



Wienwogespräch

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My Russian Mennonite Peacemaking Tradition

by Leonard G. Friesen

Introduction

My son, Isaac, used to have a neighbour who liked to play games where the forces of good wage war against the forces of evil. In choosing sides, this person would ask: "Isaac, are you a good guy or a bad guy?" Isaac, of course, would always reply that he was a good guy.

Historically, we Mennonites have done the very same with respect to our past, where the main question has been: "Have Mennonites been good guys or bad guys?" The assumption has also been that one would have to choose the one or the other.

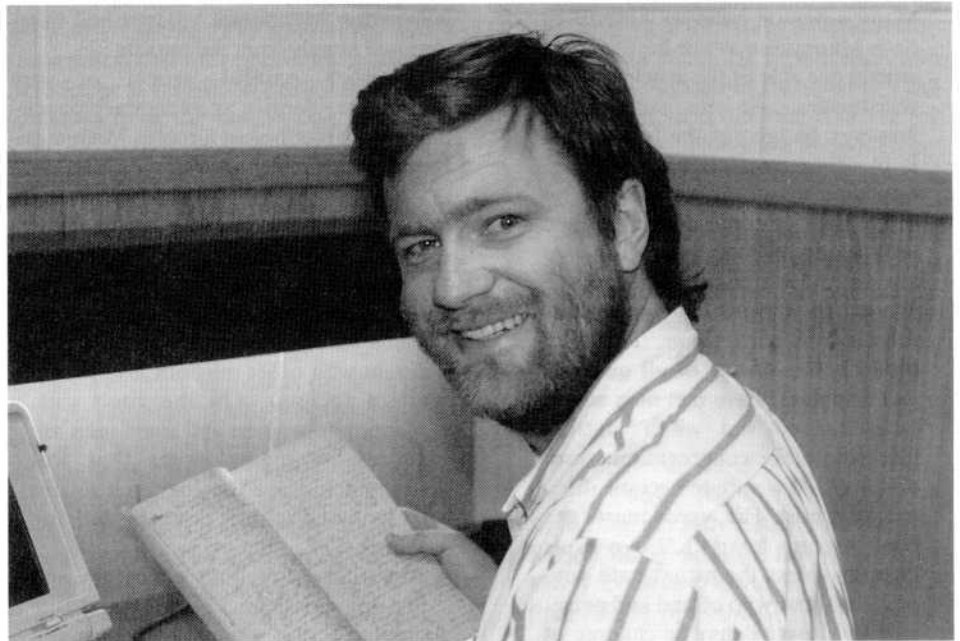
In contrast, the notion of irony allows one to choose between absolutes, or this case, from having to be either a good guy or a bad guy. This also allows us to accept that we are all capable of being good and bad. An ironic understanding of the human condition liberates us from the illusion of simple, uncomplicated, and triumphant answers.

Yet such a nuanced understanding is missing from the way that most Mennonites have understood their past; instead, those of us within that faith community have longed to identify ourselves as exemplary peacemakers. The picture we have grown up with is of a Mennonite peacemaking tradition rooted in the sixteenth century example of our Anabaptist forebearers. The Anabaptist people did not err. They were a miraculous type.

Glimpses from History

Contemporary Mennonites have reason to identify ourselves as peacemakers. We have an outspoken peace theology which talks about war and peace on the world stage. We incarnate that peace theology through our institutions, particularly Mennonite Central Committee.

But another reason for claiming an identity as peacemakers may be the fact that the true picture is too disturbing. In



Leonard Friesen.

reality, Mennonites have often failed or skewed peacemaking into a patriarchal mold, defining peacemaking and peacekeeping in exclusively male values. Thus we have seen the essential questions as: "Should men go to war?" "Should men fight?" The problem with this perspective is identified in the reflections of Katie Funk Wiebe:¹

My acceptance that nonviolence could be a powerful witness to Christ's love came fairly late in life, possible because I, a woman, never had to decide its relevance to me. For many years, it seemed to me that nonresistant love, never a strong Mennonite Brethren doctrine, was a folk teaching, like milking a cow from the left side, only intended for one segment of the population: men. My father had been a nonresistant medic in the army for nearly four years

before he became a believer because that was the way Mennonites in Russia did it at the time. Young men automatically accepted the non-resistant position when they became of military age. Fathers with many sons growing up into military age, and sensing the threat of war in the near future, sometimes packed up their belongings for another country. A father with a family of girls wasn't as bothered by threats of a military conflict.

We are always heirs to the climate of opinion in which we grow up, and unless we spot weaknesses in it and face them head on, these weaknesses become a part of us. I had accepted that nonresistance was only for men. My church had excused me from rigorous thinking about non-resistant love during war-time, but also during peace. I had not had the models of

Abigail, wife of Nathan, who made peace with David's soldiers or models of more contemporary peacemakers before me, because the whole matter was not considered pertinent to young women. Only as I accepted myself as a person responsible to Christ in this area, did I study the matter and slowly edge into its issues.

