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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

Quilting by Lacey Friesen

Mennonites and New Beginnings

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Editorial

By Maryann Tjart Jantzen

Mennonites have often been on the move, looking for new opportunities, either by necessity or the desire to improve their circumstances, both personal and communal. This issue features several articles that tell of important new beginnings in new places, for example, the late 1940s Yarrow Athletic Association's determination to build infrastructure to facilitate "secular" community sports, partly funded by the showing of movies at the Yarrow Public School. Such a development would have been new indeed for this time and place. And with a humorous touch, Helen Rose Pauls' "Shortie Coats" highlights the desire for cultural assimilation so typical of children of early 20th century Mennonite immigrants from the Soviet Union.

In addition, Brian Cooper writes of how he found a new home in the Mennonite Brethren church, as he explored unknown maternal family connections and Anabaptist history and theology. Readers will also appreciate the often involuntary and frequently harsh new beginnings forged by those fleeing Soviet oppression, as they had to create new life narratives in unfamiliar places. Some like Johann Johann Toews had the resilience to start new artistic pursuits even late in life. Or like Elisabeth Boldt Bergen, trapped in the USSR, to have hope until her death that she might still be reunited with her sons in Germany and faraway Canada.

This issue also features a fascinating article that investigates DNA evidence and ancient history to explore the possibility that some Mennonite surnames originating in the Vistula Delta have Scandinavian, likely Danish, origins. And we have included a number of book reviews to whet your appetite for summer reading. We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as you do these lovely long days of summer.

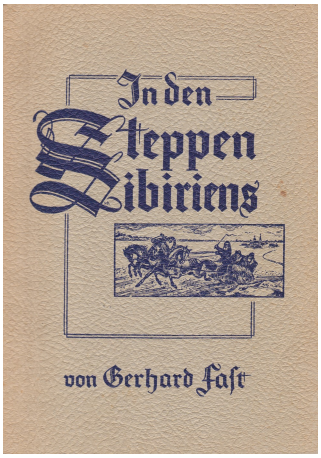
Letters to the editors

Re. review of an old book, *In den Steppen Sibiriens* (1957) (*Roots and Branches* June 2016)

I would like to enter a few points of criticism with reference to Robert Martens' review of Gerhard Fast's 1957 book, *In den Steppen Sibiriens,* as presented in your recent issue of *Roots and Branches* (22/2). I happen to be the grandson of Peter J. Wiebe, Fast's major collaborator in the gathering of material for this book. In fact, as the *Vorwort* (preface) states clearly, Wiebe, living in Vineland, Ontario, gathered the major portion of material for this book. As I know firsthand, my grandfather was perhaps prevented from doing the editorial work himself, or beginning to do so, because he had a bad case of eczema and advanced arteriosclerosis and therefore asked his friend and collaborator Gerhard Fast to take over. This is intimated in the preface.

When my grandfather died in 1961, the copy he received from Gerhard Fast, dated April 18, 1957, and inscribed by the author, was handed down to me.[1]

You were quite right to say that the settlement on the Kulunda Steppe (as they wished it to continue) "only lasted a few years." By this statement, Gerhard Fast would have meant under Mennonite self-government. Fast was reflecting what the settlers felt about the arrival after the German-Russian war of 1914-17 of German-speaking communists who were placed to intervene in the settlers' affairs during Lenin's forced grain accumulation during the Civil War years, 1918-1921. In that sense, the Kulunda Mennonites felt they had had only about ten years of complete independence as a colony.



They welcomed the years of self-development during the New Economic Policy that Lenin announced in 1921. They developed a thriving milk industry by proximate villages working together, somewhat like a collective. Then under Stalin's leadership in Moscow they were faced in 1929 with the implementation of the first Five-Year Plan with its collectivization. This, when implemented, of course took away their independence, collapsed their villages where deemed necessary, and placed them under sometimes harsh administration. In Orlovo there was a great deal of resistance, and some of the Mennonites stood in defiance in the fall of 1930. A second instance occurred in 1934, according to Johannes Schellenberg's *History of Orlovo* (in Russian), when they were put down ruthlessly after Molotov, Stalin's foreign minister, visited Slavgorod in 1934.[2] Entire families were put on a barge that would take them into exile.

After that there was a new beginning for those who submitted and worked in the system. In my book *A Time to be Born,* on page 236, I tell the story of one family that conformed following the purges of 1937-38 and worked in the system for a whole generation, raising a family of

eight children in Protassow, all of whom received adequate schooling, and built two houses. That family left for Germany in 1993.

The colony is now something different though there has been continuity. I learned from my visit to my birthplace in Orlovo (Orloff) in 2000 that Orlovo, founded in 1908, is a thriving place, a village with six cross-streets whose images on the Internet are impressive, as is Protassow, fifteen kms away, where I stayed with the Cornelius Baerg family for five days. True, some of the smaller villages were collapsed at the time of collectivization to make villages like Protassow and Orlovo more manageable and productive as units overseen by managers.

One more thing. I noticed that you used the term "holocaust" to refer to Stalin's brutality toward anyone who was suspected of standing in his way. He particularly tried to destroy all those whom he could label as "kulaks," the richer peasants and farmers. **It should be clear, however, that the term Holocaust is reserved by historians for the Nazi attempt to destroy all Jews in any country in which they had even a temporary hold, as in Ukraine.**

I will leave aside the debate whether the term **genocide** (the determination to wipe out a whole people, as Turkey tried to do in Armenia) may be applied to Stalin's terror campaigns and his total abuse of people, his own people, whether German or majority Russians. It is clear that the term *Holodomor* is applied to the Soviet-made famine in Ukraine in the early 1930s.

The archive in Barnaul which I visited, accompanied by Johannes Schellenberg and a Russian Rotary friend in the year 2000, had a collection of 42,000 names of those repressed in one form or another (*die Repressalien*) in the Altai (south-western Siberia, capital Barnaul). I leafed through some of the documents. Russian names outnumbered German. The Russian, Oleg, age 52 in the year 2000, could not believe what he was seeing: "What in God's name, did these people do to deserve such treatment?"

I appreciated the article in the same issue of *Roots and Branches* by Daphne Esau Kamphuis, but I noted that she too used the term holocaust rather loosely.

[1] Royden Loewen seems to have found an early edition of Fast's manuscript, perhaps handed to Cornelius Krahn in Newton, Kansas, for the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. In any case, in collaboration with the late Paul Toews, surveying writings about Siberia, Loewen was able to date *In den Steppen Sibiriens* as 1952, in *JMS* [missing the issue number. I had all the issues but gave them to MHSA when we moved last year.]

[2] Stalin visited Siberia in 1930. His sleigh is on display in Barnaul Museum.

Peter Penner, Professor Emeritus, Calgary

We welcome all letters to the editor. Please mail correspondence to 1818 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford, BC, V2T 5X4; or email to archives@mhsbc.com. Letters may be edited for length or content.

Upcoming Events

Summer Movie Matinées at the Museum

Come and enjoy free viewings of award-winning, historical feature films in the comfort of our in-house theatre. You are invited to take part in an informal discussion time in our Coffee Shop following the film presentations. All showtimes are 1 pm.

August Schedule

» Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays
And When They Shall Ask
» Tues, Aug 1; Thurs, Aug 3
Remembering Russia 1914-1927
» Tues, Aug 8; Thurs, Aug 10
Remembering Russia 1928-1938
» Tues, Aug 15; Thurs, Aug 17
The Great Trek Part 1; The Great Trek Part 2
» Tues, Aug 22; Thurs, Aug 24
Through the Red Gate
» Tues, Aug 29; Thurs, Aug 31
Through the Desert Goes Our Journey

Limited seating. Register by calling 604-758-5667
1818 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford, BC

Genealogy Workshop

Saturday, November 4, 2017
Mark your calendars! Book your flights! Watch for registration information for the MHSBC annual fall genealogy workshop.

Menno Comedy

Friday, September 29, 2017
MHSBC presents an evening featuring Menno Comedy.
Details to come.

A Telling Stories Event: An evening with Rudy Wiebe

Friday, October 27, 2017
Details to come.

Call for Papers: Mennonites and the Holocaust

Location: Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas
March 16 and 17, 2018
Proposal deadline: Sept. 1, 2017
mla.bethelks.edu/MennosandHolocaust

Memorial to Jews slaughtered by Nazis near Halbstadt, Molotschna colony, in 1941. Photo: Louise Bergen Price

The history of Mennonites as victims of violence in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly on the territory of the Soviet Union, and as relief workers during and after the Second World War has been studied by historians and preserved by many family histories. This commemorative and celebratory history, however, hardly captures the full extent of Mennonite views and actions related to nationalism, race, war, and survival. It also ignores extensive Mennonite pockets of sympathy for Nazi ideals of racial purity and, among some in the diaspora, an exuberant identification with Germany that has also long been noted. Now in the last decade an emerging body of research has documented Mennonite involvement as perpetrators in the Holocaust in ways that have not been widely known or discussed. A wider view of Mennonite interactions with Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, Roma, *Volksdeutsche*, and other groups as well as with state actors is therefore now necessary. This conference aims to document, publicize, and analyze Mennonite attitudes, environments, and interactions with others in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s that shaped their responses to and engagement with Nazi ideology and the events of the Holocaust.

Paper topics are welcomed from a variety of perspectives, such as social, economic, political, cultural, theological, religious, historical and gender analysis. Some sample questions for consideration that could be applied in specific geographic settings include the following: How and why was the alignment of traditional Mennonite theology with Nazi ideals articulated? What were historical Mennonite attitudes toward and experience with Jews in the various European states? How did those historical attitudes and experiences with Jews impact involvement? How did varying national settings – Dutch, German, or Soviet, for example – affect Mennonite actions? What was the range and scope of Mennonite identity and how did that influence actions? How did Mennonites think about who counted as Mennonite and why? How did various state actors identify who was Mennonite and what was at stake in those determinations? How were Mennonites represented in media and/or government reports?

How did Mennonites represent themselves? What was the relationship between national identities and Mennonite identity? How did gender impact Mennonite responses to the Holocaust? What evidence is there that Mennonites resisted Nazi policies or worked to save targeted people? Where and how did Mennonite business people act as suppliers to Nazi systems? Were Mennonites beneficiaries of the Holocaust by taking over Jewish properties or otherwise? What was Mennonite experience with or as war criminals? What were Mennonites' experiences as members of the various militaries and Holocaust-related events? How did Mennonites deal with their involvement with the German regime in the immediate postwar years?

Submit a one-page proposal that includes a title, a description of the proposed paper, a short explanation of the stage of your research (work-in-progress, new paper, previously published), and a one- to two-page CV by September 1, 2017, to John Thiesen at jthiesen@bethelks.edu.

Registration and lodging costs will be covered for all presenters. Some travel subsidies will also be available. Publication of selected conference papers is planned.

Co-organizers: John Sharp, Hesston College, Hesston, Kansas; Mark Jantzen, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas; and John Thiesen, Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas.

Two Reflections on the Historical Society Lecture Featuring John D. Roth: The Global Anabaptist Movement.

March 17, 2017, Clearbrook MB Church

Reported by David Giesbrecht

Dr. Roth teaches history at Goshen College (IN), and is the editor of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. He sees himself as a "scholar of the church," with an emphasis on church renewal. He has travelled and interacted widely with fellow Anabaptists, as well as written extensively on Anabaptists and their organizations.

In preliminary remarks, Roth reflected with some pessimism on the aging of the Mennonite church in America, noting that the average age of baptized members in the USA is now 58. He also expressed concern over the deep fissures dividing American Mennonites, often along contemporary political lines.

As a historian, he is well aware of the historic suspicion towards Anabaptists among Lutheran and Reformed scholars, who once characterized the Anabaptist movement as the "Deformation within the Reformation." However, Dr. Roth also offered reasons for hope in a robust Anabaptist future. Historically, the rift between Anabaptists and their Reformation opponents is healing. Globally, there are now Anabaptist churches in 90 countries, constituting a membership of 1.2 million. Especially calling attention to itself is the vigour of Anabaptism in Africa, India and Asia, with the largest number of adherents being in Ethiopia (perhaps some 400,000). Not insignificantly, there is a vibrant interest in Anabaptist ideals among European Christians, many of whom do not leave their own denominations while cultivating values reflected in the Anabaptist spiritual tradition.

The central question Dr. Roth addressed was this: do we (North American Mennonites) view the global Anabaptist church as a threat or a source of our own reinvigoration? If Catholics find their identity in an ecclesial hierarchy with the Pope at the apex, Anglicans in their liturgy, and Lutherans in the Augsburg Confession, where is the locus of a global Anabaptist faith? And what is the glue that keeps Anabaptists together as a family?

Creatively, Dr. Roth proposed a new metaphor around which an identity can be found – that being the botanical image of a rhizome, by which a tangle of invisible (below surface) roots allows for new different plants to emerge, although all are fed and nurtured by the same unseen, intricate network. Given the continuing attraction of many to this understanding of discipleship, Roth thinks that Anabaptists "are now living in a time of profound renewal."

In practice, such a paradigm is visible, for example, through an agency like the Mennonite World Conference (a very modest structure) that allows for a global church to meet in fellowship while still being comfortable with much diversity. Similarly, such commonality is expressed through MCC ministries, with their vast global witness – in ways, however, that are locally needed and culturally acceptable.

By way of documentation for his views, Roth highlighted the *Anabaptist Wiki* (https://www.goshen.edu/academics/2010/07/28/anabaptist-wiki/) which collects stories of Anabaptist individuals and churches from around the world.

Dr. Roth concluded his lecture with a brief homily on Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the Lord's." Within this transcendent vision exists a global Anabaptist communion, very diverse and yet richly intertwined though many political, economic, cultural and ecclesiastical expressions.

The Global Anabaptist Movement and Its Meaning in the 21st Century

March 17 event reported by Robert Martens

John Roth speaks with a quiet warmth that easily absorbs the attention of those who hear him speak. His lecture on March 17, "The Global Anabaptist Movement and Its Meaning in the 21st Century," was detailed yet clear; his expertise is based on extensive research and travel.

