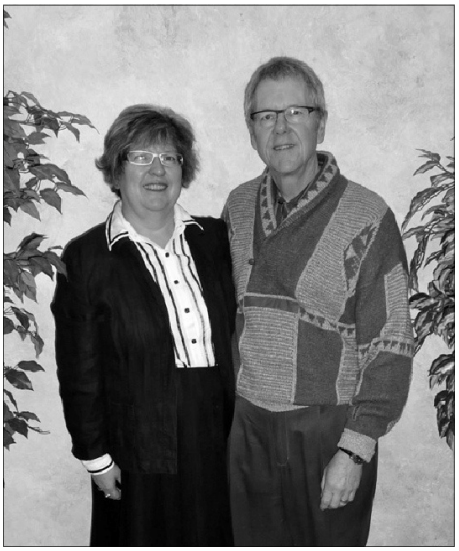
Newsletter

Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta

Volume XIII, No. 1 **Mar 2010**

How Our Family Became Mennonite

by Bryan Fuhr



Arlene and Bryan Fuhr

I developed an interest in my heritage during a Fieseler reunion in Langenburg, Saskatchewan in 1982. Some of the material in this story was obtained from the family history prepared prior to the reunion by Jayne Fieseler-Andres, entitled, *Was Hast Du Getan, Fieseler?*. The rest of the information I have gleaned from stories told to me by my Dad.

My great-great grandparents, Konrad and Sophie (Blumenburg)

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Pedigree of a Cowboy Poet

by Doris Daley Haysom

I come from a gene pool that includes Irish stowaways, bicycle repairmen, sorry team ropers, fancy two-steppers, petticoated bushwhackers, pioneer ranchers, North West Mounted Police (NWMP) constables, and English homesteaders. The perfect pedigree for a Mennonite-by-Choice Cowboy Poet!

Daley (originally Daly) is a common Irish name: they say there is a star in heaven for every Irish girl or boy who had to leave home, go across the big water, and find a new life in the new world. Jim Daly was one of those, stowing away on a ship at the age of 13 and leaving Ireland forever. He patched together a hard scrabble life as an immigrant teenager in the Ottawa area, then joined the NWMP in 1875. His enlistment number was 266. He served six years as a Queen's Cowboy and took out his discharge papers at Fort Macleod in 1881. In those days, to encourage pioneers to settle in the west, the government rewarded retiring Mounties with the deed to 160 acres. What good fortune for a young boy who had arrived in Canada as a penniless immigrant.

Jim Daley built his little ranch west of Granum, about 18 miles northwest of Fort Macleod. A Chinook had just blown through and on a late winter day the site of water running off the south slopes looked good to him! He ranched in partnership with another cowboy for two years, then

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Current Contents

MHSA Spring Event—Saturday, April 10, 2010

The Annual General Meeting/Spring Conference of the MHSA will be held at Abbeydale Christian Fellowship (1352 Abbeydale Dr. SE, Calgary) on April 10 starting at 9:30 am.

The afternoon session will feature presentations by Eleanore Woollard and Ted Regehr; there will also be book launches for Eleanore's and Ted's books. Lunch will be provided for $12.00. Please RSVP for lunch to Colin Neufeldt at (780) 433-2127 by April 5.

Schedule of Events:

9:30 a.m. to Noon -- Annual General Meeting

1:00 pm -- Eleanore Woollard's presentation: "The Reluctant Author"

2:00 pm -- Break

5 pm -- Ted Regehr's presentation: "A Generation of Vigilance"

Everyone is welcome.

Editorial Reflections:

by Dave Toews

There are two lasting bequests we can give our children: One is roots. The other is wings. — Hodding Carter, Jr.

Inclusiveness—creating a hospitable and welcoming environment; interacting with all members of the community without regard to individual characteristics or heritage.

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Many of you will remember a few issues ago I mentioned I had asked a friend to submit an article to the *MHSA Newsletter*. He declined, saying he felt the MHSA was for Russian Mennonite stories only. In an effort to be more inclusive I've sought out a cross section of stories. I have summarized *The Life Story* of Danziger Hans G. Claassen. This is a gripping story of life, suffering and flight from the Free State of Danzig, present day Poland. I had the opportunity to visit with Hans and his wife Frieda for an afternoon. Looking across the coffee table I saw two people whose unwavering faith in God, tenacious work ethic and love for each other has carried them through all those difficult times.

We also have two heritage stories from Mennonites by Choice. Doris Daley Haysom, Turner Valley, Alberta, who by her own admission has the perfect pedigree for a Mennonite-by-Choice cowboy poet. She is a descendent from a number of colourful characters. Retired chemist, Bryan Fuhr, Edmonton, tells the story how his German ancestors immigrated to Canada in 1889 and how he and his family came to attend First Mennonite Church.

The beauty of inclusiveness is that what may start out as merely acknowledging a more fair way of operating, ends up with a more diverse and complete understanding. I thank all the contributors for making this issue of the newsletter rich and rewarding for me and I hope for all of you, our readers. ❖

Chairman's Corner

by Colin Neufeldt

As many of you know, retired University of Saskatchewan librarian Victor Wiebe conducted a survey of various MHSA members last fall. The point of the survey was to obtain feedback from our members—especially those in southern Alberta—as to how to improve MHSA services and volunteer opportunities. Victor came to Calgary where he interviewed some members; he also corresponded with other members via e-mail. Based on his interviews and surveys, Victor prepared a report that he shared with the MHSA board members. During the past two months, the board has reviewed Victor's report and met several times to determine how to implement some of Victor's recommendations.

Why am I telling you this? As chairman of the MHSA I want all of our members to know that the MHSA board is working hard to implement strategies that will improve the MHSA experience for members and non-members alike. We are also looking to find ways to have MHSA volunteers become more actively involved in the work and programs of our organization. We believe that this is the best way to help the MHSA grow and ensure its long-term success. You will have to be patient, however. Putting some of Victor's recommendations into action will take time, but the board is committed to developing policies and programs that will improve the MHSA experience for everyone. ❖

New Publications for Sale:

- Generations of Vigilance ($30)
- Settlers of the East Reserve ($30)
- Einlage collection ($45)
- GRANDMA 6 ($35)

registered his own brand (the campstool, an X with the top crossed off) in 1883.

Four years later, two years after the Riel Rebellion, a young Wiarton, Ontario lady, Mary Selves, was making preparations to accompany her aunt out west. The aunt had a husband waiting for her at the end of the long journey, somewhere west of Lethbridge. Mary, didn't want to go! "The stark trees and brown shorn fields wore the look of my despondency," she wrote 60 years later in her memoir. But you can already guess what happened...Southern Alberta was not only good for her lungs (dry air), it was good for her heart: she met a young Irish cowboy, changed her name, and became a rancher's wife. My great grandparents, Jim and Mary (Selves) Daley, were married in 1889. Their modest ranch house at the edge of the Porcupine Hills became a favourite stop for travellers, the patrolling Red Coat, natives with their Indian Agent passes, and the mail coach. Jim would sometimes be gone to Montana or Oregon for livestock (once he got "stuck" in Montana in a February blizzard and didn't get home till spring). Mary fought loneliness for a long time. "If it weren't for the certainty of winter coming, and the knowledge of so many rivers to cross, I would start tomorrow to walk back home," she said. Her little son Stanley, my grandpa, was sent to live in Fort Macleod when he became of school age. Mary wrote, "I would have been very lonesome for his company, but right about then, his little sister Henrietta, arrived in a package from Eaton's."

At about the same time the Webber family was coming by covered wagon from North Dakota to homestead in southern Alberta. The Webbers had a number of children including a daughter Vivian. My grandparents Stanley and Vivian (Webber) Daley had six children: four daughters, a son who died at age 13 and baby Wallace, my father.

The coming of the Calgary-Macleod railroad in 1892 brought homesteaders, settlers and farmers, and the wide open ranching days were over. "The prehistoric days of the ranchers were numbered," writes Mary. "The homesteaders' toiling faith was fulfilled with rewards of abundance and graceful billows of golden grain. Ranchers adjusted...and the fate and face of the country was changed forever." My dad Wallace (Jim and Mary's grandson) ranched all his life except for a stint in Edmonton as the government's farmer's advocate.

My mom, Melva Worth, arrived in Granum as a school girl. Her parents, Gertie Groves and Paul Worth, started their married life together in northern Saskatchewan. Grandma was one of six children born to English parents who had followed the call of the Homesteader posters. Being a repair man in a bicycle shop in Birmingham, England was hardly good preparation for the life that awaited them on the Saskatchewan prairies. Grandma was born on December 15, 1914 near Major, Saskatchewan. Her first bed was a butter box; her young parents warmed wheat in the oven, poured it into the box and scooped out a little warm nest for the baby. As a young girl, Grandma was given the choice of attending Baptist or Anglican Sunday School. The Anglicans sponsored Sunday afternoon baseball games AND they mailed Sunday School magazines directly to her (her own private mail!), so it was no contest.

Jim Daly (Ireland) = Mary Selves (Ontario)
Stanley (Alberta) = Vivian Webber (North Dakota)
Paul Worth (England) = Gertie Groves (England)
Wallace (Alberta) = Melva (Sask)
Wallace = Doris Daly

Grandpa Worth, was an Alberta Wheat Pool agent. Job transfers took him to many Alberta towns, including Rocky Mountain House, Morinville, and in the late 1940s to Granum. My parents, Wallace and Melva Daley were high school sweethearts, married in 1952, and raised three kids on the ranch. It was a carefree childhood in a farming and ranching community: horses, chores, toboggan parties, cousins, grandparents, branding parties, music lessons, school bus rides, Sunday School and church functions. My mom and dad were great dancers and we learned to dance in the kitchen watching Don Messer's Jubilee on Saturday nights.

In 1984 I embarked on the grand adventure of my life, joining MCC for a two-year term in Pennsylvania. The Self-Help Crafts program needed a writer and I needed something more meaningful in my life. I was in my late

twenties with a journalism diploma and knew that a corporate office job was not for me. All I knew about Mennonites was that I would see some conservative ones sometimes on shopping trips to Lethbridge! MCC Alberta Director Bill Thiessen took a chance on me, and I took a chance on MCC! It turned out to be a great fit. I felt that I had found my tribe of people, even though I wasn't even looking for all of you! Two years eventually led to 15 with the Ten Thousand Villages program, including four in Pennsylvania and two in Ontario. I eventually got homesick for the west and moved back to Alberta, where I became a member of Trinity Mennonite Church. It was then I started attending cowboy poetry festivals and got hooked. I can do that, I said to myself. Now I had found a group of folks who loved the west and loved how words went together. Who knew where that would lead, but now I make my living as a western writer and poet, travelling throughout North America for gigs. No campfire too small, no convention centre too big. My husband, Bob Haysom (a good Welsh name) and I live in Turner Valley and continue to attend Trinity Mennonite Church. ❖

(Continued from page 1)

Heinrich Fieseler (my great-grandfather), Tina Fieseler (my grandmother) and Bertha Sott (with baby Heinrich on her lap)

Fieseler, lived near Hanover, Germany in the mid-1800s. The third of their four children, Karl Heinrich Konrad (Heinrich) my great grandfather, was born in 1852. He became a *Stellmacher* (wagon maker) and had a workshop at Klein Elbe, about 30 miles southeast of Hanover. My great grandparents Heinrich and Johanne (Diessel) Fieseler had their first daughter Johanne Karoline Konradine (Tina, my grandmother) in 1884. Johanne died at the age of 26 when Tina was less than two years old. Heinrich married Bertha Sott shortly after and they had two more children.

