into Latvia "Unter Das Rote Tur" (a gate the train passes through there with a red star above it). We all broke down as a family and cried.

From there we came into Holland where we were received by the Anabaptist church (the church of our forefathers). They helped my father find a hotel. "It was in Rotterdam, and we saw our first airplane there." Shortly after our arrival, two families in the church asked my father if it would help if two of us older children were taken in by local families. As a result, my brother Isaac went into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hesso Veendorp (he was the curator of the Botanic Gardens of Rotterdam), and I was invited into the home of a wealthy widow (Tante Sutte) whose family had ships and imported goods from Africa etc. I was 8 years old at the time. While I stayed there, the eldest daughter of their family became engaged. Coming from

being hungry and such abnormal circumstances, it was a shock for me to be surrounded with comfort and beautiful things all around, and for everyone to be so kind. I was given a carriage and a doll. Even so, I would cry a little at night as I was lonely for my family. Thinking I had a headache, they would come with perfume on a handkerchief to cool my head. I was too shy to tell them the problem.

It took a while for my father to get organized. He really did not want to go to cold Canada, so he decided we would try to get to Mexico where there are large Anabaptist colonies. He got passage on the old Maasdam out of Rotterdam. The Maasdam was a half passenger and half freight vessel. This meant we stopped in many places to load and unload cargo. I remember even picking up a passenger in Spain. We were on the Maasdam for a month, and of course we passed through the very hot season and the sailors covered all the decks with canvas and put out canvas chairs. As I remember it, it was a wonderful time of new hope. Mother and Dad sat on deck talking and reading with Mother sewing doll's clothes and we children being very happy for the captain LOVED children and appeared on deck first thing in the morning with all his pockets bulging with candies and oranges etc. There were about a dozen children on board.

We landed in Cuba where there was a big unloading and loading, and while we were there the Captain had all of the men on board (including the Anabaptist fathers of about 7 families) congregate. He explained that there was a typhoon on the way, and he wanted their advice on whether we should stay in port or leave. He said, "If we stay in port, this is an old boat and harm could come. If we leave, we may be caught." The men unanimously decided that we should leave. We did that, and I'll never forget the commotion on board with sailors sealing every porthole and putting up railings along the dining room tables to keep the dishes from flying off. All canvas and deck chairs were removed, and ropes were strung along the deck for the sailors to hang on to. We were not allowed out. Only the tail end of the typhoon struck us. It was still violent, but there was no damage. Apparently there was much damage in the harbour we had just left. The old Maasdam went down during WWII.

We were met in the port of Veracruz, Mexico, by the church. We took the train to Irapuato (near Guadalajara) where the church had secured quarters in a hacienda that had been rented for the travellers because it was winter, and the owners were living in their city home. They had left a native family as caretakers for the grounds in a mud hut in front of the hacienda. All the men got together and divided the living quarters up. There were those who wanted only the elegant living quarters in the building. My father let everyone choose first, and then he took a private room in the servants' quarters where he had a window and a door which could be closed and where he could keep his family alone together. None of us got the 'runs' because Opa had a bottle with him, and every morning he gave us a spoon of strong 'medicine'. I tried to let some of it dribble to the ground if possible.

One day, my brothers Ike and John and I looked into the hut. It was all dark with a mud floor. It had a pole in the middle and a venting hole on top. The woman was making food on a hot rock - pancakes with stuffing.

(See Unrau on page 28)

(Unrau from page 27)

She gave each of us one, and we brought them home. The hut was worse than how we lived in Mayfair, Saskatchewan leaking roof and all.

Father went up north to the colonies to visit them by train. He came back very discouraged because he saw how very poor they were. If he found work, he could earn so little that he couldn't even replace his shoes. He said, "If I had a quarter of a million, we could stay, but we have very little money left." So he applied to Canada for immigration status and was immediately accepted.

As soon as our papers came, we took the train and after what seemed

like a week of moving and stopping on a very old train, we reached the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. There again we were met by the church. Each time the church met us, there was an enormous welcoming ceremony with joy and thanksgiving for our escape from Russia. They helped us onto a new train. As we came closer to where we were going, there were many people on the train, all smiling and happy. Many of them might have been students and teachers going home for Christmas. They would share sandwiches and oranges with us.

There was an entirely new feeling in Canada. When we came closer and closer to Saskatoon we all looked out. Someone said, "There are some lights. This must be the city." All I could see were a few dim lights and snow and more snow. How could this be a city? My father looked out at the fields and fields of snow, some with farm implements standing in them. Being a farmer, he could not understand such negligence.