There is reason, said Roth, to be concerned about the future of the Anabaptist-Mennonite church. In North America and Europe, fewer and fewer, he said, seem to feel a strong connection with the church. Among American Mennonites, there is cultural division: these "chasms have found their way into the church," which "seems to have lost its distinctive voice."

There is reason, though, said Roth, to feel optimistic about the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement. He pointed out that, in his own lifetime, attitudes "in broader circles" towards Anabaptists have changed profoundly, that they are no longer regarded as "heretics." Outsiders "appreciate the communitarian impulse" and "the gospel of peace at the heart of the Christian message." In that

sense, Roth said, the Anabaptist-Mennonite church is "alive and well."

The great majority of Anabaptists today reside outside the Western world. In fact, only about eight percent of Mennonites live in North America and Europe, and nearly all the growth in numbers in North America occurs among the Old Order Amish. Fully one-third of Anabaptists currently live in Africa, and nearly that many in Asia. That said, the influence of North American Mennonites is still substantial, especially, said Roth, in terms of historical and theological studies.

Source: Goshen College

What explains the explosive global growth among Mennonites in the last forty years? Roth gave four major reasons:

1. The diaspora of "ethnic" German-speaking Mennonites, particularly into Latin countries such as Mexico, Belize, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Argentina.
2. The Mennonite missions' movement of the twentieth century. Roth said he has spoken with fifth-generation Indian Mennonites who "bear their tradition as proudly" as conservative Mennonites in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
3. The increase in numbers among "Neo-Anabaptists," who are interested in practising Anabaptist values but remain in their own denominations. The Anabaptist Network in Britain is an example.
4. Indigenization. Mennonite churches in Africa, Latin America, and Asia were established by Western missionaries, but are now proudly independent: "Thank you very much, we'll take it from here." In Ethiopia, the Meserete Kristos Church, planted by fairly conservative American Mennonites, has grown on its own from about 5,000 in the 1940s into a highly structured institution of approximately 400,000.

Mennonites, said Roth, focus on local congregations, "churches as webs of relationships." "We have an impoverished vocabulary," he said, when we speak of the larger, global church. Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, and Reformed know what constitutes their organizations: sacraments, hierarchy, confessions of faith, and so on. Mennonites, said Roth, for very good reasons have rejected these kinds of symbols of unity. "What then," he asked, "is the glue that holds the Anabaptist global group together?"

History can help bind the movement: the tap roots of Anabaptist origins are in the sixteenth century, leading to migrations, missionary movements, and finally new congregations outside the Western world. A "minimal standard" of principles can help unite as well: statements on theology that can establish who is "in" or "out." History, however, said Roth, is inadequate as a foundation for a church. As for theology, who, he asked, would be responsible for establishing a "minimal standard?"

A better way to explain Anabaptist-Mennonite unity, said Roth, might be with a metaphor: the rhizome. Plants such as tiger lilies, ferns, and aspens have rhizomes that are connected by a subterranean mass of roots. New growth, springing from nodes on those roots, appears independently and unpredictably. The global Anabaptist-Mennonite movement could be compared to a rhizome: "Connection is not organizational but relational."

"How do we make that real?" asked Roth. One answer is with conscious and intentional activity, he said. For example, the Mennonite World Conference, with a miniscule staff and modest headquarters, has been a major influence on Mennonite unity. Roth mentioned several other initiatives: The Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism; The Bearing Witness Project; the Global Anabaptist Wiki; and the *Biblioteca Digital Anabautista*. These initiatives can all be found online.

Roth ended his lecture with what he called a "sermon." An early Anabaptist woman, he said, was ordered to leave her home and city. Her response was "no, because the earth is the Lord's." This phrase, said Roth, has become a key verse for Anabaptist-Mennonites, and in several different ways. It is a political statement, said Roth: "We obey God rather than humans." It is an economic statement: "We view wealth as a gift from God." Finally, he said, it is a spiritual statement. "The forces of evil," said Roth "have been conquered by the Resurrection. The earth is *already* the Lord's."

How I Discovered That I Was an Anabaptist

By Brian Cooper

In my role as a theology faculty member at MB Seminary, I spend time teaching about what baptism looks like and means in (Ana)Baptist perspective. I talk about baptism as being based on one's confession of faith. In theological parlance, baptism is seen to be *declarative* rather than *causative*, because the outer baptism in water is seen to reflect the prior spiritual baptism that takes place in the life of the individual.

I consider my pilgrimage to belonging and ministry in an Anabaptist context to be another example of something that is declarative rather than causative. Externally, I became a member of a Mennonite Brethren church in 2006. But inwardly, I believe I became an Anabaptist long before. Only as I reflected on my experiences did I see the slow change that had transpired.

I grew up the son of a Baptist pastor. My parents modelled a vital Christian faith to me and my brothers from before we were old enough to appreciate it. The drama of my conversion experience was the drama experienced by a young person who becomes convinced of his own depravity, understood in the Calvinist Baptist setting in which we heard the Gospel articulated. I came to living faith before heroic self-centredness took hold in my life, largely because of the consistent example of my parents.

Although my mother grew up in a Bergthaler Mennonite church in Manitoba, her faith had taken a strongly evangelical turn, influenced by the radio ministry of Theodore Epp's *Back to the Bible* broadcast. Convinced that she ought to be baptized by immersion and faced with her church's refusal to immerse her, she made a bold break from her upbringing. When she left home to attend nursing school, she attended an Alliance church and was baptized there. Her influence shaped my nascent Baptist piety, but not from an obviously Anabaptist perspective.

As I grew up, my father's influence impressed on me an awareness of the Gospel that was intuitively holistic. While theological conservatism was the norm, it never occurred to me to limit the service in which I might be involved in the interest of Christian witness. Acts of service alongside words of proclamation seemed essential elements of Christlike character; what could be clearer?

It was not until my seminary years that some of the theological foundation for my emerging Christocentrism began to become evident. I recall a conversation with a seminary professor in which he suggested that Paul's exhortation to preach the Word in 2 Timothy 4:2 was actually an exhortation to proclaim Jesus rather than an exaltation of preaching. This insight intrigued me; I had never considered it before. It planted another seed in my thinking.

In my first pastoral role, I encountered a church that, for the first time in my memory, seemed openly resistant to obvious opportunities for Kingdom witness. Our church board declined to host a food bank because of the risk of damage to our site, a heritage building. I was rebuked by this same board for taking up the cause of a South Asian family one block over from the church; they were the target of racially-motivated opposition to their application to build a wheelchair ramp for their disabled daughter. I was told I ought to spend more time doing ministry work. I was mystified, because I thought I had been. For me, witness and service had to go together.

When I returned to school to do doctoral studies at the Toronto School of Theology (TST), my research focus was very fuzzy. Along the way, a couple of influences helped sharpen it. First, having studied Baptist history and thought, I decided I wanted to study Baptist antecedents – Anabaptists. Second, the little exposure I had to Mennonite thought and culture when I was growing up in southern Manitoba made me curious about Mennonite history and theology. Third, at the direction of my course supervision committee, I took a course on the natural law tradition from a professor at the University of Toronto; this shaped my research focus and created a life-changing opportunity for me.

There was a Mennonite theologian at TST, A. James Reimer from Conrad Grebel College, who directed the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre. He taught a course on Dietrich Bonhoeffer that a friend encouraged me to take, so I approached him about supervising my work. Fortunately for me, my recent work on Anabaptists and natural law paralleled work he was doing, so he took on this Baptist with little knowledge of Anabaptism.

Under his tutelage, I dove into detailed readings of Grebel, Menno, Marpeck, and Balthasar Hubmaier. Hubmaier captivated me. Here was a figure whose approach seemed familiar to me as a Baptist, but who opened my eyes to theological issues I had only apprehended in passing. My doctoral thesis on natural law in sixteenth century Anabaptism proved to be not only a

fruitful academic exercise, it was the setting for a slow theological epiphany as I gained language to describe theological yearnings I had felt for a long time, and stimulated me to consider how I could combine these new Anabaptist commitments to faithful and peaceful witness with my heartfelt evangelical Baptist Christianity.

Ultimately, reflecting on what I had learned led me to a Mennonite Brethren church, and to service in the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. It amazed me that within five years of my arrival in the Canadian Conference I was chair of the Board of Faith and Life, and teaching theology at the MB Seminary! My time in this setting has been one of ongoing learning that I have thoroughly enjoyed. My experience bears out the saying that the newest converts are the most fervent evangelists. The more I reflect on Christ-centred spirituality, the more I am convinced that the Anabaptist tradition is a rich resource for Christian discipleship. Like the earliest Anabaptists, I have entered as an adult convert, and here I have found a true spiritual home.

Brian Cooper teaches at ACTS Seminary on the campus of Trinity Western University. Brian has been married to Connie since 1994, and they have three children: Lauren (deceased), Nicole (age 10), and Austin (age 8). His hobbies are roasting and brewing coffee, cycling, exercising and playing softball.

Stories and What They Mean

By Loraleigh Epp

If there is one thing I have learned at my time with the Mennonite Historical Society, it is that roots matter. In my family, roots were never really given very much thought. My mother was part of the foster care system, and lived on her own until she met my dad, and my dad's parents lost touch with their roots long before I was on the scene. So roots have never really been a big part of my life. I think this is what impresses me the most about the MHS. While being here I have learned that roots matter. People want to know how they fit into the story and what their part of the story is.

My own "grafting" into the Mennonite story starts with my marriage to my husband, Jason. I remember my very first family gathering. It was Christmastime and as a joke my new sister-in-laws thought it would be funny to give Jason and me a puppy for Christmas. Jason and I were newlyweds and we were living in a house I saw advertised in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. It was 460 square feet; there was no room for a puppy! But they presented us with a huge box and out popped a big German Shepherd puppy with a big red bow around its neck! Jason loved it and all I could think of was: where are we going to put a puppy??? I was trying to be so grateful, but apparently everyone could see the look of panic on my face. After a few minutes of Jason playing and me panicking, my sister-in-law yelled out a big APRIL FOOLS! Everyone laughed as the joke was on us and we were not actually getting a puppy for Christmas! After A LOT of laughter by all my new relatives, everyone mingled about playing dominoes or crokinole and eating Napoleon Torte. I'll never forget that first Christmas in my Mennonite family.

These stories and countless others are so special, and I think that's what drew me to the Mennonite Historical Society for a practicum experience. I knew the Mennonites had lots of stories to tell, but I was curious about why it was so important to keep these stories, organize them, and preserve them. What I have come to learn is that the stories matter, they help shape who we are, and help us understand where we have come from and where we are going. I've learned that we organize and keep track of the stories because we want others to be able to find their place in the story. I have also learned that when a story is lost it hurts and that pain is felt for generations. So I feel honoured to be part of a story full of faith, love and hope. It's a good story! I've learned so much from the "Story Preservers" I get to work with regularly.

When I'm not a student I work at the Ray and Millie Silver Aboriginal Library, which is part of the Abbotsford School District's Aboriginal Education Centre. Ray Silver was a residential school survivor and although he struggled with education, he saw the its value, and chose to make supporting students and education part of his life story. My experience at MHS has shown me that the practice of chronicling roots and documenting stories can actually bring healing, so I hope to transplant what I've learned at MHS in order to help others reclaim and find their own stories.

So it's true: roots matter! And I'm so glad that I have the privilege to work amongst so many people who are able to help me learn this. You have taught me that every story is a special gift worth preserving. I look forward to the opportunity to pay this gift forward in my work as a library technician.

Loraleigh Epp spent some time in 2017 doing a practicum at MHSBC.

The Yarrow Athletic Association: A Cooperative Approach (Part 1)

By Elmer G. Wiens

The Yarrow Athletic Association operated in the Mennonite community of Yarrow, BC from 1947 to 1953. It was founded in late 1946 when a group of young men gathered in Bargen's Carpentry Shop with the intention of providing Yarrow's residents with secular recreational activities and facilities.

As the population of Yarrow grew and residents prospered, the desire for athletic activities became more important among youth and adults. Facilities were needed for indoor and outdoor sports to meet this new demand. As late as 1946, Yarrow's Christian high school, the Sharon Mennonite Collegiate Institute, played its basketball games in the barn of Henry Ratzlaff, Sr. The town's two senior league softball teams, the Yarrow Growers and the Yarrow Lumbermen, held their softball games on the ball diamond at the downtown public school.

While the two Mennonite churches of Yarrow provided religious programs and events, residents still had to travel to Chilliwack for secular entertainment such as movies or bowling.

The success of the Yarrow Growers' Co-operative Association probably influenced the young men to choose a cooperative approach. Accordingly, at the Athletic Association's inaugural meeting on December 16, 1946, the attendees selected John Henry (J.H.) Hepting as president; W.H. (Bill) Siddall, vice-president; Henry Froese, secretary; and Fred Hendricks, treasurer. The Association's membership included men who had recently returned home from serving in the Canadian Armed Forces during World War II: John Hepting, Henry Froese, Peter Bargen, Hank Giesbrecht, Abe Wittenberg, John Wittenberg, Henry Ratzlaff, Jr, and Henry Fast (Dyck 104). Some members were already experienced businessmen, while others became successful businessmen in later years.

Initially, the organization was called the Yarrow Athletic-Entertainment Association (YAEA). The following account of the YAEA and its successors, the Yarrow Cooperative Athletic Association (YCAA), and finally the Yarrow Athletic Association (YAA), are based on the minutes of these organizations as provided by Mary Froese (YAA *Minutes*).

1947

The next meeting of the Association was held at Bargen's Carpentry Shop on January 3, 1947. The Association planned to raise funds by showing movies in the basement of the Yarrow Public School. Jack Wittenberg of the Chilliwack School Board advised the group to make an official application to the municipal school board for the purpose of showing movies.

Once the Chilliwack School Board gave its approval for the use of the public-school basement for showing movies, revenues began to roll in to the new Association.

Other motions were made and carried. Membership payments of $5 were due on the tenth day of each month. Members would forfeit their membership if delinquent for more than three months. Movie ticket prices would be set at the cost of fifty cents for adults and twenty-five cents for children.

