

Roots and Branches

Periodical of the Mennonite Historical Society of BC

*"What we have heard and known
we will tell the next generation."*
Psalm 78



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Editorial — by Maryann Tjart Jantzen

This issue of the newsletter features two reviews of recently published books doing “history from the bottom up” to explore the gendered narratives of Mennonite women. In her review of Marlene Epp’s *Mennonite Women in Canada*, Connie Braun comments that this “volume’s personal narratives reveal how women carved out spaces for themselves within the structures that constrained them, but also, how, at times Mennonite women successfully resisted those structures.” These books remind us of the ways in which Mennonite women have found ways to build meaningful lives despite the restricted gender roles traditionally available to them.

I grew up in a transitional time: my early understanding of gender roles was shaped by my small Mennonite community in which the unarticulated and yet clear message was that men were in charge, called to be leaders in community, church and home, while women, as supportive helpmeets, were primarily to find fulfillment in the domestic world. I was as yet unaware that, in Epp’s words, “the theological and ideological concepts intrinsic to Mennonitism are also gendered.” But the countercultural winds of change of the sixties and seventies, including the turbulence of feminist challenges to traditional assumptions, pulled me in other directions, forcing me to see how much of my thinking about gender had been shaped by rigid cultural proscriptions.

How then do I now evaluate my first female role models, my mother and her peers, strong women who bore much responsibility for keeping their families intact, both emotionally and economically? Not only did these women often excel at homemaking, many were also active partners to their husbands in keeping their families on an even economic keel. For example, in addition to all the “female” tasks needed to efficiently run a household — mothering, cooking, cleaning, gardening, canning, etc (Saturday’s bizarre blended odour of floor wax and fresh-baked zwieback heralding the coming of the Sabbath) — my mother also raised poultry and produce and picked wild blackberries for extra cash, as well as working alongside my father in the daily chores required to sustain the family’s dairy farm. These women created lives of significance, despite cultural proscriptions that denied them wider opportunities to use their abilities.

To gain perspective, it helps me to scan the last three generations of women in my family: my mother employing her strengths within rigid gender boundaries; myself able to move beyond these boundaries to find fulfillment not only in family but also in a professional career; my daughter taking for granted that her gender does not hold her back vocationally, yet voluntarily embracing traditional “female” pursuits such as gardening and cooking.

From this wider view, I find myself determined to honor the strengths of women like my mother and her peers who excelled at traditionally “female” domestic skills, abilities now ironically becoming culturally desirable to both genders as their value to sustainable family life is increasingly recognized. And yet it’s important to acknowledge what Epp’s book also reveals about Mennonite women of the past: “while for some women, life could be fulfilling, for others, life was repressive. Some women flourished while other women were marginalized.” Thus, I also celebrate women who have challenged rigid gender expectations, often during turbulent times of cultural transition.

During the last four or five decades, these women, many times unpopular within their community of origin, frequently criticized as “pushy” or “unfeminine,” have functioned as trailblazers. They have had at times had to walk a solitary road — but they have also breached the walls of conformity, facilitating a future with more inclusive views about gender in family, church and community that a younger generation of women may sometimes take for granted.

As a midlife woman of Mennonite origin, I find myself nurtured by the past, thankful for present opportunities and longing for an increasingly inclusive future. My hope is that contemporary Mennonite communities will generate welcoming social structures, where no one, female or male, will be marginalized because of his or her gender.

We are pleased to announce that Maryanne Tjart Jantzen is joining the *Roots and Branches* editorial team.

INSPIRING LIVES

A Spiritual Pilgrimage

By April Yamasaki

As a child, I happily attended a Lutheran Church Sunday school with friends of friends, where I was taught and pretty much took it for granted that God loved me. As a young teenager, I was invited by a friend to a Baptist youth rally where I heard about God's wrath and righteousness, and went forward in tears during the altar call. At the age of 15, I was baptized on the confession of my faith in an Anglican Church, a denomination that practiced mainly infant baptism.

For a while I tried the Gospel Hall, where I memorized long passages of Scripture, but later returned to the Baptist Church since it had a very active youth group. When I was 21, my husband and I were married in that Baptist church, but we also attended the United Church which was his family background. We tried various other Anglican churches, the Plymouth Brethren, the Alliance Church, and other churches that I no longer even remember.

Some might call my experience an extended exercise in church shopping, or even church hopping, but as I look back on it now, I think of it more as a pilgrimage – during that time, I didn't have the language to describe it, but what I was really doing, what my husband Gary and I were both really do-

ing, was longing for and looking for a church home. We had put our personal faith in Jesus, and were being led then to a people and a place that we weren't yet sure of. In that sense we were on a pilgrimage – a sacred journey to a sacred place.

One day in the midst of this journey, a close friend called and said, we're starting a new Mennonite church, and it's going to be all English-speaking. Are you interested?

Gary and I already knew a bit about the Mennonite Church from our friends and from some reading we had done. We appreciated what we understood as the Mennonite concept of discipleship as following Jesus in daily life, its emphasis on community, simplicity, peace. Those were already things that we cared about. Yet most of the Mennonite churches in our area seemed very German and not really the place for us. But a new Mennonite Church? English-speaking? Yes, we were very interested and ready to try one more church!

Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, British Columbia very quickly became our church home. We were even counted among the founding members of that congregation, and we put down roots in a way that we had not done before. It was the place where I led my first Bible study, taught my first Sunday school class, led my first worship service, preached my first sermon. It was the place and the people who encouraged me in my writing, who encouraged my husband in his studies and in the area of teaching. Our pilgrimage was no longer from church to church and through many different denominations, but became a pilgrimage of deeper relationship with the Mennonite Church.

Along the way, we've studied at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and taken part in Mennonite churches in Indiana and Virginia. We've seen the Conference of Mennonites in Canada become Mennonite Church Canada. We've been part of the Conference of Mennonites in BC as it has gained some churches and lost others, changing its name to Mennonite Church BC and recovenanting together. We've discovered that not all Mennonites define Christian discipleship in the same way, and that not everyone who identify themselves as Mennonite also identify themselves as Christian.

This journey has sometimes been painful, sometimes filled with laughter. We have rejoiced; mourned; been forgiven and forgiving; agreed and disagreed; at times welcomed as brother and sister, at other times ignored as strangers; worked together and eaten together;

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INSPIRING LIVES

Doctura Latifa: Gertrude Dyck

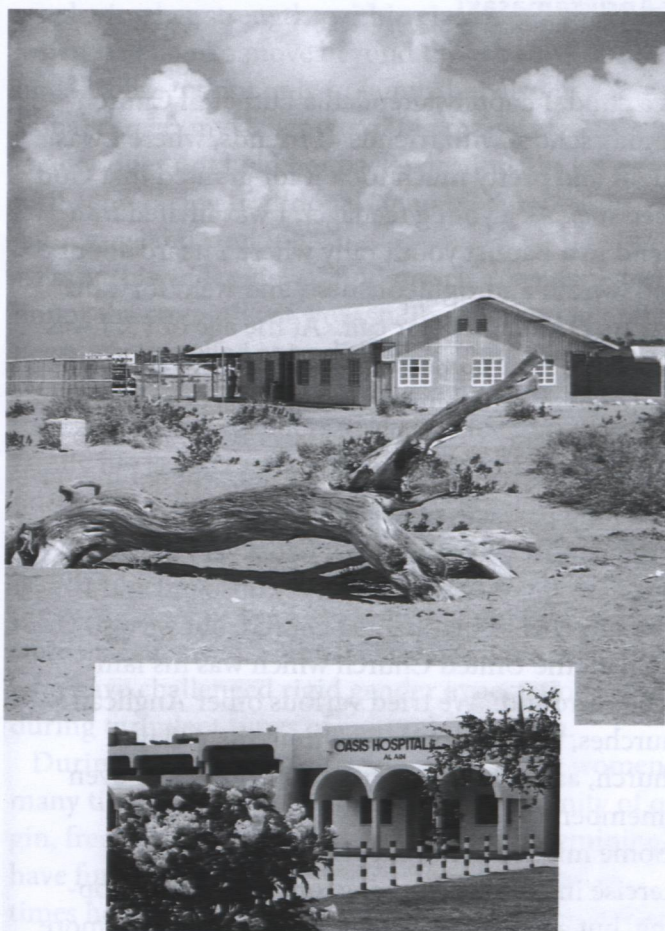
By Helen Rose Pauls

Last fall at a quiet funeral in Clearbrook M.B. Church, mourners paid tribute to a little known Mennonite missionary nurse who was awarded both the Order of Canada and Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee Medal for her heroic work as a nurse and midwife in the United Arab Emirates.

Gertrude Dyck was born near Swift Current, Saskatchewan in 1934 during the great depression and was used to poverty and hardship. Determined to be a missionary nurse, she trained at Calgary Hospital and affiliated with the Evangelical Alliance Mission, arriving in Al Ain when she was 28.

Although Arabic was a difficult language to learn, she was soon accepted warmly for her nursing skills and "treated like family." Her patients had never seen a woman without head covering and although she did not make this concession, she adopted the Arabic embroidered ankle length "kandura" dress for comfort in the heat.

When she arrived, medicine consisted of home herbal remedies; infant mortality was at 50%, and 1/3 of mothers died in childbirth and the population was in decline. When she retired, infant mortality was below 1 % and the death of mothers was virtually



Special Columbia Bible College sponsored event

May 6 at 6:30pm. The Spiritual Lives of Mennonite Women and Men

Marlene Epp, author of *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* (University of Manitoba Press), will give a presentation, focusing on how Mennonite women in Canada have lived out their spirituality. Gareth Brandt, author of *Under Construction: Reframing Men's Spirituality* (Herald Press), will discuss a new paradigm for exploring men's spirituality, using Joseph from the Old Testament as a model. Presented by Columbia Bible College Friends of the Library.

