



Mennonite Historical Society of BC Newsletter

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The MHS Newsletter is produced periodically to inform and to promote the work of the BC Historical Society. It is mailed to people who contribute \$25 or more per year to the work of the society.

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**WHAT WE HAVE
HEARD AND
KNOWN, WE WILL
TELL THE NEXT
GENERATION.
Ps. 78**

From the Russian Steppes to South American Settlements:

an evening of stories and songs with

Anneliese Jeske, Erich Penner, Walter Bergen;

music by Erna Tilitzky and the Mennonettes.

Garden Park Towers February 10, 2001 at 7:00 P.M.

"The Mennonite settlement of Paraguayan and Brazilian colonies is a remarkable story of great courage, perseverance in the face of indifference, and insurmountable obstacles," says **Walter Bergen**, who will tell the story of his aunt, Neta Bergen. "That story ought to be celebrated in our church and community! While this story is known among immigrants, it is not well known, in fact neglected by the larger Mennonite community."

Anneliese Jeske, a well-known storyteller from Bakerview MB, will tell stories of Pioneering life in Paraguay. **Erich Penner**, who grew up in the Brazilian settlement of Santa Catarina will tell the story of the founding of the settlement, and its early struggles to survive and thrive.

The Mennonettes, is 20 member choir based in Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church under the direction of Erna Tilitzky.



*Tina Janzen Thiessen, Paraguay, 1956. Making
Animal feed with haksel machine.*

From the President.

John Konrad

Reflecting on the past year, 2000 has been a good year for Society. We have:

- * collected additional historical information from local sources
- * launched a major old-picture scanning project for our archives
- * received new information from the Odessa archives
- * experienced a large increase in visitors to our centre
- * received increased financial support from our growing membership
- * enjoyed an increase in volunteer support for our work

I would like to thank all of our volunteers for their faithful service without whom we could not have met our objectives.

To our members, we thank you for your generous support during 2000. **Income tax receipts for donations will be mailed out with this newsletter.** To qualify for this year's (2000) income tax receipts, donations must have been post marked or delivered not later than December 21, 2000. **If you have any questions about your receipts, please contact Loretta Kruger at the office on Tuesdays or Fridays at 853-6177.**

Paraguay: A home for our people *Book reviews by Helen Rose Pauls*

Gardens in the Wilderness by Edgar and Muriel Stackley.
Canadian Mennonite College Publication, 2000

A book of interest to all of us, especially those who have lived in Paraguay, *Gardens in the Wilderness* is a series of windows into the complex development of the Mennonite communities in the Paraguayan Chaco from 1927-1997. A Catholic country welcomes Protestant refugees at a time when no other country will welcome them. Ill prepared settlers pray and persevere to survive in spite of epidemics, deaths, discontent, and discouragement.

Cooperation and community ensure that all are taken care of, and that individual enterprise can flourish for the good

Both books are available through Mennonite Books, 67 Flett Ave., Winn. Man. R2K 3NS; phone 1-800-465-6564 or visit their website at www.mennonitebooks.com

New: from the editors:

With this newsletter, we introduce two new sections: ***How we were***, a series on Mennonite settlements in BC, and ***From the archives***, a section informing readers of new (and old) materials available from the MHS.

The newsletter committee looks forward to your responses to your newsletter.

Contributions of articles, letters and ideas are greatly appreciated.

of all. Truly a story of gardens blooming in the wilderness.

Under the Still Standing Sun by Dora Dueck
Kindred Press, 1989.

A sixteen year old WW II refugee anticipates the adventures of life in Paraguay. Although the wilderness is hostile, and pioneering difficult, her life is a fulfilling one.

Lest We Forget

By Helen Rose Pauls

Like the scarlet poppies worn by many at Remembrance Day, the red rose given each member of the Jubilee Choir at the close of the B.C. Mennonite Historical Society's Book Launch and Concert evening, symbolized the theme: "Lest We Forget".

Three books shedding light on our heritage were featured Nov. 3 at the South Abbotsford MB Church. Harry Loewen's book, "Road to Freedom: Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering," reminds us, our children, and grandchildren of the tremendous suffering of those who came out of Russia after W.W.II.

Commissioned in August 1998 by the 50 Year Freedom Jubilee

Committee, this long awaited book full of

poignant and horrendous stories from those difficult years, is finally available.

Two other books were featured at this book signing event. John B. Toews' translation of "The Diaries of David Epp 1847-1853" provides a vivid and candid portrait of the life of a lay minister in the Chortitza Mennonite Church. John Krahn's family memoirs "Our Family Story Book" by Grandpa K, relates informal vignettes from a variety of life experiences.

The book launch was surrounded by a rich and varied concert. The Jubilee Singers, under the direction of Wilmer Neufeld, set the mood with familiar hymns of praise, deliverance and waiting on the Lord.