There was unanimous applause when Yarrow resident Bill Wolfe of CHWK radio (in Chilliwack) volunteered to provide free publicity for the YAEA. A few members expressed concern about the Yarrow MB Church's reaction to movies being shown at the public school. Other members wondered about the nature and content of the movies. Bill Siddall stressed the importance of presenting the objectives of secular recreational activity to the Yarrow community diplomatically, in order to build support from locals.

Once the Chilliwack School Board gave its approval for the use of the public-school basement for showing movies, revenues began to roll in to the new Association. Revenues increased so much that at the January 17, 1947, meeting in Bargen's Carpentry Shop, the YAEA decided to reduce adult movie fees to thirty-five cents. Members then agreed to acquire 1000 board feet of 2 x 12's to build benches for the movie patrons. John Esau volunteered his time to look after setting up benches and cleaning up after shows. J.W. Neufeldt and Johnny (Mex) Giesbrecht volunteered to usher when audiences lined up for movies.

At an extraordinary meeting held after a movie on February 1, 1947, in the public school's basement, the Association's members voted to change its name to the Yarrow Cooperative Athletic Association (YCAA), intending to organize under the Cooperative Act. At the subsequent meeting of March 3, 1947, at the public school, A. M. Guinet, barrister and solicitor, advised that the organization incorporate under the BC Societies Act.

C. Peters moved and C. Sukkau seconded a motion to this effect. Peter Nightingale moved and Bill Siddall seconded a motion to name the organization the Yarrow Athletic Association (YAA).

In the Declaration of the Yarrow Athletic Association as filed on March 17, 1947, with the Registrar of Companies in Victoria, the Society articulated the following objectives:

(a) To promote conduct, and give assistance to athletic activities in the community of Yarrow, BC.

(b) To promote and operate athletic games and competitions and entertainment for the benefit of the Association and for the welfare of the community.

(c) To provide recreational athletic entertainment facilities for the youth of Yarrow, BC.

(d) To join with other organizations for the carrying out of the same or similar objects.

The members of the 1948 Intermediate team.
Back row: George Derksen, Bernie Dyck, Pete "Happy" Wall, Henry "Tiny" Harder, Ernie "Nestor" Reimer, Jake "Brownie" Brown, Alex Fast.
Front row: Irwin "Wiener" Froese, Len "Leggy" Froese, John "Mex" Giesbrecht, George "Fuzzy" Enns, John "Vagy" Martens.
The Froese family, appearing in the announcer's booth in the photograph, actively maintained the ball diamond, mowing, raking, and liming the base lines and batter's box. Mary kept score; Ed announced the games; and Harold "Cactus" was everywhere. Photo provided by Elmer G. Wiens

The signatures on the filed declaration and the Association's by-laws were John Hepting, David Harder, Fred Hendricks, Peter Nightingale, and Abram J. Wittenberg, as witnessed by Henry Froese.

The YAA's first venture was to purchase four acres of land on which to build a hall as a venue for indoor sports events and public roller skating. At the 23rd April 1947 meeting, members voted in favour of purchasing land owned by the Post 24 Civil Defense Guild. Subsequently, this property was purchased for $1079.66, including registration fees.

At the meeting held on May 14, 1947, J.H. Hepting, Dick Epp, Bill Unger, Henry Froese, and John Kliever were elected as directors of the YAA with their positions on the executive to be determined among themselves. Mr. J.H. Hepting was again elected president.

Providing movies in the public-school basement to raise funds for its yet to be realized athletic projects occupied the attention of the YAA for the remainder of 1947. At the 1st December 1947 meeting, members opted to show movies twice weekly, provided they could share the rental cost of films with the Sumas Recreation Association. Movie nights in Yarrow were to be Mondays and Thursdays. Mr. D. Harder was elected to replace Mr. Bill Unger on the executive.

1948

The movie nights at the Yarrow Public School were paying off. With the funds accumulated during 1947, members considered building a 100 by 90-foot hall for indoor sports. Members approved buying J.H. Hepting's Bell & Howell 16mm sound projector and movie screen for $650 to permit continuous screening of movies along with the already existing projector and screen.

The January 14, 1948, edition of *The Chilliwack Progress* contained an update of the YAA's activities: "It is expected that this year will see the actual construction of a [sports] building. The association has acquired assets to the amount of approximately $4000. The effort is particularly substantial because of the fact that these assets represent the donations of a small, but energetic group of progressive young people. Activities have been carried on in the basement of the Yarrow public school with the permission of the school board. This is the only accommodation available at present. Particular care is being taken to look after the premises and no extra burden is put on the janitor staff of the school."

As mentioned, Yarrow's softball teams played their home games on the ball diamond of the public school's playgrounds. This facility, with neither fences nor enclosed bleachers, prevented teams from charging admission to spectators. Accordingly, at the February 5, 1948, meeting, Mr. Pete Nightingale moved that the YAA lease a field from George Knox for the purpose of constructing a proper ball diamond with bleachers and fences.

As a result, the focus of YAA shifted from the construction of a hall for indoor sports to providing facilities for outdoor sports. Interestingly, the hall was never constructed, although on several occasions it appeared that the YAA might actually begin to build it. Eventually, in 1952, construction began on a 24 by 60 foot clubhouse, but the YAA was disbanded before much work had been accomplished on this structure. The majority of members remained more committed to outdoor sports.

With the sponsorship of the Yarrow Growers' Co-operative, Yarrow fielded Senior B and Intermediate softball teams wearing YAA crests on their jackets, and Y G logos on their ball caps.

During the spring of 1948, the Yarrow Athletic Association constructed a softball diamond on the field it leased from Mr. Knox on Wilson Road South, north of the British Columbia Electric Railway tracks near Vedder Mountain. The YAA and Mr. Knox agreed that the rent would be $50.00 per year for three years (YAA *Statutory Lease*). Work began in March to level the ground, and bleachers and an announcer's booth were constructed shortly afterwards. With the sponsorship of the Yarrow Growers' Co-operative, Yarrow fielded Senior B and Intermediate softball teams wearing YAA crests on their jackets, and Y G logos on their ball caps (Martens 197-198). Managed by Johnny Giesbrecht, the Intermediate ball team won the 1948 Provincial Intermediate Softball Championship.

The minutes of the meeting held on November 23, 1948, reflected the successes of the YAA during its first year of operations. A preliminary financial report indicated the net profit of approximately $1000.00 from the year's activities. Dick Epp was selected for the position of ball park manager. A banquet held on the evening of Wednesday, December 22, celebrated the YAA's achievements for the year of 1948.

The YAA continued as a successful cooperative venture for four more years, until it was disbanded in 1953.

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Elmer Wiens grew up in Yarrow, BC. He attended Yarrow's MB Church but also participated in youth activities at Yarrow's Alliance Church. At UBC he studied mathematics, computer science, and economics. Elmer lectured at universities in Canada and the USA, and worked as a government economist. He is a member of the board of directors of MHSBC.

Johann Johann Toews (1882-1976): A Mennonite Folk Artist

By Julia Born Toews

Quotations collected by Johann Johann Toews are interspersed throughout the account.

Long ago, and not so far away, in a snug, rural village in the Fraser Valley called Yarrow, there lived a little cobbler named Johann Toews. His customers affectionately called him "*Schusta* Teivs." He lived with his tiny, lively wife, Aganetha, in a small, tidy house that had a big yard designed as a garden (laid out in "Russian" style). There was not much of a lawn on this property, but the couple grew great quantities of vegetables, dried much of the fruit from their well-tended fruit trees, and regularly were busy with visits from their four children and many grandchildren. The people of the village liked coming to Johann's leather-scented shop to have their shoes and boots repaired, and they would stay to chat.

But did they know that their cobbler also painted pictures, built furniture, enjoyed poetry and collected mottos and epigrams? Johann had not always lived in this village; it was not his place of origin. But it did look similar to the place in which he was born. Johann had travelled many miles across land, snow, and water, by wagon, sled, train, and car, to finally come to a place where he could live in peace.

Johann's first home was the village of Neukirch in the Mennonite colony of Molotschna in the Ukraine, which in 1882 – the year he was born – was part of Russia. His father worked with wood, making furniture and wagon wheels, and Johann followed in his footsteps. Johann loved horses. The family's horses, Blackie and Wall, were combed and curried by his father till their hair glistened. Next to the house was a rectangular horse corral made of boards. Every morning and evening the village horse herder would bring the animals in from the pasture. If the farmers needed horses for the day, they would come to the corral and take theirs. "So," Johann writes in his biography, "I had the opportunity to look at these beautiful horses."

His childhood continued: studying at school, with Jacob Thiessen as his first teacher; learning little verses at Christmas time to recite to his parents on Christmas Eve; travelling to Berdyansk with his father to sell grain; watching his close friend get kicked to death by a spooked horse; and – perhaps the inspiration for his vocation in later life – watching his neighbour, Peter Toews (no relation), paint wagons.

> *Zeugen Jesu Christi sind stille Leute, sie reden nicht viel, sind nicht viel geschäftig; aber man sieht sie bei der Arbeit.* (Witnesses to Jesus Christ are quiet people; they don't speak much, they are not preoccupied; but one sees them at their work.) (D. von Bezzel)

When Johann was about 9 years old, his parents decided to make a big move: to the newly formed colony of Neu Samara. They travelled by train to Sorochinsk and then by sleigh to the village of Dolinsk. When they arrived, half of the village was still unoccupied. The following day Johann entered a school set up in a private home. His teacher was his brother-in-law, Jakob Wedel, who had become a teacher at 18 years of age. The entire student body consisted of twelve students.

Johann writes fondly of his growing-up years in this village. When his older sister, Mary, married Bernard Klassen, Johann apprenticed with him and learned the art of finish carpentry and wood-staining and polishing; he helped make benches for the large, new Mennonite Brethren church in Lugovsk. Helmut Huebert, in *Events and People,* describes the dedication service of this church in 1901: 3,000 people attended, and a choir from Ufa Colony sang, ending with a rousing rendition of the *Hallelujah Chorus*. Here, also, Johann's spiritual life deepened, and he was baptized – an event he mentions many times in his writings.

And in due time, he fell in love. His mother, however, had reservations about her prospective daughter-in-law. "Have you noticed," she asked, "that this girl already has weak legs? What will it be like after you are married?" The couple had been associating for three years, but Johann had never noticed this. So, even though they loved each other dearly, he broke off his relationship with this girl.

Sometime after that, another young woman caught his eye: Aganetha Rempel. They began seeing each other in December 1902, and before long he asked her father for her hand in marriage. The young couple was advised to wait till the next summer to be married, but youth would not be delayed and they married on January 3, 1903.

Both Johann and Aganetha had an artistic bent. They sang in the church choir, and Johann delighted in collecting sayings and poems. It is not known when he started, but he wrote down sayings that he liked in miniscule writing in a little book. And he had beautiful penmanship, at first writing in the old German Gothic script, then successfully managing the switch to Latin letters.

> *Jedes Kind, das zur Welt kommt, predigt sogleich das Evangelium der Liebe.* (Every child born into the world immediately preaches the gospel of love.) (Karl Gutzkow)

The young couple welcomed a son, Hans, into their lives in 1904. Johann's father, as well as three other members of his family, succumbed to tuberculosis in the same year.

Perhaps with the encouragement of Rempel relatives, the young couple decided to move further into Siberia, to the Omsk area. This was not an easy relocation, as it was then winter. "Beginning life here was very difficult," Johann writes, "but we were happy and courageous ... [M]y Nettie still liked to sing [in the choir] on Sundays and I would hold our son on my lap." He got a job building church pews; they bought a stallion and a travel wagon; and eventually, after four years, they bought some land in Barnaul, 500 kilometres away, near Mongolia and China. To get there, they travelled by sleigh, staying with Kirgizian people along the way. (This move, was once again, initiated by close relatives.)

Eventually, after winter breakup, they found their property and proceeded to build a sod house. Young Hans remembered a Christmas while living in this hut – he had put the box of Christmas goodies he had received far under his bed, so his siblings would not "share" it. The next morning, he found it frozen to the wall of the shack.

In his autobiography, Johann describes life at this time as consisting of hard pioneer work. A daughter, Helen, was born in Slavgorod. "These were difficult days," he writes. Typhus came and a son, Cornelius, perished. Two daughters, both named Mariechen, died soon after birth. Two other children, Jake and Agnes, survived.

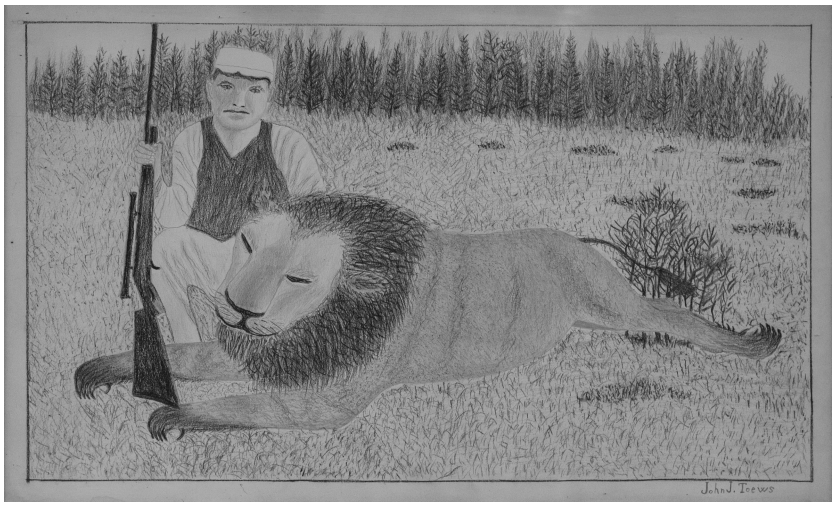
> *Wo die Natur nicht will, ist die Arbeit umsonst.* (Where nature is contrary, all work is in vain.) (Seneca)

In 1915 Johann was conscripted into the Russian medical corps, and served as an orderly in a military hospital in Kursk until 1918. For the rest of his life he had a horror of medical facilities.