When we arrived in Saskatoon, right in the large beautiful station in front of the Bessborough hotel, all the lights were shimmering and shining on the snow. Finally I understood that this really was a city! We stepped out in our Dutch clothes. I had on a little brown bowler hat, a woolen coat (down to the knees), white stockings, and brown shoes. I didn't remember snow from before, nor did I know what hurt so much on my nose and every time I breathed. It was about 30 below zero. Father's worst fears about Canada were met immediately! Again, church members took us under their wing and

(See Unrau on page 29)



Rear L-R: Maria, John, Isaac, Mary, Peter Klassen,
Front: Peter, Kathy, Margaret taken shortly after arrival in Canada

(Unrau from page 28)

walked us as a family from the downtown CN station to the CP station (three-four blocks). It was a cold walk.

We went to our destination Osler Saskatchewan by train and by horse and cutter, conveyed by church people. Grandmother 'Toews' family had arrived months before via London, England, which was the normal route for CPR-sponsored immigrants. My understanding is that the Canadian government rewarded the wealthy investors who had built the railway with large tracts of uninhabited land in northern Saskatchewan to sell to immigrant settlers.

Many years later, in 1957-58, when we all spent a year in Cambridge because your Dad (John Unrau) was doing post-graduate studies, we revisited Holland. We took the opportunity to pack us all into the 1953 Chev and go to the continent for six-eight weeks. We looked up Mr. & Mrs. Hesso Veendorp. He was by this time the curator of the Leiden Botanic Gardens, the oldest botanic gardens in Europe. The Veendorps told us that they remembered Isaak as a very quiet, gentle boy who was always reading. They also said that because they had helped Isaac, the Lord later blessed them with two children of their own.

The Veendorps came with us to Rotterdam to visit my Tante Sutte. Tante looked at me and said "Un dit es Marieken??" (So this is Mary?) Then she looked at you (you were 11 then) as though she had me before her again. I brought her the biggest bouquet of flowers that I could find at the town market. We all had a Dutch tea together and took picture slides, which

we still have with your brother John in Toronto.

Your Dad thought Holland was like heaven, and he would have loved to stay there, but at the time they were not receiving any new citizens. We went to tea after Sunday service. The glittering silverware, the ladies in their silky clothes, the pastors wearing tails, and the air blue with smoke made a lasting impression on a little girl like you, and we all understood the sermon on Mary & Martha. Tante Sutte and the Veendorps asked us to allow you children to stay with them in Holland. They would give us all opportunities to study, and then send you back to Canada at age 21. Father, as always, was calm and said, "We'll let them choose."

(1) *Some facts in the above are historically inaccurate*

Mary Anne Unrau was born in Colfax, Washington and grew up in Edmonton. She is a retired music educator and has a BMusic, M.Mus, BEd and was an Examiner for the Royal Conservatory of Music. Mary Anne and her husband Laurence (Larry) Roberts launched their custom-built steel sailboat Traversay III in 2000, they have sailed over 120,000 km in the boat since her launch. They have crossed every meridian and reached latitudes from 65 S on the Antarctic Peninsula to 80 N at the north-west tip of Spitsbergen. Ports of Call have included such diverse spots as Pitcairn, South Georgia, Hamburg, Darwin and the Northwest Passage with lots of places between. When they were docked in Oberndorf Germany they were given the pennant of the city and Mary Anne was interviewed in German, and the people spoke to each other in Plattdeutsch (Low German)! ❖



Mary Anne Unrau

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Do you want to make a contribution to Alberta Mennonite history, but do not have the patience to write history or volunteer in the archives? Do you want to support Mennonite historical research projects or help in the long-term preservation of records that document the Mennonite experience in Alberta? Then please consider making a donation to the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta, 2946 - 32 Street NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 6J7. Not only will you receive a charitable receipt, but also the satisfaction of contributing to the long-term survival of Alberta's Mennonite heritage.

Dad, God and Me

By Ralph Friesen

How many of us have told a story and had someone say, “You should write a book”? And we think, “Maybe I should,” but for various reasons we never do it, and the story goes unpublished, and when we die, it dies with us. The world loses that story.