Mennonite Historical Society of BC 2010 events

May 8 at 7pm. Lecture: Marlene Epp "Mennonite Women in Canada"

Level Ground Mennonite Church (formerly West Abbotsford Mennonite Church)

June 5 at 3pm. Annual General Meeting

Meeting will include a film on Mennonites in Siberia. All are welcome.

Garden Park Tower, Dogwood Room.

October 23 at 6pm. Annual Fundraising Banquet, with lecture by John B. Toews

"Mennonite Church and Mennonite Brethren Church: The 100 Years War"

Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Clearbrook Road.



Photos from memoir of Gertrude Dyck, *The Oasis*.

Doctura Latifa: Gertrude Dyck continued...

non-existent. She introduced penicillin to a people that were nomadic Bedouins, who accepted a life of daily hardship as normal, and who knew little of the outside world. Her camera was a novelty and the first they had seen, and when she struggled with Arabic, her patients were puzzled that an adult did not know how to speak. They were unaware that other languages existed. Many of her early photographs of this period can be found in her book: *The Oasis*, published in 1995.

Gertrude soon won favour with Shiek Zayed, founder of the modern nation, and delivered over a 100 children in his extended family, as well as countless children of Bedouins and of ordinary citizens. She was considered "mother" to all of those whose umbilical cords she had severed, and her children greeted her wherever she went. She was soon known as Doctura Latifa, which is Arabic for "merciful".

Spanning the years from 1962 to 2005, her time there coincided with explosive growth and dramatic development after the shipping of the first oil tanker in 1963. She witnessed the changes from mud huts, sand dunes and hardship to the modern and wealthy country that UAE has become. During her time there, the population went from 95,000 citizens to four and a half million. There was explosive growth as roads, schools, vehicles, permanent housing, hospitals and malls were introduced, led by Shiek Zayed, who welcomed modernization. She said that even in the face of unprecedented change, "the people remain warm,

kind, undaunted, with their values and virtues".

Her goal was to provide a humanitarian service, not "to preach to people and get them away from their own religion". "I have a deep respect for the Arab people, the religion of Islam, the faith of the Muslim people and their wonderful traditions" she said, "and their hospitality is second to none." She remained faithful to Christianity throughout her life.

After Gertrude retired from Oasis Hospital, she became a consultant for cultural orientation for Inter-health Canada in Abu Dhabi.

Former Canadian ambassador to UAE Christopher Thomson said about her, "There can be few Canadians with such a lifetime of compassion and caring. She is an outstanding example of a person raised in a tradition of religious values and caring, who has devoted her entire life to improving the lives of others."

In 2005, Gertrude moved to Abbotsford where she had a sister. Living at Menno Terrace East, she enjoyed photography, increasing her computer skills and scooter outings. After a fall last October, she passed away. She was looking forward to attending the dedication of a room in her honour at the Canadian Embassy in UAE this spring.

Bibliography

"Passings" The Province, Sunday November 15, 2009
www.amazingwomenrock.com

Gertrude Dyck, *The Oasis, Al Ain Memoirs of 'Doctura Latifa.'* Dubai: Motivate Pub, c1995.

BOOK REVIEW

Leonard Neufeldt's *The Coat is Thin*

By Louise Bergen Price

Neufeldt's poems in *The Coat is Thin* are anchored in time and place, from a home in 18th Century Danzig, to a fishing boat in modern day Turkey, and reflect Neufeldt's life's work as a literary and cultural historian. In this review, I will touch briefly on a four poems that deal with the Mennonite experience.

"Passing" follows the wandering of "heaven-haunted" Mennonites fleeing the dangers of armies and the influence of an alien culture, yet always searching for a home. Part I of this poem is set in Danzig at a time when many Mennonites are emigrating to Ukraine.

"It may have been the women who knew / what part of ourselves is ready / for another journey..."

In their wanderings, the Mennonites settle near rivers: ...the Vistula, Molotschnaya, / Tok, the Red of the North, / the Fraser, always rivers, / each one right, each wrong.

No accident, then, that one of their favourite hymns is, "*Ich weiss einen Strom*," (I know of a river), and that homeland, so elusive, is centred in song:

...there are songs in which we live forever, / where the river flows wondrously through our / homelessness.

Several poems are placed in the eastern Fraser Valley, where Neufeldt grew up. "The Language of Water" is set in the present but the poet's "memory's on edge, wants to be elsewhere," and takes him back to his childhood in Yarrow. A lyrical passage describes a young boy racing home, violin balanced perfectly on his bike:

"Hungry for home after the last lesson / before summer, jacket filled like a sail, feet / pedaling through Yarrow / to recover their joy, pumping / across town past church, the swamp's / green curd, bleached new wood / of the lumberyard, cows at the fence / staring as I free my hands from the handlebar.. / ride straight in the saddle..."

"There is a language of memory," the author concludes. "Sometimes it comes as a prayer for mercy."

In "An Afternoon at Cultus Lake in Raspberry Season" Neufeldt contrasts the beauty of the setting with a dawning awareness of imminent danger.

Say there's something a father should explain, / but Father's reading music in the shade, / and the sun has set the children's heads' / ablaze, golden hair adrift, sinking below / chains of bubbles...

Then the final, foreboding sentence, "Say they know the lake is bottomless."

In "Why Passing Our Stories on Is More Than Addition: A Verse Essay," Neufeldt develops the theme of story and how it influences our perceptions of the past. Part I is set in a revival meeting of the 1950s, where an evangelist stages a mock death to remind his audience, "this life can end when least expected. A question of being lost forever," a warning that leads to an altar call:

...the tent roof no longer billowing / this world is not my home, I'm just / a-passin' through stepping back to join them / Softly and tenderly ...calling for you / and for me...

In "Part II, The Turkish Captain, 1990," the poet's friend asks him about "crazy religions" in America, and he tells about being wedged into an evangelist's tent at sunset

...Of how large and half-lit / the tent was, how old I was in it although a boy / how lost the air felt as we rose to sing, / the scent of fresh sawdust everywhere.

Part III describes a dinner with a Turkish Jew in 2004. During a discussion of the growth of religious fanaticism, Burhan echoes words often heard from Mennonite survivors of the anarchist terrors or the Gulag:

...The old suffered most; / those who survived weren't sure they wanted to

Although we may wish to learn lessons from the past, it's not easy, for as Neufeldt states in Part IV of this poem:

...passing on stories when we're not / at home in the language may help little to / find each other because our words / threaded and tied like sutures to close gaps large as wounds, the story made over / and over and left to heal itself.

The Coat is Thin, Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2008, is rich in meaning and imagery, a book to read over and over again, a book to buy and give to friends. It is available at the MHSBC.

BOOK REVIEW

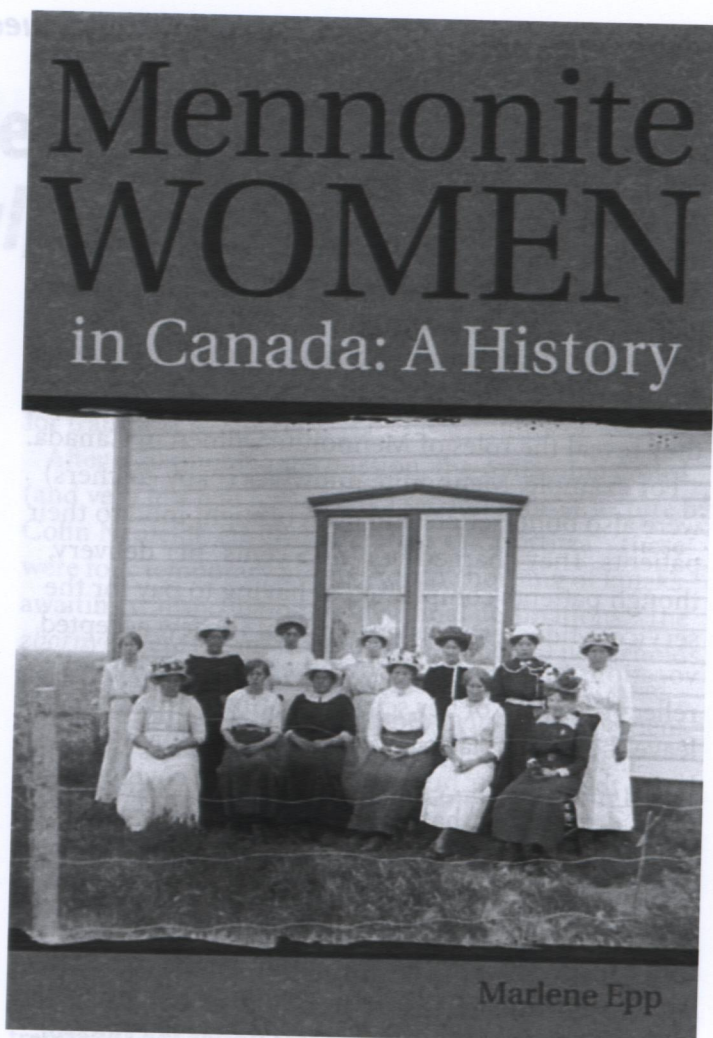
Marlene Epp's *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*

By Connie Braun

In her book, *Mennonite Women in Canada* — as in her previous work *Women without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* — historian Marlene Epp once more offers an account of Mennonite women that deepens our understanding of their historical experience, and demonstrates that the feminist movement and academia has inspired the discovery — and recovery — of Mennonite women's stories.