Heinrich and his brother Christian heard of free farmland and prosperous life in Canada, so they made arrangements with their families, to leave the "Fatherland." They boarded the *SS Carthaginian* at Hamburg and set out for Canada in 1889. After a stop at Quebec City they boarded the train and eventually reached the hamlet of Langenburg in the district of Assiniboia, North-West Territories (Saskatchewan would not become a province until 1905). This small colony, at the end of the railway line, was to be the Fieselers' new home. They homesteaded on land a few miles north of Langenburg and became members of the recently formed St. Paul's German Lutheran congregation.

Konrad Fiesler = Sophie Blumenburg
(Ger) | (Ger)
K. Heinrich = Johanne Diessell
(Ger) | (Ger)
Conrad Fuhr = Johanne (Tina)
(Wisconsin) | (North Dakota)
Conrad = Gladys Thomas
(Sask) |
Bryan Fuhr

Conrad Fuhr (my grandfather)

Less than two years after settling in Canada, Heinrich died of appendicitis at the age of 37. A few years later Bertha married Ludwig Werle. Bertha was a well-educated woman from Germany. Ludwig did not think education was necessary, especially with all the work to be done on the farm. Therefore, Tina and her younger brother Heinrich had only three months of formal schooling at Langenburg School. Their younger sister Frieda did not even attend school. They did learn to read German and English thanks to their mother's home tutoring.

Tina lived on the farm with her step-parents until she met Conrad Fuhr, the hired man. Conrad was a good horseman who had arrived from Milwaukee, Wisconsin; it is likely his family had come from Germany, but details are not known. My grandparents, Conrad and Tina (Fieseler) Fuhr, got married on the farm. They moved in 1904 to their own homestead in the Zorra district, about 30 miles northeast of Langenburg. They had four children: Johann, Heinrich, Conrad John (my father) and Hilda. My grandparents were among the founders of Zorra Lutheran Church, located a few miles from their homestead.

The family worked very hard on the farm. One day in 1912 tragedy struck; the two oldest sons ate poisonous berries along the roadside on their way home from school. They both died within a few days and were buried in the Zorra Church Cemetery. My Dad was only four years old at the time.

Conrad & Tina Fuhr Gravestones, Zorra Church

He only spoke German at home, and learned English when he started school. I remember him telling me that he used to walk several miles to school in his bare feet. Another story he shared was about the time he was taking lunch to his father who was working on the land. On the way he came face-to-face with a wolf. He dropped the lunch and started to run one way and the wolf the other. I guess they never saw each other again!

After a few years the family moved to another farm a few miles east of the original homestead, just across the border in what is now Manitoba. They lived there until 1920. My grandparents were not involved in the war. In 1918 everyone except my grandmother contracted the Spanish flu. There were no doctors in the area, so my grandmother nursed them all back to health.

In 2008 my wife Arlene and I were invited to the 100th anniversary of the Zorra Church, which is still located on the same site as the original building. The celebration included two church services and a large potluck. A commemorative quilt had been woven which included the names of all the founders. Communion was served at one of the services, but non-Lutherans were not allowed to partake! One of the old timers we met, who knew my Dad, took us to the sites of my grandparents' original homestead, their second farm and to my Dad's school.

My grandfather was not one to stay in one place for long. In 1920 they moved about 50 miles further north to a farm at Pelly, Saskatchewan. This is where I was born in 1946. Grandmother Tina died of cancer in 1931 at the age of 47 and grandfather Conrad died in Vancouver just one month after I was born.

Moving 40 years ahead, Arlene and I were living in Edmonton with three children, and were members of the United Church. My parents, Conrad and Gladys (Thomas) Fuhr, lived in Brandon, Manitoba more than 35 years. When Dad began to suffer from bone cancer, we made numerous trips to see him. During these trips our oldest son Adrian stayed with our good friends Mark and Carolyn Wilson (also Mennonites by choice) and would attend Sunday School at the 76th Avenue church. Adrian liked First Mennonite Church so much, he suggested we attend there. So, that is why we became Mennonites!

All of our children have enjoyed Camp Valaqua, as campers and counsellors, have been baptized and have attended Rosthern Junior College and Canadian Mennonite University. Two have married Mennonites and the other has a Mennonite girlfriend. Both Arlene and our son-in-law are Mennonite pastors. How much more Mennonite could our family be? ❖

Life Story of Hans G. Claassen—a Synopsis (Part II)

by Dave Toews

The Party had begun to organize the flight west or "trek" as we called it. We had three carts; one for food and bedding, another for feed for the horses and a covered coach for us, each pulled by two of our tough Trakeners. It was a bitterly cold foggy dawn as we started out after we said a tearful good-bye to our Polish servants. We hoped they had nothing to fear from the Russians. We headed south to Dirschau (Tczew), we had become refugees and would remain so for many years. I still feel like one sometimes today, fifty years later.

The first obstacle we encountered was a bomb damaged bridge at Dirschau. In the turmoil we lost Josef with his cart and all our food. We believe he headed for his hometown, this left us without food for the rest of the trek. One evening we pulled into a yard just as the family was eating a roast goose supper, we watched hungrily as they ate, leaving a few leftovers for

us. A bitter truth dawned on us here. We, of the privileged class had now become beggars. This was a lesson from God, it changed our outlook on life.

We were allowed to advance a few more days, then put into quarters on a small farm in the Danziger Hohe (Danzig Heights). Werner was sent back home for supplies as the front had come to a temporary standstill. This two week delay prevented us from reaching West Germany as the Russians had now encircled the province of Pomerania. Werner Haeker returned with some provisions and reported our farm had been looted. Back on the road there was chaos, the fleeing German Army stopping occasionally to return fire with bazookas and machine guns. Many emaciated horses driven until dead, lay by the road side in the snow. I was given a pair of small riding boots by a young lady, at night my feet would swell so I couldn't take them off for two weeks. In places the road was blocked by a *Panzersperre* (rock or log tank blockades). The carts had to drive through the steep ditch to circumvent the obstacle. A Russian prisoner lying there, leg crushed by a tank, screamed in pain, as the carts unable to stop, rolled over him. It was a horrible sight that haunted me for a long time.

By the time we got past Stolp (Slupsk) and into Kustrin (Koszalin), it was clear we were encircled, so we had to head back. Mom probably regretted at this point that we had not taken a refugee ship from Danzig to Denmark even though the *SS Wilhelm Gustloff* had been torpedoed January 30, 1945 and over 9,000 souls were lost. For days we ate only cheese found in an abandoned cheese factory. We finally made it back to the city of Danzig, where we lived in Aunt Trude's apartment, while she and her family moved in with her parents. Her husband, Mom's bother Eric, had fallen in the battle at Ladoga Lake in the summer of 1943. *Opa* (grandfather) Below had taken me for long walks in Danzig during peace time, up Bischoffsberg (Bishop's Mountain) to show me the old earthen fortification walls. These had been built by Mennonite engineer Adam Wiebe, with trolleys on ropes, during the Polish-Swedish wars of 1620-29. The Allies were bombing almost every other night now, first the flares (Christmas Trees) were dropped, followed by the terrifying high pitched whistle, then the exploding bombs. The Russians attacking now with both artillery and the truck mounted multi -barrelled cannon—the so-called *Stalinorgel* (Stalin Organ), that hurled it's shells into the city with a frightening howling sound. We had to go farther and farther for water, rushing from one doorway to the next, shells exploding around us. In times like this, one lives only one hour at a time.

The bombing stopped. The Russians were advancing now with only machine gun fire. A German soldier killed a Russian who was sneaking up passed the hedge behind our apartment. It caused us great concern as he lay there, we feared the Russians would avenge him on us. An officer was the first Russian to burst into our apartment. He walked right up to me and pressed his revolver against my head. "Are there any Germans soldiers hiding here?" he asked in broken German. "No!" I replied, trembling. "If we find any, I shoot you." Fortunately they didn't find any, as the officer could have shot me without impunity. They kept us in a room over night, packed so tightly no one could sit down. When we were allowed out next morning, we looked around in disbelief. This looked more like hell on earth, certainly not the beautiful city we had known. The smell of smoke and burning flesh was overwhelming. How many perished here, only God knows. We roamed from ruin to ruin searching for food and shelter.

The drunken Russian soldiers were celebrating the victory by firing their weapons, chasing the women young and old, killing people and generally creating a reign of terror. In one of our shelters a young mother crawled under a bathtub to avoid the brutes, but the landlord pointed her out to the soldiers. They dragged her out and raped her in front of her screaming children. "If there was a God, he would not allow this terrible suffering," I heard people say. They also found satisfaction in telling jokes about the stupid Russians, sarcasm seemed the only defence left to us.

There were also some kind-hearted Russian soldiers. With tears in his eyes, one shared his rations with us, probably thinking of his own children far away. Another, an officer gave us a ride on his *Panje-Wagen* (horse drawn cart) and forced his men to walk behind through the water of the flooded *Werder* (lowlands). The Germans had blown up the dams in a vain effort to slow the Russian advance.

We were now on the way to our homestead, as all routes west were blocked. There was very little food, the potatoes we had counted on were rotten from the water. The wheat we had carried to an upper floor was ground with coffee grinders into flour to make sourdough bread. I fashioned a fish trap out of old chicken wire, set it in a drainage ditch; it helped add to our meagre diet. There were no jobs, no money and there was no protection. We survived a year with no assistance, except for a bag of potatoes from a Polish mayor for helping harvest them.

There was no law in this part of the country, except the law of hunger—the law of necessity; the law went to the one carrying the gun. There were marauding bands of soldiers looting, raping and indiscriminately killing women who resisted. The Polish *Milizman* (minuteman - self styled Communist policeman) was no help and someone to be feared. He would come around and threaten Claus and me to reveal where the neighbours or we had buried valuables among the ruins. On one occasion he lined us up against a tree and threatened to shoot us. I knew he was bluffing, but Klaus only eight, was crying horrified. We escaped, running into the house, old *Antje* slammed the heavy door behind us. The *Milizman* was out there hammering on the door, cursing in Polish, all to no avail.

One day we received notice that mom's sister, our Aunt Lisbeth who lived in the next village, was very ill of blood poisoning.

We brought her home in a hand cart, she died the following day. Mom was unable to attend the funeral as the police arrested her and accused her of causing the death of our servant Josef. Untrue of course, but they beat her and kept her in jail for some time. Aunt Lisbeth's funeral was the saddest I ever attended; there was no minister, no singing and no casket. She was placed on some boards, wrapped in linen and buried behind the Catholic church. Someone muttered a short prayer. When mom was released from prison she was delirious with typhus. An owl hooted outside and superstitious old *Antje* said, "*Nu word se storve*" (Now she will die). Fear gripped our hearts, but God was gracious and the angel of death passed by.

It was shortly after this that our cousin Erika Bock, Aunt Lisbeth's daughter, came to live with us. We felt sorry for her and took her in, a difficult decision, another mouth to feed in these terrible days. Our wheat for sourdough bread had been depleted. Whenever Claus and I would see a half -starved cat we would catch it and kill it for food. A horrible task, no kid should have to perform. Our health and strength had dwindled. We had our poorest Christmas here. I can still see mom sitting by the window crying, while she was eating something that only faintly resembled a piece of cake.

