

Mennonite Historical Society of BC Newsletter

Vol. 7 No. 3

Summer 2001

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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Contributions are welcome.

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

Creating the Garden of Poland:

Mennonite Historical Society of BC Annual Fundraising Banquet.

Guest speaker: Dr. Peter J. Klassen

Long time Professor at Fresno State University and leading authority
on the Polish-Prussian Mennonites.

The Polish-Prussian Mennonites

- A story forgotten for four centuries
- A story of frontier leadership
- A story of faith
- A story of absolutistic Kings & rulers
- A story which continues today

Join us for a gourmet meal, a fascinating lecture
& special music at the

Garden Park Tower - October 20, 2001, at 6 P.M.

*Last year, tickets to this event sold out before the evening,
so purchase your tickets early!*

Third Annual Genealogical Workshop

Saturday, October 13th, 2001 at 8:30 am - 4:00 pm we will be hosting
a genealogical workshop with Dr. Tim Janzen. Cost will be \$45.00,
please call the MHS office at 853-6177 to register.



Holda Fast
Redekopp



William Reimer



Tony Funk

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Hours: 9:00am-4:00 pm Monday to Friday.

Editorial

From the strains of "Grosser Gott wir loben dich" to "Hab' oft im Kreise der Lieben" to "Lerchengesang", the "Invitation to Celebration" afternoon transported me back into another world. At times, emotion choked my voice, and I could not sing. Other times, I sang loudly, reveling in the blending of voices, as the prayers of the people in song filled the church. I appreciated every chance to sing along with the choir, to join my voice in praise with theirs.

Several days ago, I bought the CD recording of this afternoon. Once again, as I turned up the volume and let the music fill the room, I realized how important this part of my heritage and history is to me.

In 1932, my great-grandmother, Katharina Janzen, wrote a letter from a prison camp in Siberia, describing the harsh working conditions, the starvation, the almost overwhelming despair, and, in the midst of this, her abiding faith in God.

Letters

I was in the audience at Central Heights on May 27, attending the Historical Society's "Invitation to Celebration..." I thank the MHS and Holda Fast Redekopp (whose vision made the event possible) for the comprehensive overview of our heritage, superbly presented by emcee Tony Funk. I am grateful for the opportunity to sing ziffern (music written in numbers), to sing with a Vorsaenger, and to join the excellent choirs and orchestra in singing.

As the children and grandchildren of the conductors we were celebrating, rose to lead the choirs, as audience members who had sung with various conductors stood to be recognized, as the details of each conductor's contribution was articulated, I began to realize that this celebration was as much a tribute to excellent teachers as to musicians. Each man left a legacy that continues to thrive to the present.

As the emcee pointed out, the legacy also included Gemeinschaft (church as family or community). He reminded us that the introduction of four part harmony, which we take for granted as the foundation of our musical heritage, split the church. I could not help but wonder that Gemeinschaft could be so easily shattered by—of all things—music.

She described a funeral that she had attended for a Mrs. David Klassen. "It was a beautiful autumn Sunday," she wrote. "We did a lot of singing. And now we are no longer allowed to hold funeral services. Yet God's will be done. Pray for us, that we do not lose hope."

We, who are allowed to sing, should not forget those who were not allowed to do so in the past. May we also remember those who live in repressive regimes today, and are not allowed to worship in freedom.

LP

If you would like to purchase a recording of *Invitation to Celebration*, CDs and videos are available at the Historical Society office.

Audio recording (2 CDs) \$15

Video recording \$20

Several years later, we still haven't learned from our history. People still condemn others in the Gemeinde (church community) and marginalize them over matters of taste. The dogma of the day labels its view as 'spiritually superior'; as one view takes pre-eminence, another is cast aside.

While I enjoyed the artistry of the performers during the afternoon, I couldn't help but think of those whose God-given gifts were scorned by the community, and who have never received redress, much less celebration. These include painters, poets, preachers of the 'wrong' gender, playwrights, etc. Their legacy (or unrealized potential) has largely been ignored or lost. Perhaps this is something that the MHS or a doctoral candidate in search of a thesis could address, if not redress.