All throughout *Mennonite Women in Canada*, Epp disentangles the following important thread from the fabric of Mennonite identity: "the notion that the theological and ideological concepts intrinsic to Mennonitism are also gendered" (11). Underlying the experience of women gathered into this study is the realization that the Mennonite's historical affinity with traditional biblical literalism and the Protestant Fundamentalist movement, which the Mennonites took up in North America, created rigid definitions of gendered behaviour. The experiences of Canadian Mennonite women, whether stemming from Russian Mennonite or Amish, Swiss Mennonite, Prussian Mennonite or various other immigrant roots, are presented in five chapters. This volume's personal narratives reveal how women carved out spaces for themselves within the structures that constrained them, but also, how, at times Mennonite women successfully resisted those structures (5). In Mennonite culture, women were shaped by the tension between spiritual equality and social inequality which, in most cases, led to submission and silence within home and church. The stories reveal that, for some women, life could be fulfilling, while for others, life was repressive. Some women flourished while other women were marginalized.

Epp explores the period spanning a century, from the early immigrations of Mennonites to Canada, to the 1980s (when this reviewer was entering adulthood and marriage and the 2nd wave feminist movement had crested in the academy and crashed against the shores



of traditional values). Epp's study offers an honest look at the past and honours the resilience of women in all branches of the Mennonite tree — women such as our mothers and grandmothers who gave birth to large families, ran households without modern conveniences and helped with the farm work, and also women who crossed from the domestic to vocational sphere, although what was deemed vocationally acceptable was traditionally subject to the authority of the church — and, in other words, men.

The first chapter, "Pioneers, Refugees and Transnationals" deals with the experience of immigration to Canada. Chapter two illumines the role of Mennonite women in the sphere of family where marriage, motherhood and the domesticity were paramount, as the title "Wives, Mothers and 'Others'" implies. The following section covers the role of women in church; "Women as Non-conformists, Non-resistors, and Citizens" deals with the gendered way in which women in the more ethnically distinct Mennonite sects bore the cultural markers of dress and language, embodying

...Continued page 8

the responsibility of preserving tradition as "Women Living in the World" even as the men equipped themselves to do business in their English-speaking environments. Chapter five explores the artistic expression of women through gardening, sewing or quilting and household tasks or writing.

The book is a compilation of personal accounts, and while the accounts are succinct, they are engaging as they reveal the roles of Mennonite women in Canada.

For example, Mennonite midwives (baby catchers) were also bone-setters and even brought food to their patients. They charged "up to 25 cents" per delivery, though patients complained of having to pay for the service. Midwifery was once one of the few accepted vocations for women, though the payment did not reflect the value of her service. At times, these stories leave the reader slack-jawed; "just after a baby was born, the woman's husband brought the cow to the door, demanding that his wife milk it, as it was her duty" (79). In discussing the issue of immigration to Canada, Epp touches on the transition of young women from the family home to urban centres to work and generate income for the family, giving rise to the establishment of girls' homes. Citing examples, Epp posits that "since the homes were under the supervision of male-run Mennonite conference and mission boards, the authority of patriarchy remained in place, though many of the homes were run by women" (45); and Epp explains that the role of these young women took on a "missionary enterprise" which located the experience of labour activity in spiritual as well as material terms.

Spiritual Pilgrimage continued from page 3...

struggled with tough questions; sung songs "familiar" to the church that were new to us; sung other songs that were familiar to us that were "new" to the church; reached out to others and had them reach out to us; been both frustrated and satisfied; disappointed and pleasantly surprised; sad and angry and mixed up and happy – in short, we've been family together.

Through it all, the qualities of the Mennonite Church that drew us years ago are the same qualities that keep us in the church today. Yes, I'm now a pastor, and

In her final chapter on "Women in the Material World," Epp concludes by highlighting the experience of various Mennonite women who have transcended the barriers of prescribed roles — those women who have risen professionally in academia, or those who, as authors, are now included in the canon of Canadian literature despite the early challenges from their Mennonite communities. Indeed, the official history of their people, a history void of women's voices, is often what compelled the daughters of Mennonite women to write (271).

Although the book is structured into five chapters, the content has a circuitous quality. However, such a work would be impossible to organize chronologically. As a scholarly book, the writing is accessible to all readers. And — perhaps not surprisingly given Epp's groundbreaking work on Mennonite women refugees of the Second World War — *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* is an affecting read. Like her previous work, this book invites the reader to re-examine Mennonite history and more fully evaluate the complex experience of Mennonite women in Canada.

I anticipate this will become an important book in Mennonites studies and a significant contribution to gendered history studies. I further recommend this book for general interest as it is sure to provoke/inspire thoughtful dialogue between women and men.

yes, my husband is now a Bible college professor, so we have ministry and vocational reasons that keep us connected to the church. But even beyond those reasons of ministry, I find that discipleship, community, peace, and simplicity continue to inspire and challenge us. Following Jesus in these ways binds us beyond ethnicity, beyond history, beyond generation and gender differences, beyond north-south, beyond east-west, beyond anything else. And so our pilgrimage with God in Jesus Christ and with the Mennonite Church continues.

LECTURE REVIEW

Colin Neufeldt's lecture, 1929-1930: A Turning Point for Mennonite Kulaks in Ukraine

By Wilf Penner

On February 22, 1930, at a village soviet meeting in the village of Osterwick/Kronsthal (Chortitza colony), 18 named Mennonite kulaks had their properties confiscated by the state. They were sentenced, by the Mennonite leadership of the soviet, to punishments ranging from eviction from their home villages, banishment to the Siberian Gulag, and execution by firing squad. The accused kulaks bore names such as Heinrich Rempel, J.I. Klassen, A.A. Funk, and so on. The verdicts were signed by soviet leaders, Rempel, Vogt and Wilms. Meetings such as the cited one were part of a systematic "dekulakization campaign."

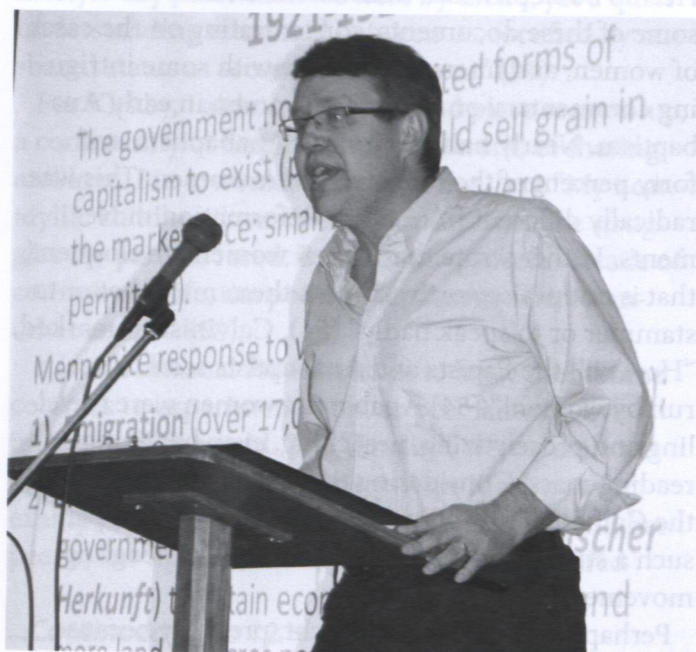
Dr. Colin Neufeldt's lecture was particularly interesting in that it was based on his recent research of just released official archival records in Zaporozh'ye, which made possible the naming of the actual people involved. His use of a projected detailed time line helped listeners to visualize the rapidly changing situation for the people of Ukraine in the years 1928 to 1931.

While every student who has studied world history knows something about the collectivization that took place in the Soviet Union after 1928, few have experienced such a graphic account of that catastrophic period as was given us by Neufeldt. Government policies and official pronouncements during the years in question were confusing and contradictory, and intended to radically disrupt the settled way of life of Mennonite communities. The original 1929 definition of kulaks by a four step classification was soon replaced by a new definition by a three step classification. Just as arbitrary as the quotas of confiscated agricultural crops demanded by the central government were the arbitrariness of quotas of evicted kulaks: each local soviet was instructed to round up the number of kulaks from its region demanded by those higher up the chain of command. This was clearly based on no procedure of justice, and the local soviet had orders to charge, arrest, and sentence. Later, when the number of evicted kulaks was greater than could be deported in a timely manner, some local soviets were accused by Stalin of being too rigorous in finding kulaks, and were relieved of their posts, as were the leaders of the Osterwick/Kronsthal soviet. Once the kulaks were rounded up, the surveil-

lance of the deportees was the responsibility of the local soviet until they were finally loaded into train cattle cars for transport to Siberia.

After a 20 minute intermission, the remaining crowd (and very few had left) heard a second shorter lecture by Colin Neufeldt, entitled "Zbornyis of Chortitza." These were four temporary villages for the housing of kulaks awaiting transportation to their final destinations. The *zbornyis* were meant to house from 10 to 20 households, usually with children. They were located on marginal farmland and were organized into living areas, gardening areas, and general pasture: a sort of microcosm of the former village pattern. The committed families were given no provision for building materials, nor for seed for the gardens and fields they were instructed to cultivate. How dispossessed families could survive in the conditions provided without outside help is unimaginable. This attempted form of internal exile was soon deemed a failure, and the doomed people were transported away from Ukraine into the far reaches of the Gulag.

MHSBC director Richard Thiessen welcomed the capacity crowd, and Ernest Block led in the singing of the traditional hymn, "Es Schaut bei Nacht und Tage," in both German and English.



Linda A. Huebert Hecht's *Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism: Their Days, Their Stories*

By Robert Martens

In the early years of the Reformation, a reign of terror was unleashed upon Anabaptists similar to the horrors Mennonites and millions of others would experience under Stalin many years later. Archduke Ferdinand, devout Catholic and unrelenting tyrant, ordered night raids, surprise attacks, and interrogation under torture to stamp out this "damnable and pernicious sect" (31) in the Tirol, present day Austria. Recantations from victims might result in leniency, but then again perhaps not. Persecution climaxed in 1529. In a single day, May 12, after a mass show trial, seventeen Anabaptists were executed in Rattenberg. Ten of these were women. And yet this grassroots movement grew during these years, fed by a reluctance of many citizens to betray Anabaptists to the brutal ordeals of state prosecution.