The expulsion of the Germans began subtly. First a Polish family came to share our house, then we were moved to the poorhouse in the middle of the village. Nobody wanted anything to do with Germans, we were treated like lepers. In March 1946 we were told the Red Cross would transport us to West Germany, but first we had to walk twenty kilometres to the former border town of Dirschau. An ethnic cleansing of huge proportions was taking place as the Slavic countries tried to rid themselves of their ethnic Germans. In *Nemesis of Potsdam*, Alfred M. de Zayas cites the fact that 15 million people were driven out. Many people were given only ten minutes to pack their suitcases. The Western Allies had agreed to a "humane plan," but 2 million people died in this process.

First we were taken to a camp at Szczecin, where an American nurse gave us a shot of DDT, the miracle delousing powder. Three weeks later we were transported by train to the North Sea Frisian Island of Fohr, just off the coast of Denmark. We were put in a five-storey sanatorium with 50 other families. Food and firewood were always in short supply, but at last we could live without fear. This fear in my memory, was a lot worse than the starvation. Mom was a walking skeleton when we first got to the camp; Eva and Erika were sent to Switzerland to recuperate from starvation. All of us had some shadows on our lungs, a mild form of tuberculosis that encapsulates when the body regains strength.

Tourist Hotel used as refugee barracks, Island of Fohr

Marie Claassen by refugee barracks, Island of Fohr

Dad finally managed to get permission to join us from Berlin, where he had been living with his mother and sister. He was rundown and haggard, as he had almost starved to death, in an East German Prisoner of War camp. He had been released early because he had been wounded. Dad was a changed man after he got

back, he'd stopped smoking and read the Bible to us every Sunday morning. He leased a small garden plot and grew tomatoes and cucumbers; this provided some income and work for the family.

My siblings and I resumed our education here on the island, I started in grade six at 13 years of age and finished when I was 18. Learning came easy for me, I excelled in arithmetic, writing essays and the little science that was available. Claus and I did all kinds of experiments; we developed photos, taught ourselves the Morse code and built a crystal set to receive radio transmissions. We had religious instruction once a week and, as Protestant Mennonites, took part in the Lutheran classes. After school our walk home took us within a hundred yards of the sea. We would often roam through the sand dunes, collect sea shells or go swimming. Dad warned us never to touch the unexploded ammunition that washed up on the beach. A few days later two young boys were playing horsey on a bomb, one hit the detonator and it blew the boys to pieces.

When I was 14, I became more aware of the opposite sex. I felt especially attracted to my friend Richard's sister, Herta. She was a beautiful girl with dark hair and lively brown eyes. Her mother did not approve and soon broke up our relationship. The ratio of women to men was seven to one after the war, this caused a lot of problems in some marriages. It reminded me of Isaiah 4:1[1]. I knew of a case where two girls shared a boy friend. Next door lived a well educated Swabian lady who had the strange habit of sunbathing in the nude behind her house. She told dad to tell the boys to make some noise before entering the garden.

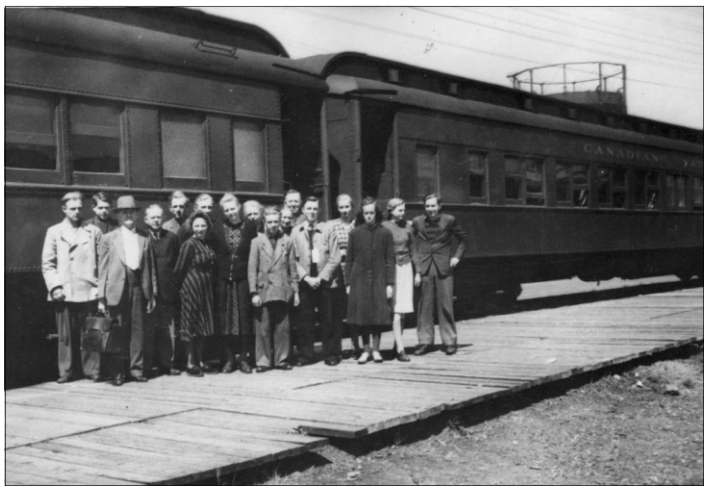
Dad's brother Otto had been in Saskatchewan before the war. He had returned to marry, got drafted and was killed in the great conflict. Since there appeared to be no hope of returning to our home, dad applied to immigrate to Canada, through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). We had come in contact with MCC as they had sent us food parcels two three times a year, a tremendous help to us during that period. When we brought the parcels home, the first thing we did was lock the door. I know it was selfish, but with all those hungry neighbours, the parcel would have been gone in no time.

In late April 1951, we received permission to immigrate to Canada. We packed our few belongings in a trunk, a tub and some old suitcases and took the train to the MCC camp at Gronau, Westphalia. We left old Antje with her niece. It was heartbreaking, she had been like a grandmother to us. We were held in quarantine at the camp for two weeks. Here we met Russian Mennonites for the first time; they spoke the same Low German as we did, however our accents had both changed somewhat during the 150 years of separation. We also met friends and neighbours from the *Werder*, some we had not seen since the war. We learned that a lot of Danziger had migrated to Uruguay, as that country had accepted refugees earlier than Canada.

On May 5, 1951, we boarded the *SS Anna Salem* in Bremerhaven and started the voyage across the Atlantic. The route was around Scotland, then we headed for Halifax. There were rough seas, many people were seasick, but not Claus; he was healthy as a fish and ate extra portions left by the sick. We saw schools of dolphins jumping in formation and whales spouting, right off starboard. Our first view of Canada was St John, Newfoundland. When I saw the coast of Canada a voice seemed to say to me, "You must love this land forever." We disembarked on Pier 21 in Halifax on May 15, 1951 and boarded the train that took us west for five days.

Hans, May 1951 on the *SS Anna Salem*

We finally arrived in Lethbridge and immediately began our contract work in the sugar beet fields around Coaldale and Picture Butte. The two year contract we had signed with the Canadian Pacific Railway and MCC proved to be hard work and it was difficult to get used to the dry climate. Hoeing in the beet fields was intermittent work, four weeks on and four weeks off; in between we had to find other work. We worked at a



Pier 21, Halifax—boarding the train to Lethbridge

lumber yard and on the extra gang for the railway. There was an advantage to working on the extra gang: Claus and I could eat all we wanted, something we had not been able to do for many years.

After completing the two-year beet work contract, I moved to Calgary and began working in the house construction industry. At church I noticed an attractive girl in the choir; Frieda Prochnau had a beautiful alto voice. After a time of courtship we decided to get married the next summer. But Frieda said, "I am not going to spend another cold winter in my room by myself." So on November 21, 1953 Frieda's sister Martha and Helmut Janz and Frieda and I were married in a double wedding. Frieda had saved an amazing $1,000 on her low wages, so next spring we purchased our first house. Frieda sometimes reminds me, that all I brought into the marriage was a pillow, an old shotgun and an old car (and I still owed $500 on the car).

After we married, we lived in Coaldale where I attended Bible school. Then we farmed at Tofield for a year. In March 1959 we moved to Edmonton and have lived here ever since. Most of the time I have worked in the house construction industry. Our family consists of three grown children, Paul, Ruth and Bruce and two grandsons. We have toured much of North America and have been back to Europe four times. Frieda and I have both visited our former homes in present day Poland; that was an emotional experience. Our volunteer work has been with Jubilee Partners, Habitat for Humanity and MCC. We attend Lendrum Mennonite Brethren church in Edmonton and still serve on several committees, including Canadian Peacemakers International.

Working sugar beets at Coaldale

Note:

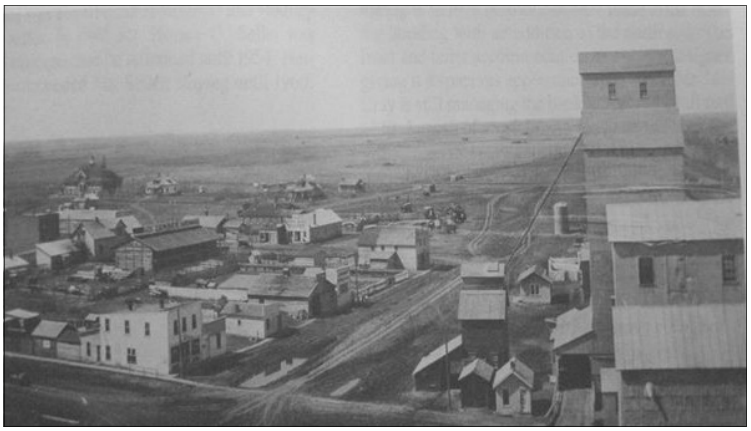
[1] And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man..."❖

From the Outside, Looking In

by Leona Wiebe Gislason

This is a story of Coaldale, the Southern Alberta village into which I was born. The period that I will be talking about occurred before my birth. Between 1926 and 1929, this proud Anglo-Canadian community of 1,000 persons absorbed 600 Mennonite refugees from revolutionary Russia. Not many years before, the Coaldale founders had encountered their first taste of ethnic diversity with the establishment of a Hutterite colony just south of the village. Now, with the Mennonite refugees arriving in their very midst, Coaldale would be faced with a considerably greater challenge to its sense of community.

While I was growing up here in the 1940s and 1950s, there were two solitudes; the conservative "English" world of the pioneers and the equally inward-looking Mennonite world to which I belonged. After all, these Mennonite refugees had always lived in closed communities. During my time, each group lived and interacted peaceably. I could not help but wonder if it had always been this way. When the *Lethbridge Herald*, the only newspaper that covered Coaldale events at this time, came on-line recently[1], I saw an opportunity to explore my question. In so doing, I looked at all references in the newspaper to Coaldale Mennonites from 1926 to 1929, the first years of their settlement. What I discovered is that there were, indeed, bumps on the road to acceptance. I will describe these, share some vignettes of the early days of Mennonite settlement as described in the newspaper, and conclude by discussing how the Mennonites earned their place in the community. This, then, is the story of the Coaldale community's response to the Mennonite invasion as reported in the *Lethbridge Herald*. I call this presentation "From the Outside, Looking



Coaldale in 1926

Irrigation Canal

In" because it reflects the perspective of the "outside" world of an Anglo-Canadian population coming to terms with my "inside" world of Mennonites.

Today, Coaldale is a prosperous mixed-farming community of 6,000 persons. It is located 12 kilometers east of Lethbridge, the third-largest city in Alberta. In 1904, an irrigation company purchased from the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) nearly a township of virgin prairie just east of Lethbridge. The CPR developed the land and founded Coaldale at its centre. Advertisements of the time heralded the Coaldale district, quite truthfully, as the most productive area in the northwest. These promotions promised irrigated land for farming and grazing of sheep and cattle. Hardy settlers with names such as King, Oxland, Baldwin, Lathrop and Galbraith soon arrived from the north-western United States. They established a solidly Anglo-Canadian lifestyle around what became the United Church, with institutions such as the Knights of Pythias, Women's Institute, Canadian Girls in Training, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. In 1919, with their own funds, an imposing four room brick school house topped with an auditorium was built to the tune of $20,000.

Many early settlers discovered that their irrigated holdings of a half to full section were too large to farm efficiently as long as grain was the main crop. The answer lay in reducing the size of the farms and introducing more intensive agriculture such as sugar beets. In 1925, a 1.5 million dollar sugar refinery was built in nearby Raymond and steps were taken to break up the inefficient large farms into 80 acre parcels.