Which also would have happened with this story, of my father, and of my spiritual journey as it was shaped by him. Except that I was determined that this story should not be lost. Actually, no one suggested that I write

it—this was my idea. Other biographies of church leaders of his time have been published, and I thought: “If them, why not him?” He was not as strong a personality as some others, and his influence on church affairs was not as great as that of some others, but even so, he had his moment in history, and it mattered, and I wanted to give him his due.

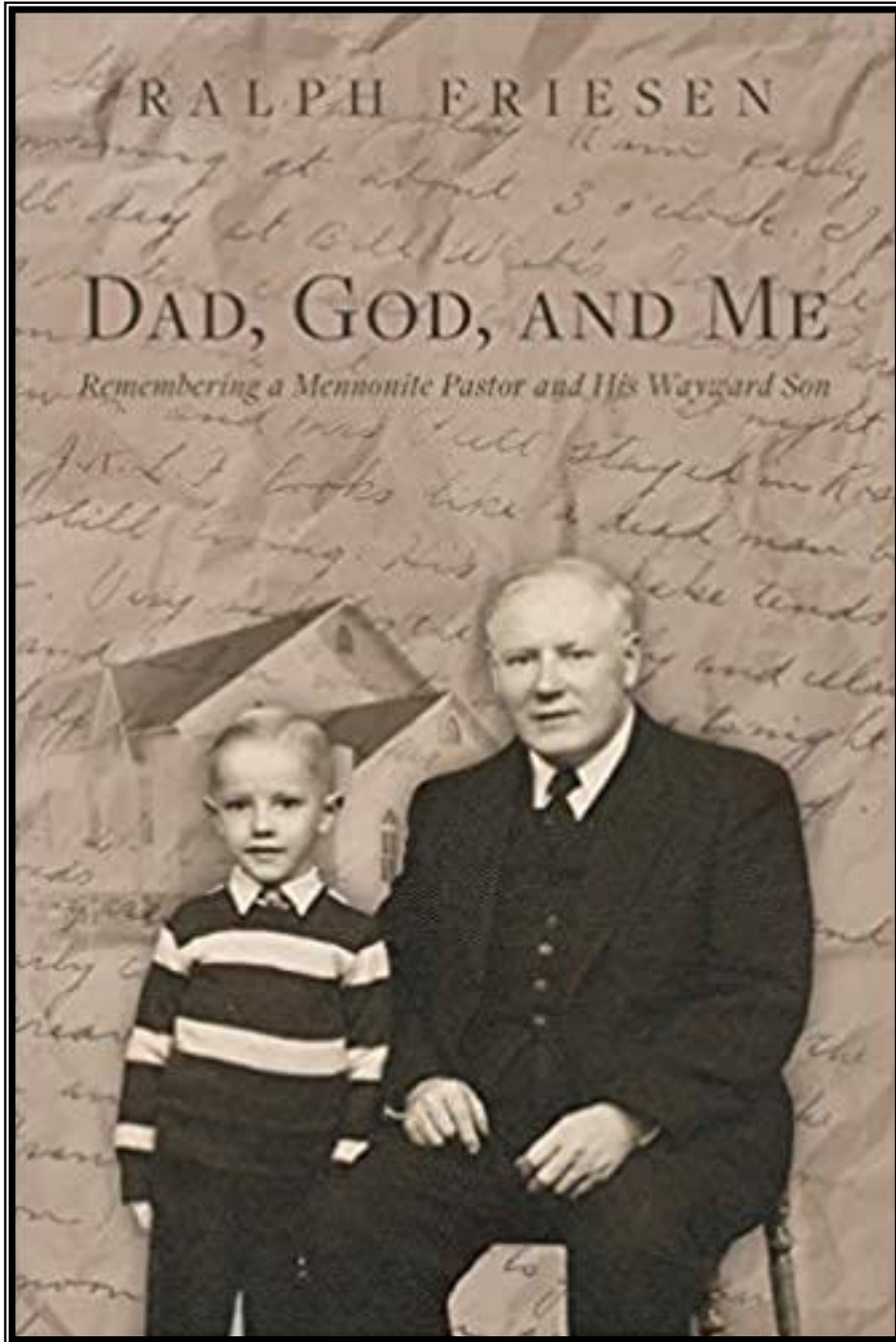
I also wanted to give my own rebellion, apostasy, lack of faith—whatever you want to call it; I wanted to put this “forbidden” stuff out into the world. We have many biographies that are essentially hagiographies and we have many spiritual memoirs in which the writer endures trials and emerges victorious and blessed, and that’s all good. My purpose was different.