In terms of dealing with conflicts in our own communities, Mennonites have not done all that well at peacemaking. A letter written by a Prussian Mennonite minister to Mennonite ministers in Ukraine in 1851 provides a window into this reality:²

Many a person believes himself to be a Mennonite when he observes strictly one side of the article of non-resistance. At the same time, however, he ignores the fact that he is in other respects resisting and opposing divine as well as human ordinances. People deny that they are seeking revenge, yet their hearts are full of vengeance and malice against their brothers who do not fully agree with them. **This bad blood is the source of all quarrels and disputes.** I have met men whose faces turned red when matters involving other congregations were discussed. If we are to become disciples of Christ, His words must take root in our hearts: "Love your enemies, bless them that hate you, pray for those who offend and persecute you, that ye may be children of your father in heaven." We are genuine members of our congregations, not when we give appearances by adhering to outward forms, but when we evidence the fruits of the spirit, which are: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and purity. Galatians 5:22.

This passage contains both good and bad news. The bad news is that the Mennonite community visited in 1851 by this minister was torn by internal strife and conflict. The good news is that this awareness allowed those very Mennonites, in the eyes of the writer, to grasp the essence of the New Testament. We are only ready for repentance and grace when we have come to terms with where we have failed.

I want also to give one example of the almost class-like struggle which marked those Mennonite communities in Imperial Russia. Mennonites practised an inheritance system whereby the farmstead was passed on to one son, leaving the rest of

the family landless. At the time of settlement, Imperial Russian authorities attempted to protect the disinherited by providing each village with reserve lands to be distributed up among future generations. Yet this distribution did not occur as planned, leading to the emergence of a large, landless class. To overcome this crisis, the Mennonite landless appealed to an outside body - the state - at a time when powerful Mennonites were urging that the matter be kept within the colonies, where they could best maintain control. It was only when St. Petersburg authorities intervened directly that the landless finally received better treatment, and land practices within Mennonite villages began to change. In this instance, what peace there was within Mennonite villages had been imposed largely from the outside.

Another painful aspect of our Mennonite identity as exemplary peacemakers is described in a recent **Mennonite Reporter** newspaper article:³

The bad news is bad, the good news is getting better, concerning Mennonite women who experience violence. On the bad side, violence against Mennonite women exists at rates consistent with other religious groups and all of society. On the good side, Mennonite women and some men are addressing major issues that will strengthen peace theology as it relates to violence within families and the church.

About 80 counsellors, educators, and theologians from 12 states and five provinces, plus seminary students and others, examined the topic in a "consultation on peace theology and violence against women" at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries here October 4-5. Participants shared personal stories and knowledge of Mennonite women experiencing, and surviving, violence. They called Mennonite peace theology to account for its past silence on the issue and showed ways women must be part of correcting an errant peace theology.

The bad news for Mennonite women, according to Toronto theology student Carol Penner, is heightened by an implied passivity in the Mennonite theology of suffering. Penner told of an assault she and a friend experienced about 10 years ago. They did not resist.

"At the time, I believed I was acting like Jesus. I was suffering innocently and I did not return violence for violence. I wonder how much of it was the proper response for being a nice

Mennonite girl - she smiled, she endured, and then she didn't talk about it afterward," said Penner.

This article points to an entire segment of Mennonite life that has previously not been touched at all when peace theology has been discussed, even though examples of this abuse among Mennonites goes back to other countries and other times. The emergence in the nineteenth century of a Mennonite theology of submission, of yieldedness (**Gelassenheit**) has made possible the victimization and disempowerment of many within the church. Although it may have been good for men to see themselves as the quiet in the land when it came to whether one should participate in war or not, the results were less positive when applied to women's role in the home or church. We clearly see this in the arguments presented in the 1920's as to why women should wear a prescribed headress. For example, Harold S. Bender, the influential North American Mennonite church leader, wrote in 1922 that:⁴

The entire question is not one of moral or religious nature, but social. The covering of the head is not a necessity to make God hear the woman's prayers, or to recognize as valid her contribution to the religious life of the community - it is a necessity to preserve the divinely ordained social order from disruption and to enforce the lesson of woman's submission to man.

In short, it is possible to present a long list of those places where Mennonites have failed as peacemakers in their own midst. We could also list those times when they did act justly and peaceably. But the larger question is: "where does a more

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honest, nuanced understanding of the Mennonite peacemaking tradition leave us?"

Conclusion

First, we need to be less self-congratulatory about our historic peace position. Although it has indeed been a powerful witness in places, serious breaches of a peace ethic were not at all uncommon and continue into our own day. I am a part of that larger tradition and if I want to take my past seriously, I cannot select only the triumphant route, as has happened so often in the past.

But at the same time, we need to guard against becoming cynical, or yielding to a depiction of our past that is without virtue. To do so reduces this discussion once again to a false dichotomy of the world into "good guys and bad guys." Such a view does not follow from an examination of the past because the Mennonite tradition of peacemaking has produced many significant achievements.

I believe that one such achievement is found in the very fact that Mennonites have historically sought to remain on the periphery of the dominant society in which they lived. This strikes me as a tremendous historical legacy by which we can see ourselves as "in the world but not of the world". Such a position allows us to use the "anti-war" position as a springboard for challenging other societal violence, including the most destructive aspects of North American culture. How, for example, does our peacemaking tradition collide with the violent images found every night on our television screens? The Mennonite religious tradition compels the believer to find the ways in which being a Christian is over and against the larger society, and to work for its healing.