In her book, *Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism*, Linda Huebert Hecht tells this story from the perspective of women, as "history from the bottom up." Ironically, this telling is made possible by the voluminous and meticulous court records of Anabaptist trials. Grete Mecenseffy, a pioneer in Anabaptist studies who taught at the University of Vienna, compiled and edited thousands of these documents; Huebert Hecht's book provides translations and reports of some of these documents, concentrating on the cases of women, and intersperses these with some intriguing commentary on the role of women in early Anabaptism. Nearly half of Tirolean Anabaptists, and forty percent of their martyrs, were women. This was radically different from other Reformation movements. Luther wrote that "when women are eloquent, that is not praiseworthy; it suits them much better to stammer or to speak badly" (54). Calvinists remarked, "How will the Papists and Anabaptists scoff to see us run by women!" (54) Anabaptist women were traveling and proselytizing, preaching, even baptizing and reading mass. Considering the brutal suppression of the Catholic state, why did Anabaptist women play such a strong and determined role in the fledgling movement?

Perhaps, writes Huebert Hecht, precisely because

of that suppression. In the early stages of a fringe movement, when preservation and renewal depend on charismatic personalities rather than on structure and regulations, women will frequently move into leadership positions. In other words, when times are hard, women are welcome to be forceful and vocal; this was true for the Early Church, for Quakers, for Methodists, and many others. However, as the movement becomes institutionalized over time, the reverse becomes true. The Mennonite Church was typical: once again women slipped, at least officially, into the background, as the Anabaptist movement became structured and regulated as a denomination.

Anabaptists believed fervently in the right of the congregation to interpret Scripture – not a church functionary, but the Holy Spirit, speaking in each heart, would reveal God's truths. Thus women could be prophets just like men. Women's "authority to act came from an inner spiritual call and the exercising of their spiritual gifts, not from the power of holding office, as happened in the second generation of the movement or as might be the case today" (49). In the absence of a paid ministry, women could, and in fact were impelled to make their own decisions. "Husbands or guardians could not decide on matters of faith and discipleship for women. The belief in the Holy Spirit meant each believer had the authority from within to speak for herself or himself" (49). The Anabaptists were a small and open community, often meeting furtively in homes, the women's traditional domain, and respecting the voices of the least among them.

State law, on the other hand, "considered women to be mentally weak and simple-minded and therefore not fully responsible for their actions" (100). Women, it was thought, were being led astray by the cunning of false shepherds. However, "[w]ithin the Anabaptist community simple-mindedness was not looked on negatively, in fact the attitude toward it was almost the opposite.... The unlearned peasant, with

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BOOK REVIEW

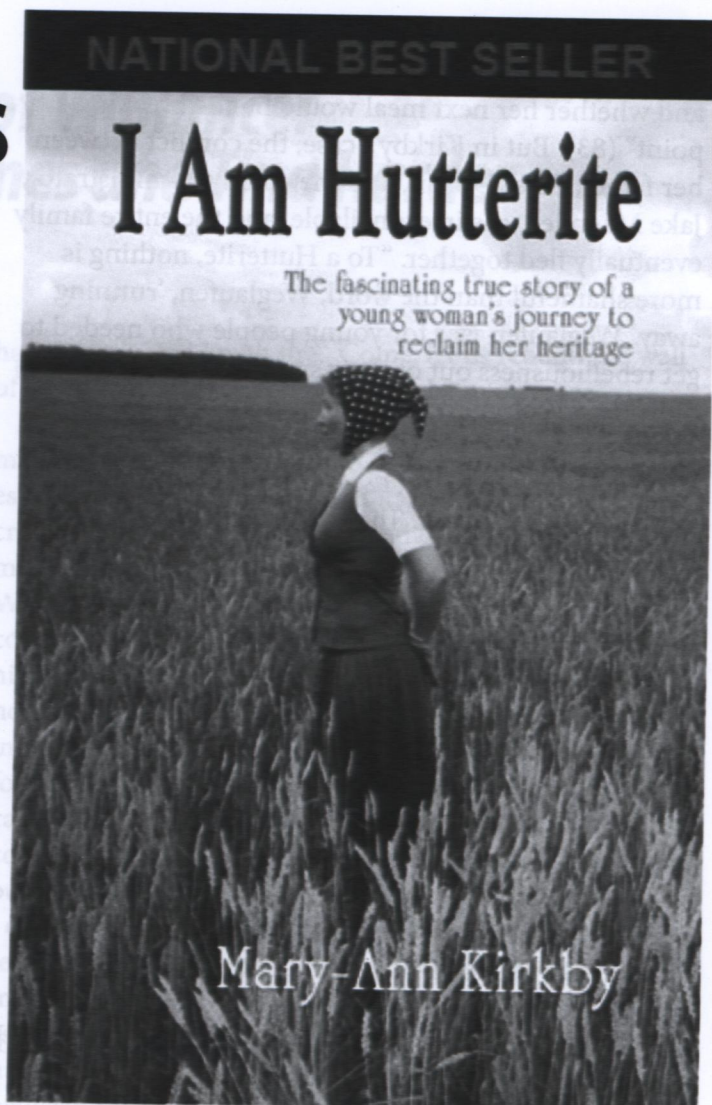
Mary-Ann Kirby's *I Am Hutterite*

By Robert Martens

In 2002 Mary-Ann Kirkby returned with her son, Levi, to what had been her childhood home, the Hutterite colony of Fairholme, about an hour's drive from Winnipeg. A rush of emotion seized her. Fairholme remained, for her, a place "of safety, of duty, and of motherhood" (vii). "I really feel sorry for your dress," said the cook, "It's too tight!" (viii) – and Kirkby quickly changed to the more comfortable traditional Hutterite garments, meanwhile wiping the lipstick from her lips. "You look so nice when you're not wearing all that paint on your face," remarked another woman. Kirkby laughed. "One doesn't have to read minds around here" (ix), she thought. Fairholme still felt, after all these years, like going home. And when her son asked her, "Mommy, are you a Hutterite?" (ix), the question sent her on a journey through the deep places of the heart.

The first few chapters of *I Am Hutterite*, Mary-Ann Kirkby's memoir of growing up in Fairholme Colony and eventually leaving with her family at about the age of ten, tell the story of her grandparents and parents, their struggles, the power conflicts, the romances and marriages. The book at times reads nearly like a Jane Austen romance. At the same time it describes in almost anthropological detail the Hutterite customs that Kirkby still holds dear: the engagement parties, the wedding ceremonies, the church services with sermons preserved over hundreds of years, the wailing hymns, the children's eating room. And the large families. When Mary-Ann was born, "See you next year, Mrs. Dornn," the nurse called out sarcastically as my parents left the hospital with their new daughter" (47).

In Hutterite colonies, modelled on the early apostolic church, all life is communal, all things are held in common. "We were bound to a society that needed to get along in order to survive and, like it or not, had to find ways to adapt to the failings of others" (54). The Hutterite way stands on the fringes of our global economic structure. When aboriginals visited Fairholme,



writes Kirkby, "[t]he natives weren't tempted by our lifestyle any more than we were by theirs, yet a quiet understanding remained between us, fortified by our shared status as second-class citizens" (99).

For Kirkby, Fairholme was a good place to grow up, a community of laughter and hard work, of sharing and love. But it would, and could not, last. "My near idyllic childhood was in sharp contrast to the struggles my parents faced. Beneath the peaceful facade of community life, the political landscape offered another reality" (58).

It is not unusual for Hutterites to leave their home colonies to experiment with, or permanently live in, the outside world. The "English" were a constant source of fascination for Mary-Ann Kirkby, as for example, the colony teacher, Mrs. Phillipot, with her pearls, her lipstick, her high heels: "we wondered

...Continued page 12

I Am Hutterite review continued from page 11...

how such thin heels could support her entire weight and whether her next meal would be the breaking point" (83). But in Kirkby's case, the conflict between her father, Peter Dornn, and the colony administrator, Jake Maendel, was irreconcilable, and the entire family eventually fled together. "To a Hutterite, nothing is more shameful than the word, Weglaufen, 'running away.' Weglaufen was for young people who needed to get rebelliousness out of their system.... Entire families didn't leave colonies. It was unheard of" (109).

It was also an act, Kirkby believes, of courage. "In God's name we go" (120), remarked her mother as the family drove off. The Dornns were leaving for "the loneliest summer of our lives. We lived in the middle of nowhere and knew no one" (123). School-time friendships for the children were slow in building. "While Mother struggled with loneliness, we collided head-on with popular culture.... We had never tasted pizza, macaroni and cheese, or a banana split – rites of passage in mainstream society" (133). When young Mary-Ann made visits back to Fairholme, she was overwhelmed by a desire to stay there. "I was enveloped by a warmth I could not describe. I wanted to put that moment in a box and take it home with me so that when I was lonely I could unwrap it and it would comfort me" (141). And so her adolescence was spent mimicking the customs of mainstream Canadians, "[h]iding behind English clothes and hairstyles" (185).

It was a cold world, where Mary-Ann was stunned by the lack of concern for the vulnerable, especially the elderly. After years of struggle, however, the family made good: the farm prospered, the children adapted, and Mary-Ann even won the Miss Winkler beauty pageant. She had transformed "from a Hutterite nobody to an English somebody.... Even so, longing still plagued my heart" (188). She still felt herself without a real home. It took her years to realize "that freedom is not found on a Hutterite colony any more than it is found off the colony. True freedom is an inside job – it is taking responsibility for ourselves and daring to confront and release the anger and resentment that keep us from leading meaningful lives" (190).