Particularly touching were English renditions of "So Lang Mein Jesu Lebt," "Wehrlos und Verlassen", and Mozart's "O Christ, What Bounteous Kindness".

Kathryn Koslowsky, who shared the stage at the Chan Center with Ben Heppner later in the year, delighted those gathered with Chopin's piano music. The talented Fast family presented a violin duet and several songs.

The next event planned by the Historical Society is an evening of storytelling and music featuring Mennonites in South America. As Wilmer Neufeld stated during the fund appeal, "As we tell our stories, we bring closure to the difficult experiences of the past."

Mennonite Women Confront Stalinism by Henry Neufeld

Women are the unsung heroines of the Mennonite faith in Russia in the 1930's and 40's said Dr. John B. Toews at the October Mennonite Historical Society of BC fund raising banquet attended by over 300.

Despite the extreme difficulties of life in the Stalinist era, Mennonite women were the keepers of the faith, Toews said. Women led house services, organized Christmas services, led Bible studies, and said the table prayers.

They risked prison sentences for teaching the youth Bible stories. "All the autobiographies I have read reflect a faith in God," said Toews, who teaches Anabaptist Church History at Vancouver's Regent College.

Mennonite Women confront Stalinsim con't

Toews noted that as early as 1925 the head of the Russian secret police considered using prisoners to work in the mineral rich areas of northern Russia. "By 1930 a human's worth was calculated in units of labour," said Toews, "the camps became an integral part of the Soviet economy."

There were 476 camps and many were divided in sub units. The workers performed a variety of tasks, from gold mining to agriculture. One agricultural camp surrounding Karaganda was 250km in circumference. Eighteen million people passed through the camps between 1930 - 1953; it is not certain how many perished or were shot.

The camps consisted largely of workers and peasants. The state claimed these were intellectuals engaged in counter - revolutionary activity, but few had involvement in politics. The camps turned out to be economically inefficient, and were run by a criminal minded bureaucracy which showed a consistent

disregard for human life, said Toews.

Toews read from the memoirs and letters of three women. "In 30 years I've read many autobiographies of Mennonite women; every story is unique and heartbreaking," said Toews. The Stalinist prison system (Gulag) and the 1941 deportations of Germans determined the kind of world Russian Mennonite women faced.

*"It seems the women
can handle it better
than the men..."*

Susan Toews

Susan Toews of Orloff came from a family of 14 children, three of her siblings managed to escape to Canada. Her letters to Canadian relatives describe Nestor Makhnov setting up headquarters in Orloff, the famine of 1921-22, the loss of the last family cow to collectivization, and the eventual loss of their land.

"A paradise without bread," is her description of their situation, as she reflects happily about the parcel that arrived from Canada. "What is worst for us women is the fact that a common kitchen is

to be organized this fall. I don't think it will last long. Once they start with the women let them watch out. There could be some bloody heads - the women will not be made fools of."

In 1933 she writes: "*It seems the women can handle it better than the men. The men seem to be cowardly. By contrast the women are forthright and say what they think. They are simply incensed about everything: their men are being taken from them and they have to live through thick and thin.*"

In 1934 Susan Toews' family moved to Melitopol to escape harassment. With the German army invasion in 1943, the German population was moved to eastern Russia. Susan died in Kazakhstan in 1943.

*"The tyrant cannot
prevent a few women
and children... from
honouring the birth of
the prince of peace,"*

Justina Martens

Justina Martens, at age 85, orally recounted her experiences. In 1938 her brother was arrested for attending a Bible study. Living in a barn, Justina prepares a Christmas celebration.

Mennonite Women confront Stalinsim con't

"The tyrant cannot prevent a few women and children... from honouring the birth of the prince of peace," said Toews.

When all the men have been arrested, Justina gathers the children, sings with them and tells them Bible stories. At a collective farm in Kazakhstan in the 1940's she gathers young people, sings with them and tells them Bible stories.

Selma Kroeker/Hooge

Selma Kroeker from Marienthal describes the plight of Mennonite women. *"You had to admire our mothers. No matter how scarce everything was they made do and they managed. No matter how tired they were from working in the fields they kept their homes clean and their children well dressed.... If a woman or girl had only one dress, she wore it inside out all week then turned it for Sundays."*

Her family managed the great trek to Germany during W.W.II and is caught in the post war refugee crisis. Eventually they end up in the BC's

Fraser Valley. It was a pleasant to many to learn that Selma's daughter, Selma Hooge attended this lecture.

"80% of Mennonite families lost their fathers and husbands..."

Women's story

"Women tell the inner story," said Toews, "they don't try to figure out how this is God's plan... they say what worries them, they describe the pathos of life, they document hardship and each emotion."