A grant from the Plett Foundation enabled me to have the book edited, designed and laid out by professionals, and also to make it available to a broad audience online. *Dad, God, and Me* was published in late December of 2019, so there’s been time for some readers to respond, and share their thoughts with me. Many have been moved to share their own stories of their parents and siblings, and their experiences with faith and doubt. Whoever reads these words . . . I invite you into the dialogue, too.

This is a book I’ve had in me almost all my life. It was a labour of love, and my hope is that you, the reader, will finish the circle by engaging with it. The following is an excerpt from the introduction.

My father was Reverend Peter D. Friesen, pastor of the Kleine Gemeinde / Evangelical Mennonite Church in Stein-

(See Dad on page 31)



(Dad from page 30)

bach during the 1940s and 1950s. Twelve years ago, talking about him with my wife Hannah over breakfast at the Corner House Café in Nelson, BC, I was surprised by a sudden upwelling of sadness. I began to weep. Those tears were the seeds that developed into this book.

We were six children in my family—Alvin, Donald, Mary Ann, Vernon, Norman, and me, Peter Ralph, the youngest. When my father had his paralyzing stroke on August 11, 1958, we made our individual visits to the hospital to see him. We didn't go together.

To whom would it have occurred to bring all of us together and ask: "What does each of you need? What can you contribute? What shall be done now, now that you have lost your father?" (Or for my mother: "your husband.") To no one, apparently—it didn't happen. And this is one of the things that struck me at breakfast that day—that we each dealt with the situation alone.

"Loss," I say of Dad, although he didn't die. But we treated him like an imposter. This paralyzed imitation of a man, whose brain didn't function properly anymore, was not our father. I believe we all thought that, without talking about it.

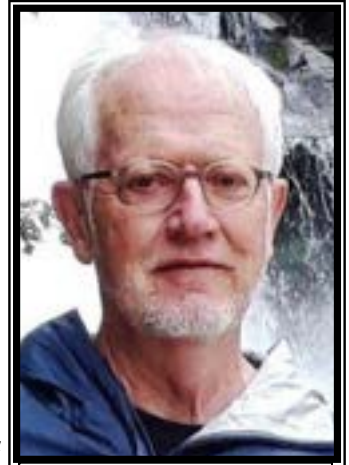
And we were wrong. Why was I crying at the Corner House? In my adolescence, after Dad's stroke, I was embarrassed by him. He tried to be of good cheer, despite the horrendous blow that had slammed his body and brain with such terrible force. I had always thought of this effort at cheerfulness as artificial—absurd, even. But now I was struck by his lonely courage. He carried on, as best he could. He must have known that we, his children, viewed him from a cool distance after his stroke, that we didn't try to understand his situation or connect with him. But he did not complain, or ask for sympathy. He was a brave man, far braver than I ever realized, and I had

failed him. Understanding this for the first time, I wept that August morning.

When Mom died in 1983, Steinbach businessman and family friend Cornie Loewen met with us siblings regarding the settlement of the estate. He congratulated us on our spirit of cooperation. He saw that we had something, as a family. Whatever our differences, we were kindly disposed to each other.

There is for me in the memory of that estate meeting a hint of the guidance that we needed (and could not find among ourselves) after Dad's stroke; I'm still grateful to Cornie Loewen for bringing us together and giving us encouragement. Even today, with Mom and Dad gone, Vern gone, and Cornie Loewen gone too for that matter, and the Corner House Café transformed into a different restaurant, I wish for us to gather again and reconsider that time in our lives, more than 50 years ago. Perhaps this book is a kind of gathering, and reconsidering.

I have collected everything I could find of my father—his diaries, a few letters, postcards, sermon notes, pictures. I have also drawn upon my mother's diaries and letters. I have interviewed my siblings and a number of people who knew my father as a businessman and as a church pastor. In this process, I have made discoveries, and have come to know Dad more completely than when he was alive.



Ralph Friesen

I have also told my own story insofar as it intersects with his. So this is both a biography of a man, written by his son, and a memoir of parts of that son's boyhood. The task I set myself was not only to get to know my father better, but also to get to know myself better. Even if you know nothing about him, or me, you do know something about your own search for what has been lost, your own attempts at self-understanding. Our mutual searching, our need to know and understand—these things can connect us.. ❖

Makhno and Memory, Book Review

By Dave Pankratz

Sean Patterson: "Makhno and Memory" Anarchist and Mennonite Narratives of Ukraine's Civil War, 1917 – 1921. University of Manitoba Press, Winnipeg, 2020

Russian Mennonites view Nestor Makhno as an anarchist bandit who was responsible for looting, wide spread rape, and murder. In contrast, many anarchists see him as a hero who liberated Ukrainian peasants from capitalist exploitation. Sean Patterson explores the origins of these conflicting views with the goal of telling a more balanced story.