So I sat there, enjoying the lengthy excursion through the cultural cannon, acutely aware of the fact that there wasn't a place for every Mennonite-born bird in the choir. However, when the whole audience rose to sing the "Hallelujah Chorus" in a mighty voice, together with the mass choirs and orchestra, I could not help but be grateful to the legacy, in spite of its limits. Because it limited me, it also liberated me.

Verity Harms, Surrey, BC.

reprinted from the MB Herald, June 22. Used by permission.

We welcome your letters. You may send them to "Letters" Mennonite Historical Society of BC. 211-2825 Clearbrook Rd. Abbotsford, BC V2T 6S3, or send them directly to Louise_Price@mindlink.bc.ca. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Annual General meeting report

by Henry Neufeld

The annual general meeting of the BC Mennonite Historical Society was held on Sunday, May 27, at the Central Heights MB church, following the *Music in the Valley* event. Henry Rempel chaired the meeting in the absence of president John Konrad.

The year 2000 saw a record number of visitors to the office and archives, four successful public lectures, increase in volunteer help, and the establishment of an endowment fund. The Memorial Wall now has 33 plaques. A tax-deductible donation of \$500 will purchase one plaque honouring a BC Mennonite family. You are invited to come into the office to view these plaques, or to order a plaque honouring a family member.

Acquisitions

The Society has contributed to the microfilming of 120,000 pages of documents held in the Zaporsche Regional Archive. This four-year project, under the direction of Dr. Harvey Dyck, should result in our society receiving 109 reels of microfilmed records this year.

We also received 24,000 pages of microfilmed records from the Odessa archives, covering the period 1848-1853 and 1852-1856 from Dr. Paul Toews, Fresno. Dr. Tim Janzen of Portland provided material from Odessa archives from 1800-1912. Most of these materials are in the Russian language, and translation is underway.

Books and Resources available at the MHS office and library

by Hugo Friesen

Thesis

1. By Donald M. Baerg - Mennonite "Citizenship and Land Tenure" in Prussia - 17th & 18th centuries.

New Library Books.

1. *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada - 1875-2000*
Editor, Delbert Plett.
2. *When God Opens the Door* - Gladys Blyth - Story of MB church work in Prince Rupert and Port Edward.
3. *Getting Home Before Dark* : Stories of Wisdom for all Ages. Peter J. Dyck .
4. *Pioneer Years in Belize* - Cornelius Kroeker.
5. *Beyond These Mountains* - Dick Thiessen - Escape of Isaac and Liese Wiens from Russia.

Events

The events committee organized lectures by Cornelia Lehn (Mennonites in the Fraser Valley) Dr. Alfred Siemens (Mennonite Pioneer Settlements) and Dr. John B. Toews (Mennonite Women and Stalinism). A combined book launch and concert included the writings of John B. Toews, Harry Loewen, and John Krahn, and featured the Jubilee Singers conducted by Wilmer Neufeld.

Elections

Re-elected to the board were David Giesbrecht, Helen Rose Pauls, William J. Riediger, and Richard Thiessen.

Finances

Treasurer Ed Hildebrand expressed appreciation to the MHS membership for their generous donations which enable us to honour God and the work of our forbears. He noted that the year 2000 was a 'turnaround year' financially. In contrast to deficits of previous years, the society had a small surplus in the past year.

Your financial support is needed to continue the work of the society. We encourage our readers to remember the Mennonite Historical Society of BC and to make contributions by sending a donation, by contributing to the endowment fund, or by remembering the society in your will.

Family Histories

1. *Genealogy of Abraham Enns* - 1784-1991
2. *What is My House?* - Descendants of Claas Huebert 1785-1853
3. *Family Reflections* - Abram and Anna Falk Braun.
4. *The Story of My Life* - Cornelius H. Penner.