The women victimized under the Stalin regime suffer differently than men, said Toews. "80% of Mennonite families lost their fathers and husbands... if your husband was arrested, you could not buy bread, you're likely to be expelled from the collective, and your name is placed on a list for possible arrest."

These women remained amazingly hopeful and optimistic, said Toews, reflecting their faith in God. They are practical, they work to survive, yet remain amazingly

hopeful, optimistic, and are keepers of the faith. A moment of silence was observed for all those who died in the Stalinist era. In thanking Toews, Walter Bergen noted that we live in a time when faith comes easily; the lecture reminded us of a time of costly faith.

Former MHS President Bill Riediger acknowledged the contribution of Agatha Klassen, MHS board member from 1988 - 1996. She received a copy of the recently published book, *The Diaries of David Epp*, by John B Toews. Wilmer Neufeld led the assembled group in singing.

NOTE: *Thanks to those who contributed financially to the work of the MHS at the fundraising banquet. Your contribution provides membership in the BC Mennonite Historical Society for the coming year and ensures you will continue to receive the Newsletter. If you were unable to attend the banquet, please use the enclosed envelope to make your contribution and support the work of the MHS.*

Erica Suderman

PIER 21 by John Goosen

This summer I took my family on a long flight to see a short pier. Pier 21 - tall ships, fishing boats - in Halifax, the Far East from a BC perspective. Until a few months ago I hadn't even heard of Pier 21.

I often heard from each of my parents that their families arrived in Canada after the war and that Halifax was their entry point into Canada. My grandmother, father and his siblings arrived on the *Aquitania*. My mother's transport ship, as far as she could remember was the *General Langfitt*.

At separate times, when in their teens, my parents made the long trip to BC, where sponsoring relatives met them.

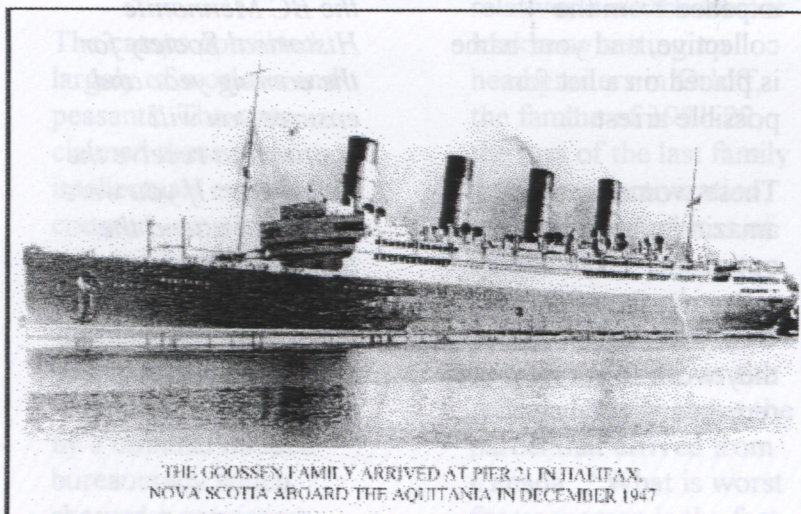
Pier 21, billed as Canada's Historic Soul, has a resource centre of self guided displays, exhibits, listening stations, video terminals, and a simulated rail car.

A 24 minute virtual projection presentation - Oceans of Hope - highlights comings and goings at the pier, including vignettes of arriving Ukrainian and Italian immigrants, returning soldiers and anxious English war brides.

In the exhibition centre we discovered a listing of 100 of the most frequently arriving ships at Pier 21. We were excited to find *Aquitania* and an archivist on the

second floor showed us more images of the ship and copied some relevant facts for us. We ordered a photo of the *Aquitania* with our own inscription: "The Goosen family arrived at Pier 21 Halifax, Nova Scotia aboard *Aquitania* in December 1947."

Search as they might, the staff could find no mention of *General Langfitt*. At least 16 ships were named after generals, we were told, but no record of this one. Perhaps we had the wrong name. We completed an information request form on the possibility that the main research librarian would have better luck in locating something.



THE GOOSSEN FAMILY ARRIVED AT PIER 21 IN HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA ABOARD THE AQUITANIA IN DECEMBER 1947

Two weeks after returning home I was pleased to receive a picture of the *Aquitania*. A week later we received more good news; the research librarian had found information on the *General Langfitt* as well as a picture.