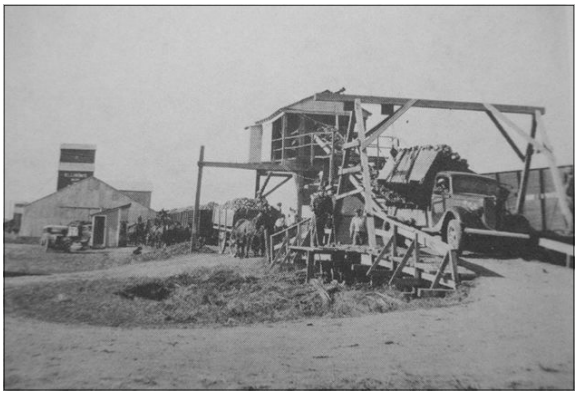
At this time, sugar beet production was labor-intensive and involved the efforts of the entire family, in what is known as the Continental European System. The local Anglo-Canadian community was not accustomed to these conditions. After all, their women and children were socialized into more refined activities than digging dirt and pulling weeds. Therefore, the CPR, which still owned considerable land in the area, was eager to find the type of settler who was willing to work in this way. At the same time, the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, seeking settlement opportunities for thousands of Mennonite refugees, advertised farming opportunities in Coaldale. The CPR Colonization Board successfully persuaded Mennonites that though they had been wheat farmers in Russia, they could, with their work ethic, become successful beet farmers. In the spring of 1926, Mennonites began to appear in Coaldale. By the end of that year, forty Mennonite families had arrived and soon got the hang of seeding, hoeing, thinning, digging, topping and transporting sugar beets.

Willms Family, thinning beets

Let us begin with a short lesson in raising sugar beets as the Mennonites first experienced it. This is illustrated by pictures of Mennonite pioneers in Coaldale. First of all, the land had to be cultivated, usually with a horse-drawn plough, although one Mennonite clan could afford the purchase of a McCormack-Deering tractor. Weed control was managed by densely planting the crop.

Then it had to be thinned, first with a hoe and then by hand, two or three times during the growing season. It took a cold snap to increase the sugar content. Therefore, harvesting took place in early winter, after the threshing season. Although the roots could be lifted by a plough-like device pulled by horses, the rest of the preparation was by hand. One laborer would grab the beets by their leaves, knock them together to free the loose soil, and then lay them in a row, root to one side, greens to the other. A second worker equipped with a beet hook followed behind, picking up a beet and swiftly chopping off the crown and leaves. Working this way he would leave a row of beets that could then be forked into the back of a cart for delivery to the beet dump.

Now for the newspaper reports from the *Lethbridge Herald*. The Coaldale reporter was Emily



Coaldale Beet Dump

Shimek Baldry, wife of the owner of the Coaldale Pioneer General Store She was educated in Munich. As such, she had a firm grasp of the German language and could communicate directly with the Mennonite people. In her role as reporter, Emily Baldry had enormous influence on how the larger community would come to view Mennonites. Fortunately for the Mennonites, she consistently demonstrated a generous and compassionate attitude towards them. While she dutifully reported those in the community who were not entirely supportive, she also suppressed certain negative stories such as the occasional appearance of tuberculosis among the new Mennonite settlers.

1926

April 30, 1926: Twenty-five Mennonite families have been placed on beet farms. The 320 acre Lathrop farm was sold to [four Mennonite families for $53,000, without a down payment. They were to seed 150 acres with sugar beets, the proceeds of the crop going to Lathrop until the entire farm was paid up. The contract also included his horses, stock and equipment. The fact that there was no down payment was astounding to these penniless Mennonite refugees. The contract was eventually paid off.]

June 17, 1926: Coaldale entered into a new phase of development this spring with the introduction through the CPR Colonization Department of about 100 Russo-Germans. Two young girls who were at school in Saskatchewan and one young lady who was taught English in Russia are the only English speakers. They are a fine class of settlers—thrifty, industrious and thoroughly religious. On Sunday they had a church service in the little school house loaned by the United Church. They sang their old hymns. These settlers will establish themselves chiefly by means of our new industry, the growing of sugar beets. They have nearly all rented land on a share crop plan. They may be seen at work early and late. Some people view their coming with disquiet. Most people of the community are giving them a welcome and want to make them feel at home.

August 31, 1926: [Forty] Mennonite families are making a real success in Coaldale district. These folk, dressed in drab but serviceable clothes, are from Ukraine. Farmers who have Mennonite families operating land on an equal share basis are delighted. There is an aura of thrift and tidiness everywhere. They are clean, and their homes bright and cheery. Families have from six to twelve children. Children are alert and rugged, ready and serious to do their part on the farm. All, old, young, male, female, are workers. The women, picturesque in their straight dark dresses and kerchief-covered heads, are capable of a large amount of manual labour. [Until now, many of the Mennonites had been living in makeshift dwellings-granaries, sheds, shacks and even pig barns. That fall, sixteen eighty-acre CPR farms were made available to the Mennonites at $40 to $60 an acre along with a $400 loan for housing and an agreement that 10 acres would be seeded to beets. The proceeds from the beets would go to the CPR until the farm had been paid for. This became known as the Mennonite contract.]

Mennonite Congregation at School House

Dec 31, 1926: On Saturday night some seventy Mennonites, forty-five of them children, gathered in the school auditorium for Christmas festivities. Choruses, recitations and dialogues were given. The Christmas story was told. A small mixed choir sang in harmony. One of the women played a zither-like instrument. The choir sang without accompaniment as no one among them could play the piano. Generous bags of sweets and fruit were given to the children, including a few Anglo-Saxon children who were there. The entire program was in German.

1927

January 8, 1927: [No Mennonites were present] At a Coaldale UFA

Coaldale Consolidated School

meeting (the United Farmers of Alberta was the ruling party of Alberta throughout this period), one of the topics was the question of present colonization policy which is bringing such numbers of Mennonite settlers to the district. The presence of about half a dozen ladies, members of the women's organization [of the UFA], may have served somewhat to check the debate but not noticeably so.

David King [owner of a harness shop, former reeve and Justice of the Peace] introduced the subject with a passionate speech. His principal objections to the policy were that too many of these alien people were being located here at one time, causing embarrassment to social life and creating a problem for schools, that they are being subjected to exploitation in the terms of purchase and that the authorities concerned had no regard for the future of the country. Several speakers rose to the defense of the Mennonites, repudiating the inference that they were an inferior people and constituted a menace to the economic or social life of the community. It was pointed out that they were a clean, law-abiding, deeply religious, thrifty and generally speaking well-educated people. There was a distinct difference between them and the Hutterite Colony to the south, in that these newcomers were not communal in their way of living and were ready to adapt themselves to the ways of a new country. Though language difficulties would keep the adults from becoming one of us, the children being educated in our schools and mingling freely with ours would become real Canadians in a few years. It was finally agreed that the thing to do was to ascertain all the facts so as to be in a position to meet the situation intelligently and to assist in protecting any unfairness towards any of these new immigrants. A committee of investigation was appointed. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 but discussions continued until midnight.

March 30, 1927: An event of some significance took place here on Sunday morning. The Mennonite Brethren service held in the little school house had a record attendance. From all over the district horse-drawn vehicles of many descriptions brought in their loads of people until the building was crowded to the doors. The special occasion was that of the first Mennonite wedding in Coaldale. Miss Helen Dyck, adopted daughter of Rev. Jacob Wieler, one of the families who arrived from Saskatchewan last year, was united in marriage to George Barg, a new immigrant from southern Russia. The groom is the father of four children under nine years of age. The mother died at Montreal en route to Canada 2 or 3 months ago. The ceremony was performed by Mr. Wieler himself, who recently received authority from the provincial government to conduct marriages. It was conducted, as is the custom in this brotherhood, during the course of the regular service of worship. The bride wore a grey silk dress and a white veil and wreath of ivy. Miss Mary Wieler, in a pink silk dress, took the part of bridesmaid.

July 6, 1927: On June 30th, the Jubilee of Confederation was held in front of the Coaldale school. In the parade were the school children from local schools and the Women's Institute, and a banner carried by Mennonite men saying "New Canadians." Among the participants were the New Canadians Albert and Hans Schulz who were received by Miss Canada, who pinned a large maple leaf on them while they were given a hearty welcome.

July 19, 1927: An event unique in the religious annals of Coaldale took place yesterday. The members of the Mennonite Brotherhood gathered in perhaps the largest numbers yet assembled here. It is estimated that there were between 200 and 300 present in and around the little school during the services of the day. The special attraction for the day was the baptizing by immersion, according to the established practice of the sect, of two candidates for admission to communion. [After morning services] the congregation adjourned to the CPR reservoir about half a mile away. Here in the presence of many Canadians as well as their own people, the two ladies were put beneath the waters while the age-old formula of baptism was spoken in the German tongue.

Citizens present said it was so strange a scene it was difficult to realize that it took place in Alberta—hundreds of people, many in strange European costume, though it was noticeable that among the younger, Canadian dress prevails. [The fall of 1927 brought another influx of Mennonite settlers. Among them was B.B. Janz who would become the leader of the Mennonite Brethren Church and an influential interpreter of the Mennonite way of life to the community. It also marked the first open clash with the Mennonites. When the Mennonites began Saturday classes in Religion and German in the United Church-owned little schoolhouse, the church authorities, led by the church minister Norman Priestley, protested and brought in police to bar the Mennonites from entering. This was not reported in the newspaper.]

1928

January 28, 1928: [No Mennonites were present]. On January 27, a special meeting of the Coaldale UFA was held in the school auditorium. Lawrence Peterson, MLA from Taber, was the main speaker. On the subject of immigration, he stated that he believed the people of the province should have some say as to the type and quantity of persons to be admitted. No more foreign people should be allowed into any community than the community could readily absorb. He believed the labour shortage of last fall could have been relieved if the railway companies had offered the same reduced rates to American harvesters that they gave to European immigrants.

R.J. Baldry, chairman of the school board, asked Mr. Peterson what was to be done with the extraordinary influx of Mennonite settlers. There were now over 70 pupils of these immigrants in the school. Two new vans had already been necessary to provide for their transportation. One new teacher at least had been engaged to ease the burden on the staff. If the information received was correct, there would be so many here by spring as to necessitate the opening of another basement room, if not the building of an entirely new school. Mr. Baldry was followed by David King, who gave an impassioned speech on the subject, maintaining that the CPR and other land owners in the vicinity were flooding the locality with these people without regard to the interests of those who had built up the district in the course of the past twenty years. A committee was appointed to draft a resolution to send to the Federal MP at Ottawa. The meeting adjourned at midnight, but groups of men interested in the question which has so agitated Coaldale during the past 18 months remained for nearly another hour.

March 21, 1928: At the regular meeting of the UFA, there was the largest attendance for several years. The cause of the unusually large attendance was the announcement that there would be an address on the subject of Mennonite immigrants in Coaldale. Several dozen of the new settlers were themselves present, as also was Jacob Gerbrandt, their agent, and O.T. Lathrop of the CPR colonization board.

Charles Hammersma, a Dutchman who last year raised sugar beets in the district, and who had been announced as the speaker of the evening, made some wild charges against the Mennonites, the CPR, the Raymond Sugar Factory, the local farmers and the Dominion Government concerning the introduction of Mennonite settlers to the district. He finally was called to order on account of abusive statements and epithets.