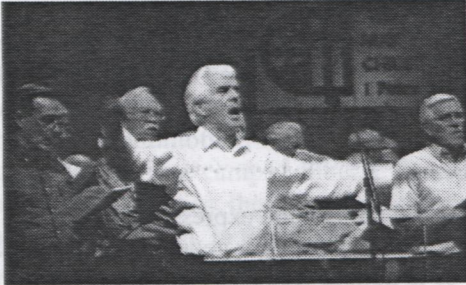
Microfilms

1. 109 Microfilms - received from Dr. Harvey L. Dyck regarding "Mennonites in Southern Ukraine, 1789-1941 from the Zaporozhe State Archives in Russian language.

Special events: Music in the Valley

by Henry Neufeld.

If singing were taken away from them, Mennonites would not know how to worship, according to a recently published book. Over 1500 people gathered recently to celebrate their musical heritage at the Central Heights Church on May 27. They came to demonstrate their desire to worship through choral and congregational singing and to show appreciation for their musical legacy.



Henry Wiebe conducting the congregation

While choral and four part congregational singing is disappearing from the church scene, this afternoon brought back memories of an era when choral music was valued and congregational singing was seen as an important part of worship. Sponsored by the BC Mennonite Historical Society, the tribute was given to some of the people who developed and maintained a strong choral and musical tradition in the Fraser Valley in the 1920 - 1960 era.

The significant musical contributions of George Reimer, Henry P. Neufeldt, Franz C. Thiessen, Cornelius Toews, Menno and Walter Neufeld, and violin maker Heinrich Friesen were acknowledged and interspersed with congregational and choral singing. A volunteer choir of over 130, consisting of people who had sung under or were descendants of one of the earlier musicians, were accompanied by a 34 piece string ensemble conducted by William Reimer.

Narrator Tony Funk provided historical comments on the life and work of these musicians as well as describing the development of choral singing in the Mennonite churches. Based on material researched by John Klassen, Funk pointed out that Mennonites have always been known for their humanitarian concerns, their sense of community, and their love of music.

"I am indebted to these people who are no longer with us," he said. When the Mennonites emigrated from Russia to Canada they brought their music with them. "Tyrants could not silence the voices of people singing," he said.

In the late 1920's George Reimer directed the Yarrow MB choir and was a strong supporter of community choral groups. Musical instruments were rare and a pump organ was used to accompany singers. In the late 1920's the Yarrow MB church purchased a Steinway grand piano which is now being refurbished. Erna Tilitzky played the pump organ, brought in for this celebration, to accompany a congregational song.

Franz C. Thiessen and C.D. Toews taught music at the MEI from 1950 -1960. Toews developed a number of smaller choral groups. Toews' son Neil conducted the choir for part of this celebration. Menno and Walter Neufeld taught music to a whole generation of young people in the 1950's and 60's. At one time, said Funk, all of the registered music teachers in the Fraser Valley were former students of the Neufeld brothers.

The descendants of many of these early musical leaders were acknowledged and a women's ensemble consisting of the daughter and granddaughters of these early musicians sang Mendelsohn's 'Lift Thine Eyes.' The choir sang traditional hymns as well as selections from Bach and Hayden. The afternoon closed with the choir and congregation singing the Hallelujah Chorus from the Messiah.

Tell the next generation is part of the mission of the BC Mennonite Historical Society. The enthusiastic response to this celebration reminds us of the rich musical heritage, now in danger of being lost. Congregational and choral singing are among the most important activities in which people engage in worship. The youth of the Pacific Mennonite Children's Choir provided hope that a choral tradition is being maintained.

This event, planned by the MHS and a music committee consisting of Holda Fast Redekopp, Henry Wiebe, and John Klassen, received financial support from Vancouver's Anabaptist Foundation.



Erna Tilitzky at the pump organ

Eichenfeld/Dubrovka: A Mennonite tragedy

by John B. Toews.