Pier 21 con't

A quote from the Pier 21 brochure summarizes its significance to Canada and to me:

In Halifax, Nova Scotia, Pier 21 stands as a testament to Canada's immigrant experience. From 1928 to 1971 Pier 21 was Canada's 'front door' to nearly one million immigrants, wartime evacuees, refugees, troops, war brides and their children. Fleeing hardships such as poverty, war, famine, drought, and religious and political persecution, they journeyed to Canada in search of freedom, opportunity, love and excitement. As a result, they enriched Canada's cultural and social landscape and uplifted the very soul of our nation forever.

Pier 21: Gateway of Hope

by Linda Granfield. 48 pp. Tundra bks, 2000.

*"Listen
Since 1928 we have
spilled from westbound
ships
Entering the harbour as
the morning mists
lifted...
We have arrived at Pier
21.
We have stories to tell.
Listen."*

Using text and archival photos, Linda Granfield tells the story of this important port in Canadian history. A brief account, written for children, but of interest to the larger public as well.

Mennonites en Route

A special English edition of *Der Bote*, "Mennonites en Route" describes the first large Mennonite immigration from Russia to Canada.

This issue features articles by Roydon, Loewen, Lawrence Klippenstein, Delbert Plett, James Kehbel and others. Copies can be seen at our archives and are available from *Der Bote*, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, R3P 0M4. \$2.50 by mail, \$1.00 when purchased in person. Multiple copies: \$1.00 plus postage.

Music in the Valley
A celebration of
Mennonite
musicians.

May 26, 2001

More information
will follow.

Mennonitische Rundschau Project at MHS

The Mennonitische Rundschau discontinued indexing by subject after 1939, so finding information after that date often takes hours of searching. The MHS has taken on the project of indexing obituaries from 1940 to present. Because obituaries are a prime source of information, this project will be invaluable for genealogists and others needing information.

The second step of the project is entering the data culled from these obituaries into a genealogical data base, in order that families can be linked from isolated bits of facts. Many of these obituaries contain information dating back as far as the 1860's, and in a few cases even further back. To date we have more than 10,000 Mennonite names.

Eventually these facts will be merged with the Grandma program, a data base originating in Fresno, CA, containing more than 401,000 Mennonite Names.

Both of these projects are long term ventures and will be ongoing for the next years.

Erica Suderman

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

Visit the MHS Offices

If you have never visited the Mennonite Historical Society's office and Archives at the Garden Park Tower, you might be in for a pleasant surprise. The centre is bustling with activity. On any weekday, you will see people searching for relatives using the data base or other reference material, borrowing books from the library, browsing through a selection of new and used books for sale. An average of 140 visitors come to the centre each month.

Volunteers help facilitate searches, catalogue books. They inventory archival acquisitions, enter material on the data base, photocopy and scan family albums, conduct interviews.

A recent acquisition of great interest is a collection of microfilms containing material from the Odessa State Archives.

Come and visit the Centre on any week day, 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m. You'll find it well worth a visit.

Help preserve our history

Photo albums are an important tools in preserving our history. At the Historical Society offices, volunteers scan the pictures into our computer and preserve them on discs. Jean Neufeld says, "The more information you can give us on each photo, the more meaningful and complete your family history will be."

The process is a lengthy one, but will be an invaluable resource. If you have albums that contribute to our history, call the Society and arrange for an appointment so someone can review your albums with you.

After the photo albums are scanned, and the information is collected, the albums are returned to their owners. Any photographs that are donated to the society are stored and preserved in our conditioned environment.

BOOKS For Sale at MHS BC office.

Events and People by Helmut T. Huebert published in 1999 (258 pages). Events in Russian Mennonite History and the People that Made Them Happen. Includes maps and photographs.

Price: \$30.00

Women Without Men by Marlene Epp published in 2000 (275 pages). Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War. Includes photographs.

Price: \$23.00

Road to Freedom by Harry Loewen published in 2000 (302 pages). Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering. Includes numerous photographs.

Price: \$49.00

The Diaries of David Epp 1873-1843 by John B. Toews published in 2000 (202 pages).

Price: \$19.00

Mennonite Historical Atlas by William Schroeder and Helmut T. Huebert published in 1996 (183 pages).

Includes maps of the Netherlands, Vistula Delta, Russia, Latin America and North America.

Price: \$30

Odessa State Archives Microfilms

Recently, MHS of BC has received five microfilms made up of documents from the "Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers in Southern Russia" held by the Odessa Region state Archives. These microfilms designated as Fond 6 Inventory 2 contain over 14,000 pages of material for the period 1847-1852.

Included is a great deal of information regarding activities in the Molotschna and Chortitza colonies and beyond containing voters lists, reports about movements from one area to another, census entries and numerous reports by the Molotschna Mennonite District Office to higher authorities. It has a Geographical Index for the regions of Ekaterynoslav, Tavrida, Kherson and Bessarabia. It also has an index of the names of Mennonites mentioned in the microfilms living in those regions during the 184-1852 period.