(Although Emily Baldry did not report the details of his accusations, they can be reconstructed from a letter written by B. B. Janz on the following day to the Board of Colonization, according to Frank Epp, p. 212. "Soon after the school clash, word spread through the community that the Mennonites were responsible for veterans and renters leaving the community because they could not compete with the newcomers. And more of the newcomers were on their way. The UFA meeting gave public expression to the resentment. Both the CPR and the Mennonites were criticized for bringing in people with T.B., children thus infecting other children. They were blamed for a nearly ten-fold increase in land prices compared to prices fifteen years earlier and for the slave-like use of their women and children. Other people wanted land, too, it was argued, but they could not obtain it because it was being kept for the Mennonites. What was the worst though, was that the Mennonites wanted to enjoy all the privileges of a good country without doing anything to defend it.") The chairman called upon Mr. Gerbrandt, who responded to the allegations that medical examinations at the port of entry was being waived in favor of the Mennonites, that this was untrue, and that as a matter of fact some sick cases had been detained at Southampton since 1923. Mr. Gerbrandt was followed by David King, who stated while he had no personal objection to the Mennonite people, he did object to their being given special privileges and to their being brought in such numbers as to create difficulties in the local schools and retard the education of the other children of the community. He gave voice to the rumor that the CPR had given them [as a gift] a ten acre site for a church and cemetery. He also dealt at some length with the anti-military views of the

Mennonites and weighed heavily against the prices these people were contracting to pay for their land. Replying to some of the statements of Mr. King, Mr. Gerbrandt declared that the Mennonite people were not getting anything for nothing. They would have to pay interest on all contracts. They would also have to pay for any cemetery or site for a church sooner or later.

At this stage the report of a committee which was instructed in January to prepare a letter to the minister of immigration, was presented. The letter outlined the development of Coaldale district and drew attention to the success attained by its farmers and businessmen in the growing and marketing of large and varied crops and products of the farm. It showed that the village was a thriving and progressive community whose affairs were in fine financial condition. Then, after speaking appreciatively of the fine personal qualities of many of the new settlers, it drew attention to the fact that their entry in such numbers was causing the disintegration of the English speaking community which had created these values. The letter concluded as follows "It is our contention that this policy has no regard to the considerations laid down by the Prime Minister of Canada, when he said it was the policy of the Dominion government to bring into the country just as many people as the country was capable of assimilating… We therefore urgently ask you, Sir, on behalf of the people of Coaldale, to assure that such immigrants as are brought to this district shall be of such stock and shall come only in such numbers that they will become part and parcel of its life and not... break up our Canadian institutions or establish a foreign life and culture in our midst." The report of the committee was adopted without discussion. One of the Mennonite leaders present, Mr. Janz, asked permission to address the meeting and stated with much reserve and in a fine manner in spite of having been in the country little more than a year, a few considerations with respect to the allegation that the Mennonites would not fight for the country of their adoption. He said he could not speak for the future but could tell about the part taken by the Mennonites of South Russia in the Great War. He reminded the audience of the fact that they were on the side of the Allies, though speaking the German language. As early as September 1914 the Mennonites had been drafted by the Russian Government into the Red Cross and Sanitary Services. An analysis of the statistics of the war had disclosed the fact that though they had not carried arms they had suffered more casualties in proportion to the active fighting troops. They had died in large numbers through the ravages of typhus and other diseases. Once again, this vexed question was brought to a close, though groups continued the discussion in various parts of the building until the late hour.

May 27, 1928: One of the oldest of the new Mennonite settlers here succumbed to a long illness. Mrs. Goertzen commenced to suffer pains which were discovered a year ago by X-ray examination to be caused by cancer. [In fact, she was one of several Mennonite pioneers to die of T.B., although Mrs. Baldry did not report this.] Mrs. Goertzen was buried on unconsecrated ground, as there was as yet no Mennonite cemetery. The Mennonite Church did not realize this was illegal, and later had to pay a fine.

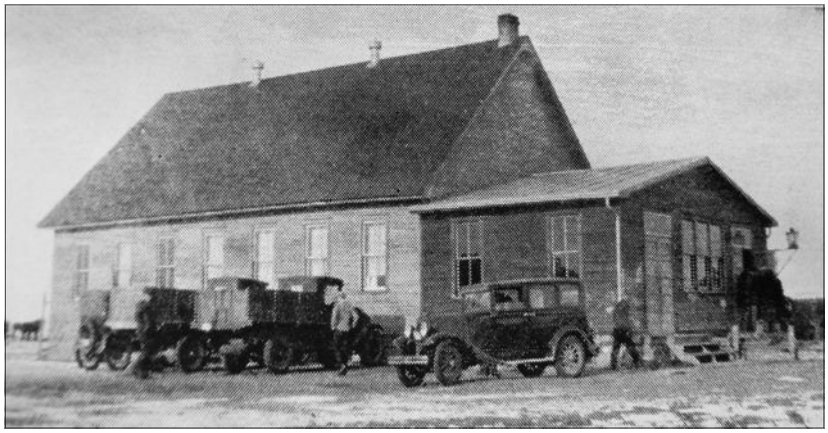
November 14, 1928: Thanksgiving Sunday this year will long be remembered by those who attended the service of worship of the United Church. Prior to noon four religious bodies were conducting worship or Sunday School in the school premises. In the little school the Mennonite Brotherhood, in the NE basement room of the big school the [General Conference] Mennonite church, in the SE basement room the Roman Catholic church, in the auditorium the United Church Sunday School... At a few minutes to noon, the school bell rang and the Mennonite congregations entered the auditorium to join in Thanksgiving with the United Church. The front of the platform was decorated with grain, vegetables, fruits and flowers surrounding a panel with the words "We Thank Thee, Oh Lord." The central object on the altar table immediately in front of this was a loaf of bread. The arch of the platform was rimmed with small sheaves of wheat and oats and was flanked on one side by the Canadian ensign and on the other by the Union Jack. The Mennonite choir sang a thanksgiving song in English and repeated it in German. The scripture was read alternatively in English and German by the pastor and Mr. Kornelsen. Mr. Priestley's sermon was summarized in German by Mr. Gerbrandt. There were over 300 persons present at this service uniting religiously people of enemy nations in the war now ten years past.

1929:

The Mennonites earn their place in the community:

They build their own church:

January 28, 1929: The members of the Mennonite Brotherhood in this community will have no difficulty in remembering this past week-end. Encouraged by the splendid open weather of the early part of the winter, they have built and completed the main body of a substantial church building on a site just north of Coaldale. The opening was set for Sunday, Janu-



Mennonite Brethren Church in Coaldale

ary 27th. Services were held all day, commencing at 10:00 am. The day turned out to be the coldest in twenty years, but that did not deter several hundred members of the congregation from attending. A number of English-speaking visitors were also present. It is probable that if the weather had been mild the building would have been taxed to capacity, as it is estimated that there are now some six hundred people of this religious persuasion within a 25 mile circuit of Coaldale.

Jacob Janz spoke a few words in English for the benefit of Canadians present. In the course of his remarks he told of the persecutions to which their people had been subjected in Russia, particularly since the revolution, and expressed the thankfulness of the congregation for the liberty of speech and person they found in Canada. He also thanked the people of the United Church for the use of their building on Sunday services over the past two or three years.

They improve their agricultural skills

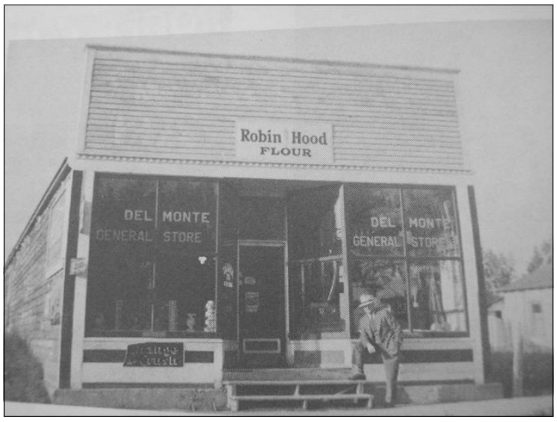
March 4, 1929:
Mennonite farmers in the Coaldale district asked agricultural experts to put on a farm school for them even though they needed an interpreter to understand what was said. The school lasted for three days, with an attendance of over 75. Some of the folks who are always bewailing the influx of so-called "foreigners" might take a grain of comfort from the story of the Coaldale Mennonite Colony.

They earn recognition of academic skills:

August 24, 1929: The parents, teachers and school board of Coaldale Consolidated School #9 have reason to be proud of the splendid showing made by the pupils of the High School in the recent departmental exams. Great credit is due to Principal George Watson and teacher Miss McNabb, who were in charge of these classes last year. More especially is credit due to them because of the large influx of European students who have entered the Coaldale School system during the past two or three years. One of these students is worthy of special attention. Mary Unger, a Mennonite girl of 19, came to Canada in 1926 and entered the Coaldale High School on 1 Jan 1928. This year she has made the splendid record of passing all her exams with an average of 70%. This is certainly remarkable, considering the disadvantage Mary had in learning a new language.

They develop new businesses:

A new store has been opened in Coaldale by Mr. Klaas Enns under the management of Mr. John Martens December 6, 1929, making three general stores in the village. It is located in the old building occupied by David King. [This is ironic, as David King was a major opponent of the Mennonite "invasion."] The store will handle a little of everything in groceries, hardware and dry goods.



First Mennonite Business in Coaldale

They contribute to the economy:

December 31, 1929: During the past year the development throughout Coaldale and district has been characterized by a steady advance---The feeling of prosperity has been more evident than ever. This attitude is probably due to the good crop prospects, there has been a great deal of building going on. Most of this has been confined to the new Mennonite homes, there being a number of new homes in the village alone. Among the industries, beet growing has made the most noticeable development during the year. Coaldale has a bright outlook for the coming year.

Postscript

Beginning in 1930, Mennonites became eligible for, and sought, citizenship. In the spring of 1930, J.B. Janz was elected to the school board and served for many years. More Mennonite businesses were founded. In 1934, a Mennonite Hospital was established. My mother, Helen Martens Wiebe, a

Registered Nurse, initiated the process, with a Mennonite doctor and staff. In 1938, an internationally award-winning cheese factory was founded by Mennonites. By this time, the Mennonite population in the Coaldale District had reached 1,000. There were 267 families in all. 110 were on irrigated land, 16 on rented land and 141 in town and regularly employed.

In Conclusion

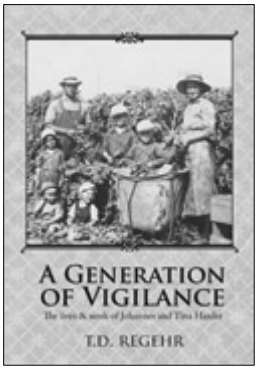
In an article dated 1 Dec 1945, the *Lethbridge Herald* stated: "Coaldale was pioneered by well-to-do American farmers from almost every state in the Union about forty years ago, when the irrigation project was opened. But today a majority of Coaldale district citizens are of European extraction. And a look at their homes indicates that Coaldale has done well by them and they have done well by Coaldale. To walk down the streets in Coaldale one would think the community was the meeting place of the races. Their language tells the land of their birth, but they openly boast they are Canadians all, and co-operate for the community good."