The anarchists' perspective is based on the memoirs of a number of Makhno's supporters, the diary of Makhno's wife, and Makhno's own memoirs. Makhno became an anarchist at a young age and was influenced by the views of the Russian thinker Peter Kropotkin. Kropotkin was opposed to both capitalism and the State. He held that private property

(See Makhno on page 32)

(Makhno from page 31)

should be expropriated and society should be reorganized on a communal basis; he believed a new society would emerge based on mutual aid where goods would be distributed on the basis of “from each according to his means, to each according to his needs.” The land would not revert to a State but be placed in the hands of independent local associations that would link up with other associations to form a national network. The national network would deal with social issues. Kropotkin held that land in rural areas could only be taken away from the wealthy landowners through a peasant uprising.

Makhno made it his mission to organize the peasants in his local area and expropriate the land of wealthy farmers and estate owners. He dealt

harshly with those who opposed his revolutionary movement. Members of self-defence units (*Selbstschutz*) in the Mennonite colonies were seen as counter-revolutionists, so he targeted them also. In the violence that followed, civilians not identified as enemies became victims too.

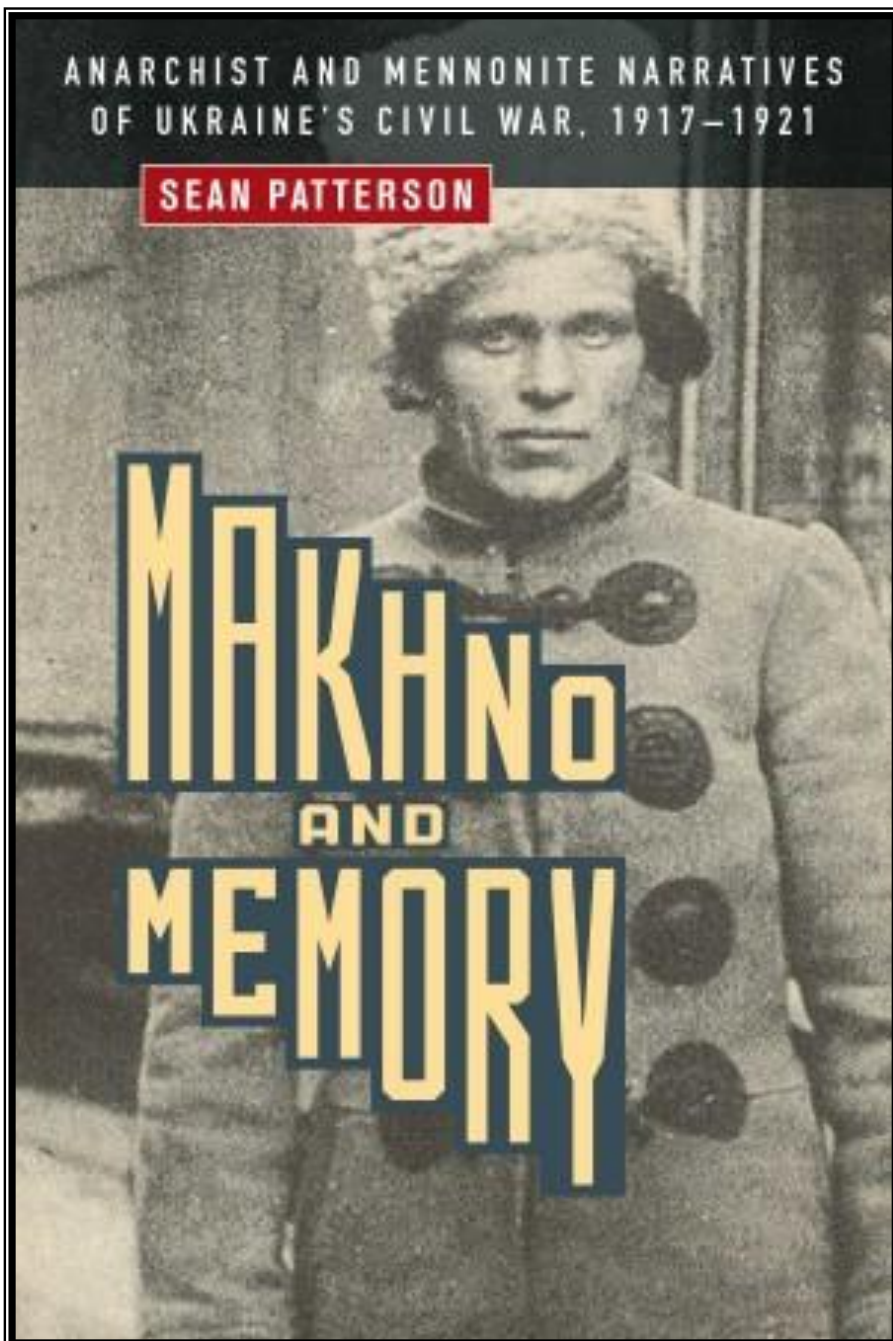
Makhno denied his movement mistreated or murdered Mennonites who were not wealthy or counter-revolutionaries, but Patterson challenges that claim. He writes that although Makhno may not personally have been present at all of the massacres, it is clear that Makhnovists under his command committed heinous crimes against people not considered enemies.