During a 1995 visit to Ukraine, some members of a tour group Lillian and I were leading visited the former Mennonite settlement of Iazikova. At Eichenfeld (now Novopetrovka) we searched for the mass graves containing the remains of some 85 people killed during the night of October 26, 1919, by members of the partisan army led by the anarchist, Nester Makhno. In our quest, we met ninety-three year old Safron Tretyak, who lived in the village. He recounted the events of that tragic night. He wasn't sure why it had happened—he was a teenager at the time—but he felt it should not have happened. "They were good people," he said. He had worked for some of them and remembered a few names—von Kampen, Friesen, Dyck—all persons on the register of those murdered.

Why the killings? The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 brought about the collapse of traditional governing structures on both the national and local level. The districts (*volosts*) in which the Mennonite settlements were situated, were now controlled by *soviets* (councils) of peasants and workers. These were mainly composed of the economically underprivileged, who frequently used their new powers to better their status. From the Mennonite standpoint, the first months of Bolshevik power were characterized by extortion and bloodshed.

Any hope for a return to normalcy vanished with the outbreak of the civil war, which pitted the so-called Red and White armies against each other. It was a conflict in which prisoners were usually shot. As the war ravaged Ukraine, the followers of Nester Makhno operated in the regions where neither the Whites nor the Reds could gain control. A Red Army offensive in March 1919, brought Bolshevik soldiers as far south as the Molotschna Settlement. Then, in late spring, General Denikin's White Army once more swept northward.

Meanwhile, in a surprise attack, the Makhnovzi broke through White Army defenses and overran the Zgradovka, Chortitza and Iazikova colonies. By October 1919, they reached the Molotschna. What followed was a reign of terror characterized by extortion, robbery, rape and murder.

The Makhno activities resulted in several massacres. The first of these occurred in Eichenfeld and nearby villages in late October; the second in Blumenort, Molotschna in mid-November.

Another attack involved six villages in the Zgradovka Settlement between November 24, and December 1, 1919, culminating when Muensterberg was subjected to fire and sword. The village was burned, and almost one hundred people, including eighteen women and thirty-six children, lost their lives. In nearby Orloff, forty-four persons were killed.

Why this rash of killings at this late stage in the civil war? A partial answer may lie in the callousness of war, which brutalizes the combatants and strikes capriciously at innocent victims, often without identifiable motive. Some ascribe an ideological motive to Nestor Makhno. As an anarchist, he believed chaos would eventually create order. A more plausible motive related to his hatred of all Germans in Ukraine. Then too, the lack of public order allowed all criminal elements free reign.

Moreover, it seems that the massacres were not unrelated to the activities of the Selbstschutz. The Selbstschutz, a Mennonite militia organized to curb the attacks of the Makhnovzi on the Mennonite villages, possibly provided a pretext for Makhnovzi revenge, since some degree of Selbstschutz activity was present in each of these villages.

The unveiling of a memorial stone to the Mennonite victims of the Nikolaipol district (mentioning specifically those killed in Eichenfeld and Hochfeld) is very much in order. Hopefully, this will be the first of several such memorials.

The following issues of the Historical Society Newsletter will feature several eyewitness accounts of the massacres. These stories reflect individual experiences, yet provide a sense of the whole.

Eichenfeld/Dubrovka was a well-planned massacre. The village was surrounded by the last contingent of Makhnovzi, which then set about systematically killing the male inhabitants. The victims at one end of the village were shot, while the others were hacked to death with sabers. The accounts provided some sense of the fear and horror associated with the massacre and the shock and pathos experiences by the survivors. The portraits of the Makhnovzi are chilling: crazed killers one minute, courteous breakfast guest the next. On the Mennonite side, with a few exceptions, there is piety, resoluteness and even calmness in the face of certain death. (continued next issue.)

The way we were: Ootsa Lake Bible camp

by David Loewen

Ootsa Lake Bible Camp is situated on the shores of Ootsa Lake, approximately 70 kilometres south of Burns Lake, reached by crossing Francois Lake by ferry. Fifty years ago there was no lake and there was no camp. In the early 1950s, Alcan built its aluminum smelter at Kitimat, requiring a reliable and abundant source of hydro-electricity, resulting in the building of the Kemano Dam and creation of several new lakes, including Ootsa Lake. In 1952, Peter Funk, a West Abbotsford church member who had acquired a contract for clearing the land that was to be flooded, purchased a 5-acre parcel that would eventually become lake frontage. Cabins were moved onto the property and refurbished for his workers' use, but were left vacant once the job had been completed.