Notes:

[1] http://www.newspaperarchive.com/ Photographs are used with permission. They were previously published in *Gem of the West*,, a book about Coaldale. The reference to Frank Epp,is from *Mennonites in Canada: 1920-1940*. All other material is from the *Lethbridge Herald*. Another source of archived newspapers is: www.ourfutureourpast.ca/newspapr/ ❖

Review Article
Yarrow, British Columbia: Ten Years, Five Volumes

By Peter Penner



While a complete review of Ted Regehr's biography of Johannes and Tina Harder is in order,[1] this article is more about placing it into the context of the larger project undertaken by what came to be known as the Yarrow Research Committee (YRC). *A Generation of Vigilance*, the last volume in the Yarrow Research Committee's project, dealing exclusively with Johannes and Tina Harder, was not an afterthought. Early on the Committee's initiators recognized that the story of Yarrow's early immigrant community would be incomplete without a major study of the life of these two pioneers. Consequently the Harders were set aside for a larger study except for an abbreviated biography in the volume *Windows to a Village*.[2]

Theodore D. Regehr, Calgary, a scholar well known in Mennonite circles and farther afield in Canadian business history, grew up in Coaldale and graduated from the Mennonite High School. Coaldale has often been compared with Yarrow in terms of the curbs on social adventure by its young people. In his brief address at the book launch in Winnipeg on October 23rd last, he allowed having been drawn to do this biography because he recognized "some of the same forces that had troubled [him] in Coaldale..." Regehr also had a "high regard for Jake Loewen," a famous missionary, anthropologist, and Bible translator, who had already gathered numerous Harder family documents for a biography before his stroke in 1993.

But first, something about the initiators of this project and their original aims, their colleagues, and their productions in four volumes by 2007, covering three major themes.

The Yarrow Research Committee

The large Mennonite Brethren (MB) and smaller General Conference (GC) Mennonite community built up after 1928 in Yarrow, a community now incorporated into Chilliwack, never intended to become a case study for professionals and intellectuals. But it became just that in the hands, fortunately, of some of its own offspring who gave that community a searching but fair examination during the last decade. The Yarrow Research Committee was comprised of a dozen members, two from the outside—Regehr and myself from Alberta. We attended one, sometimes two, committee sessions each spring or fall in Abbotsford since 1999, for half of which I was the recording secretary.

Starting small in 1928 just below Vedder Mountain and the smaller Majuba Hill, the membership of the MB church grew to about 970 and then rapidly declined after 1960 as members and young people moved away.[3]

This series was possible because there were qualified and committed professionals to do the job, as well as money to assure publication. The initiators of the YRC were the late Jacob A. Loewen, Harvey Neufeldt, and his


Yarrow MB Church

cousin Leonard Neufeldt. They had grown up in Yarrow under the tutelage of Johannes Harder, as it were, had become specialists in anthropology and missions, education, and American literature, in that order. Once retired they conspired (positively) to use their intellectual and the financial resources that resided in related families to do a thorough study of the community which had been founded in Yarrow. Jake Loewen who had a debilitating stroke in 1993, nevertheless became the first coordinator, and Harvey Neufeldt, resident in Tennessee, succeeded and continued as Chair until the project was complete. [Loewen died January 1996].[4]

All the others had either grown up in Yarrow or lived there for some years. These were Harold Dyck, David Giesbrecht, Esther Epp Harder, Maryann Tjart Jantzen, Agatha Klassen (author of a first history of Yarrow), Robert Martens, Leonard Neufeldt, Lora Neufeldt Sawatsky and Ruth Derksen Siemens. Ted D. Regehr and I were the only imports, so to speak, both resident in Calgary. This led some to wonder what we were doing there. I was considered because I had written the first history about the mission of BC Mennonite Brethren in 1959,[5] and Ted for his general experience and competence as shown in his many publications.[6]

Of utmost importance was the availability of financial resources dedicated to this project. These came from the Jacob H. Enns Estate, Jacob A. and Anne Loewen, the Henry and Margaret Neufeldt Fund, the Peter and Helen Neufeldt Fund, the Quiring-Loewen Trust, and the Vine and Branch Foundation (Arthur J. Block). Also significant was the generous affiliation with the Chilliwack Museum

and Historical Society. Curator and historian Ron Denman and his staff at the Museum and Archives were prepared to assist YRC in research and marketing.

Four Themes, Five Volumes

The first two volumes published in Victoria by a non-Mennonite press, TouchWood Editions, carried the title *Yarrow, British Columbia, Mennonite Promise*. Both were brought out in 2002, four years after launching the project. Both were chiefly edited by Leonard Neufeldt, late of Purdue University, and living in retirement below Seattle. He wrote much of the background and history to the Yarrow Mennonite community, but also included about 100 pages of settlers' stories in *Before We Were the Land's*. In the companion volume, *Village of Unsettled Yearnings*, assisted by his sister, Lora Jean Sawatsky and Robert Martens, the editors created "a cultural mural of Mennonite Yarrow," and included nearly 200 pages of sketches and tributes, an amazing collection. Both volumes were fully documented and held many contributors.

Not wishing to isolate the Mennonite story from its historical and cultural context, YRC, with full cooperation from University College of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford, arranged for a conference where papers were given on the "First Nations and First Settlers," including Aboriginal People, British, Sikhs, Japanese and Russian Mennonites. The presentations dealt with educational and religious developments, as well as a fascinating paper

YRC Committee in 2003: Seated: Robert Martens, David Giesbrecht, Harvey Neufeldt, Lora Neufeldt Sawatsky; standing: Peter Penner, Ruth Derksen Siemens, Harvey Neufeldt (Chair), Agatha Klassen, Harold Dyck; missing:, Esther Epp Harder, Maryann Tjart Janzen, and Ted Regehr

on the hops industry by Ron Denman.

This volume, *First Nations and First Settlers in the Fraser Valley (1890 -1960)*, ed. Harvey Neufeldt, Ruth Derksen Siemens and Robert Martens. Kitchener, 2004; and *Windows to a Village: Life Studies of Yarrow Pioneers*, ed. Robert Martens, Maryann Tjart Jantzen and Harvey Neufeldt, 2007, covering themes two and three, were published by Pandora Press in Waterloo.

Windows brought together 15 biographies, both men and women, who had provided leadership in the Mennonite community, including the long-time Sunday school superintendent, Peter Loewen, the first long-time preacher/pastors, Johannes Harder and Herman Lenzmann, and others in violin-making, music, and painting. The last biography is Harvey Neufeldt's priceless story of Jake Loewen, "missionary, anthropologist, and Bible translator." Always a bit controversial in each of these areas, in retirement in Abbotsford, Loewen was for some time treated as a theological heretic by MB leadership. He got even, so to speak, by writing, among others, *The Sword and the Spirit* (with Wesley Priebe, Hillsboro, 1997), as one last plea to MBs to return to an Anabaptist orientation.[7]

The Last Volume

That is how it stood in 2007. What was required was the capstone of this project, the full-scale biography of Johannes and Tina Harder as stated above. As noted, Ted Regehr consented to undertake the research and writing of this important study. By unfolding both chronologically and thematically the life and work of this leadership couple who tried to be an exemplary model for their family of six children and for a fast growing congregation during the years 1930 to 1949, we have been given an unmatched portrait of a serious attempt to recreate in Canada the image of what this couple remembered from Grossweide, Molotschna and perhaps Rueckenau.

I am leaving the more complete review of this volume to others. It is a masterpiece, done thoroughly – hardly an archival stone left unturned – with great sensitivity, and comes well up to the standard the YRC wished for each volume. Regehr tells first how their background and beginnings were bound up with an orphanage founded by his parents in that setting. This is where they both learned to work and managed to find each other within the strict church social guidelines of the day. He was MB and she, from a Rempel family in the Crimea, grew up *Kirchlich*. Such unions were not unusual, though the MB view in the rightness of baptism by immersion usually prevailed, especially in the case of Harder whose conviction here was unshakeable. Even then, Tina was not rebaptized until they had arrived in Canada.

After 1922 the young couple thought it best to join the general migration to Canada. Though they left the Ukraine in 1924, they did not reach Yarrow until six years later. Regehr's description of their passage from place to place through Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta features only hard times. As Regehr wrote:

"For seven years Johannes scrambled to find whatever work he could, earning only a very meagre livelihood. They arrived in Yarrow virtually penniless, but they had paid off their $246 transportation debt and consistently given a tenth of their income 'to the Lord'. They had done much physically difficult, sometimes emotionally humiliating, work. They had survived, but only through great frugality. Tina had given birth to four children, the twins dying shortly after their birth."(p. 59)

It needs to be said that throughout these testing years and often in dire straits, Johannes had managed to maintain his personal Bible reading and study and had often been called on to teach and preach, often in humble surroundings. It says much about his character and abilities that after only two years in Yarrow, and hardly well-settled, that Harder was voted in as the leader of this new MB congregation. Even then, for many years he worked without remuneration from the church, having to provide for his growing family working in company hop yards along with many others from the congregation. Everyone knew hops were used for beer-making, but what choice was there for many in that situation in that place? One of the 2003 conference papers by Ron Denman spoke of the moral dilemma for these Mennonites whose church rules forbade drinking of alcoholic beverages. The argument used to rationalize the contradiction was they were picking hops for yeast, not for beer.[8]

In successive chapters Regehr also tells of Harder's ministry to the "scattered and unreached," to those in Vancouver, and his (failed) attempt to build an enduring Mennonite high school in Yarrow. Though he may not be remembered for these things, perhaps not even for his perceived harshness in pastoral ministry, his participation in outreach beyond Canada through long-term membership in

the Board of Foreign Missions, Hillsboro, KS, is most significant and interesting in this story. Regehr devotes four chapters to this part of his career. It was in Colombia on a field trip where Harder first met Jake and Anne Loewen in their mission setting and experienced first hand what Loewen tried to cope with before he turned to anthropology.

Yarrow will always be associated with an administrative upheaval in foreign missions because the 1957 General Conference came to Yarrow when strong steps were taken for rapid indigenization of the MB mission in all fields. That policy change which proved most upsetting to many missionaries at the time, especially in India, will always be called the "Yarrow Statement."

As though all of this was not enough, after the War Harder also served until retirement on the Canadian Conference *Fuersorgekomitee*. This was considered the highest ranked committee in the Conference, later called Committee of Reference and Counsel. This is where he maintained his position on such questions as baptism by immersion and where the Brethren wrestled with the most difficult questions facing the MB churches. Not only had he and Tina thought of themselves as necessary models in the Yarrow congregation, Harder believed that the Lord had made him "a watchman unto the [entire] house of Israel," duty-bound to give warning....

There were two book launchings for *A Generation of Vigilance* in the Fraser Valley, one in Yarrow and a second in Abbotsford, mid-October, 2009. What pleased everyone was the attendance of members of the Harder family.[9] Like many young people in Yarrow they had been put off by the regimented church life which had necessarily impinged on their home life. But when they became aware of the degree of understanding and empathy they discovered in the successive volumes produced by YRC and the fair and sensitive fashion Regehr dealt with their family within that larger context, they became appreciative and grateful.

The publisher's accoutrements:

The font in the Pandora books (the middle two, and this one by CMU Press) is a bit small; while the photos are placed close to the relevant story, they too have been kept unusually small, black and white and not always fully captioned. Documentation – index, bibliography, picture credits – is extensive, as expected. While a bit unusual, there are three indexes: name, subject, and geographical as well as a pedigree chart. Two maps, one of Canada and the other of South America, show the Harder family immigration travail, Johannes Harder's mission assignments in Colombia and Ecuador and his preaching assignments in the Mennonite settlements of Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay.

Is YRC a model for other studies?

Somewhat similar *Russlaender* congregations were built up in Coaldale, Winnipeg, and Kitchener. They too threw up strong leadership and in Coaldale, particularly, there was a wish to recreate a congregation "without spot or wrinkle" under B.B. Janz, J.J. Siemens and others. And are there not still living, active, and qualified Albertans (scholars and professionals) to undertake such a study if not to attempt five volumes taking ten years to do so?