In January 2009, CBC television news ran a story on the writing of Kirkby's memoir. After a dozen publishers turned her down, she decided to self-publish and soon had sold a phenomenal 35,000 copies. An intense public fascination with the concept of community propelled sales. Controversy, however,

soon followed, with some Hutterites angered by the naming of Jake Maendel and the exposure of power conflicts among them. "The outside world is closing in," reported CBC, and Kirkby remarked sadly that "I feel bad that I hurt them" (cbcnews.ca).

I Am Hutterite is not without flaws. The background history of the Hutterite tradition receives scant attention. The flurries of names and kinship are often confusing and perhaps too detailed. The story of the conflict between Kirkby's father and Fairholme's administrator seems rather one-sided, with her father's antagonist taking nearly all the blame. Despite that, the memoir is charming, entertaining, and ultimately generous and heartwarming. "[I]t is only when we embrace our past that we can find true fulfillment in our future.... Today, I am filled with a deep appreciation of where I have come from and a better sense of where I'm going. The Hutterite culture has defined me in ways that can never be erased. In my heart, I will always remain a Hutterite" (194).

Women in Early Austrian Anabaptist review continued from page 10...

the help of the Holy Spirit, offered a more genuine interpretation of the Bible than a highly educated person" (101). The Anabaptist teachings were clearly subversive of the top-down established order. In fact, "simple-minded" Anabaptist women were considered a greater threat than the men, as their forsaking of house and home for the perils of leadership turned the old order on its head.

The court documents in Huebert Hecht's book will be valuable reference material on library shelves, but often can be very dry reading. The language is repetitious, monotonous, detailed, and bureaucratic; the brutality it describes is veiled by its very objectivity, its "reasonableness." These documents indeed represent "the banality of evil." Huebert Hecht's analysis, however, is both perceptive and passionate, bringing to life the extraordinary courage of the early Anabaptists and their willingness to hear the "Inner Word." When accused of having a proud spirit, Anabaptist prisoner Elisabeth Dirks of Friesland answered, "No, my lords, I speak with free courage" (206). The greeting of Tirolean Anabaptists, "The Holy Spirit live in you" (208), acknowledged the freedom of each woman and man to live the divine word as received within. Huebert Hecht's book is a potent reminder of that defiance of the abuses of power from which the Mennonite Church emerged.

BOOK REVIEW

T.D. Regehr's *A Generation of Vigilance: The lives and work of Johannes and Tina Harder*

By Elmer G. Wiens

In *A Generation of Vigilance*, T.D. Regehr expands on his biography, "The Ministry of John and Tina Harder in the Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church, 1930-1949," that appears in *Windows to a Village: Life Studies of Yarrow Pioneers*, published by the Yarrow Research Committee (YRC). While the book's Introduction states that John and Tina Harder were "perfectly ordinary, perfectly remarkable people," their influence was neither ordinary, nor perfectly remarkable on the members and attendees of the Yarrow MB (Mennonite Brethren) Church, and on the residents of the Yarrow settlement. Furthermore, the authority and leadership of John Harder extended beyond Yarrow by way of membership on boards of the BC, Canadian, and North American (General) MB Conferences. He also served and advised churches and missions projects in BC, South America, and Europe, as well as World War II conscientious objectors.

A Generation of Vigilance divides roughly into three parts. Chapters 1 to 4 describe Johannes and Katharina (Rempel) Harder's Russian Mennonite roots, parents, courtship, and immigration to Canada soon after their marriage. Chapters 5 to 10 portray their destitute arrival in Yarrow, struggle to make a living, raising of a family, advancement in the hierarchy of the Yarrow MB Church, and "vigilance" over the souls of its members. In the remaining chapters, Regehr provides details, previously unavailable, about Harder's work in BC, Canada, the US, Latin America, and Europe on behalf of various Mennonite Brethren programs. Regehr ends the book with John and Tina's three-year tenure serving the Black Creek MB Church on Vancouver Island, and their retirement years in Clearbrook, BC.

In the chapter "Watchman, 1945-63," Regehr relates how Harder read Nehemiah 2:17-18 to the Fuesorgekomitee (Committee of Reference and Counsel) of the Canadian Conference, putting these verses forward as a metaphor for Harder's vigilance "to preserve and strengthen the faith and life of church members." Nehemiah, the King of Persia's Jewish cupbearer, having obtained the king's permission to rebuild Jerusalem, finds its walls in ruin and meets with the city's officials. In the New International Bible these verses read: "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates

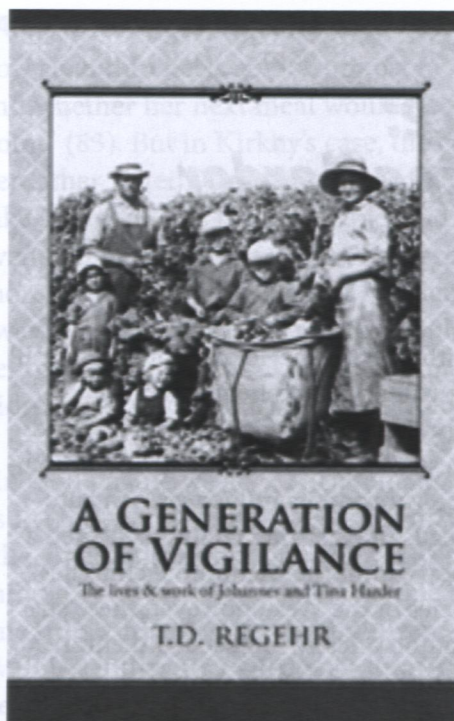
have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace."

According to Regehr, Harder "sought to reinforce and maintain the walls designed to separate the [MB] churches from the outside culture and its influences." In autocratic Russia, these walls of Christian conduct allowed a measure of democracy within the Mennonite churches. Within the democracies of the West, however, these strict codes of behaviour, autocratically imposed and enforced, hindered the development and assimilation of the Mennonite Brethren churches into the civil society surrounding them. Harder's interpretations of the Scriptures were founded "not necessarily in eternal and unchanging biblical truths," but on his own "old-world cultural heritage," conditioning his judgement not only of spiritual matters, but also of cultural and social matters.

Did Harder consider Ezra's chronicles of the enmity the Jews aroused some years earlier, when the Jews returning to Palestine refused their neighbouring Samaritans' assistance to rebuild the Temple cooperatively? If he had, Harder could have lessened the subsequent tensions between Mennonites and non-Mennonites in Canada, and particularly in Yarrow. Rather, Harder might have followed the example of the scribe Ezra who returned to Judah from Persia some half century after Nehemiah. Appalled at the unfaithfulness of Jews who had assimilated with their neighbours and married foreign women, Ezra ordered the men of Judah and Benjamin to separate themselves from their neighbours and foreign wives, and to exile these women and their children.

Was there a belief among Mennonite people and their leaders that their version of Christianity was special





within God's grace? Might the Mennonites actually be a special race, somewhat like the holy race of Israelites of the Old Testament? Apparently.

Growing up in Yarrow, one could easily develop the notion that only good Mennonite Brethren went to heaven after death. Or at least, that there would be a special place in heaven for us. Even the Eckert Road General Conference Mennonites (now MC) might not make it, given that some members smoked cigarettes. A member of the MB Church who married an unbeliever, someone who was not "saved" or "born again," was excommunicated. Furthermore, Regehr claims that a member of the MB church who married someone whose church did not practice adult baptism by immersion was excommunicated. "Be ye not unequally yoked together" was a verse often quoted. Children of parents who were non-members could attend Sunday school and church services, but sometimes children of MB adherents were warned not to play with them because "they were bad." During the 1950s and early 1960s, the church-run Sharon Mennonite Collegiate (SMC) practised separation of its students from grades six onwards. Elementary school friends suddenly became strangers, having contact with each other only at church functions. Perish the thought that a boy from the public school on Wilson Road might have a girlfriend attending SMC on Stewart Road. Meanwhile, young adults trod carefully through a minefield of forbidden activities, places and friendships, and some parents warned of the difficulties inherent in an MB-MC

marriage, or even in a Russlaender marrying a Kanadier.

Regehr praises Harder's administrative and organizational skills. The Yarrow MB Church's administrative structure created by Harder was still in place 10 years after he left office, as is illustrated in the table of "Church Ministry Workers" on the web page cited below. About thirty names appear among the Church Council Members, its governing body. Another diverse list of members appear among the thirty committees and groups with church responsibilities. To name just a few, these committees include the Sunday School, Saturday Religion School, High School, West Coast Children's Mission, and Library. The Yarrow MB Church was run efficiently. When Harder helped to establish the Vancouver MB Church, he naturally wanted it to follow the model of church organization, governance and discipline adopted in Yarrow. Undoubtedly, the political and interpersonal skills Harder acquired with this Vancouver venture served him well some years later when he was asked by the General MB Conference to "visit, preach, and gain insight into the life and work, the joys, sorrows, and difficulties of all Mennonite Brethren churches in South America."

Since the Church Council (Vorberat) excluded women as members, Tina Harder "exerted considerable unofficial influence" by persuading Johannes to express her opinions. While she held girls and women to strict codes of behaviour and dress with concerns about the "lusts of the flesh," Tina "provided strong emotional and practical support for widows," organized church support groups, and generously offered her time and energy during crises.

According to Regehr, John and Tina Harder "provided strong leadership" during a difficult time of transition, as Mennonites relocated from their Russian enclaves to their new Canadian homeland.

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INSPIRING LIVES

Ethiopia and the Mennonite Church

By Richard Thiessen

My family and I travelled to Ethiopia at the beginning of May 2009 and we were there for two months. For several years I had thought of applying for a service leave from Columbia Bible College so that I could share some of my gifts and abilities with the church in another country. When my wife Karen, who is a pastor of Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, decided to apply for a sabbatical in 2009, we agreed that I should apply for a service leave and that we would take our family of three boys with us and make it a family service leave.