Mennonite Historical Society of BC collaborated in funding this extensive microfilming project and the preparation of the listing. Other participants were the Mennonite Heritage Centre(Winnipeg), Centre for MB Studies (Winnipeg), Centre for MB Studies (Hillsboro), and Center for MB Studies (Fresno).

Hugo Friesen

Tim Janzen Donation

Dr. Tim Janzen, a family physician of Portland, Oregon, is an ardent genealogist. Dr. Janzen donated a microfilm of materials designated as Fond 6 Inventory 1 from the Odessa State Archives. His description of the contents is as follows:

"In general I am quite pleased to see all the materials that are on this microfilm. In my opinion the most valuable item on this microfilm is a complete 1801 census of the Chortitza Colony listing about 1650 Mennonites from 9 villages. It is in German and is highly readable. It is similar to the 1795 Chortitza Colony census previously published by B.H. Unruh in format.

Also of high interest are vital records of all births, marriages, and deaths in the Chortitza Colony for much of 1801 and 1802 and for the period of May to October, 1807, an 1802 Neuenburg village census, an 1803 Hutterite Colony census, and 1801 Krongarten census which is in Russian, and lists of all children vaccinated against smallpox in the Chortitza Colony in 1809 and 1814.

There are also various voters lists for the Chortitza Colony and for the Molotschna Colony during the period 1801 to 1812 among other items. This material gives us significant new information about early residents of the Chortitza Colony that had previously been unavailable. When this data is reviewed in conjunction with the 1795 Chortitza Colony census and the portions of the 1802, 1808, and 1814 Chortitza Colony censuses previously published by B.H. Unruh as well as the information published in Peter Rempel's recent book Mennonite Migration to Russia, 1788-1828 it gives us a much more complete picture of the inhabitants of the Chortitza Colony prior 1814 than we had available to us previously."

The MHS of BC is thankful to Tim for his generous donation. This microfilm, as well as the Odessa microfilms, may be viewed at our Centre in Abbotsford, Monday-Friday, 9:00-4:00.

Hugo Friesen

Books: Two Reviews of

T. D. Regehr. *Peace, Order and good Government: Mennonites and Politics in Canada*. (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 2000, 130pp.

Review by Benno Friesen

Peace Order and Good Government is a compilation of lectures given by Dr. T.D. Regehr as the 1999 J.J. Thiessen Lectures at Canadian Mennonite Bible college. On reading the lectures, however it might seem to have been more appropriate to sub-title the lectures "Politics and Mennonites in Canada" rather than the other way around, since they appear to have more to do with Dr. Regehr's politics than a thorough examination of the work of Canadian Mennonites in the political arena.

The first demand a professional historian must meet is the demand of historical accuracy - Truth. For a Christian historian this pursuit becomes even more demanding in light of St. Paul's injunction "whatsoever things are true... think on these things." To accomplish this the historian must first set aside his own natural bias and persist on thorough and

historical detail, relying on original sources - printed or personal - wherever possible.

"the lectures ...appear to have more to do with Dr. Regehr's politics than a thorough examination of the work of Canadian Mennonites in the political arena."

On both of these requirements, these lectures are a disappointment. First, they ignore the contributions of a number of active practicing Mennonites whose work deserves attention, but oddly enough, give space and time to the work of E.C. Manning and Robert Thompson. He seems to favour those Mennonites of General Conference heritage - the NDP's Erhart Regier and the PC's Siegfried Enns. This could be justified by the fact that these lectures were given at a GC Bible college.

What is more difficult to accept is Dr. Regehr's treatment of the Hon. Jake Epp's career. While ignoring Mr. Epp's

successful work in initiating the anti-smoking climate of today, he leaves the impression that the abortion debate and its failed legislation came during Mr. Epp's time as Minister of Health. Not true. He then goes on to say: "Equally disconcerting is Jake Epp's complete silence on the alleged scandalous behaviour of members of the Mulroney government." If they are allegations, why should anyone comment on them? More importantly for the historian, he seems content to perpetuate gossip in the name of truth, without ever having spoken to Mr. Epp.

Perhaps Dr. Regehr (as well as the rest of us) should take to heart the rest of St Paul's injunction to the Philippians: "Whatsoever things are true... whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things."

Benno Friesen is a former Member of Parliament now living in Surrey.

Book review: T. D. Regehr. *Peace, Order and good Government: Mennonites and Politics in Canada (con't)*

by Dr. John Redekop

In publishing this expanded version of the 1999 J.J. Thiessen lectures, The Canadian Mennonite Bible College Lectureship Committee has provided a valuable service for the entire Mennonite constituency. It constitutes a significant addition to the still scarce studies of Mennonites and politics. The five chapters, in sequence, present a general overview, describe 19th century developments in Ontario, analyze Mennonite and socialism as well as Mennonites and Social Credit, and offer an assessment of several national Mennonite politicians. The brief conclusion contains some provocative assessments.