Think on it.

Notes:

[1] Ted Regehr, *A Generation of Vigilance*, *The lives and work of Johannes and Tina Harder* (Winnipeg, CMU Press, 2009), 334 pages, illustrated, indexed. Abe Dueck attended the book launch in Winnipeg on October 23, 2009 and has already written a review for the Press. Surely there will be others in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, *Mennonite Historian*, *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, and *Mennonite Quarterly Review* over the next months.

[2] This has 15 biographical studies by eleven different authors.

[3] See the GAMEO account for a competent but short history.

[4] This photo dates from 1999 and shows Leonard Neufeldt, Harold Dyck, Jake and Anne Loewen, Esther Epp Harder, Agatha Klassen, and Harvey Neufeldt around the circle of one table

[5] *Reaching the Otherwise Unreached: An Historical Account of the West Coast Children's Mission of BC, 1939-1959* (Clearbrook, 1959), 125 pages, pictorial, indexed

[6] T D. Regehr, born in Coaldale, Alberta, and now living in Calgary, is Professor Emeritus of History, University of Saskatchewan. He is the author of several books including *Mennonites in Canada, 1939 -1970: A People Transformed* and *Faith, Life and Witness in the Northwest, 1903-2003: Centennial History of the Northwest Mennonite Conference,* as well as numerous significant Canadian business histories.

[7] See GAMEO for a detailed account of Loewen and an indication of his many publications.

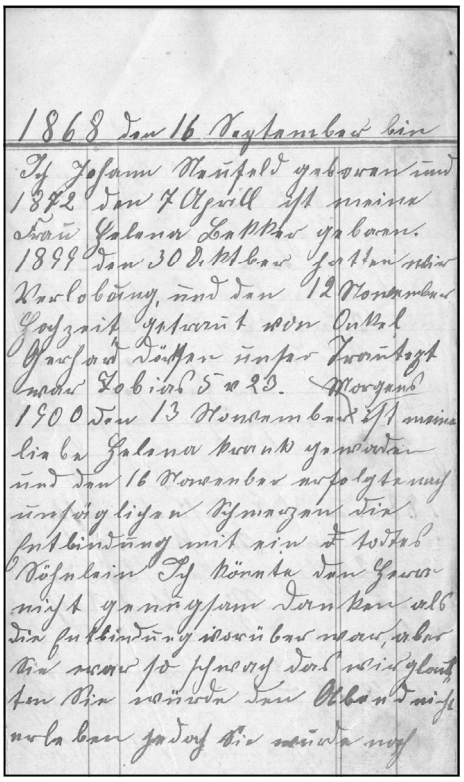
[8] Ron Denman, "A Gift from Providence..." in *First Nations and First Settlers in the Fraser Valley (1890-1960)*, (Waterloo: Pandora Press, 2004), 254, edited by Harvey, Ruth, and Robert.

[9] Five of six children are still living. A set of twins had died in infancy during their migrating years. ❖

Book Notes:

Diary of Johann Neufeld and Barbara Funk Neufeld: From the Russian Revolution to Pioneer Life in Peace River Alberta.

Translated and edited by Edgar Rogalski 2009. Coil bound , 70 pages, with



index and maps and photos. The original diary and this translation were both donated to the MHSA.

Any family diary is worth translating and recording for the generations to follow. This translation begins with an introduction into the background of Mennonite history and the political setting in Molotschna, Russia. It is further augmented with stories told by the children of Johann and Barbara Neufeld.

The diary itself begins in 1868 by Johann Neufeld, recounting the genealogy of his parents, and continues to describe life in general, births, deaths, wages, cost of living, weather etc. He describes the ever-increasing unrest in Russia.

Johann was arrested in 1918, released, but died in 1924, leaving his widow with eight children. Barbara then continues the diary. There again, it describes life and death, crops and weather, and her frequent debilitating headaches. There is the strong desire to leave Russia – immigrate to Canada. When finally they are able to leave in 1926, she describes the difficult yet interesting journey. The poignant description in the Atlantic Park, a Lodging House or Hostel for immigrants, near Southampton England, where she and several of her children were detained, separated and isolated, while the rest of the family were allowed to sail. Their eyes were repeatedly treated and bandaged, and still they were not allowed to leave. Their inability to understand the language was frustrating. Yet it seems that there was quite a bit of socializing in that hostel, as new immigrants came through and left again on their way to Canada.

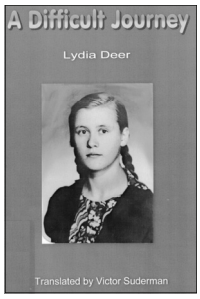
Finally they too were released to begin the journey that ended in Beaverlodge, Alberta, in the Peace River area. Diary entries are intermittent and include daily routines, weather, land clearing for the boys, working out for the girls, growing a great garden, long days in the summer, frost that did not freeze the pansies, church life in Beaverlodge, new preachers, baptisms and weddings. In spite of her continuing frequent headaches, there is a new hopefulness, but the isolation from other Mennonites draws them to move once more, to Lymburn, near Tofield where a new community of Mennonites is flourishing.

Barbara died at age 82 and is buried in Tofield. Like her pansies, she survived many of the 'frosts' in her life, and could still smile. ❖

A Difficult Journey by Lydia Deer, translated by Victor Sudermann.

Soft cover - 90 pages - price $20.00 Published in 2009. Memories of life in the Soviet Russia as told by one who lived it, Lydia Sudermann Deer.

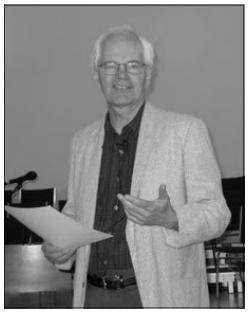
by Irene Klassen



This is a sad story of conditions 1930-1990, recounting how lives were affected by the brutality in the Stalin era, and the suffering in the *gulags* (prison labour camps). It is a personal story with intimate feelings. It includes the story of the Trek to Germany and the enforced return to Kazakhstan and work in the *Trudarmee* (slave labour army). Lydia is married to Alfred Deer, another prisoner. Her father returns from the Gulag and the family is united. Finally the family is able to go to Germany where they feel secure and at home. The original story was written and printed in Germany. The translation is good although at times a bit awkward, but there it seems as if the voice of the story-teller is coming through. Maps and charts and a brief biography of Joseph Stalin are helpful to understand the picture. I quite enjoyed the intimacy of this story. ❖

GAMEO Report

By Wes Berg



Last fall Colin Neufeldt asked me to become the Alberta GAMEO representative. My task would be to coordinate contributions about Alberta topics to the online encyclopedia. After agreeing to take on this task, he informed me that I was now on the national committee. Furthermore, he told me that I was also the Alberta representative on the Board

of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC). It came with perks, he said: accommodation and air fare to the annual meeting. Sounded good. Then I learned that the meeting was to take place in Winnipeg in the third week of January. Memories of 40 below surfaced immediately, but I did travel to Winnipeg in January. As it turned out, the weather was fine, although most of us escaped just as a major blizzard moved into the province.

The meetings were held at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, and we trudged through the snow on a fascinating if chilly tour led by the senior curator, an expert on house barns. There was also a dinner at a restaurant specializing in Mennonite foods.

The GAMEO Committee celebrated the completion of a major project to add all the articles from the five volumes of the printed version of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* to the database. Many of those articles will now need to be refreshed and brought up-to-date, of course. It was useful to be able to learn about the work of GAMEO representatives and committees in other provinces as I begin my work on the project. One thing I noted is that most of the provinces do have a GAMEO committee.

There was some soul searching at the meeting of the MHCS. Its primary focus has been the publication of the three volumes of *Mennonites In Canada*. While there is the possibility of a one-volume summary, the task is essentially done, GAMEO has been taking on a life of its own, and there was some discussion of future projects and the format they could take in light of changes in publication technologies.

It was interesting and inspiring to be a part of this very dedicated group of people, and I look forward to my work on the online encyclopedia. ❖

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada Board. Front (L-R): Connie Braun (BC), Alf Redekopp (Mennonite Church Canada), Richard Thiessen (BC), Sam Steiner (Ont.), Lucille Marr (Quebec), Royden Loewen (Chair of Mennonite Studies); Back: Conrad Stoesz (Man.), Barb Draper (Ont.), Richard Lougheed (Quebec), Leonard Chester (Brethren in Christ), Robert Goertzen (Evangelical Mennonite Conference), Wesley Berg (Alberta), Bert Friesen (Man.), Jake Buhler (Sask.), Laureen Harder-Gissing (Mennonite Church Eastern Canada), Victor Wiebe (Sask.), Linda Huebert Hecht (Ont.)

Award of Excellence to Lorraine Roth

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC) named Lorraine Roth of Tavistock, Ontario as the recipient of its 2010 Award of Excellence for her life-long contribution to the preservation of Canadian Mennonite history. The award, made at the Society's January 23 annual meeting in Steinbach, Manitoba, especially noted her meticulous research on the history of Amish Mennonite families who settled in Upper Canada beginning in the 1820s.

Award presentation to Lorraine Roth. L-R: Lorraine Roth; Sam Steiner, President, Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. Photo by Barb Draper.

Roth, 79, became interested in family history as a teenager, and published her first genealogy in 1963. She began serious research

on Amish origins in Europe in 1969 when she lived and worked there for one and a half years. Over time she compiled 25 family histories and assisted with another 15 or 20. She wrote the historical background when the Amish Mennonites celebrated their sesquicentennial in Canada in 1972, and in 1998 published *The Amish and Their Neighbours: The German Block, Wilmot Township, 1822-1860*, the definitive work on the early Amish settlement in Waterloo Region. She published a collection of biographies, *Willing Service: Stories of Ontario Mennonite Women*, in 1992. Roth was a charter member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, and served on historical committees for the bi-national Mennonite Church, the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, and the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. In retirement she continues to maintain detailed genealogical files on over 100 Amish Mennonite surnames. She received the award on January 30, 2010 at a meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario board of directors.

The Canadian Society, hosted by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, held its annual meeting at the Mennonite Village Museum in Steinbach. Board members enjoyed a tour of the Heritage Village Friday afternoon, and Village volunteers provided meals and coffee breaks for the meetings. Joining the Society's annual meeting for the first time was a representative of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society, Leonard Chester.

The Canadian Society celebrated several publication landmarks in the past year. The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), in which MHSC is a partner, completed inclusion of all articles from the print *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. Members heard that Marlene Epp's *Mennonite Women in Canada: a History* by University of Manitoba Press, which was sponsored by the Society's Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites (DVCM) program, had sold over 1450 copies since its publication in late 2008. It also heard the Society had donated 630 copies of Ted D. Regehr's *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* to the church libraries of Mennonite congregations in Canada.

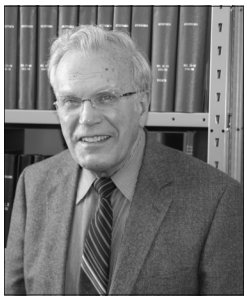
New projects for 2010 included formation of a Genealogy Committee that will oversee a MHSC-sponsored website on Mennonite genealogy that will include digitized source documents. A committee composed of Bert Friesen (Winnipeg, Man.), Victor Wiebe (Saskatoon, Sask.) and Laureen Harder-Gissing (Waterloo, Ont.) will develop a plan for the site during the coming year. The DVCM project for the year will be an October conference at the University of Winnipeg on "Mennonites, Melancholy and Mental Health."