Makhno’s supporters wrote about violence as a necessary part of the struggle to free peasants from exploitation and to mete out justice, but they didn’t distinguish between violence against enemies and violence against civilians.

The Mennonite perspective of Makhno is based on letters, memoirs, diaries, and the Molotschna newspaper *Friedensstimme* (Voice of Peace). Almost all of the accounts are recollections of murder and looting. Patterson makes the argument that the special privileges granted to Mennonite colonists by the Czar, and the Mennonites’ insistence on retaining their culture and values ultimately led to the conflict between the Makhnovists and the Mennonites.

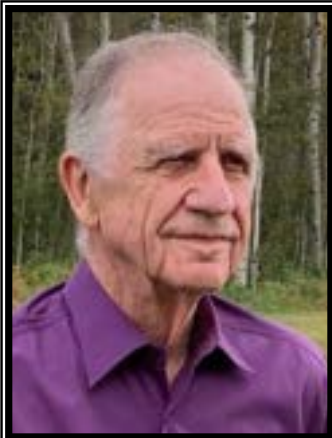
Patterson sees the Makhnovist and Mennonite perspectives as each only presenting one side of the story. The Makhnovist narratives focus on freedom and justice, but they are silent about the wanton violence. The Mennonites em-

(See Makhno on page 33)



(Makhno from page 32)

phasize the violence and the atrocities but say little about Makhno's objective to halt the exploitation



Dave Pankratz

of the peasants and to eliminate the inequities between the rich and the poor. By including both the Makhnovist and the Mennonite perspectives a more complete picture emerges of the historical Makhno.

I read "Makhno and Memory" with trepidation. My mother was born in the Chortitza Colony and was thirteen years old when Makhno and his troops overwhelmed and occupied Mennonite towns and villages in south Ukraine. My mother rarely mentioned Makhno, so I don't know what she witnessed or experienced. However, I have long thought the memories must have been too painful for her to talk about. My concern was that the descriptions of the violence and mistreatment might be too detailed and make me uncomfortable. Those concerns were unfounded. There is violence, including a chapter on the Eichenfeld massacre where over 800 Mennonites were murdered in a six-week period, but the descriptions are not graphic or sensationalized.

"Makhno and Memory" is well written, thoroughly researched, and insightful. It is a valuable addition to the growing list of thought-provoking publications about the

complex story of Russian Mennonites.

Dave Pankratz is a long-time member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta. He also served on the MHSA Board of Directors for a number of years. Dave is retired and lives in Fort St. John BC with his wife Tracey, their daughter Sawyer, two horses, and two cats. ♦