Much of Professor Regehr's material is organized around several key themes. Canadian Mennonite political activity has incorporated elements of martyrdom as well as patronage and the solicitation of special favours. Attitudes of reluctance and avoidance have been more than matched by involvement and activism. Tensions between theological theory and political

practice developed early and have increased over the years. And politically, Mennonites are "all over the map" but identify most readily with the conservative sector of the political spectrum.

Supported by significant research, the author explains that Mennonite political activism in Canada has expressed itself variously. The solicitation of special arrangements, initiated by the earliest immigrants, has continued to the present day. Even the most conservative groups have not hesitated to lobby for their own interests. Mennonite partisan candidacy at elections also has a long history. Already in 1864, three years before Confederation, Isaac Erb Bowman won the Waterloo North seat in the Upper Canada (Ontario) legislature. In Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, Mennonites won at least one seat in the first elections held after the creation of each province.

If we measure Mennonite political activism according to candidates, then the Canadian Mennonite record must be described as

impressive. From Ontario to British Columbia, Mennonite candidate percentages have generally exceeded Mennonite population percentages.

Significantly, Mennonites as defined by Regehr, constitute perhaps eight percent of the population in Manitoba but constituted "roughly one-quarter of the recent Manitoba provincial candidacies."

While Professor Regehr raises many key issues, concerning some fundamental matters his treatment is at best incomplete; space limitations doubtless account for part of the problem. He states, quite correctly, that the early Anabaptists avoided political activity and seems to affirm such a stance as Biblically correct but he does not adequately explain how such a theology should be expressed in radically transformed democratic and pervasive states in which church and state share broad common agendas, where the line between those who govern and those who are governed is increasingly blurred, and where almost half of all income flows through government hands.

Further, the author tends to define political activity largely in partisan terms but there are other components. Many Mennonites serve governments in the public service, in regulatory agencies and in government-owned corporations. Is such activity appropriate? Regehr also does not grapple with the fundamental Anabaptist/Mennonite dilemma concerning church and state, namely, why Mennonites describe the governmental realm as part of "the Kingdom of Darkness" (Schleitheim Confession, etc.) and reject any involvement in it given that the New Testament writers instruct Christians to honour government, to be thankful for it, to pray for it, and to pay taxes for its operation? Would Jesus and the inspired writers instruct us to pray for the success of something which is intrinsically evil?

It also seems difficult to reconcile Regehr's accurate observation that various Canadian Mennonite politicians have rendered "valuable services to the state and to Canadian secular society" (p.125) with the apparent inference that

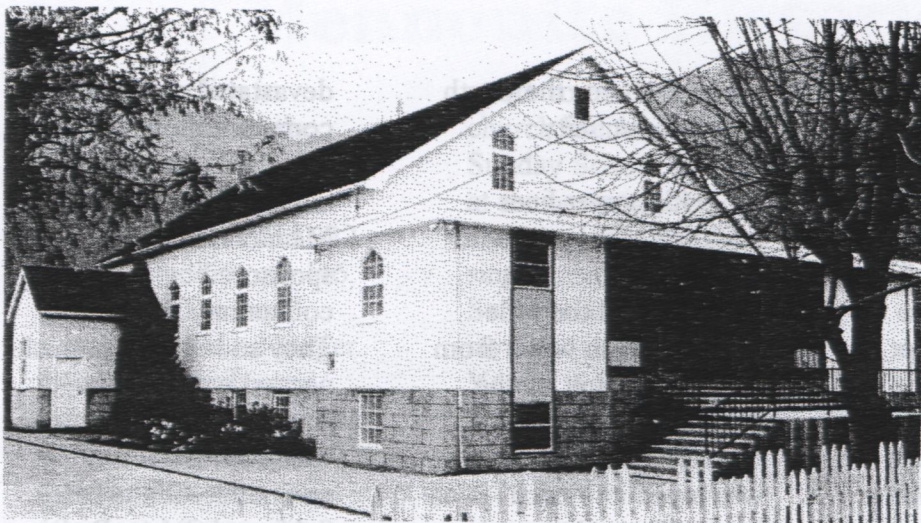
they should not have done so, given that Mennonite theology calls "for a complete separation of church and state". (p.43) Is such Mennonite political activism commendable or should it be opposed?

Several lesser assessments and interpretations should probably be revisited before any additional printings are undertaken. I suggest that it was not the "ambiguities of the Canadian constitution" which "made possible a gradual transition from the politics of special privilege and patronage to participatory democracy" (p.21), but the growing understanding among ever more prosperous Canadian Mennonites of the opportunities and responsibilities in a democratic state. Further, reference to the King of England should be changed to King of the United Kingdom although, as used in this context, the writer actually refers to the King of Canada. Third, it was not that "Mennonites were slow to respond to the appeal of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation party," they were simply reluctant and suspicious of socialism.