The first task was to find an educational institution that needed the assistance of someone with library training. After speaking with several Mennonite missions organizations, it was suggested that I explore my options with Meserete Kristos College, a Mennonite Bible college in Ethiopia. They responded by issuing me an invitation, which I accepted.

I had several goals to accomplish while I was at Meserete Kristos College. One goal was to help the college library become more efficient in the way they catalogued their books by setting up software to allow them obtain catalogue records from other libraries over the Internet. Once that goal was accomplished, we were able to catalogue approximately 2,000 books that had been donated to the college over the past few

years, and add them to the collection. A final goal was to carry out an assessment of the college library and offer some suggestions for improving library services. During the month of May, Karen and the boys volunteered at a school down the road from the college. They assisted with ESL courses and generally interacted with the students, allowing them to practice their English. In June they shifted their work to the college library, helping to rearrange the collection to accommodate the new books that were added to the collection. The boys also helped out with sales in the bookstore.

I had never been to Ethiopia or even Africa before. Most of us probably think of Ethiopia as a dry, desert land that is often unable to grow enough food for its people. Many of us remember watching television footage of the famine that struck Ethiopia in 1984 and 1985. Images of crying children with swollen bellies seemed to inundate us along with pleas for help. Bob Geldhof's Live Aid was a world-wide phenomenon and raised well over 100 million dollars in aid for Ethiopia. In fact, Ethiopia is a country rich in resources that are poorly utilized. Ethiopia is sometimes called the "water tower" of eastern Africa because of the many rivers that flow from its highlands to the rest of Africa. 85% of the water in the Nile River comes from Ethiopia. Ethiopia has the greatest water reserves in Africa, and





yet only 1% is used for power production and 1.5% for irrigation. The vast majority of the country's farmers, comprising roughly 80% of the population, rely only on the seasonal rains to water their crops. It is claimed that Ethiopia could be the breadbasket for much of Africa if only it had the financial wealth to tap into its rich water resources and construct good irrigation systems.

Those of you with a love for the coffee bean should know that Ethiopia is the original source of the coffee bean, and the coffee bean remains the country's largest export. Other exports are all agricultural products such as beans, cereals, sugar cane, and oilseeds, along with hides.

In 1974 a Soviet-backed Marxist-Leninist military government succeeded a monarchy of many centuries duration. During the 1980s the country was devastated by wide-scale droughts and resulting famines, leaving approximately 1 million people dead. In 1991 the Marxist-Leninist government was removed and a new constitution was adopted in 1994, resulting in relatively free elections in 1995.

Religious life in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the oldest countries in the world, having existed as an independent country since ancient times, and is described by some scientists as the birthplace of humanity. Christianity came to Ethiopia in the 4th century, making it one of the oldest "Christian countries" in the world. Athanasius appointed the first bishop of Aksum, once Ethiopia's capital

located in the north, in 346 AD. Syrian missionaries spread throughout the country in the 5th century and built monasteries and translated the Bible into Gêez, the ancient language of the country still used in the Ethiopian Orthodox liturgy. The country's mountainous terrain and remoteness allowed Christianity to gain a firm foothold in the country. During the 16th century, Muslim soldiers invaded the country and the Ethiopian monarch sought assistance from the Portuguese. However, along with soldiers, the Portuguese sent Catholic missionaries to the country and sought to bring the Ethiopian church under the rule of Rome. The Portuguese were eventually turned away, and many Ethiopians have resisted contact with other Christian groups ever since. Even today, many in the country are wary of foreign missionaries.

Beginning in the 19th century, Christian missionaries were given permission to work in the country, establishing schools and eventually churches. In the mid-20th century, many Orthodox Christians joined Protestant churches, leading to strong resistance from the Orthodox Church. However, it is also claimed that the coming of missionaries to Ethiopia also impacted the Orthodox Church in a positive way.

According to the 2007 national census, Christians make up 62.8% of the country's population, with 45.3% belonging to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and 19.3% belonging to other Christian churches. 33.9% of Ethiopians are Muslim, 2.6% practice traditional faiths, and 0.6% belonging to other religious groups, including a small group of Jews, the Beta Israel or House of Israel, also known as the Falasha or

Exiles, that lives in northwest Ethiopia. Most of these Jews were airlifted to Israel in the 1980s and 1990s.

Like much of the history of Ethiopia, the stories regarding the origin of this group of Jews are legendary, with claims that they are the descendants of Israelite tribes that came to Ethiopia with King Menelik I, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, or that they are the descendants of the tribe of Dan. These Israelites also brought with them the Ark of the Covenant, which is said to reside to this day in a church in Axum, northern Ethiopia. While these legends make for great reading, it is more likely, based on DNA evidence, that these Jews are the descendants of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians who adopted Jewish practices several centuries ago.

In many ways Ethiopia is a unique country. The strong presence of the Orthodox Church throughout much of the country, the country's unique languages and alphabet, the fact that in Ethiopia it is only the year 2002 because it uses the Coptic calendar, and the fact that Ethiopia has its own time system, all contribute to a country that is one-of-a-kind.

Mennonite Mission in Ethiopia

Unlike the vast majority of African countries, Ethiopia was not a colony of a European power. However, the Italians made several attempts to colonize the country, first in the late 19th century, and second in 1936, when Italy invaded Ethiopia. The Italians were finally defeated during World War II. However, the turmoil created by the Italians left Ethiopia in need of assistance from other countries.

Mennonites first went to Ethiopia in 1945 as relief workers sponsored by the Mennonite Relief Committee of Mennonite Board of Missions (MC). Samuel Yoder and Paul Hooley made initial contacts and found the country to be in need of medical and educational work because the Italian occupation left the country bereft of an educated class. Even so the government was reluctant to admit foreign missionaries. As a result, the Mennonites tried to prove themselves as people of service and not as intruders in the nation's politics nor as proselytizers of Orthodox Christians.

Mennonites contracted with the government to renovate a cotton gin into a hospital at Nazareth, a town of 30,000 located at an elevation of 5,000 ft., 60 miles (97 km.) southeast of Addis Ababa. By 1947 renovation was complete for a 40-bed hospital, a

training school for medical assistants (dressers), and an outpatient clinic. The site was named Haile Mariam Mamo Memorial Hospital in honor of a statesman killed during the war with Italy.

In December 1947 Daniel and Blanche Sensenig of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference arrived in Ethiopia, sent by the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. Their goal was to obtain permission to begin an evangelical mission service. In 1948 Emperor Haile Selassie I invited Mennonites to function as a mission and do educational and medical work among Muslims in Hararge Province. This was the start of the Ethiopia Mennonite Mission. At this time areas with a predominantly Orthodox population were considered to be closed. A hospital and the first elementary school were built at Deder in Hararge Province, a school and clinic were opened at Bedeno, and an evening school was established in Dire Dawa. A School for the Blind, directed by Clayton and Martha Keener, was opened in Addis Ababa in 1952. In 1959 a Bible Academy was opened at Nazareth. A staff of 30 missionaries—doctors, nurses, teachers, pastors—were appointed by Eastern Board to maintain these institutions. Congregations were formed around these institutions. When the Meserete Kristos Church was organized in 1959 there were 400 attending worship services in five locations: Deder, Bedeno, Dire Dawa, Addis Ababa, and Nazareth.

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Mennonites and leaders: the Ignatieff connection

By Robert Martens

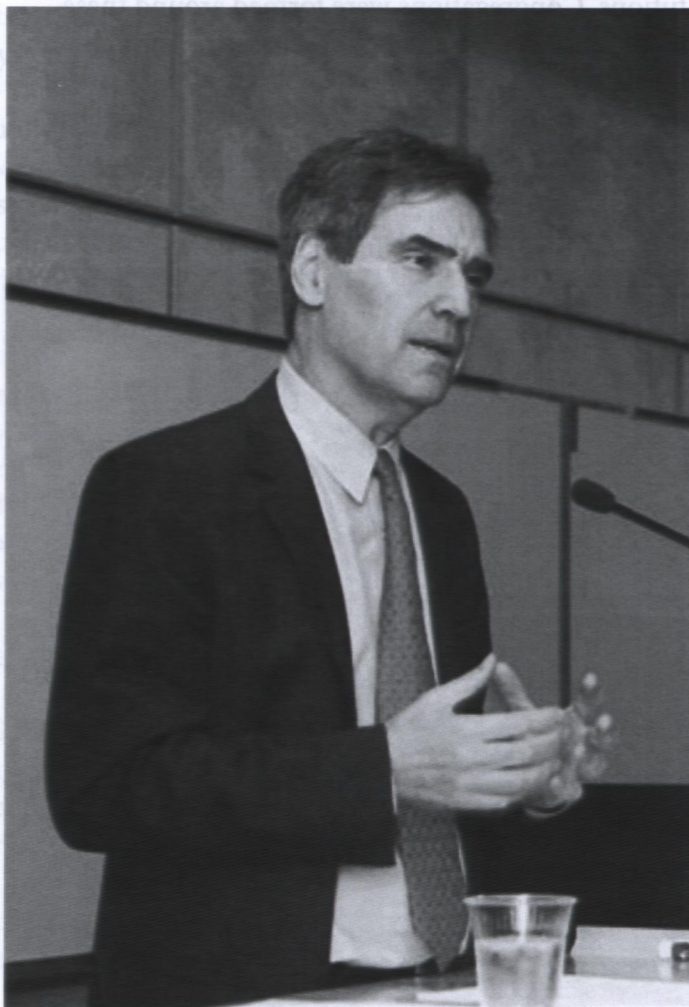
We Mennonites, especially the more traditionalist among us, have often held ourselves aloof from mainstream society, and particularly from the control of cultural elites. We have sometimes been tempted to tell our history as an entity separate from global currents. Mennonites in pre-Soviet Russia, for example, were profoundly ignorant of the national and international politics of their time. Even today, Mennonite memoirs and histories can have a slight air of isolationism around them, as though the intrusion of the wider world is inconvenient, or even resented. But of course the Mennonite story is just one thread interlaced with many others. One example is the establish-

ment of Ignatyev Colony in the Ukraine, the Ignatyev family, and a chain of events that would follow Mennonites into contemporary Canada.