Having survived these turbulent times, this family, by now seven people, moved south to the Kuban area. It was rumoured that it was easier to emigrate to Canada from there. Young Hans served for a time in the army, but when he left (or escaped) in 1924, he joined a group of family friends, the Isaacs and Wittenbergs, and successfully travelled to Canada, finding employment on a farm in Drake, Saskatchewan.

It took another two years for the rest of the family to be able to make the move. And on the way, another little daughter, also named Mariechen, died and was buried in a cemetery along the way, "close to a Russian orphanage," Johann anguishes, "there beside the fence. Our hearts bleed with grief when we think of this time."

Daughter Helen remembers the panic of this trip and the hunger that accompanied it. She felt responsible for finding food for her younger sister. "But where could I find anything to give her?" she wailed, when recounting this trip several years ago. "And I'm supposed to sleep in peace now with these memories?" She almost sabotaged the whole relocation effort by refusing to undress for the usual "inspection" of immigrants supervised by a medical doctor, Dr. Drury. "If I have to take my underwear off," she told him, "you will not have eyes left to see anything!" Nevertheless, he let them go. They boarded the ship *Baltara* in Latvia, then the *Metagama* at Southampton, England, and sailed off to Canada, arriving in St. John's, Newfoundland, in



Hunter and Lion, by Johann Johann Toews

Hand-drawn motto for grandchildren by J.J. Toews.

December, 1926.

In the meantime, in Saskatchewan, love had come to young Hans. He married his boss's daughter, young Tina Schmidt, and they set up home in Zeneta. One winter day he was in town and saw a man walking in the distance coming towards town. "If I didn't know any better," he remarked to a friend, "I would say that that is my dad walking toward us." "It is your dad," his friend informed him (how he knew, I don't know). The letter advising him of his parents and siblings' coming had not yet arrived. What a surprise!

For a while, they all lived together. Then Johann and Aganetha moved out and started farming in the prairies. Helen married Abe Friesen, a young man with no known relatives in Canada. Then in 1936 Johann and Aganetha packed up again and moved to the congenial little village of Yarrow, BC. Here Johann cobbled shoes and Aganetha knitted and canned fruit and vegetables. They found a church home and became an integral part of the community. Their two youngest children, Jake and Agnes, grew up and made their own way in the world.

> *Wenn man alt ist, muß man mehr tun, als da man jung war.* (When one is old, one has to do more than when one is young.) (Goethe)

In 1963 the couple moved into the Tabor Home, a residence for seniors in Clearbrook (now Abbotsford). An article in the January 1973 edition of the *Chilliwack Progress* described their seventieth wedding anniversary. "Mrs. Toews," the reporter noted, "is a petite woman with a good sense of humour and still keeps as busy as her eyesight will permit her. Mr. Toews' hobby now is being an artist and his pencil and crayon pictures are shown with pride by his family and friends." Many of these paintings adorned the walls of their small room.

Family members recall their grandfather trying to draw the faces of his family, but never being satisfied with the results: crushing up his efforts and throwing them away. The only drawing still extant with a depiction of a person is one I found at the local MCC thrift store: *Hunter and Lion*. Judging by the signature, it is an early effort, drawn perhaps before the couple's time in the seniors' home.

Oddly, very few paintings or drawings depict the life of a farmer or reveal memories of Russia. There is one of mountains, snow and trees – an empty snowscape – but how the snow shines! One grandson has a picture of a horse and wagon that was given to him as a birthday present. Perhaps, because he drew several pictures of tropical scenes, we can surmise that Johann still had a desire to do more travelling. A goal of his was to give every one of his grandchildren a drawing with the motto in the picture to the left.

Johann and Aganetha celebrated 71 years of marriage. Aganetha died in 1974, and Johann in 1976. They are both buried in the Yarrow cemetery, in beautiful coffins crafted by Johann's own artistic hands.

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Newspaper article from 1973:
The strengths of faith and love show clearly in Johann and Aganetha Toews, who will be visited this Christmas by many of their 112 descendants. Next month, too, will be special for Johann, 91, and Aganetha, 89, because then they celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary. They were married Jan. 17, 1903, in Samara, Russia and lived later in Siberia before coming to Canada in 1927. Toews took up sketching as a hobby five years ago and one of his pictures, drawn from a childhood memory, shows men on a horse-drawn sleigh fighting off a pack of wolves. Source: http://www.yarrowbc.ca/settlers/settlers1966_75.html


Johann and Aganetha Toews: Memories of Siberia

Stories from Berry Flats

Red Shortie Coats

By Helen Rose Pauls

Isbrandt Goosen, lay minister at the Berry Flats Mennonite Brethren Church, noticed them first. He was rounding the corner by the Neufeld's General Store when his head swivelled sideways and took in Edna Harder walking past the gas pumps, hands deep in the pockets of her red corduroy shortie coat. He had just seen one on Jean Geddert as she hurried up the driveway of the Thiessen home for her weekly piano lesson with Mary Thiessen. Then he watched Sara Dick turn up the collar on her matching bright red coat as she hurried to the church to turn up the heat for Bible Study night, being the janitor as well as a grade twelve student at the Mennonite high school.

He couldn't believe his eyes, and wondered if Martha would believe him if he told her at supper. He pulled into his driveway and there stood Caroline Plett with a dozen eggs she had just purchased from Martha, tucking the cardboard case under the arm of her red shortie coat.

The phone was ringing as he entered the house.

"I'm calling a quick meeting of the elders after the Bible study tonight," said Johann Thiessen over the phone to Isbrandt. "It seems Henry Plett saw Loretta Lenzman in a rather compromising positon in the woods off of the mountain road last night, and I think your Albert was there as well. Oh, and she was wearing a red coat, kind of short, just past the waist with big pockets."

"My Albert?" spluttered Isbrandt. "We'll see about that."

He opened the door to his back porch and there stood his daughter Elsie ready to go out. She wore a plaid toque over her ears and a red shortie coat, buttoning the huge buttons right in front of him. "What's going on?" he shouted. She looked at him stoically and pushed past him out the door.

…

The elders gathered at the church.

"Well," said Deacon Harder, as he hurried into the large Sunday School classroom off the church foyer. "What seems to be troubling you, Johann?"

"It seems that one of our youth is falling into bad ways," Johann replied. "Loretta Lenzmann was seen walking in the woods by the mountain road holding hands with your Albert. Then when Mary Thiessen was giving a piano lesson she caught Loretta looking in on her, pressing her face up against the living room window and making faces. Loretta was also seen after dark, smoking behind the powerhouse, and I believe Henry Kroeker saw her pilfering cucumbers from the pickling vats beside the cannery. When Peter Peters was at church selecting next week's choir songs, he observed Loretta hurrying home from Neufeld's store with a suspicious bundle in one of the huge pockets of her red coat. Also, after dark last Sunday, there was a red-coated runner dashing between the berry rows in Hulda Enns' raspberry patch with an unidentified boy. This girl needs to explain herself."

"A red coat, you say?" asked Isbrandt Goosen, several pictures going through his head. Deep furrows were forming across his forehead and between his eyes.

"We'll call her up after Youth on Sunday night,"

Johann Thiessen stated. “We must get to the bottom of this, before this girl runs right off the rails.”

…

Jean Geddert hastily bit the red thread she was using to sew a large red button onto red corduroy. The last jacket finished, she thought.

Weeks ago, her father, Jacob Geddert, had been commandeered by his wife Louise to stop at Hooge’s Fabrics on his way home from work in the big city to pick up the thirty yards of red corduroy she had ordered over the phone.

“The girls have a project going on,” she told him. “The bundle will be waiting for you by the cash register.”

Jean had been sewing ever since. At youth night, she had collected $7.00 from each of her girlfriends along with their measurements. She copied the stylish garment from the cover of Eaton’s brand new *Fall and Winter Catalogue* and sewed it ten ways and in ten different sizes. Jean held up the last completed coat with satisfaction.

…

The large classroom off the foyer was powerfully scented with the farm smells of six large men as they ponderously sat down to discuss the matter. “We’ll need to call Loretta in to explain herself,” suggested Henry Plett, getting up to cross over to the sanctuary where the young people were just winding up their Youth meeting.

“Loretta Lenzmann, please come with me as you have a few things to answer for, I’m afraid,” he called. “You have been seen in your red coat playing havoc all over the village.”

Jean Geddert poked her head up from the circle of friends she was entertaining. “Red coat?” she shouted. “Come on, girls. Let’s let them have it.”

Immediately ten girls got up and filed into the large classroom off the foyer. All of them had their red coats buttoned to the top and their hands in the large pockets. Closed mouthed and with straight faces, they faced the elders.

“Uh,” said Johann Thiessen. “There seems to be some mix up here.” Henry Plett’s mouth hung open as he observed the young women. Deacon Harder suppressed a smile as he beheld the ten identical coats. Something dawned in Isbrandt’s eyes and he asked Loretta to step forward.

“Not quite so sure now, Johann?” asked Phillip Driediger, a smile quivering at the corner of his mouth. Johann Thiessen was searching for something to say when Deacon Harder asked. “So who is the gifted seamstress here?” But the girls knew that he was amused and that they were off the hook. All laughed pleasantly and the girls backed out the door.

“Jean, next summer let’s make identical tops, eh?” suggested Elsie Goosen.

“Sleeveless!” Jean yelled back. Their laughter streamed through the autumn chill as they found their way home along the unlit streets.

“Loretta Lenzmann, please come with me as you have a few things to answer for, I’m afraid,” he called.

Source: https://www.pinterest.com
ruth_zahlervintage-coat-patterns

Genealogy Corner: The Ties that Bind

Tracing Ancient Mennonite Ancestry: The History of the Vistula Delta and Poland During the Viking Age (Do the Mennonite Loewen and Wedel Families Have Their Roots in Scandinavia?)

First in a series of 2 articles

By Bill and Norma (Loewen) Male

We have been studying Norma's Mennonite family history for about five years. After examining family trees and census records we wanted to get a picture of our ancient ancestry, so we needed to look at history and ancestral DNA evidence. Archaeological discoveries have been made in the regions where our most distant ancestors of record lived that give clues as to where some of Norma's ancestors may have originated before they lived in Poland/Prussia. That, combined with recent discoveries using ancestral DNA markers, provides clues as to where our ancestral roots lie prior to the seventeenth century.

None of the Mennonite history mentions Scandinavia because that ancestry would be pre-Reformation.

Few of us have any documented family history before the first Prussian/Polish census in 1772. The history of the Mennonites tells us that many of our ancestors originated in the Netherlands or regions of Germany before arriving near the Vistula Delta in Poland/Prussia. All of Norma's ancestors were Mennonites. The four branches of Norma's family tree stemming from her grandparents are Loewen, Wiens, Siemens and Unruh. We suspect, based on the fact that Siemens and Wiens are believed to be Dutch surnames, that the Siemens and Wiens branches may have been Dutch in origin. The Loewen and Unruh surnames may have originated in Poland/Prussia during the time that surnames came into use in the Middle Ages. However, this tells us nothing of where these ancestors may have come from before Poland/Prussia.

The purpose of this article is to highlight the historical association of the Danes and Poles to explain why Norma's maternal Polish/Prussian Wedel ancient ancestors may have come from Scandinavia prior to Poland. The following historical framework lays out the involvement of Scandinavian Danes in the history of the Vistula Delta where the Loewen and Wedel surnames of record first appear. This perhaps should not be surprising because in the ninth century the Vistula Delta was reachable within seven days from most coastal regions of both Denmark and Sweden in a Viking ship powered by sail alone.

Norma's Maternal DNA

Geneticists attempt to trace ancient human migration using ancestral DNA markers. We had our DNA tested at both the *Genographic Project* (National Geographic) and *23andme*. Norma's maternal haplogroup is H, subclade H4, which is found in central and western Europe.[1] Not much more has been published about this subclade so that alone doesn't tell us much about her ancient maternal ancestry. Norma's ancestral DNA analysis by *Genographic* indicates that her maternal surname line, that is, her mother's mother's mother's mother (and so on) is Danish. Norma's maternal surname line (Siemens-Unruh -Kasper-Wedel) has been traced back to her great-great-grandmother, Wilhelmine Wedel, born in Deutsch-Wymyschle (today, Nowe Wymysle), South Prussia in 1825. We don't know who her mother was because the original church records did not survive a fire that destroyed the original church about 1862. We do know, however, that Deutsch-Wymyschle was established by Mennonite families from the Schwetz and Graudenz region in the Vistula Lowlands around 1760.

Even though we can't trace Norma's maternal ancestry beyond the surname Wedel, we suspect that this surname itself may have a Danish ancestry. Wedel is a habitational surname from places called Wedel or Wedell, all in northern Germany, for someone who lived in a forest, from Low German *wede,* meaning "wood." We suspect that the Wedel ancestry before northern Germany could also have Danish roots because today, of almost 45,000 people with the surname Wedel on the *MyHeritage* ancestry website, 14 percent are Danish, behind the USA at 37 percent and Germany at 24 percent.

Norma's Paternal DNA

There are published ancestral DNA results for Norma's paternal Loewen Y chromosome from men who are in her family tree. Her paternal haplogroup is R1b, which is the most common haplogroup in western Europe, so again that is not specific enough to tell us much about her ancient paternal ancestry. However, knowing that her Loewen ancestors were in Poland in the late seventeenth century, it appears – based on maps of human mi-

gration of the subclades of haplogroup R1b in the region of Poland and Scandinavia – that we would expect to find that the Loewen males are in subclade S21 (aka U106). Subclade U106 has been found to have existed in Scandinavia by the Bronze Age (550-3500 BC).

Norma's maternal Danish DNA link surprised us because we had assumed that all of her ancestry would likely be Dutch before Poland/Prussia. None of the Mennonite history mentions Scandinavia because that ancestry would be pre-Reformation. We wondered how Poland and Jutland (southern Denmark) might be connected in the history of human migration. What were the reasons that Norma's ancestors might have migrated from the modern-day region of Denmark to the region around the Vistula Delta?