The author accepts the utility of the threefold categorization of ethnic, ethnic-religious, and religious Mennonites which I set out in a 1982 essay. The third type are those people who have no Mennonite family of faith. Unfortunately he defines this group inaccurately. Finally, any author would be well-advised either to define "antinomianism" or to use some other term.

All things considered, this slim volume is more significant than its brevity might suggest. It deserves a wide readership. All Mennonites, pastors, social scientists, Mennonite or non-Mennonite, who desire to understand how the heirs of the "third branch" of the Reformation have grappled with political change, and who desire to be informed and faithful citizens, should read this book...It should, of course, be available in all church and school libraries.

John H. Redekop, of Trinity Western University, is also an elected member of Abbotsford City Council. Dr. Redekop's review appeared in the Mennonite Historian, September 2000, and is reprinted here with the permission of Dr. Redekop.



The way we
were:

Arnold, a short history

by Helen Rose
Pauls

When they meet, people who grew up in Arnold often hug. The community was small, fifty families at its peak, and exceptionally homogenous. Unlike most Mennonite settlements in the Fraser Valley which had a division into General Conference and Mennonite Brethren groups, Arnold had only one M.B. church, so everyone knew everyone else. The village occupied a small and well-defined geographical area: Vedder Mountain to the east, the elevated BC Electric railway on the north, the international border to the south, and Arnold Slough to the west. Mennonite farmers who purchased larger tracts of farmland on the reclaimed Sumas flats to the north, added their numbers to the church as well. The

settlers arrived over the course of a few years and all were Mennonite, German speaking and relatively penniless. They needed each other in practical ways.

The Mennonite settlement in Arnold was comparatively recent and short, bookended by the sale of the land in the early 1940's and urbanisation in the late 1960's. A vibrant little church is still very active in the original building, but it is a "community church" and draws from a much more eclectic group than in the past.

John Perrigo originally owned the 400 fertile acres, and was eager to sell his land holdings to Mennonites after he witnessed the orderly development of Yarrow close by. He advertised in the "Rundschau" and

the "Winnipeg Free Press", and asked a Yarrow storekeeper, Jacob Neumann, to help him plan the subdivision of his land, and the sale of real estate. Young families, disillusioned after the depression on the prairies, were eager

to settle there with the promise of raspberry markets and work in the hopyards on nearby Sumas Prairie. The original acreage's were small, consisting of two, four, ten or twenty acres, and were advertised at \$150 an acre, with 1/3 down. Perrigo was advised to sell to at least two lay ministers to attract a Mennonite population.

By 1942, eight families had arrived with two ministers among them. Apparently, the Sumas Municipal Council felt

threatened by this sudden influx of German speaking neighbours, but soon realised that the many little acreages would provide a sound tax base and that these settlers were very adept at farming.

By 1946, fifty families had flocked to the comparatively small area, and were industriously improving their real estate with large kitchen gardens, orchards, small hip roof barns with haylofts and stanchions, milkhouses, hen houses, tool sheds, and of course, outhouses. The area began to resemble a checkerboard as raspberry plantings developed and grass flourished for the cows.

Co-operation was evident from the start. The Arnold Grower's Co-operative Union was established in 1944 to market the berry harvest, and a large cannery was built on Marion Road right up against Vedder Mountain.

In the same year, Mr. Jacob Neumann built a corner store with a real estate service. He supplied grocery staples, hardware, dairy feed, gas and also met some of the social needs of the day, as the store became a meeting place,

particularly for the youth in the community.

By 1945, power lines could be seen parallel to the gravel roads that criss-crossed the little village. Fresh water from a reservoir built by the settlers behind the B.C. Electric train powerhouse was piped into each home. Every homeowner had to pay the Arnold Water Works \$300.00 and do physical work on the project.

The church basement was useable for services as early as 1943. John Perrigo would have liked to have had the little community named after him, and offered to donate an acre of land for the church if his wish was granted. The leaders, however, chose to name the village "Arnold" after the train station and slough. Instead, they paid him \$150.00 for the land.

In 1945, the sanctuary of the church was finished and worship services could proceed in comfort. The church became the focal point of the little community and soon developed a rich spiritual and social life, fondly remembered by former inhabitants.

Arnold managed to escape the flooding which

devastated nearby communities in 1948. After the war ended, 13 dispossessed Prussian Mennonite families were sponsored by various community members. They soon became much-needed workers and found employment along with the rest of the community in the berry fields and Sumas Prairie hop yards. Whole families could be seen, from infant to grandparent, joining the many others as they proceeded down the long rows.