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada was established in 1968 to sponsor the *Mennonites in Canada* history series by Frank H. Epp and Ted Regehr. Its membership is composed of six provincial Mennonite historical societies, four Mennonite denominational bodies, Mennonite Central Committee Canada and the Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

The 2010 executive is Sam Steiner (Waterloo, Ontario), President; Royden Loewen, (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Vice-President; Lucille Marr (Montreal, Quebec), Secretary; Richard Thiessen (Abbotsford, B.C.), Treasurer; and Alf Redekopp (Winnipeg, Manitoba), fifth member. The board approved a budget for 2010 of $27,800. ❖

GAMEO bolstered by New Content

By Conrad Stoesz



Researcher, author, and historian Dr. Helmut T. Huebert has donated his Russian Mennonite research to the growing Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopaedia Online (GAMEO). Dr. Huebert is the author of nine books, and is co-author of the bestselling book Mennonite Historical Atlas with William Schroeder. Huebert's books documenting settlements, individuals, and estates contain a gold mine of biographical information of influential Mennonites. In his research Huebert consults rare newspapers, family genealogies, and other archival documents that detail the Russian Mennonite experience. Often his published work has become the best – sometimes only – major resource on the individual, which is why GAMEO was so interested in Huebert's research.

Huebert is thankful that GAMEO was interested in his research. His aim has always been to "help people gain a better understanding of Mennonite history and in many cases their own family history. The partnering with GAMEO will help make that happen" said Hubert in a phone interview.

GAMEO's management board is equally grateful for this open ac-

cess to this significant body of research. "It is actually quite remarkable to be offered such a wonderful resource" says GAMEO's managing editor Sam Steiner, based in Waterloo, Ontario. "We hope this will prompt other compilers of biographical and congregational data to consider a similar donation," Steiner went on to say. Huebert's materials will be edited according to the GAMEO editorial guidelines and uploaded over the next year.

Huebert's next project is to document Mennonite involvement in health care in Russia. He has already started his research, uncovering names of trained doctors, nurses, midwives, and other medical personnel. One valuable source of information is what he calls "parking lot" research. Connecting with people one-on-one in informal settings such as the church parking lot is a great source of information. "It is surprising what comes out of the wood work" he exclaimed. When not in the archives or at his computer writing, Dr. Huebert is busy stamping out disease from his Winnipeg orthopaedic clinic. ❖

What's New at the MHSA

This *MHSA Newsletter* issue includes book notes for two, privately published translations—the work of Edgar Rogalski and Victor Suderman. I hope this is a trend of individuals making family diaries and life stories available to those of us limited to the English language. It's a labour of love for translators, but still a great labour. Thanks should go to the folks who make the time to do this.

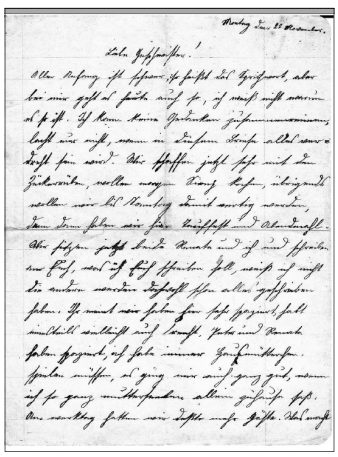
The MHSA also welcomes and preserves original diaries or letters that are donated such as the Braun letters. The school notebooks featured on p. 24 are only part of the Braun family's collection. They received many letters from family in Ogus Tobe, Crimea. While the family has chosen to keep the original letters, Herta (nee Braun) Anderson has made it possible for us to scan roughly 170 letters; the PDF files now are available as part of our electronic archives.

Here is Irene Klassen's translation of just one of the letters:

Monday 11 March [1927]
Dear Brother and Sister

Will try to write you again, since I haven't written for a long time. We received your letter to Papa, and yesterday Abram and Lena received one from you. We are always happy to get a letter from you, and to know that all is well with you. Papa has not been home for three Sundays, and will probably bring home our new mother the day after tomorrow. You must have received the letter from Papa where he wrote all this. This mother is like the other mother, chubby and talkative and not a bit shy. I'm sure we will learn to love her, but we still miss the other mother, but are happy about this. Peter and I will be moving in with Lena and Abram when they come, for it will be too crowded here. She is bringing with her, two extra siblings and in the Fall there will be two more. We are happy for Papa that he is marrying again, for he was very lonely, and most of the time he was not here. In a way I am happy too, for I was very tied down here, and it hasn't been easy, but I'm also sad to be leaving. We are hoping to be with you this summer yet. We are ready with everything except for the "pass" [exit visa?], and we are waiting for that. We applied a month ago but haven't heard yet whether we will get it. Franz Federaus and Abram [?] have too, and we plan to travel together. Several people from here in the Crimea have also applied, so we hope we won't be suddenly refused. We don't want to go until everything is ready and done, and now it is almost too late. I am expecting on 15 April and we had hoped to be gone before then, but everything is taking so very long. I have everything ready, except for a few odds and ends, but that can wait, money is scarce and everything is so expensive. Eva's Marta is quite big already, can sit up nicely, always wants someone to play with her. She is teething and the teeth are not coming in well, she's only a week over four months. David Penners have lost another child – the little one died before he was a month old. They called him Willi. It is a hard time for them – they lost three children in succession. Danja [?] is still their only child. Anna said if she lost Danja too, she wouldn't know what she would do. Otherwise, we are well, for which we can't thank the Lord enough. The Lord will lead us as it pleases him, whether we stay or go, we do not know the future. Lena is all alone now, the girls have already gone to the parents through [?]. Abram and Hans also went with the furniture, but Abram will probably come home today. Anna is lonesome but will probably stay till May 1. She says that although she does not mind it, it is not home. When she comes home for a visit, she would like to stay. I don't suppose you are even thinking of seeding yet, but we are getting ready, since it is really looking like Spring already. Peter will be going to [?] for a month where it is really spring. Today it looked like it might rain but it's over now, we have had a shortage of water and had to haul water most of the winter. (?), you ask whether Agnes has black eyes. The page is full and I have written all that I know.

The letter is to be posted today. With loving greetings and a kiss, from Peter and Renate.



Wanted—You!

Still wanted—Fiebel stories

Remember these images from last newsletter? We have delightful

copies of several *Fiebel* and other German readers in the MHSA archives. We're looking for someone interested in telling a story about their experience with these kinds of books.

Classroom Stories

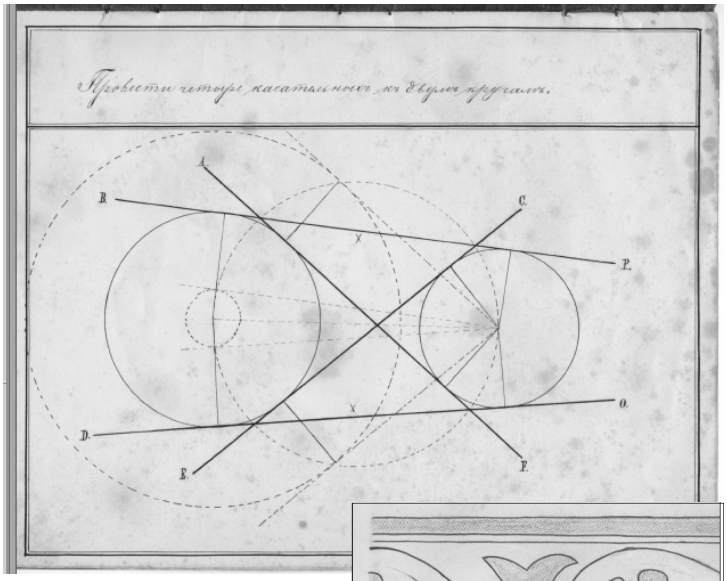
Where did you use them? What teachers did you have at that time? Any other classroom tales? The story doesn't have to be long. We know a lot of our members have memories of these books.

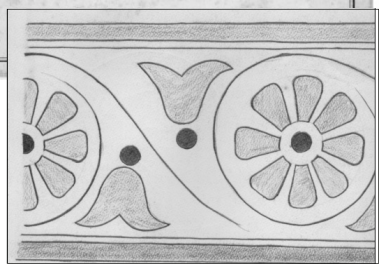
Or—we have students' notebooks in the archives. Do you have experience with these? See right.

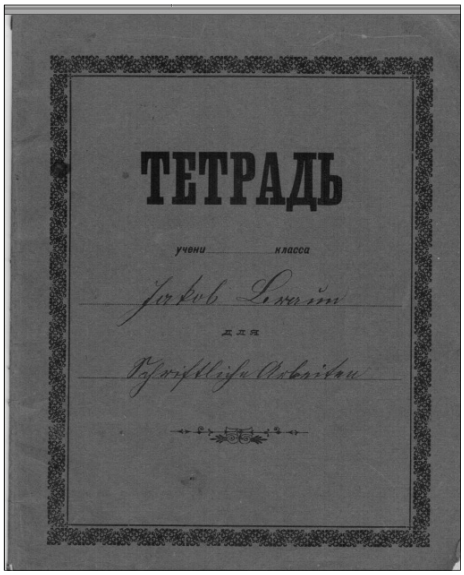
Herta (nee Braun) Anderson donated some of Jacob Braun's (her father) notebooks. They appear to be grammar exercises and are sometimes are graded with red pencil. The books are periwinkle blue or dark red.

Jacob also was the student behind Herta's donation of art class notebooks where he practiced drawing geometric shapes. These books are large—twice as large as a normal exercise book.

See p. 23 for more information about donated Braun documents.

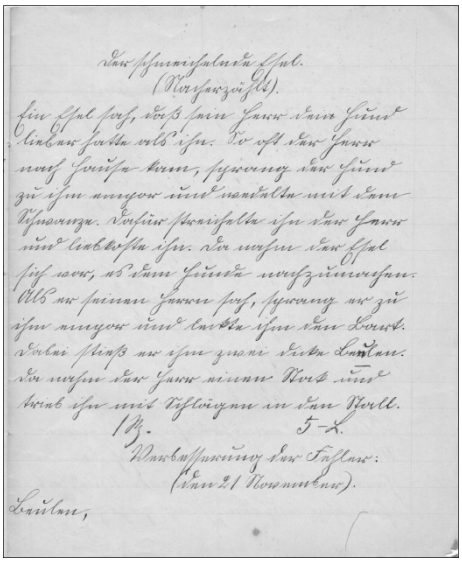






Tailoring and dressmaking

Speaking of books of instruction and drawings, we also have a delightful, oversize Russian-language book of dressmaking patterns… You really must visit and see some of these things!



Also Still wanted—Heritage Stories from Mennonites by Choice.

Are you a Mennonite By Choice (MBCer)? What is your chronicle? Do you have a heritage story to tell?

If so, send one and a half to two printed pages plus two to three scanned photographs to the *MHSA Newsletter*. The heritage/ancestor narrative should start in Europe or old country as far back as information is available to the present. Also tell us when, how and why you decided to join the Mennonite Church.

Forward your Fiebel, classroom, dressmaking, MBC (Mennonite-by-choice) other heritage stories to: Judith Rempel (queries@ mennonitehistory.org), Lorne Buhr(lorne@mennonitehistory.org), or Dave Toews (dave.toews@mennonitehistory.org).

Please be in touch with Dave Toews, Lorne Buhr, or Judith Rempel if you can share something. It's possible