No One Knows

By Dave Toews

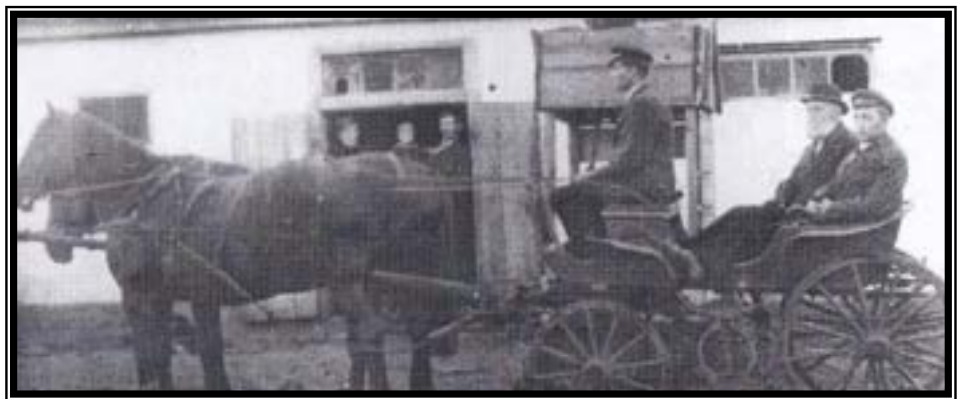
My grandfather Johann's oldest brother, Isaak Isaak Toews 1870-1937, grew up in Osterwick, Chortitza Colony, Russia in the midst of many cousins. In 1894 he married Agatha Funk. Since there was no land available, Isaak was landless. This compelled him to take up a trade, and he became a cabinetmaker and carpenter.

In 1910 the Chortitza Colony purchased land on the Little Arkadak River 1000 km northeast of Osterwick and established the Arkadak Colony with its seven farming villages. Isaak and Agatha packed up their seven children and moved to the village of Marianovka, Arkadak Colony west of the Ural Mountains. Isaak was now a proud landowner. Sadly, Isaak's wife Agatha died of typhus in 1919 at age 48.

Although their relatives in the Old Colonies (Chortitza and Molotschna) experienced the terror of the marauding bands of anarchists, life



Isaak Toews Osterwick 1905 prior to the move to Arkadak



Isaak and his youngest son Peter on the back of the buggy, Arkadak ca 1926

(See No One on page 34)

(No One from page 33)

for the family in Arkadak was generally peaceful during the troubled 1920s. Isaak's oldest son Isaak was a university student at Rostov-on-Don while son Johann had been conscripted into the Red Army. In 1925, sons Isaak, Heinrich, and Johann emigrated to Canada where their maternal grandparents, Heinrich and Agatha (Neufeld) Funk, lived in Altona, Manitoba. They wanted to establish themselves and bring over the rest of the family.

Unfortunately this was not to be. The doors to emigration from Russia slammed shut in 1929. In the early 1930s the communist government ordered all the land and livestock at Arkadak to be collectivized. Isaak, now aged 60, once again picked up his carpentry tools. He built ladders, beehives, cribs for the nursery, and whatever the collective ordered. Many letters were exchanged with his three



Isaak Toews death certificate issued July 11, 1990 stating Isaak was shot Oct 31, 1937

sons in Canada. In one letter, in 1935, he expresses his happiness for his youngest son Peter and daughter-in-law Maria who will soon move into two small rooms that have been created in the barn where the double horse manger had been.

In October 1937 Isaak and his son Peter were arrested, never to be heard from again. **"No one knows where they were taken, no one knows where they died; no one knows where they are buried".**

In July 1990, just before emigrating to Germany, Erna Dick, daughter of Peter and granddaughter of Isaak, received official documentation (death certificate) from the Soviet authorities stating that Isaak had died on Oct 31, 1937. Cause of death? Shot! Isaak and Peter had been executed just a few days after their arrest.

The apology from the government saying that Isaak and Peter had been wrongfully accused was of little consolation to the family.

In 1952 the Johann Toews (Isaak's son) family from Niverville, Manitoba came to visit his cousins the John and Peter Toews families at Mayfair, Saskatchewan. It was joyous occasion. Many stories from bygone days were exchanged. A lot were tragic, but there were happy ones as well. I was just a young boy of seven, but that event has left a lasting impression on me.

Source: Toews Family Registry, Arthur Toews, Winnipeg Sept 2000 ♦



Rear L-R - Erna & Peter Krahn (oldest daughter of John & Mary), Peter, John Centre - Johann, Mary, Seigfried (hidden), Elizabeth, Hilda, Helen Front - David in bib overalls (the author), Anna Marie, Dorothy, Arnold, Ernie, ALL Toews

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor Dave,

June 2020

I was blown away with the latest *Chronicle* published by the MHSA, thirty two pages of great stuff. Sarah Regier, under 25, reminded me that a new generation of younger writers have arrived who are doing genealogies with names like Regier and MacFarlane. Mennonites and those from other traditions have married to create not only Buhlers and Wiebes, but also MacFarlanes and Carswells.