Two of Funk's workers, Abe Buhler and Jack Nickel were among those teaching Vacation Bible School in the area to children who had no opportunity to attend Sunday School. They returned to Abbotsford with a dream for a Bible Camp at Ootsa. They took this dream to Peter Funk and the West Abbotsford Young Peoples' group. The challenge was accepted and in 1956, the West Abbotsford Young People purchased Ootsa Lake Bible Camp from Funk for \$1.00. Eventually the ownership was transferred to the Church.



Chapel at Ootsa Lake, c. 1960

While Jack Nickel, with the help of others, prepared the buildings for the first camping season, back in Abbotsford a quarter of beef was purchased and canned since no electricity was yet available at the site. "We purchased some other supplies, loaded them in a trailer and headed north in excitement and also fear," said Abe Buhler.

Approximately 30 people, including campers and staff, attended that first camp in August, 1956. "We had a great time with the kids, and many made commitments to Christ, which was encouraging and exciting," said Buhler. Some of the local population viewed the camp with suspicion, while others readily entrusted their children to the staff. The first year had its share of growing pains. Supplies were limited, cooking facilities cramped, and the stove was a wood-burning model. In addition, the staff had to cope with the neighbour's cows and with bears.

Health regulations forced the camp to be held at another site the next year, but by 1959, the first campers' cabin had been built. Still, there were many challenges. In 1960, camp director Bill Dyck sent this report at the end of the first week:

Our wood and sawdust supply was nil. Hope to get some sawdust on Wednesday. We borrowed a power saw and even at the moment it is going strong. All water is being hauled from the public dock half a mile away. It is also being used for drinking. We are purchasing a roll of roofing paper because it is needed badly for one girls' cabin as well as for our office home, bathrooms, and washrooms.

Some church members who could not afford the time to go up north helped by donating the use of an electric generator, finding mattresses, and donating produce. Others assisted by canning food for the camp. The long weekend in May developed into a traditional work camp for volunteers. On more than one occasion, John Froese flew the group up in a Cessna airplane.

During the mid-1960s, discussions were held regarding relocation nearer to Burns Lake, but after much soul-searching and input from local residents, the recommendation was to leave the camp where it was and focus on improving the facilities.

In the 1970's, a working agreement was developed whereby the operation of the camp was split between the northern churches and West Abbotsford Mennonite Church. Annual camp budgets were set up jointly. The agreement provided that West Abbotsford would not sell or lease the camp to a third party without the written consent of the northern committee. In the 1980's the decision was made to sell the camp to the local churches for \$1.00, and to allow them to assume full responsibility for it.

Over the years, the camping season has lengthened from two weeks to six weeks, and now includes such activities as canoeing and archery. In the first years, most staff members were primarily from West Abbotsford. Today, although the Northern communities supply most of the staff, small groups of young people from West Abbotsford still travel north to serve.

Peter Funk's son, Harvey, has lived near the camp for most of its history, and has played a major role in the life of the camp, keeping a watchful eye on the property in the off-season.

Through the years, the purpose of the camp has remained constant. One of Ootsa's pioneers, Jack Nickel, wrote:

We discovered to our joy and encouragement later on that the work of the camp and its ministry began to have positive and lasting effects on the local family... I believe also that the church at West Abbotsford derived a great deal of good, just getting involved.



Peter and Sara Funk, whose generous gift of land made the camp possible.

Profiles: Hugo Friesen

by Henry Neufeld.

With this issue we begin a series of profiles on Board members of the Mennonite Historical Society of BC. Hugo Friesen brings a rich and varied career history to his work as archivist of the BCMHS. He has been a teacher, principal, administrator, MCC volunteer, and archivist.