Connecting Denmark to Poland is where history and archeology come into focus. After we had our ancestral DNA tested, Bill discovered that our ancient ancestry is similar. He began studying Scandinavian-Viking history because his most recent ancestral Y DNA marker stems from haplogroup I, subclade I1a2-Z59. The originator of this genetic marker is believed to have lived in Scandinavia around 1500 BC. It is found in all the regions raided and settled by Vikings. Initially, all he knew was that his family had lived in Cornwall, England, for at least 200 years before coming to Canada around 1906. Eventually he learned that his family had escaped to England from France around 1684 as Huguenot refugees fleeing from religious persecution. Bill suspects that his Scandinavian connection to France is from the time that Normandy was populated by Vikings (probably Danish) in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Viking Age History of the Vistula Delta Region in Poland

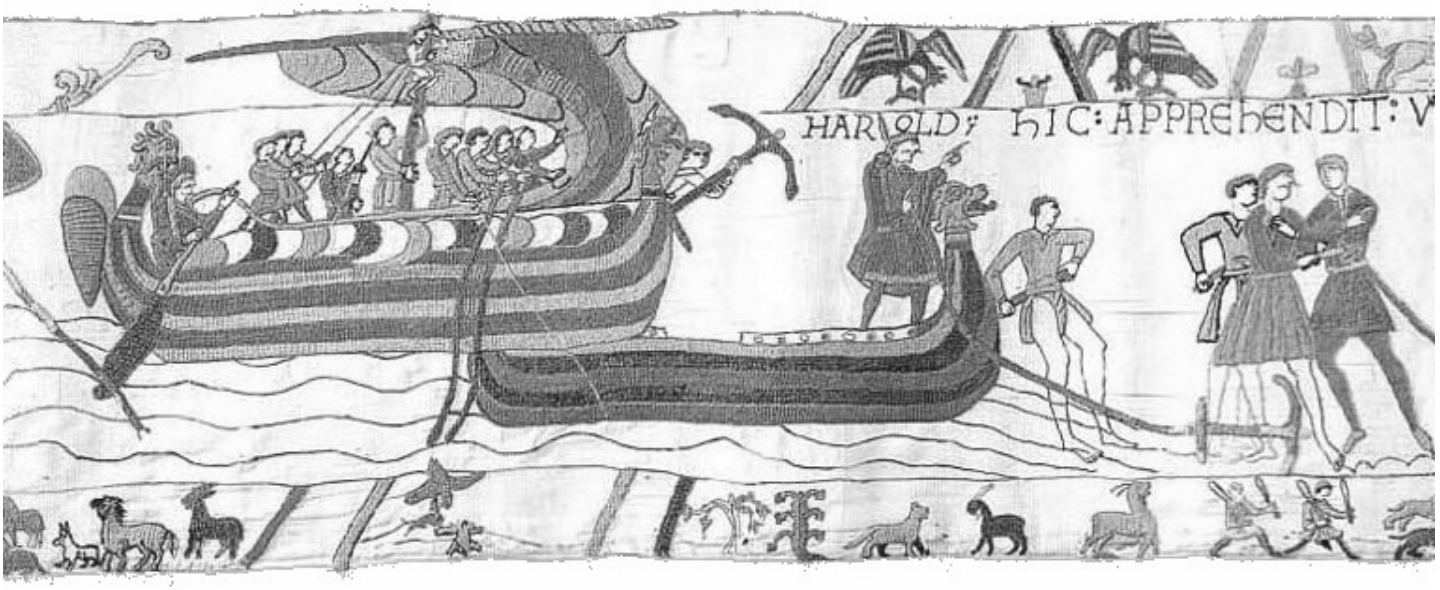
The following summarizes the historical and archeological evidence that connects Scandinavia to the Vistula Delta, Poland, beginning during the Viking age in the late first millennium. In addition to the Internet, most of the information here is sourced from five books: *Empires and Barbarians Migration* and *Development and the Birth of Europe* by Peter Heather; *Europe: A History* by Norman Davies; *Wulfstan's Voyage* and *Ohthere's Voyages*, both published by The Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark; and finally, *Poland: A History* by Adam Zamoyski.

Archeologists have found 900 Neolithic worksites in the Vistula Delta region where amber was processed thousands of years ago. Amber and salt were at one time Poland's main natural resources. Our first clue was a recent map published in *National Geographic Magazine*, March 2017, which shows that Vikings settled territory, including the Vistula Delta region, in Poland. According to Peter Heather, "The Collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century caused a huge amount of disruption in … trading structures in northern Europe. By the seventh century, however, trade flows were strong enough again for kings to establish trading centres. … The new trade network started in the Channel/North Sea zone but quickly spread to Jutland (Denmark) and then on to the Baltic. … The Norse raiders and traders of the Viking period not only took the trade into their own hands, but also redirected it through centres under their control." During the Viking age (789-1066), Scandinavians had superior ships that were able to carry large amounts of goods.

...the Vikings, in addition to raiding, followed trade routes along the North Sea and Baltic coasts from France and Friesland to Russia...

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Vikings, in addition to raiding, followed trade routes along the North Sea and Baltic coasts from France and Friesland to Russia to acquire and trade items that were important to their economy, such as furs, slaves, silver, livestock and Baltic amber. One of the maps in Peter Heather's book shows Viking activity in the region of the Vistula Delta at the ancient trading centres of Truso and Wolin, Poland. Today, Wolin stages an annual celebration of its Viking heritage. Truso was an ancient town dating from the ninth century on Lake Druzno, located about ten kilometres southeast of Elbing (Elblag), Poland, where Norma's eight times paternal great-grandfather, General Michael Loewen, is believed to have been born about 1603. This Michael Loewen is reported in the GRANDMA database to have converted to pacifism late in life, having been baptized around 1695 at the age of 92. Additionally, Norma's four times and three times paternal great-grandfathers were born in nearby Tiegenhof. Norma's earliest documented maternal ancestors, Unruh (Unrau) and Wedel, were also born in the Vistula lowlands along the Vistula River on the ancestral Amber Road trading route.

Many archeological finds in the Vistula Delta indicate that the commercial settlement at Truso had a multi-ethnic character in the ninth and tenth century, with Slavic, Prussian and Scandinavian settlements. The Scandinavian settlements appear to have been Danish. Crafts developed there were goldsmithing and work in glass,



Tapestry of Danish ships on Normandy Coast. Source: Ulrich Harsh's website - http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspost11/Bayeux/bay_tama.html, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17141780

amber and horned items; these crafts were similar to those found in Dutch Friesland, which was also a Danish trading centre. Seventh-century Scandinavian material has been found at Elbing. Heather reports that by the mid-eighth century there was a marked Scandinavian presence at Janow (Janowko) on the Vistula Delta. Janowko is located 80 kilometres east of Schwetz (Swiecie) where Norma's four times maternal great-grandfather, David Unrau, was born. Schwetz and Graudenz are also in the region where the ancestors of Norma's maternal great-great-grandmother Wilhelmine Wedel lived. A Viking cemetery which dates from around 1000 AD was discovered 180 kilometres south of Elbing at Bodzia, Poland, where, along with the bodies of 14 men, 21 women and 14 children, were found Viking weaponry and jewelry.

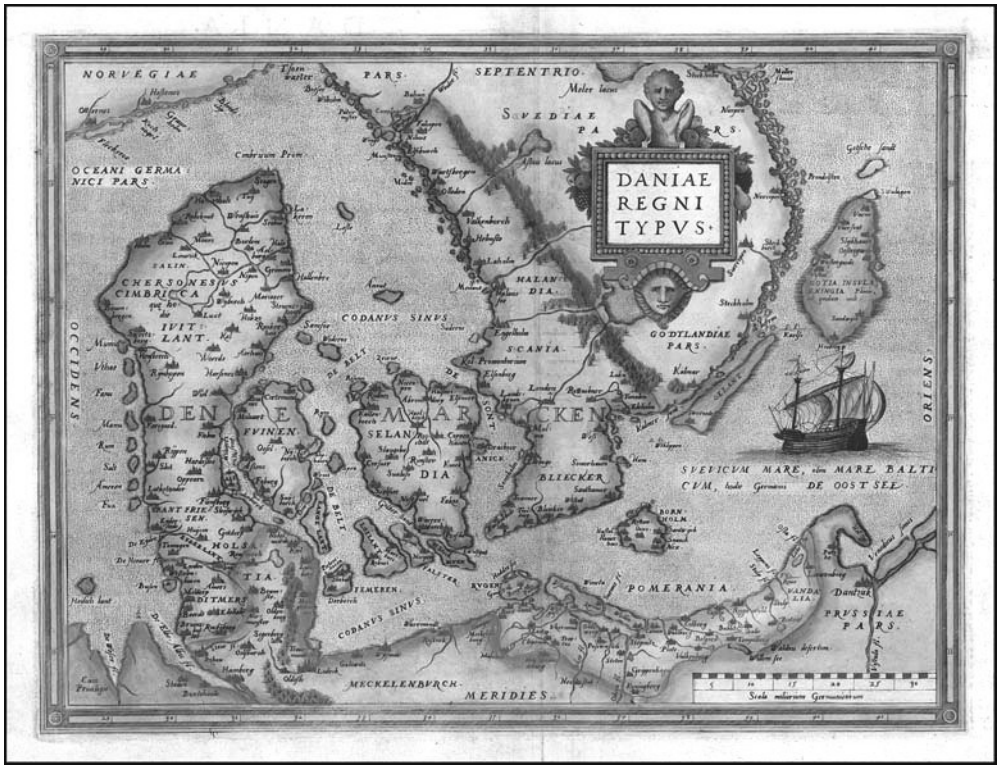
Truso was frequented by Vikings as a trading centre along the Amber Road – an ancient north-south trade route along the Vistula and Dnieper rivers, possibly dating to pre-Roman times, that connected the Baltic Sea at Truso to the Black Sea near Odessa. Further north, Scandinavian Rus sold slaves, furs, amber, honey and wax to Islamic merchants from the south. The book *Wulfstan's Voyage* contains a chapter written by Marek Jagodinski which describes the history of Truso. Along with Slavic and Prussian settlements, 15 locations of Scandinavian colonization (most likely Danish, based on the nature of the artifacts found there) have been found.

Adam Zamoyski's book, *Poland: A History*, describes the early history of Poland and indicates its early ties with Scandinavia as follows: during the Viking age, the region of modern-day Poland was settled by Slavs – Polanie (people of the fields) in the south and Pomorzanie (people of the seaboard) in the north. While Danish Vikings were raiding, trading and colonizing along the Baltic coast, Poland began developing an organized ruling class. The first ruler was a Piast prince named Miesko who in 965 married the Bohemian Princess Dobrava. Miesko was baptized in 966 and the Duchy of Polonia became part of Christendom. Miesko advanced his army northward and gained control of Pomerania, west of the Vistula Delta. Eventually he met the Danes who were advancing south and eastward. In cooperation, Mieszko gave his daughter Swietoslawa in marriage to King Eric of Sweden and Denmark. After Eric's death, she married Swein Forkbeard, King of Denmark. Their son was Canute who in 1014 visited Poland to add 300 horsemen to help him reconquer England. Later, the Danish realm under Valdemar II (1170-1241) extended for a brief time along the trade route from Jutland, Denmark, eastward to Danzig on the Vistula Delta.

Scandinavian ancestry

Peter Heather states that human migration is "… intimately linked to prevailing patterns of social and economic development … shaped by the political context(s) in which they are operating." This certainly applies to the Mennonites who migrated to Poland and, later, South Russia for political, religious and social reasons. Before the Anabaptist movement arrived in Poland, some of the indigenous who eventually converted to Anabaptism could have had Scandinavian roots. Some of

their ancestors may have arrived in the Vistula Delta region for economic reasons: commerce and land. Some Danish and perhaps Swedish traders, arriving by either land or sea in trading centres like Truso, likely decided to settle permanently. We suspect, based on Norma's ancestral DNA evidence, that some of these Scandinavian traders and settlers may have been Loewen and Wedel ancestors.



Abraham Ortelius's 1570 map of Denmark.
Source: Wikipedia, Public domain

The evidence of DNA

It has been said that much of history is an interpretation based on too little information, which is certainly the case here. Ancestral DNA is still in its early stages and new archeological discoveries will continue to reveal history. However, our conclusion here seems plausible. Through our study of DNA and history we now have a better understanding of why our ancient ancestry is similar. It appears likely that in the tenth and eleventh centuries some of Bill's ancient ancestors moved from Denmark to France (Normandy) and some of Norma's moved from Jutland (Denmark) to the Vistula Delta (Poland/Prussia).

The study of ancestral DNA markers requires a lot of patience and perseverance. This science is evolving as the database grows and new genetic markers are discovered. To obtain your DNA haplogroups we suggest you use the *Genographic* study. However, the *23andme* study also has some benefits such as identifying relatives who have participated in the study. An excellent source for human migration maps of each of the haplogroups and subclades is *eupedia.com.* We encourage everyone to have their DNA tested and to brush up on his or her history. Like us, you are sure to find the results interesting and sometimes surprising.

[1] A haplotype is a group of genes in an organism that are inherited together from a single parent, and a haplogroup is a group of similar haplotypes that share a common ancestor with a single-nucleotide polymorphism mutation. Subclade is a term used to describe a subgroup of a subgenus or haplogroup. *Wikipedia.*

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History Through a Personal Lens: the story of my grandmother, Elisabeth Boldt Bergen, 1902-1985

By Louise Bergen Price

Elisabeth Boldt was born in 1902 in Alexanderfeld, a village in Sagradowka (Zagradovka), a Mennonite colony in the Ukraine. Although her childhood was relatively peaceful, there were dark clouds on the horizon. She was 3 when Tsar Nicholas lost a war with Japan, the last straw for a ruler out of favour with his people. Soon all of Russia was in turmoil with revolution, labour strikes, terrorist attacks and pogroms. Nervous Mennonite estate owners hired Cossacks to patrol their lands.

Land and government reforms, coupled with harsh repression, calmed the waters – until an assassination in Serbia triggered the First World War. Young men in Sagradowka colony, loyal to their Russian homeland, enlisted to serve in alternative service. They were part of a contingent of 14,000 Mennonites serving with the Red Cross or in the forestry service. The cost was borne by Mennonite colonies.