Thanks Ernie (Toews), for picking up the Spanish Flu Pandemic story in the Soviet Union that began in 1917. I hope it will get others to write more about that subject. My Mother (Maria Pauls Driedger Buhler) lost her mother, father, and three sisters from 1917-1919. Of the five deaths, four were caused by tuberculosis. Her family lived in the newly established village of Grigorjewka. More work needs to be done on the several pandemics in the Soviet Union.

Thanks Harold (Wiens) for your pilgrimage to Ebenfeld that remembered the massacre of almost a hundred Mennonites in 1919. I could not find your description of the killers but I believe it was Nestor Makhno, a Ukrainian anarchist who was an arch enemy of the new regime that would soon be named the USSR. The killer of the Ebenfeld massacre fled to France and died there in 1921

Your layout was wonderful and I counted 58 photos scattered throughout the issue.

Jake Buhler, Secretary Mennonite Historical Society Saskatchewan

A Letter to the Editor,

Sept 16, 2020

A big thank you to the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta and Dave Toews that we were able to access the life story of Hans G. Claassen that was carried in the MHSA Newsletter (now the Chronicle) of September 2009, and March 2010.

My husband Hans' brother, Claus Claassen of Calgary passed away September 2, 2020. His family wanted to know some things from his early years and especially the war experiences. The information in the articles was very helpful and much appreciated, since these two brothers had been together during that time. This shows how important it is to have this history written down and accessible for future generations.

A Sincere Thank You, Frieda Claassen, Edmonton, AB. (sister-in-law to Claus)

Hi, Dave,

June 2020

I really enjoyed seeing and reading my article *My Great Grandfather Pierre Cheri Demasson* in the MHSA Chronicle! I think you did an excellent job putting it together. I haven't read all the stories yet, but I plan to go through it. There are so many interesting and unusual things that have happened to people. Thanks again for your support while I was writing the piece. I now see many things I would like to have done differently, but that's always the way it is. It will be nice when this Covid thing is over and we can see people for real again. Thanks for all your work on the Chronicle. These things take a lot of time and energy.

Correction and addition to "*My Great Grandfather Pierre Cheri Demasson*" (Chronicle June 2020). I inadvertently left out my line of descent in the family. I didn't identify which Demasson child on the big family picture on page 21 was my Grandfather. Jean-Louis (Louis), the boy on the front left, about 12 years old. Louis married an Irish immigrant from Limerick Street, County Tipperary, Roscrea, Ireland. She left at age 16 and never saw Ireland again. They had 4 children. My mother, Bernice Marie Ezilda Demasson, was their only daughter. I hope that clears up my position in the family!

Kathy Dyck

Edmonton, Alberta

Letters to the Editor

To Editor Dave,

July 18, 2020

When the MHSA Chronicle shows up in my mail box here in La Crete, AB. I gladly put aside other activities and stop to read. Although most of my historical Mennonite connections would be from Saskatchewan, yet I find, in nearly every issue, some connection to a writer or story. This June 2020 issue had a number.

The article by Ernie Toews, firstly, brought back memories of being with him in Rosthern Junior College (RJC); secondly, it refreshed the story of my late wife Telita's maternal grandmother, Ohma Louise Janzen, at one time from Rosemary, AB. who lost a number of family members to the typhus epidemic which hit the Chortitza colonies of South Russia. She would say they were thankful that those family members died of typhus rather than being murdered, as was the case of my wife's paternal grandmother's family.

The other story of interest was written by Katie Harder. She writes that her parents, upon coming to Canada in 1926, spent their first winter in Harris, Sask. I would like to get in touch with her because my mother-in-law, Elsie (Janzen) Zacharias had a very similar story. Her family ended up on the Wilson Farm near Harris for a number of years and likewise, had been paying into a land purchase only to find out that the money never reached the absentee landlord. Hence they eventually moved to Rosemary, AB. to start over.

I also took note of Sarah Regier's story and of Elmer Regier's name; he became a close friend of my father-in-law, Werner Zacharias, through his time at SCBI.

The fourth article of special interest is about the Didsbury Bible Institute. The student body pictured includes my wife's aunt Lennie Janzen, (Koop) as well as our music instructor/choir director at SCBI, Vernon Neufeld. When the Bible school closed in spring of 1967, our tour group from SCBI was invited to tour Alberta churches to introduce them and their young people to SCBI since these schools became amalgamated.

I look forward to the AGM coming to La Crete next summer.

Peter Janzen

La Crete, Alberta

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