On the morning of December 14, 1825, Paul Nikolaievich Ignatyev, a Guard's Officer, apparently had a long talk with his mother. Many Russian soldiers had returned from the Napoleonic wars with ideas of democracy, constitutional reform, and the freeing of the nation's oppressed serfs. These "Decembrists," as they came to be called, were planning a revolution against Tsar Nicholas I. It is said that the mother of Paul Nikolaievich counselled him to be "sensible" and to stand with the tsarist regime. He must have taken this advice to heart when, later that day, his platoon was the among the first to help suppress the Decembrist rebellion. Paul Nikolaievich, taken into favour by the tsar, went on to hold numerous governmental postings.

His son, Nikolai Pavlovich Ignatyev, was ferociously ambitious and a master of political intrigue. Born in St. Petersburg, his diplomatic career began when he took part in the negotiations of 1856 which followed the Crimean War. In 1860, during the rapid advance of the English and French into China during the Second Opium War, Nikolai Pavlovich manipulated the terrified Chinese into ceding Outer Manchuria to the Russian state. He was rewarded with an appointment in 1864 to Ambassador to Turkey. While stationed in Istanbul, he underhandedly fomented rebellion among Christians and Bulgarians in the Turkish empire, thus helping incite the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8. The ensuing negotiations, however, marked the first failures of this remarkably driven man, as the results of the peace treaty did not live up to Russian hopes and expectations.

Nevertheless, Nikolai Pavlovich was appointed Minister of the Interior by Alexander II, and was expected to adhere to the brutally nationalist policies of the tsar. It seems that Ignatyev, becoming increasingly extremist over the years, followed these expectations with a violent zeal, encouraging the anti-Jewish riots known



as pogroms. Somehow, however, and here the details are vague, Nikolai Pavlovich fell into disfavour with the tsar. He may have been suspected of extortion, or perhaps he was perceived as an uncontrollable right-wing "loose cannon." In 1882 he received a note from Alexander III: "After considering our conversation of this morning, I have come to the conclusion that we cannot serve Russia together" (Memoirs 13).

From this point on, Nikolai Pavlovich no longer exerted any important political influence, and may in fact have deteriorated psychologically and financially. A later memoir, written by A. A. Ignatieff in the USSR in 1941, reported: "In his prime years Nikolai was the pride of his whole family, but he finished his life half broke, having wasted away his substance in fantastic financial adventures. Possessing forty estates distributed throughout every part of Russia, mortgaged and remortgaged to the hilt, he was the only member of the State Council, according to a member of the family, who had a judicial lien placed on his government salary" (Memoirs 11). Perhaps it was for these reasons that he, or his wife (again the details are unclear), sold 14,159 dessiatines of his estate to Mennonite colonists in 1888. The result was Ignatyev Colony, named of course after the sellers of the land.

A total of 244 landless families from the mother colony of Chortitza settled in Ignatyev, establishing seven villages, the first being Ignatyeva in 1890. In time the colony prospered. Factories and brickyards were established. A large Mennonite church was founded in the village of New York, and in Nikolayevka, the Mennonite Brethren started a Zentralschule (high school). Later, John Enns of Reesor, Ontario would report on the very odd naming of a Russian village after New York: "The count's wife was an American lady who had expressed the wish that the village, in which the count's buildings formed a rather significant complex, should be named New York. This request was granted, and thus the once unpretentious settlement in the Ukraine retained the name after the world-renowned

American city" (Memoirs 30).

Meanwhile, the count's son, Pavel Nikolaievich Ignatiev, was carrying on the family tradition of prominent public service; between 1915 and 1917 he was Minister of Education and senior advisor to Tsar Nicholas II. Then the Russian Revolution intervened. Ignatyev Colony suffered profoundly during these violent times, particularly at the hands of Makhno's men, but some of the Mennonites there managed an escape to Canada. The colony was later evacuated by the retreating Soviets in 1942 and disappeared from the face of the earth. Pavel Nikolaievich was one of the few tsarist ministers to evade execution by the Reds, fleeing to Canada with his family in 1925 and eventually settling in Upper Melbourne in Quebec. The Ignatyev ambitiousness did not die, however. Eminence in nationalist Russian circles simply gave way to secularist liberal careers in Canada. Pavel Nikolaievich's son, George Ignatieff, obtained a Rhodes scholarship and went on to serve at numerous government posts, including permanent representative to NATO, Canadian ambassador to the United Nations, and chancellor at the University of Toronto. And today, Mennonites are confronted with yet another Ignatieff, George's son, Michael, who is currently leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

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The Way We Were: A trip through Mennonite settlements in British Columbia in 1940

Translated by Louise Bergen Price from "*Eine Wanderung durch die mennonitschen Siedlungen in Britisch Columbia*," in *Warte Jahrbuch*. Edited by Arnold Dyck. Part II

In the last issue, we travelled by BC Electric Rail through Mennonite settlements from New Westminster to Clearbrook and Abbotsford.

We hurry on, and make a stop about eight miles further along at the Arnold station. From the raised railway dam, a wide sweeping plain lies before us, hemmed in only by mountain ranges in the distance. Here is open terrain; no clearing needed. Everywhere, homes and barns are rising from the soil, among them some very attractive ones. On most homesteads one sees strawberry or raspberry plantations. Although most farmers here still have to work elsewhere to supplement their income, they hope to become independent in the near future, which, by hard work and determination, they will certainly manage to do. If one takes into account that the soil is more fertile here than in other settlements, the thought arises that the prosperity of this young community may soon out-strip that of the older settlements.

Yarrow, the oldest Mennonite settlement in BC, lies in a strip along the mountains six miles east of Arnold. As we take a leisurely stroll along the main street, we observe nice-looking farms. Involuntarily, we wonder if we should not change our clothes, attach fresh collars to our shirts, and brush off the travel dust off before meeting the village administrator. For we

now find ourselves in the metropolis of the Mennonite settlements of the Fraser Valley. Yarrow has an elegant setting and could actually be called a town, for not every Canadian town encompasses 250 homesteads and a population of 2000 souls.

Our guide, Yarrow citizen G. Derksen, relates the following:

Yarrow, apparently named after an early pioneer, is actually a very insignificant stop on the BC Electric Railway. In 1927, Mr. Eckert came up with the idea to settle Mennonites on this land. The following year, the first ten families came from various regions of the Prairie Provinces to begin the pioneer work. These settlers had no cash, and were given credit based only on their honest faces... Soon houses were built, most using the same building plan. At the same time, fruit trees were planted.

Hopgardens in the area provided significant income to the new settlers. During harvest, both young and old participated. It was not easy for the settlers to keep their own farms going, or even make improvements, during this time.

During the first years, we tried different experiments with crops such as sugar beets, lettuce, spinach, green beans and cabbage, each a significant phase in the struggle to find the best crop suited to the soil and growing conditions, and to provide a reasonable income for the settlers. We came to the conclusion that we had to take matters into our own hands, and that led to the formation of the Yarrow Growers Co-operative in 1937. At first we cultivated mostly rhubarb and raspberries, later adding strawberries, fruit, potatoes and other crops. In 1939, we began processing the berries and packing them into barrels which were shipped to cities in eastern Canada and to England. In 1943, for example, 2,300 barrels (400 pounds per barrel) were processed.

Common interests and concerns of the settlers led to the position of mayor to deal with issues such as road improvements, construction of a cemetery, and regulating the use of the common pasture. We, as Menno-



nites, were also concerned that no one could accuse us of being a burden on the government, so we provided assistance to our own settlers when they were in need. As more and more people arrived in Yarrow, and in order to provide enough land for all, properties were subdivided. Farming on a large scale became impossible, and people adjusted accordingly. One raspberry farm after another came into being, and chicken farms sprouted up like mushrooms. Electricity came to the area in 1934, and the telephone in 1937.

The steady increase in population meant that more and more properties adjacent to the borders of the settlement were being bought by our people, especially to the west. For the most part, relations between original settlers and our people have been good. And how can one critique an enterprising Mennonite who trades his "pedalwagon" for a modern automobile while his neighbour can't accomplish the same?

During the first years of settlement, two shops were built; later they were joined by an electric store, a meat market, garage, and shoe repair. Since Mennonites enjoy fruit and have planted many orchards, a nursery arose which served not only Mennonites but the surrounding area.

The Yarrow Growers' Co-operative has added a retail branch in the last two years. Also under its umbrella are a jam factory, an egg candling station, cold storage, box factory, elevator, and two lumber yards.

Yarrow has two churches: the Mennonite Brethren with 550 members, and the Conference church with 75 members. Yarrow has 250 farmers; the total population is approximately 2000.

In 1943, Yarrow district paid off its travel debt, an important milestone. For several years now, we have had a health association to further good health among our settlers: [semicolon] sadly, we still have not been able to build a hospital or even maternity home – there are too many difficulties involved. A Bible school has been in existence for several years. Currently it has four classes and five teachers.

The settlement has three elementary schools with six teachers. The nearest high school is in Chilliwack, and children are transported there by bus.

Now that we have peeked into the history and into the spirit which strives to move ahead by co-operation, we set forth on our journey. From here it is only a *Hasensprung* (rabbit hop) to Sardis.

BOOK REVIEW

Helen Grace Lescheid's *Lead Kindly Light*

By Helen Rose Pauls

This story of Agnes Loewen's escape from Communist Russia during World War II, written by her daughter Helen, was first published in 1999. She describes desperately fleeing from Ukraine to Germany, refugee life caring for four small children, being reunited with family and a difficult new beginning in Canada.