At the beginning of the new decade, European berry markets, which had flourished during the war, were gone. Excessive plantings and a bumper crop added to the berry industry's woes. Many farmers were unable to pay their pickers from the meagre proceeds from the berry crop, and one by one, they tried to diversify or find off farm employment to ward off foreclosure. It was a very difficult time and each family has stories of how they weathered it. Some farm holdings consolidated and families moved on to sawmill jobs in Vancouver or to the sandier soils of Clearbrook where strawberries were still viable, and a chicken industry was developing.

A steady decline in numbers followed the berry fiasco. Whereas in 1946, there were 125 church members and 222 in 1955, by 1966 only 146 remained. The small acreages could no longer maintain a family, and they became hobby farms for busy commuters and their families who were often not Mennonites. Many original Mennonite dairy operations were sold to Dutch farmers when it became evident that the sons of the pioneers were going off to Vancouver to get an education, leaving their farm roots and all of the struggle behind. The flavour of the little community changed, and by 1988, there were only 62 members on the church roster. Renewal during the 90's built up a true community church spirit, and it became known as "Arnold Community Church". Today there are 100 separate entries in the church directory, perhaps half of the names are ethnic "Mennonite".

People from Arnold tend to have a strong bond because they all grew up together. Many newlyweds were among the original settlers and they raised their children at the same time. There was much encouragement from the elders for the

youth to take part in church life, be that Sunday School teaching at the home church or the church plant at Straiton; singing in the Youth or Senior choirs, or getting involved in Jugend Verein, a Sunday evening service led totally by the youth.

Huge baptisms took place in the Yarrow creek. Weddings where the whole community was invited and helped along were joyous occasions. Care for the sick, the hurting, and the sorrowful was abundant. Teenagers worked together in the berry fields, played together at every opportunity, enjoying the temptations of the Lynden Roller Rink, the Sumas hamburger joints, Cultus Lake, climbing the Vedder Mountain, or just roaming the roads of Arnold. Church activities brought them together often and they walked home in droves, visiting and singing. We might have been called "Strassen Madchen" street girls, but that takes on a whole new meaning when you consider that everyone recognised each car that entered the trestle onto Arnold Road, and no one was a stranger. We were close knit like family.

A large reunion took place in 1988, bringing together 600 of the former inhabitants for reminiscing and visiting. Sometimes cars criss-cross the roads of Arnold and bored children listen to "There is the powerhouse where we caught bats" or "That is all that remains of the cannery where we spent so much time".

Arnold was a place and a way of life. It is encouraging to see that Arnold Church is again a vibrant place with a community dynamic. People and practices and employment have changed, but you can ask anyone who lives there and they will attest that their little village still has a strong sense of community.

What's in a name?

Names say a lot about who we are, where we come from.

We'd like to find a name for our newsletter, too.

Submit your ideas before the general meeting on May and you could be eligible to win tickets to the fall fund-raising banquet!

Send all entries to "newsletter" in care of the MHS address.

What's In a Name?

by Jacob Loewen

I was attending a Bible society meeting in Spain and a local church asked for a preacher from our conference. I was sent. The driver got lost and we arrived at the church late. The already desperate minister quickly left the pulpit and came to the back of the church to receive me. He asked me from what church I hailed. When I said "Mennonite", a most unexpected thing happened. He cupped his hands and shouted to his wife who was playing the organ, while the congregation was singing a hymn: "Querida, un Menonita! (Sweetheart, it's a Mennonite!)

At once the organ music stopped as the organist rushed the length of the church on stockinged feet, threw her arms around my neck - and gave me a resounding kiss. I was visibly embarrassed. When she realized that, she explained.

"During the Civil War, I and my family were kept alive by food which came in bags with clasped hands and a logo which said, 'In the name of Christ, Mennonite Central Committee.' As a family we then vowed that if anyone survived the war and ever met a Mennonite, that person was to kiss the Mennonite on behalf of the whole family." I was that first Mennonite!

Something happened then and there in my heart that made me very proud to be a Mennonite. That is why it has been so painful for me to come home to find so many of the ministers who occupy our Mennonite church pulpits still ashamed of the Mennonite name and the heritage it represents....

I repeat what I have said before. I think the reason we still have people who duck the Mennonite name, is that people do not know the value of that name in the world at large and they are ignorant of the priceless heritage that that name brings with it. It is my prayer that this writing may be a small step in the direction of changing that.

Dr. Jacob Loewen is a missionary/anthropologist. He worked in Columbia under MB Missions and was a translation consultant with the United Bible Societies in South America. This article appeared in the Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian and is reprinted here with the permission of Dr. Loewen