Hugo was born on a farm near Kenton, Manitoba in Woodworth Municipality (near Oak Lake) to Cornelius and Maria (Hooze) Friesen. The family moved to B.C. in 1934 and settled in Greendale, at the time called Sardis, where he attended Sumas Elementary School. Hugo attended Sharon Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Yarrow, graduating in 1949. He attended Tabor College from 1953-54 and graduated from Goshen College in 1955.

Hugo met Jean Wismer at Brooklane Farm, Maryland, where Jean was an MCC volunteer. Not long after their interest in each other developed, Hugo left for his two year voluntary service assignment in Europe. Their letter writing romance started. Jean came to Europe for the Mennonite World Conference and also traveled to Nuremberg to visit Hugo; it was under a starry sky in Nuremberg that Hugo proposed to Jean. They were married in 1953 at Deep Run Mennonite church in Bedminster, Pennsylvania. They have four children and ten grandchildren.

From 1955 to 1963, Hugo was on staff at the Sharon Mennonite Collegiate in Yarrow; five of those years as principal. From 1969 to 1979 Hugo was principal of MEI in Clearbrook and continued as teacher until 1989.

Hugo, Jean and their children served in Hong Kong with MCC from 1963-1966 where they directed food distribution (they were in charge of preparing up to

4,000 meals a day) and provided material aid and funds for needy students. Hugo and Jean also volunteered with MCC Self-help Crafts in Akron, Pennsylvania from 1989 to 1993. On returning to Abbotsford Hugo was the part-time administrator at Menno Pavilion, and also served as Board Member on the Mennonite Benevolent Society.

At present Hugo works as archivist for MHS, sings in a church Senior's choir, is chairman of the Advisory Council of Garden Park Tower and serves on two Senior's committees. Hugo and Jean attend the South Abbotsford MB church. Despite this busy schedule, Hugo finds time to pursue stamp collecting, his genealogical interests, and reading. Currently he is reading Pearl Buck's "Kinfolk".

Hugo joined the MHS Board as archivist in 1993. His work involves coordinating all the activities in our office, orienting and directing the work of volunteers, representing the MHS at the regional meetings of the BC Archives Association, helping people with genealogical research and reviewing incoming historical material.

"We have an excellent Board that works hard at fulfilling our mandate. The special events and programs are great and I believe we are accomplishing something that will be meaningful for generations to come," said Hugo.

Hugo sees the importance of the work of the MHS. "Our churches have a great heritage and even though sometimes it is easy to forget, we need to be reminded where we have come from and how the Lord has led us as a people through difficult and also good times. MHS is providing a vehicle by which these many experiences can be remembered and told to the next generations."

A Light on a Hill: The Mennonite Centre

a report excerpted from the website www.Mennonitecentre.com



The Mennonite Centre project arises in response to widespread sentiments, that we should be doing more in Ukraine, given the severity of the crisis and the spiritual and psychological ties that bind us to Ukraine. The human and material resources to do a great deal more are available and there is a clear willingness for Mennonites worldwide to pitch in and help.

We guardedly share the expectations of Molochansk Mayor Alexandra V. Saenko, who said: "I know Mennonites quite well. I've seen what they did here in the past. I think the Centre offers our devastated people a little hope. Perhaps the Maedchenschule will become a 'light on a hill.' We are eager to work with you." With open hands and in a spirit of reconciliation, the Mennonite Centre accepts this challenge.

The Mennonite Centre will develop through overlapping stages. The first stage started with the already-completed funding and purchase of the school. Stage two will see the start of the first food, medical, and social assistance initiatives. A third stage will follow programs of agricultural, educational, and humanitarian assistance.

New religious freedoms in post-Soviet Ukraine have created opportunities for church-planting, evangelism and humanitarian aid to which Western Mennonites have responded strongly. In Zaporozhe, Frank and Nettie Dyck, Peter and Sue Kehler, and Jake and Dorothy Unrau, have devotedly pastored the Mennonite congregation since its formation in the mid-1990s. The church is the legal owner of the

Maedchenschule and has become a keen partner in the Centre project. The Dycks have further spear-headed the rebuilding of the former Petershagen Mennonite church. Close to Molochansk, its reappearance as a village church has been warmly greeted in the area. The development has opened doors and strongly encouraged our efforts.