In 2002, the book was printed in German as *Am Morgen Laecheln die Engel*, and last year Lescheid released a tenth anniversary edition of *Lead Kindly Light* with an expanded text, more pictures, an epilogue and two appendices: Appendix 1 Additional Stories; Appendix 11 Mennonite History.

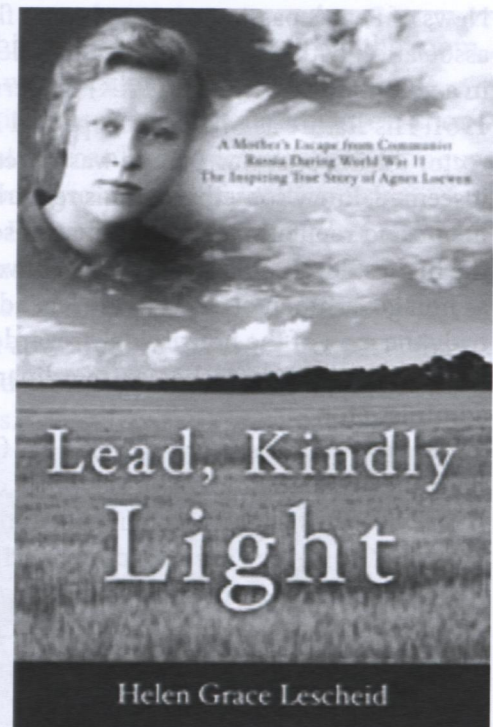
What people have been saying about the book (from the book cover):

"An amazing story of determination, courage and faith."

"What a tale of tragedy, grief and redemption."

"It amazes me that one person could experience so much pain and struggle and come through it a loving, grateful and humble person."

Although thousands of Mennonite refugees have similar stories to tell, few of them have been written to share with others. Helen Lescheid has captured the pain and triumph of a very courageous woman. This fuller account is now available for sale at the archives.



EULOGY

Ben Braun

By Helen Rose Pauls

We are sorry to have to report the passing of a very busy and involved board member, Ben Braun. Ben joined the board when he and Mary moved back to B.C. in 2001 in order to be closer to their aging parents. They found a church home at Bakerview M.B..

Newly retired and living right behind the archives in Evergreen Village, Ben soon filled his days with the computer work he loved and had done for most of his professional life. The archives benefitted so much from his knowledge. He was proficient in genealogy, in charge of the MHSBC website, and soon became the board treasurer. He was on the cemetery committee and could be seen patiently indexing gravestones and entering the photographs. He also scanned the Mennonitische Rundschau into the computer, joking that "Twenty years are done. Only 110 years to go!" As board photographer, he chronicled events and posted pictures of new volunteers and board members.

Ben was born on July 20, 1942, first child of Ike Braun

and Anne Reimer of Greendale and lived his early years in Chilliwack. Soon after Ben's birth, his dad had to go to the CO camp in Radium Hot Springs.

Ben was later joined by siblings Julie, Walter and Ken.

He had an active childhood on a mixed farm and his most unforgettable adventure was the flood of '48. He began school at Greendale Elementary and later Chilliwack High where he met, and later married, Mary Luella Hildebrandt from Eden Mennonite Church.

Ben took an Industrial Electronics correspondence course from DeVry Institute and ended up computer programming in Toronto. In 1992, he began Ben Braun Software and served a variety of clients in mainframe computer programming and web design, including the Gideons website.

Two daughters, Karen and Janice, were born to Ben and Mary Lue. Karen, a computer programmer for the Bank of Canada, lives near Ottawa, and Janice, a wildlife biologist, in Nelson. It was during a trip to visit Janice's family for Christmas that Ben suddenly passed away.

He is very much missed in the day to day work at the archives, and as treasurer on the board. Especially missed is his quiet presence in the archives working away at the table on the computer while conversations and queries swirl around him.

EULOGY

Peter J. Dyck

By Peter Adrian

News of Peter's passing triggered some flashbacks of my association with him while serving under his direction in a voluntary service unit (PAX) in Germany, 1959 to 1961. His stature as MCC's Europe and North Africa director during post war Europe was towering. Everyone, it seemed, knew something of his remarkable achievements and reputation. His diplomatic escapades within the highest levels of bureaucracy in government as well as non governmental circles were legendary. He was truly the man of the hour, widely regarded as a master storyteller, orator, preacher, extraordinary leader and administrator.

I was a 21 year old volunteer, straight from our Alberta farm, destined for an agricultural demonstration project in Northern Greece but routed through Frankfurt, MCC's Europe head office, for further orientation, where Peter Dyck discovered my German fluency and decided I was more needed in Germany. He assigned me to Mennoniten Haus in Kaiserslautern where I was "acting director," coordinating a variety of social ser-

vice, community development programs in conjunction with the city social service agencies, German Mennonite churches and the relief packages that came from Akron.

Dyck's presence and leadership amongst the European Mennonite churches and the various MCC units throughout Europe was bigger than life. Young and old alike sat spellbound as Peter related stories of human survival and needs and challenged them to peace and service involvement. An anticipated visit by Peter J. Dyck to an MCC unit generated the preparation and excitement not unlike that preceding the arrival of a head of state. And yet, in spite of his brilliance and international reputation, in small groups or in one on one, he was an engaging conversationalist, funny, warm, comforting and inspiring. While always approachable business wise, he was nobody's fool and it was understood you did your homework before requesting an appointment. He was highly principled and had firm performance standards, but I never experienced him as demeaning. He displayed a great deal of confidence in my abilities and his fatherly mentoring inspired me to higher education and later life human service ideals.

Peter Dyck's impact and influence on a generation of the Mennonite community was profound and pivotal in charting the course of a significant chapter of Mennonite history.

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EXHIBIT REVIEW

Anabaptist ceramics

By Heather Pauls Murray

The ceramics exhibit at the Museum of Anthropology is a special collection of Anabaptist workmanship. The collection was donated to the museum by Dr. Walter C. Koerner, a major philanthropist to the University of British Columbia during his lifetime (1898-1995).

With over 600 pieces of Anabaptist-produced ceramics, the exhibit is a comprehensive assembly of many different examples of pottery, from everyday items to pieces for special occasions. Some were used by the poor, and others by the rich.

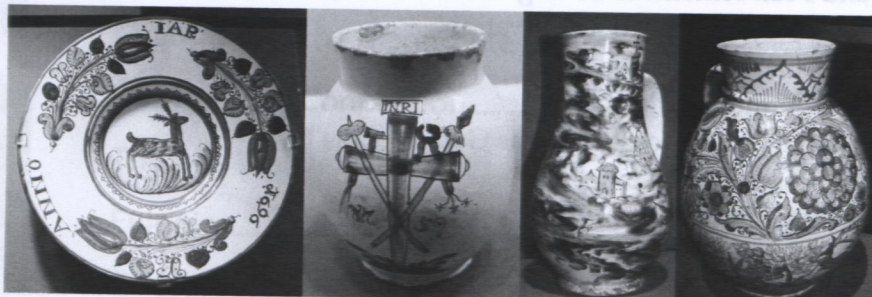
Anabaptist potters of the 16th and 17th century in Central Europe alone knew the secret of how to make the famous tin-glazed earthenware. Also known as *faience*, the style was brought from Italy by potters fleeing from religious persecution. This type of glazing was more hygienic than the more common lead-based technique, and eventually spread throughout Europe, although in very different designs.

The pottery was at first known for its simplicity of style, in keeping with the Anabaptist aesthetic. But over time, as many Anabaptists converted to Catholicism, or altered their style to be economically viable, their styles became more elaborate.

The exhibit shows this progression, from simple examples to more elaborate variations later on. Items are flat with some flower embellishments, while others are sculpted to look like cabbages, or depict scenes from well-known folk tales and Bible stories in relief. Some of the exhibit's larger pieces include a ceramic stove that dominates the centre of the room, and a mint condition matching set of 79 dishes from 1770.

Upon first entering the exhibit, the stark difference from the room and the rest of the museum is nearly palpable. The strong totems soar above you with powerful images of indigenous creatures. Then you step into a small room that seems almost moonlit, with baroque-era harpsichord music in the background. The transition from overwhelmingly grand Pacific First Nations artwork to that of small European dishware is a very sudden, unsettling shift.

While the exhibit presented a thorough history of Anabaptist ceramics, I think that it would appeal more to ceramic experts than Anabaptists. It's mostly focused on the history of the pottery trade than the history of Anabaptists.





POEM

What do these stones mean?

By Alvin G. Ens

In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.... He did this so all the people of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God' (Josh. 4:21-24).

It was the foresight of Joshua,
taking stones from the middle of the Jordan,
to create a memorial at Gilgal
that could lead children to ask-
what do these stones mean.

Whereby, reviewing salvation history-
the forty years of wilderness wanderings,
a following of the ark of the covenant,
a new consecration preparing
for the miraculous crossing
of the Jordan at flood season-
from Egypt into a promised land:
to show the Lord is powerful
and to reverence him thereby.
The stone cairn in memorial,
says Joshua, exists to this day.

And when my children shall ask,
perhaps viewing an old photo of homestead days
and Grandpa at work piling rocks
at one end of the plowed field
(and I can remember adding rocks
after every spring's first cultivation,
rocks there to this day)
what do these rocks mean-

I'll tell them: out of Russia has God led us
to a Saskatchewan prairie
where Grandpa for forty years
wrested a living in reverence to the Creator
until the plot began to flow with milk and money.

And when my children shall ask me,
a fourth generation citizen
who has no pile of rocks,
of my sojourn in the land,
what do these books mean-
then I'll tell them that for forty years,
following my covenant with Him,
God has led me in the land
flowing with a knowledge revolution
in a society often alien to the Lord
where in peace and prosperity to this day
I have lived in the reverence of God.