Elisabeth and children, circa 1928.
Source: courtesy of Louise Bergen Price

But Germany was now the enemy, and anger against German-Russians, including Mennonites, festered. In 1915, the tsar's property liquidation laws meant that Mennonites living in the Ukraine would lose their properties and face deportation to Siberia.

The February revolution of 1917 overturned that plan, and many Mennonites breathed a sigh of relief. But the fragile new democracy did not hold, and by November, the Bolsheviks, with Lenin as their leader, had staged a coup. Civil war engulfed the country. Forces loyal to the tsar formed the White Army to oppose the Bolsheviks' Red Army. Ukrainians formed their own forces to free their homeland. The anarchist bandit Makhno flexed his muscles.

In 1918, when Elisabeth was 16, Lenin signed a treaty with Germany to end Russia's participation in World War I. Soon after, under the terms of that treaty, German troops occupied Ukraine. They stayed for about nine months, and life seemed to return to its old pattern. Before the Germans left, they encouraged young Mennonite men to form self-defense units against the imminent threat of bandits. Later, a number of these young men joined the White Army.

When the Germans withdrew, the civil war resumed, more ferociously than before. Throughout 1919, Whites and Reds by turn occupied Mennonite villages, billeting in Mennonite homes. Most likely, Elisabeth helped her mother hastily butcher hens and dig potatoes when soldiers demanded meals. Like most girls, she would have scrambled to hide at the distant thunder of horses' hooves. Roving bands of outlaws showed no mercy.

In late November of that year, Makhno horsemen, fuelled by rotgut alcohol, swept into the colony, killing, plundering, raping, looting. Two hundred and six people in Sagradowka, including babies in their cradles, were horrifically murdered. At night, the sky glowed red; acrid smoke scorched the lungs. Elisabeth would have known some of the victims. Ten were from her small village.

In the following spring, a few short months after the massacres, a beggar – one of many – stumbled onto the yard of Elisabeth's parents. Everyone assumed he was another poor Russian – until the young man addressed them in Low German. His name was Hein Bergen, and he had been with the White Army when he came down with typhus. Weak and lice-ridden, he was making his way home. Both his mother and older brother had been murdered in the Makhno massacres.

Elisabeth's brothers bathed the young man, burned the infested clothing. When Hein's illness recurred, Elisabeth nursed him. She was 18 when they married that summer, 19 when their first child, Heinrich, was born. That same year the young couple moved to Schönhorst in the Mennonite "Old Colony" of Chortitza.

It is hard to imagine a worse time to start a family. As the Communist government confiscated already meagre crops to feed the cities, starvation hit the villages. Starving people have no resistance to disease. In Ukraine alone, up to 2 million, among them some Mennonites, died of starvation or the typhus epidemic which followed.

Lenin responded by bringing in his New Economic Policy which permitted a modest amount of free market activity, but many Mennonites had had enough. As con-

ditions normalized, emigration fever hit. Three of Elisabeth's brothers, Hein, Peter and Jakob Boldt, saw no future in Russia and emigrated to Canada between 1925 and 1928. So did Hein's older brother Jasch and his sister Suse. Hein and his two younger brothers remained in Russia.

The years of moderate prosperity came to an abrupt end in 1928, when Stalin, who had been consolidating power after Lenin's death, launched the first of his Five-Year Plans. The Plan especially targeted religious leaders, business owners and former well-to-do landowners. All were classified as kulaks: exploiters, a class to be liquidated.

By the winter of 1931, Elizabeth's husband Hein, a hard worker, had built a snug little house for his growing family. Someone, perhaps a jealous neighbour, reported him as a kulak and the family was slapped with an exorbitant tax. Hein scraped up the money but when he went to deliver it to the municipal hall, the doors were locked against him. Since he had missed the cut-off date, he was arrested and his home and contents were put up for auction.

Elisabeth's husband, Heinrich Bergen. Photo: courtesy of Louise Bergen Price

Elisabeth and her six children, including newborn Anna, were put onto the street with only the clothes they were wearing. They found shelter with relatives – a shed built onto the house where a cow had been kept. The roof leaked and the floor was dirt. When it rained, they slipped in the mud.

With no food at home, the children joined other beggars. They soon learned to ask for potato peels. Few people had bread – while Ukrainians starved, shiploads of Soviet grain headed to foreign markets. Mennonites called this time *die Künstige Hungersnot*: a manufactured famine. This famine, the second in ten years, took the lives of up to 7 million people including those of 329 Mennonites in Sagradowka, Elisabeth's home colony.

In the next few years, Elisabeth's husband Hein would be released and imprisoned again several times. Elisabeth gave birth to two more children.

As tensions between the USSR and Germany escalated in the late 1930s, Mennonites were again among those targeted as the enemy and wholesale arrests began. Elisabeth and Hein knew it was only a matter of time until Hein's arrest. When the dreaded night-time knock fell on their door, Hein couldn't face his children's tears. "Tell them I'm going to work," he said as he was led out the door.

Elisabeth broke down. "Children, you'll never see your father again," she wailed. And they never did. Hein's brothers, Peter and Abram, were arrested on the same night. All three had young families. All vanished into the unknown.

Between 1937-38, 1,800 men out of a population of about 22,000 were arrested in Mennonite villages west of the Dnieper– about one out of every four or five adults. Most often, they were accused of spying for Germany or of sabotage. Most were never heard from again.

On June 22, 1941, Germany invaded the Ukraine; within weeks, Mennonite villages on the west bank of the Dnieper were under German occupation. Although this brought a reprieve from Stalinist horrors, living conditions for Elisabeth's family didn't improve much. Her oldest son Heinrich was conscripted. Son Jakob ran away from home to join the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*). Years later, he was still unrepentant. For the first time in his life, he'd been able to eat until he was full, he reported. He'd finally escaped the unending misery.

After the way she'd been treated, Elisabeth had little love for the country of her birth. When the German occupiers retreated in 1943, she and her family accompanied them, as did 35,000 other Mennonite refugees. The Bergen family ended up in a refugee camp in Thüringen where Elisabeth's youngest son, Peter, was pulled into the last stages of the war. Her sons visited when they were on leave. Jacob and his sister Liese even had their photo taken together.

A song that crackled from the radio became popular with soldiers and refugees. "*Es geht alles vorüber*," Lale Andersen sang. "*Es geht alles vorbei, nach jedem Dezember, folgt wieder ein Mai*" (Everything passes, nothing lasts forever – after every December, May will follow).

May 9, 1945: the war was over. Elisabeth waited for her sons to join her in Thüringen, now under Soviet control. As weeks turned to months, her daughters, aware of

the dangers of repatriation, begged their mother to flee west. They would go, Elisabeth said, as soon as the boys came. She was so sure they'd come that she kept a suitcase with their civilian clothes, neatly folded, at the ready.

They waited too long. It was autumn when they were crammed into cattle cars, supposedly to return home to Ukraine. Instead, the train rolled on, finally depositing them in a poorly run *kolkhoz* (collective) in Siberia. The soup they received was thin with little nutrition. Tina, the youngest, almost died. After they had bartered all their extra clothes for food, Elisabeth sold her sons' clothes. It was hard to imagine she'd ever see or hear from them again.

With their escape to a camp fifty kilometres away, conditions improved somewhat. Still, Elisabeth and her family felt lonely and isolated from the language and culture that spelled home.

On March 5, 1953, news swept through the camp. Stalin was dead. Cautious hopes arose and were justified when camp rules were relaxed, and inhabitants were allowed more freedom of movement. To their overwhelming joy, Elisabeth and her daughters learned that other Mennonite families lived fairly close by, including a relative, Susanna Bergen. Susanna's husband, Peter Martin Bergen, was in Canada, and Susanna was already writing letters to him.

Elisabeth still had no news of her sons. Then, in March 1956, she received a letter from Susanna with incredible news. It seemed that Susanna's husband Peter lived quite close to Elisabeth's oldest son, Heinrich! And Heinrich had just received news from Jakob in Germany and Peter in Siberia. All three had survived!

Elisabeth did not trust herself to believe the news until she received Heinrich's first letter. Her letter, in return, was filled with joy and longing. Here are some excerpts:

Good day, dearly loved son, together with wife and children,

Yes, dear son, yesterday evening we received your letter written March 14. We thank you a thousand times for it. Even I can now believe that you are alive! I just couldn't write to you until I had seen your handwriting.

Dear son, we've been parted so long, not knowing where the other was. And now, after twelve years, such good fortune. And so wonderful – all three sons! Such a miracle He's given to me. I can't be thankful enough. Now I finally believe that God loves me. …

When they took everything away from us, Heinrich Neufeld said, "Those whom God loves, he disciplines." And I couldn't understand that. But the time comes when one can understand everything. May God give both you and us good health so that we can be reunited.

…

I still can hardly believe that you are really all alive. That is a great miracle of God, that he has protected all of you. I could write so much – but I hope we can all talk face to face very soon.

From Siberia, your loving mother, who never forgets you, greets you. Till we meet again. Goodbye.

Elisabeth's dearest wish was not fulfilled. The Soviet government refused to issue a visa so she could leave the country to visit her sons in Canada and Germany. In spite of this disappointment, her letters were filled with thankfulness and hope. She died in 1985, four years before Gorbachev's reforms tore the Iron Curtain in two. In 1993, all of her children met in Germany, together for the first time in fifty years.

The above was presented at an MHSBC event held at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, on April 23, 2017. The event was a repeat of the Society's 2016 fall fundraiser, entitled *"A Small Sign of Life and Love: Letters from the Soviet Union During the Khrushchev Thaw."*

Top row l-r, Elisabeth's daughters Tina, Liese and Anna.
Bottom row, Elisabeth with son Peter. Photo circa 1960.
Photo: courtesy of Louise Bergen Price

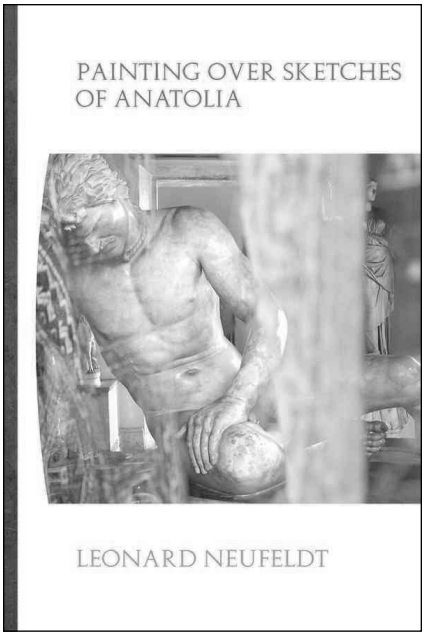
Book Reviews

Leonard Neufeldt.
Painting Over Sketches of Anatolia.
Winnipeg: Signature Editions, 2015. 89 pp.

Reviewed by Robert Martens

Leonard Neufeldt's most recent collection of poems, *Painting Over Sketches of Anatolia*, is a lesson on writing with precision and measured emotion. Neufeldt grew up in Yarrow, BC, and went on to a career of teaching, writing, and editing in the U.S. and abroad. His poems in this book reflect his wealth of experience – and his love for the beauty of things.

The first section of *Anatolia* might be the most difficult. Here Neufeldt looks back at figures such as Plato, Rodin, and Trotsky, meditating on who they were and who they remain in his poetic imagination. The book's second section, little poem/stories of Neufeldt's part-time life in Turkey where he has family, is more personal. In one poem he writes, "Hair on fire, I leave the lane's narrowness / to an oncoming tractor, turn into Ismail's yard" ("Ismail's Restaurant" 38). In the third and final section of the book, Neufeldt returns to his beloved North American west coast (he lives in Gig Harbor, WA). In "What the Fraser Valley Left Unsaid," he writes, "One day I will offer our children this poem / as love letter, ears ringing with pressure / from the other side of time" (85).



The following poem is ensconced, rather oddly, in the first section. It has nothing to do with major historical figures; it grieves the Alzheimer's of a much-loved relative who lived in the Fraser Valley.

Painting Over Sketches of Anatolia is currently for sale at the Mennonite Heritage Museum.

Fullness of Time

In her own time she could get hold
of things that go wrong,
and so having found her way
to the second stage
of Alzheimer's, she explained on a bridge
arching a small shudder of water
in Minter Gardens, where we
had taken her on a Sunday,
that ever since her husband had met
a bus head-on in northern Idaho
she didn't care for gardens,
and since her heart knew who she was
she couldn't begin to understand
her older sister's devotion to genealogy,
this zeal for missing elements.
"You can't change the past,"
not with a reading machine for macular
degeneration, not even with cataract surgery,
and her sister scheduled for both eyes,
her own eyes bright and furious
with unlearning, willing to let go
of bridge, stream, fountains, field of roses,
children, sisters all but one,
her gaze free of itself or tethered
to something far outside, beyond us,
beyond the great blue of Mount Cheam,
its glacier shadowed, inexact,
its bare peak bent by sky stretching
westward like a slope of light
called to praise by the evening bird

At night she leaves possibilities open,
window, birdless branch, eyes,
the soul, and a month ago
two nurses at the end of their day
found her five blocks away
in an intersection four lanes wide,
crosswalk zebra stripes gleaming white
between the idled cars
and horns quavering farther and farther back

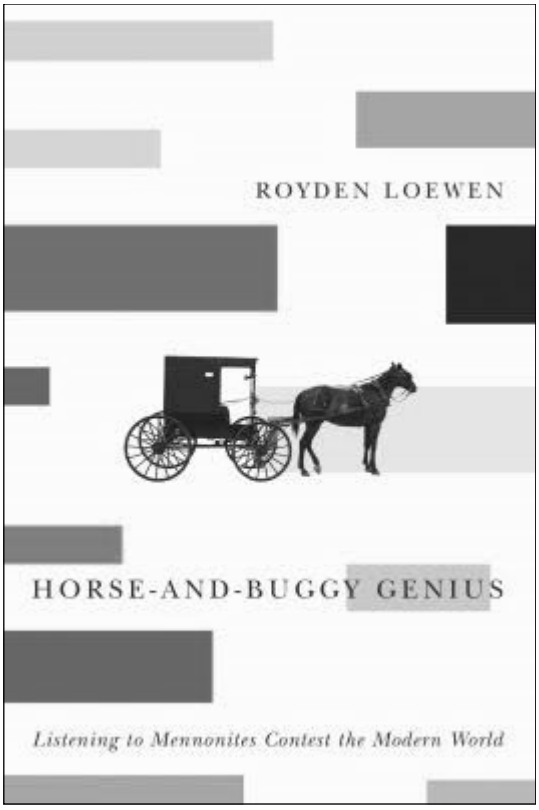
the moon above her perfectly balanced,
and she at the centre, empty
summer purse turned double
in her fist, trying
without eyeglasses to remember
the way back out of the setting sun

Loewen, Royden.
Horse-and-Buggy Genius: Listening to Mennonites Contest the Modern World.

Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016. 243 pp.

Reviewed by David Giesbrecht

In keeping with his position as Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, Professor Royden Loewen has been diligently satisfying his wide-ranging professional responsibilities by planning symposia, editing the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, and through his scholarship, publishing *Horse-and-Buggy Genius,* his eighth publication.



This study has in its sights the "reclusive horse-and-buggy Mennonites of Canada and Latin America." Its content is the product of on-location interviews conducted by the author and seven graduate students between 2009 and 2012. There are approximately 10,000 Old Order Mennonites, as they are known, in Ontario, and 100,000 in Mexico, Bolivia and Paraguay, where they are referred to as Old Colony Mennonites. As oral history, this book gives generous expression to some 250 voices (Loewen's interviewees) "with their inconsistences and degrees of narrative messiness," as the author notes. Throughout the personal narratives are interspersed numerous thoughtful, if sympathetic, interpretive and editorial comments, qualifying the book as an academic publication, and certainly making it informative for a wide reading audience.

What is of central interest in this study is that these Canadian and Latin American Mennonites, although geographically scattered, "share a common anti-modern outlook on life" which compels them to strive determinately for simplicity in their "close-knit and highly self-sufficient communities." The desire for an uncomplicated, agrarian life is poignantly illustrated by the story of John and Annie Sherk of Huron County, Ontario, who "feed eleven children on seventy-three acres of land … milk their cows by hand, feed their sheep by wheelbarrow [and] blanket their horses in the cold of winter."

Several common themes dominate the interviews. One is the steely determination of these Mennonites to "contest the modern world," and the corollary: to strive for uniformity in religious and community practices. Their core values include a close-knit family life and an agrarian, family-oriented means of making a living. A not entirely subtle convention of social control counsels members in danger of succumbing to vanity to "go a bit further down the line."

The interviews show how, among Old Order Mennonites in Ontario, spiritual and often temporal leadership are vested in the bishop, whose authority, however, derives not from any formal education or ecclesiastical prestige, but from his humility. It is the bishop who presides over the *Umfrage* – closed church meetings, which curiously take place in the women's cloak room, and where "debate, admonition and even confrontation and contestation" take place.

Loewen writes that Latin American Old Colony Mennonites exist within a "complex, democratically elected" leadership structure, presided over by an elected *Vorsteher*, loosely a "chairman." Further, most colonies have a *Brandaeltester* or "fire commissioner," a *Waisenmaun*, approximating an "estate commissioner," and a *Schult*, or "village mayor."

However, important decision-making seems located in the *Jemeen*, a spiritual fellowship approximated in the word "church." It is at *Broudaschaft* (brotherhood) meetings that all manner of pertinent issues are deliberated, including land shortages, family strife and conflict with local authorities. Since the meetings are male-dominated, women sometimes complain of unfair treatment, especially when they perceive the leader to be weak or vacillating in favour of socially prominent leaders.

Vital to maintaining social conformity is the *Ordnung* which sets out behavioural expectations for the community. Some of the interviewees, including women, recall

the shame of having to appear at the *Donnadach* (Thursday) after-church sessions and admit to unbecoming behaviour, such as having to deal with husbands who are alcoholic or who have yielded to efficiency in purchasing rubber-tired tractors. Tragically, fears over modernity sometime become self-fulfilling prophecies as when the Friesen family of Camp 20 purchased a truck and subsequently became involved with the mafia, thereby deriving their wealth from trading in drugs. By sharp contrast, as one farmer allows, "peace comes from farming in small ways with tractors on steel wheels."

Frequently occurring in these narratives is an irrepressible compulsion to migrate. When local conditions threaten their way of living, or population growth makes it impossible to sustain rural, agrarian living in an existing colony, these Mennonites opt for relocation to new settlements. Says Leona Reimer of Neuland, "We *Dietsche* or Germans are like ants, always wandering to new places." Or as farmer Jacob Peters in Mexico puts it, "The world is what drove [us] from Canada in the first place."

Overarching these interviews is also an evident longing to be people of faith, which is "expressed in lifestyle, not in words." Religion is less about doctrinal certitude than about an emphasis on "submission and humility." Alas, finding simplicity in a highly technological world can be elusive; as Anson Weber of St. Jacobs commiserates, "simple itself is not simple."

Predictably, the interviews draw attention to "incongruent anomalies." For instance, on an Ontario church yard a group of Old Order members on their way to the next service share with the author their awareness of the volatile global price of pork and government-regulated poultry production. Finding rural simplicity and practising non-violence means that adults reject any direct association with the state (they accept no Medicare or old age pensions) while at the same time being subject to global market forces and ever-changing modern technologies.

The author concludes that in this publication his aspiration was to produce "a transparent work, ethical in nature, innovative in scope and illuminating in a new way." In the opinion of this reviewer, he has in significant measure accomplished his goals. However, whether or not these Mennonites are a people of "genius," as the title provocatively announces or rather are cultural nomads driven by an unattainable inner quest is subject to debate: some readers may quarrel with the author.

Rudy Wiebe.
Where the Truth Lies: Selected Essays.
Edmonton, NeWest Press: 2016. 312 pp.

Reviewed by Robert Martens

Rudy Wiebe has enjoyed a long career as a novelist, starting with the controversial *Peace Shall Destroy Many,* published in 1962. He has twice been awarded the Governor General's Award for fiction. Wiebe has also written some fine nonfiction, including his childhood memoir, *Of This Earth*. More recently, he has published a book of essays, talks, and articles, all of which are previously written material dating from 1978 through 2012. *Where the Truth Lies* is a fascinating collection and recollection of Rudy Wiebe's "life narrative." The topics so vividly examined in this book are wide-ranging in content; however, several dominant themes emerge.

Writing: Words, says Wiebe, are bafflingly powerful in their ability to bring people together. Even Scripture, he points out, declares that "in the beginning was the Word." "Who could ever have imagined," writes Wiebe, "such a simple, such an endlessly complex matter: the first sounds a baby utters will eventually make it possible for us to walk on the moon, to converse about love or hate, to think eternity" (78). Fact and fiction are both ways to communicate with words, but what differentiates the two? Fact, writes Wiebe, "is an act of witnessing *and* an act of remembering. …" (85). Fiction is something derived from fact, but is not necessarily something that is "made up" – in fact, it rarely is. "*Fiction is the narrative you and I make out of the facts of our lives*" (81 Wiebe's italics). Every day, when we converse with others, writes Wiebe, we create narratives of our own experiences, past, present, and future. In a sense, we are all "novelists."

Sexuality: In Dene mythology, Wiebe points out (he is consistently fascinated by Aboriginal myths), the body is perceived as guiltless, in contrast to some of the

Every day, when we converse with others, writes Wiebe, we create narratives of our own experiences, past, present, and future.

ideas perpetrated in the West. Jesus, says Wiebe, was fully body. He goes on to point out that, in the so-called Dark Ages in Europe, women were often permitted considerable power in the church hierarchy. Those privileges were gradually cut back until women, after the Reformation, were largely confined to the domains of home and family. Female Mennonite writers, Wiebe contends, have been franker about sexual experience than their male counterparts.

The North: Rudy Wiebe has a passion for the North and for the role it plays in Canadian identity. His essay on Ellesmere Island in this book is brilliantly visceral: "There is such imaginable Stillness here. The endless noise of contemporary living batters us until we ignore almost everything, but in the Arctic a tuft of moss is an event, a fly a blue companion. You watch, and listen. Hear silence" (158).

Indigenous People: When Wiebe writes of the First Nations of Canada, it is almost invariably with a sense of outrage. The French and English imagined, somehow, that the newly "discovered" continent of North America now belonged to them. "How can I imagine I 'own' this land?" asks Wiebe. In English law, he says, crown tenure and consequently land ownership were considered a legal fiction, imposed by the monarch in the interests of order and justice. In North America, however, the concept of crown tenure was used as a pretext for stripping Aboriginals of the land they considered given them by the Great Spirit.

Nonviolence: Anger is also at the heart of Wiebe's writings on warfare: an essay title "Killing Our Way to Peace" condenses in a phrase the irony of humans murdering each other in the interests of harmony. There is no rationality in warfare, says Wiebe; in fact, we may be irrationally addicted to violence. And war reduces human beings to statistics: "…human beings never die as a single mass. We may die together, in small or greater numbers, but we are always, each of us *one*, and unique; every individual human being is of an absolute moral worth" (240). At the end of the twentieth century, writes Wiebe in "On Death and Writing," (1983), there may be only one nation left on earth: "*The United Republics of Total Death*" (224 Wiebe's italics).

Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage: In 2009, Wiebe listed some of the major influences on his life and work. Among them are his birthplace, Jesus Christ, his mother, reading and writing, the great Cree chief Big Bear, his students, and his Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. In *Where the Truth Lies*, Wiebe occasionally writes specifically on his heritage, as in his essay, "Flowers for Approaching the Fire," a lovely meditation on martyrdom. His Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage, though, is an abiding presence throughout this book, lingering in the background in every essay as a kind of "wallpaper."

The essays in *Where the Truth Lies* are remarkably diverse, ranging from brief newspaper opinion columns to extended speeches and crafted journal articles.

In 1959, while still a young man wrestling over what to do with his life, Wiebe received some crucial advice from Frederick Salter, professor of English at the University of Alberta. Salter told him "that there were no doubt numberless students capable of writing an acceptable MA thesis on Shakespeare but, perhaps, only I could write a good novel about Canadian Mennonites. He dared me; and I dared" (19). The result was Wiebe's groundbreaking first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. In this volume of essays, the story of the novel's writing and publication is told in "Hold Your Peace," which was the lecture Wiebe delivered at the Mennonite Historical Society of BC's fundraiser banquet in 2012.

The essays in *Where the Truth Lies* are remarkably diverse, ranging from brief newspaper opinion columns to extended speeches and crafted journal articles. Each of them, in its own way, is compelling.

The 2016 MHSBC fundraiser focused on stories of individuals and families affected by the "Khrushchev thaw." In *Where the Truth Lies*, author Rudy Wiebe tells one such story. It is excerpted here. In this essay, Wiebe is asking, what is my reason for writing? And the answer is partly found in his own ethnic history.

Where the Truth Lies **by Rudy Wiebe: an excerpt**

…Is there any point in a Canadian like me writing novels?

Well, let me tell you something: I once had a brilliant chance. It happened five years before I was born; in the fall of 1929 when my parents bundled up their young family and tried to get out of the Soviet Union. Together with thousands of other Mennonites who had been living there for seven generations, they left their Mennonite villages and whatever property they had and flooded

into Moscow. Officially there was no hope for them, but they wanted to make one last desperate attempt, by means of a massive gathering together, to importune, to force, to shame, whatever you want to call it, the government into letting them leave the Soviet Union. And it worked, to an extent. For no known reason, in late November 1929 about 3,800 Mennonites were given exit visas, put on trains as "landless refugees of German origin," and shipped helter-skelter to President Hindenburg's Germany. Some 14,000 others were forced back, either to their villages or, almost as often, to prison labour camps somewhere in the farthest reaches of the world's largest nation. My problem is that mother, father, two brothers and three sisters were among those 3,800 who were shipped out.

I began to get a clearer view of my problem in the middle sixties when the writings of Alexander Solzhenitsyn began to be known in the West; this climaxed of course with the vivid drama of his expulsion from the Soviet Union. I read everything he published, books upon books, and they were magnificent. Dear God, what a writer! And what a platform from which to address the world: secret police, torture, hunger, imprisonment, forced labour camps, exile – all rooted in the Stalin purges by terror that affect everyone on earth to this day as directly as the horrors of Hitler. I even thought of a possible short story called "Lucky Solzhenitsyn." Then, this past summer, all that Russian awareness was revived for me with a particular force.

Two of my father's brothers and their families also made that flight to Moscow in 1929; they were sent back by the police, and a few years later the brothers disappeared into the Stalin terror of 1937-38, never to be heard of again. But one of their sons, my cousin Peter, 19 years old that autumn in Moscow, did survive fifty years in the Soviet Union and in 1979 he was allowed to settle in Germany under the Soviet-West German *Umsiedler* agreement negotiated by Willi Brandt. In 1980 I lectured at the German Association of Canadian Studies in Gummersbach, and at that time my cousin was living within two miles of where I spoke; but neither of us knew the other existed. Now in July 1983, we discovered one another in a Mennonite *Umsiedler* gathering in Germany. When I saw him coming towards me through a crowd of people, it seemed I was seeing the face of my father as he was just before he died. And Peter greeted me in that marvellous Russian manner of full embrace and triple kissing, laughing, "You look just like a Wiebe, a real Wiebe!" A wonderfully cheerful, tiny man who had been to the Gulag twice, the last time in 1952 when he was arrested because a group met in his home regularly to read the Bible and pray. Though they couldn't prove that he was spreading anti-Soviet propaganda (officially there is religious freedom in the Soviet Union), he was nevertheless sentenced under Article 58 of the Criminal Code, sentenced to 25 years of hard labour. Now he tells me, "It was all right. I had only four years, only four, they let me out in the Khrushchev Amnesty after Stalin died." And he holds me, laughing and laughing, there is no limit to his happiness at meeting me.

In 1956 when Peter was released from the Kengir prison mine in Kazakhstan, I was graduating from a Canadian university and I wanted to become a writer. I had every chance to be whatever I wanted. But what could I write, really? An immigrant child born in an obscure corner of an unimportant land. I have been writing fiction for 25 years now and the question is still there; it does not go away. *What* can I write? Or should I say *whom*?