In the 1970s, tourists began looking up abjectly poor relatives who had suffered in Stalinist times, and provided them with badly needed moral and financial aid. By the 1980s and 1990s assistance of this kind sensitized groups of visitors to the escalating needs of the larger Ukrainian society. Tours now started to bring in substantial donations of medical equipment and supplies. Tour-related press stories helped popularize the idea of increased Mennonite aid to Ukraine and played an important role in the birth of the Mennonite Centre concept.

On April 10, 2000, members of the Mennonite Heritage Club in Toronto heard about the possibility of acquiring a historic Mennonite building in Molochansk for humanitarian uses. It decided to found an international association entitled "Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine", which would define its mandate, expand its membership internationally, and raise funds to buy, renovate and operate a building in Molochansk.

Strategically important in the crystallization of the Centre project was a day-long meeting at University of Toronto in June 2000, chaired by Nicholas Dick and Walter Unger and with a keynote introduction by Harvey Dyck. It involved some forty interested persons: charter members of the Friends of the Centre. Art and Marlyce Friesen, cardiologists from Vancouver, suggested a study of medical needs in the Molochansk area and the possibility of opening a polyclinic there staffed by Ukrainian doctors and nursing practitioners. Dr John Martens, a plant biologist from Ottawa, outlined projects including farm manager training exchanges, sustainable farming practises, and credit unions. Dr John Staples explored the possibility of food programs for needy seniors and children.

Mennonite Centre, con't

Paul Toews, a historian at Pacific University, Fresno California, explored Centre-related means of presenting and interpreting the Mennonite story in Ukraine. Peter Klassen, past Dean of Social Science, State University of California in Fresno, suggested ways of incorporating a memorial role into the Centre program. Winnipeg architect Rudy Friesen presented proposals and sketches for the restoration and adaptation of the Maedchenschule building. Ben Falk, a veteran Mennonite Central Committee worker, movingly described his and his wife Erna's economic and community development work in Western Siberia.

We fully expect to cooperate with MCC in defining the elements and stages of our mission and in initiating collaborative programs. But we realize that the scope and nature of our challenging project may well fall outside current MCC community-development models. The history of Mennonites in Ukraine provides us with special opportunities and perhaps also special obligations. For Mennonites to make a difference in Ukraine we will need the resources and commitments of many.

RETURN OF THE KANADIER MENNONITES: A HISTORY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

a call for academic papers

An academic conference examining the history of the immigration and integration of Kanadier Mennonites from Paraguay, Mexico and other Latin American countries into Canada will be held in Winnipeg in October 2002.

The conference will pay special attention to the accomplishments of these Mennonite immigrants and the challenges they faced as they integrated into Canada. While the conference will hear about the Mennonite migrants who left Canada for Latin America during the 1920s and 1940s, the main focus will be on the return of their descendants between 1960 and 2000. The conference will feature papers on Kanadier immigrant communities in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, Nova Scotia, British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

Among the issues that will be examined are the following: 1) community formation, 2) work and economics, 3) gender and family relations, 4) health, 5) inter-group relations, 6) education, 7) religious teaching, 8) relations with government, 9) migration and diasporic culture, 10) transplanted Latino and Low German cultures.

The organizing committee welcomes paper proposals in the length of 100 words. They should be mailed to either: Ken Reddig, Mennonite Central Committee, Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, Manitoba or to Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2E9.

The location of the conference will be in Winnipeg; an announcement of the exact location will be forthcoming. The dates of the conference are Friday, October 4 and Saturday, October 5, 2002.

The conference is sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, Chair in Mennonite Studies (U of Winnipeg), Mennonite Central Committee, and Canadian Mennonite University

Websites of Interest

1. Mennonite Centre of Ukraine (Maedchenschule project).

Describes the purpose and history of the Mennonite Centre project. www.mennonitecentre.com

2. Taras Shevchenko Museum of Canada. 1614 Bloor St. West, Toronto, ON Tel: 416 534-8662

Read a number of poems by the *Bard of the Ukraine*, as well as a biography and background history.
<http://209.82.14.226/shevchenkomuseum>

3. Soviet Archives. Archives of the Library of Congress. Rooms contain artifacts describing the artificial famine of 1932/33. Letters by Lenin and Stalin, as well as other historical documents.

<http://archive.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Experimental/soviet.exhibit/entrance.html>

My Friendly Epistle

by Taras Shevchenko

To the Dead, the Living, and to
Those Yet Unborn, My
Countrymen all Who Live in
Ukraine and Outside Ukraine,

*If a man say, I Love God, and
hate his brother, he is a liar,
I John iv. 20*

Day dawns, then comes the twilight grey,
The limit of the live-long day;
For weary people sleep seems best
And all God's creatures go to rest.
I, only, grieve like one accursed,
Through all the hours both last and first,
Sad at the crossroads, day and night,
With no one there to see my plight;
No one can see me, no one knows me;
All men are deaf, no ears disclose me;
Men stand and trade their mutual chains
And barter truth for filthy gains,
Committing shame against the Lord
By harnessing for black reward
People in yokes and sowing evil
In fields commissioned by the Devil...
And what will sprout? You soon will see
What kind of harvest there will be!
Come to your senses, ruthless ones,
O stupid children, Folly's sons!
And bring that peaceful paradise,
Your own Ukraine, before your eyes;
Then let your heart, in love sincere,
Embrace her mighty ruin here!
Break then your chains, in love unite,
Nor seek in foreign lands the sight
Of things not even found above,
Still less in lands that strangers love...
Then in your own house you will see
True justice, strength, and liberty!

Gain knowledge, brothers! Think and read,
And to your neighbours' gifts pay heed, --
Yet do not thus neglect your own:
For he who is forgetful shown
Of his own mother, graceless elf,
Is punished by our God Himself.
Strangers will turn from such as he

And grudge him hospitality --
Nay, his own children grow estranged;
Though one so evil may have ranged
The whole wide earth, he shall not find
A home to give him peace of mind.

Sadly I weep when I recall
The unforgotten deeds of all
Our ancestors: their toilsome deeds!
Could I forget their pangs and needs,
I, as my price, would than suppress
Half of my own life's happiness...

Such is our glory, sad and plain,
The glory of our own Ukraine!
I would advise you so to read
That you may see, in very deed,
No dream but all the wrongs of old
That burial mounds might here unfold
Before your eyes in martyred hosts,
That you might ask those grisly ghosts:
Who were the tortured ones, in fact,
And why, and when, were they so racked?...

Then o my brothers, as a start,
Come, clasp your brothers to your heart, --
So let your mother smile with joy
And dry her tears without annoy.
Blest be your children in these lands
By touch of your toil-hardened hands,
And, duly washed, kissed let them be
With lips that speak of liberty!
Then all the shame of days of old,
Forgotten, shall no more be told;
Then shall our day of hope arrive,
Ukrainian glory shall revive,
No twilight but the dawn shall render
And break forth into novel splendour...
Brother, embrace! Your hopes possess,
I beg you in all eagerness!

Viunishcha, December 14, 1845

*Translated by C. H. Andrusyshen & W.
Kirkconnell. Reproduced by permission of the
Shevchenko Museum, Toronto, Canada.*

Taras Shevchenko, 'Bard of the Ukraine', was born a serf in Morynitsi, Ukraine in 1814. He showed such artistic promise, that wealthy patrons sponsored his studies at St. Petersburg. In 1836, he gained his freedom from serfdom. Because of his involvement in the movement for Ukrainian independence, he was sentenced to an army post in the Ural Mountains in 1847. He was pardoned in 1857, and continued to promote Ukrainian culture in his art and poetry until his death in 1861.