Excerpted from "On Death and Writing," 227-229. Originally published in *Canadian Literature* 100 (Spring 1984).

Pioneer Perseverance

By Wilf Penner

Recently I've been researching family history; specifically, my grandfather's and grandmother's pioneering days in the Rosthern area of Saskatchewan. They arrived there in the late spring of 1894, along with my grandmother's family, the Jacob Janzens. They took up their chosen 160 -acre homesteads about six miles due west of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, very close to where the Eigenheim Mennonite Church now stands. The incidents in the story, "Pioneer Perseverance," took place several years after their arrival there. Records tell us that the Eigenheim settlers would have had to give up their venture had not concerned friends in Manitoba sent food and fodder relief to them in their first two winters. I can't definitely specify the year the tale's events took place. My guess is that it was 1897 or 1898. Duck Lake is the Métis village where a battle between Louis Riel's supporters and forces sent by the government of Canada took place in 1885. By 1888 Duck Lake had a gristmill.

The first Saskatchewan winter that the Penners experienced was one of the worst on record in that part of

Saskatchewan – to give you an idea of what Saskatchewan winters can be like, consider this: the lowest temperature ever recorded at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan was taken on February 1, 1893, when the mercury plunged to -56.7 Celsius. That year the railway from Regina to Prince Albert was clogged by mountainous snowdrifts for seven weeks; relief supplies from Manitoba were on board the train stuck in the snow.

It was winter of 1896-97 in Eigenheim, the year of the great blizzard. Life was hard at the Penner farm. Peter and Susanna, Mary, Lena, and Susie still lived in the sod and timber shanty that they had constructed in 1894; it served as a dwelling on one end and as a barn for livestock on the other. After three summers on the homestead, fifty acres of prairie had been broken by oxen and plough, and a meagre harvest had been taken in fall. A portion of the crop had been delivered to the mill where it was ground into flour. Some of the flour was returned to feed the family, while the rest was sold for much needed cash. The remainder of the crop, intended to be used for seed the next spring or for reserves that could be ground into flour when needed, was stored in a granary.

When the first snow came in early November there were still two 100-pound sacks of whole wheat flour in reserve. Peter was aware that before Christmas he would have to take a load of wheat the twelve miles to Duck Lake to be ground for more flour for the family, but he felt little urgency. He would wait until more snow fell and a better track had formed on the winter roads.

Then came the first blizzard. The wind howled and whistled as the snow piled in huge drifts around the low-lying farm buildings. The mercury plunged to -40 Celsius. For a week the wind raged, making any travel impossible. After a brief respite, a second blizzard descended on the hapless pioneers. Anxiety increased as food supplies dwindled. Peter knew he must soon make that toilsome journey to Duck Lake, but the storm raged on. Finally, in the second week of December the skies cleared and the wind died, though the weather remained bitterly cold.

Peter decided that he dare not postpone the trip to the gristmill any longer, since the weather could deteriorate again at any time. The standard vehicle for grain transport in those days was a "grain tank" on a tandem-runnered sleigh, the front set of runners providing steering action. The tank or box was about 5 feet wide by 4 feet deep by 12 feet long and was pulled by a team of two draft horses or, as in Grandfather's case, by two oxen. Such a tank or box-sleigh could carry, when filled to capacity, 100 bushels weighing about 6000 pounds. To get a load of grain to Duck Lake, some twelve miles distant, would require about six hours in good winter road conditions, longer in worse. A day near the winter solstice contained perhaps seven hours of daylight. This meant this trip would have to be a three-day ordeal: one day to get to the mill, another to grind the flour, and yet another to return home. On the day before the proposed trip, Peter prepared his oxen, harness, sleigh and cargo. The grain had to be loaded by scoop shovel, a job of about two hours. Some fodder had to be carried for the oxen; it had to be prepared. Suzanna prepared a lunch of coarse bread and smoked farmer sausage for Peter.

In the dim light of a winter dawn Peter bade farewell to his family and slid out of the yard to travel northward the twelve miles to Duck Lake. The track on the road had been broken, so the oxen had an easier time pulling the heavily loaded sleigh. The runners shrieked in protest on the frigid snow, while Peter in sheepskin coat and fur cap alternately rode on the buckboard seat or walked in the track behind the sleigh to keep warm. After perhaps two hours of travel, Peter noticed a vehicle approaching, at first barely discernible, but growing ever larger as the two sleighs approached each other at a rate of about four miles per hour. Peter realized that a serious problem was imminent. How would the two vehicles be able to pass each other in the one track? Soon both vehicles were stopped facing each other. Who would make way for the other? It would make no sense at all for both rigs to leave the track and risk upset, but someone would have to steer out of the track to allow the other to pass. Who would it be?

Now it turned out that Peter was closer to home than the other traveller was to his destination or point of departure, so it was decided that Peter would make way for the southbound sleigh. As Peter prodded his team out of the track, the box sleigh leaned dangerously to the right, for the winds had swept the snow away from the packed and raised track. And then the sleigh capsized, dumping some eighty bushels of wheat onto the snow. After making his way around the overturned sleigh, the fellow traveller assisted Peter in getting his sleigh righted and turned around. By the time Peter had reloaded his sleigh, another two hours had passed and the sun was well past its zenith. Travelling home was now his only option; he could not possibly get to Duck Lake before nightfall. At dusk, a weary and discouraged traveller returned to his humble prairie home. "Dear God, give me strength to try

again tomorrow," was Peter's fervent prayer that night.

Mercifully, the good weather held and the next morning Peter was off, only – incredibly – to repeat the previous day's course of events, and Peter's bedtime prayer was repeated. On Thursday morning, Peter was on the road again, his third attempt to reach Duck Lake on his urgent mission. This time there was no other traffic all the way to the mill at Duck Lake, where he and his team arrived after seven hours of monotonous plodding. That night Peter found a place to sleep with his oxen in the village livery stable.

Friday, Peter's rig was the second one to be serviced at the mill. By early afternoon Peter had five 100-pound sacks of white flour, five of whole wheat flour, and ten of bran in his sleigh to take home, as well as $40 in his pocket. He made a visit to the general store to do a little Christmas shopping: a bolt of brushed cotton print that Susie could turn into new dresses for herself and her three daughters, a pound of hard candy, sugar, coffee and tea. After a simple meal at the village inn and another night at the livery stable, Peter set out for home. The weather still held, and with a lighter load, without further mishap, sunset should see him home again. Even in the event of another accident, twenty sacks would not take long to reload, so Peter felt little anxiety on the return trip.

*Author's note: One dreary day during the winter of 1945-46, when our family lived for seven months up against the north side of Vedder Mountain near Yarrow, Grandfather, who was then living with us, called me to his side, saying, "*Willie, ech vel de moal waut vetahle*" (Willie, I want to tell you something), and proceeded to tell me this story. The conversations and a few incidental details have been added to round out the story.*

Teaching in Grassy Plains

By Walter Thielmann

Grassy Plains is a small community on the south side of Francis Lake in the Burns Lake School District. When I taught there, people living in Grassy Plains consisted of First Nations; Mennonites of various sects such as Sommerfelder, Bergthaler, and Old Colony from Mexico and Manitoba; some old-timers and original settlers; a blend of other residents like teachers, storekeepers, garage owners and mill operators; and finally some American draft dodgers buying up farms from conservative Mennonites, who were seeking further isolation and moving north of Fort St. John where farmland was available.

Grassy Plains school accommodated about 100 students in grades 1 to 10 and had a staff of five teachers. The principal, Dave Gooding, taught math and science in grades 7 to 10. I taught English, social studies and beginning German, also in grades 7 through 10. The other three teachers taught grades 1 to 6. It was a small school: grades 7 and 8 had ten students, grade 9 had nine students, and grade 10, four students.

In grade 9, at the legal age of 15 at which one could quit school, the conservative Mennonite students were forced to drop out. Many of them would have loved to continue their education but were not allowed. We were told that some of them read books by flashlight underneath their blankets. Over the two years my wife and I lived in Grassy Plains, however, attitudes among conservative Mennonites towards schooling became somewhat more tolerant.

At the start of the school year, I began assigning homework. I was soon told that what I did between 9 am and 3 pm was up to me, but I was not to assign any homework – because after 3:00 the students lived under the parents' demands!

There was no gymnasium, so students spent recess and noon hours outdoors. A favourite activity was skating on a rink situated between the school and the row of teacherages. Sometimes the rink was used in the evening by the local kids, as well as some adults, mostly teachers. One evening I placed a record player at the window of the teacherage in order to provide some music. The Mennonite kids were called off the rink – apparently skating to music was not allowed.

We found fellowship in a small church led by a General Conference Mennonite pastor. The church was fairly ecumenical, and the church congregation was very hospitable, especially after our daughter was born. We often were the recipients of unannounced visits on Sunday afternoons and we were invited out for many dinners. Since no one, except for the general store proprietor, had a phone, drop-in visits of this nature were the normal practice. On one occasion, we were invited to an Old Colony Mennonite wedding reception where the men and women were served separately. This larger community hospitality extended to providing access to favourite fishing spots and inclusion in hunting trips, the two main pastimes of most people in Grassy Plains.

Coming from the Fraser Valley to take a teaching job

Roots and Branches

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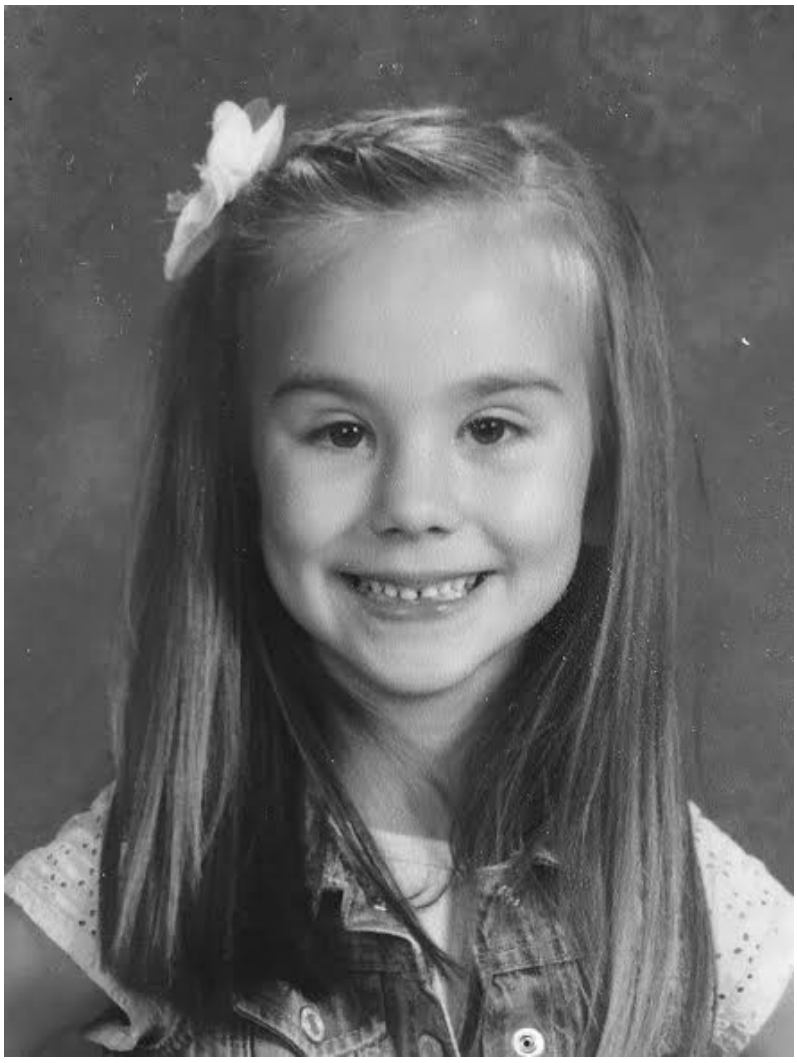
in Grassy Plains right after my wife and I married was, to say the least, a culture shock, but it was a choice we made intentionally and we had a great two years there. We have no regrets.

Walter Thielmann was born in 1936 in Bassano, Alberta, to Mennonite parents of Dutch-German descent. His parents immigrated from the Ukraine to Canada in 1925, settling first in Alberta and then moving to BC in 1947. Walter attended Chilliwack High School, East Chilliwack Bible School, Mennonite Educational Institute, and trained for teaching at the University of British Columbia. In 1960 he married Ruth Enns and left immediately afterwards to teach in Grassy Plains for two years. He then moved on to Prince George, Whitehorse, North Vancouver, Langley, and finally back to Prince George, where he worked as a secondary school counsellor till retirement in 1995.



Featured Artist—Lacey Friesen

Lacey Friesen, front cover artist, is a Grade one student at Mennonite Educational Institute, Abbotsford. She is passionate about art and is learning needlework from her grandmother. Lacey's art is featured in cards for sale at the Mennonite Heritage Museum.

God's Garden Photo: Louise Bergen Price

Geh aus mein Herz und suche Freud.

1 Go forth, my heart, and seek delight,
While summer reigns so fair and bright,
View God's abundance daily;
The beauty of these gardens see,
Behold how they for me and thee
Have decked themselves so gaily.

2 The trees with spreading leaves are blessed,
The earth her dusty rind has dressed
In green so young and tender.
Narcissus and the tulip fair
Are clothed in raiment far more rare
Than Solomon in splendour.

3 The lark soars upward to the skies,
And from her cote the pigeon flies,
Her way to woodlands winging.
The silver-throated nightingale
Fills mountain, meadow, hill and dale
With her delightful singing.

5 Thy splendour, Lord, doth brightly shine
And fills my heart with joy divine
While here on earth abiding;
What, then, may be in store for me
And all who heaven's glory see,
In golden halls residing?

Translation by Catherine Winkworth

Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676, was a Lutheran pastor, theologian and hymn writer whose works include "*O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden*" (O Sacred Head now Wounded), "*Befiehl du deine Wege*" (Commit thy ways), and "*Wie soll ich dich empfangen*" (How shall I receive thee?). A number of his texts were put to music by Johann Sebastian Bach.