Another important historical legacy for Mennonites that is worth preserving is the myth of having been non-hierarchical, or "a priesthood of all believers". Such a position challenges the notion that intermediaries are needed to speak to God. We can do that directly ourselves. This also allows for the liberation of believers within our tradition in a number of ways, most especially as it pertains to the abuse of power within the home, church, and society.

And lastly—and ultimately the only point that really matters—the Mennonite tradition is important to the extent that it seeks to be Christian, and is committed to peacemaking on those terms. At this point, we might also ask: "How do people like the Mennonites, who have obviously failed so often at peacemaking, put the Jesus event at the centre of their lives?" In response, it must be said that there are

no other kinds of people than those who fall short. Acceptance of our repeated failures—both past and present ones—makes possible the realization that we cannot save ourselves. True faith can begin where self-delusion ends.

I would like, in closing, to set out three biblical images which might help us better understand the past, but also more squarely face the future as fully-rounded peacemakers.

The first comes from Romans 2:4, and it is a question: "Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" God will lead us to repentance. I believe that an honest view of the past, and the present, is essential if we as Mennonites wish to break the cycle of failed peacemaking. The story of the New Testament is that the opportunity is always there for us to repent. We need to liberate ourselves from the notion that our own good deed or our good history will save us.

But that is only one of the images which we need to incorporate. It is not helpful, for instance, for victims, who have directly and painfully experienced those times when Mennonites have failed to act justly and peaceably. It is also not a message for people who have been misshaped by undue emphasis on passivity and longsuffering. Here I would instead wish for the gift of righteous self-assertion and empowerment for those in our midst who have been victims. The image that I would like to call out for them is that of John 2: 13-17: "The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers at their business. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables."

True peacemaking within our communities will require that some of us heed the language of repentance even as others become unshackled though the language of empowerment.

And finally, taking ownership for the failures of our past and present should not deny us the right to celebrate those times in the past when we have experienced the fruits of peacemaking. Indeed, the temptation to cynicism can only be overcome once we acknowledge the goodness of our past. Let me put it this way: we should not celebrate Mennonites **as** peacemakers - as we have most often done - but rather celebrate Mennonites **when** we have been peacemakers. We have all experienced peacemaking in our own lives, or else seen it in our shared past. Those times of peacemaking, empowerment, or reconcili-

ation should not be allowed to pass without comment, celebration, or thanksgiving.

And so I close with a note of true thankfulness for the ways in which Mennonites have been true peacemakers in the past, and the times that I have experienced in my own life. We can celebrate those voices from our past that have spoken against hierarchies that dominate; for those whom we have known who have refused to engage in all acts of violence; and for the example of those parents and grandparents who modelled right relations within our homes and churches.

We also need to celebrate with those in our midst who are experiencing a new era of "inner" peacemaking and wholeness. Thus, if the first reflection on Mennonite peacemaking leads to repentance and grace, and the second has resulted in a call for empowerment, a final call is one of joy and celebration. This sense of sudden joy is best captured in the parables, as seen, for instance, in a slightly altered version of Matthew 13:44: "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man [or a woman] found and covered up; then in his [or her] joy they go and sell all that they have and buy that field."

NOTES

1. Katie Funk Wiebe, "A Tale of Seduction", in *Why I Am A Mennonite. Essays on Mennonite Identity*, ed. by Harry Loewen (Scottsdale PA.: Herald Press, 1988), pp. 333-34.
2. Harvey L. Dyck, ed. and trans., *A Mennonite in Russia: The Diaries of Jacob D. Epp, 1851-1880*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 91-2 [emphasis in the original].
3. John Bender, "Peace theology related to violence against women," *Mennonite Reporter*, 21 (21 October 1991), p. 1.
4. Marlene Epp, "Carrying the Banner of Nonconformity: Ontario Mennonite Women and the Dress Question" *Conrad Grebel Review*, 8(1990), p.243, n.21. Compare with E. Reginald Good, *Frontier Community to Urban Congregation. First Mennonite Church in Kitchener, 1813-1988*, (Kitchener: First Mennonite Church, 1988), chapter 8.

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Finding Refuge Among Mennonites in Waterloo

by Annie Dick Konrad



My parents, Wilhelm and Justina Dick, a younger brother Jake, and I fled the Wiesenfeld area of Southern Russia in 1919, in order to escape the

terror of anarchistic bands of peasants led by Nestor Machno.

From 1919 to 1924 we lived in the village of Neukirk in the Molotschna colony, about 80 miles from Wiesenfeld. Grandfather and Grandmother had rented a house in Neukirk which they shared with our family, my aunt Tina's family and my aunt Agatha. We were allotted a piece of land in the outskirts of town to grow vegetables. To pay for the rent father did menial tasks for the villagers. He bartered goods and services for extra food. To supplement our fuel my cousin and I gathered cow dung from the streets.

There was a complete crop failure in 1921 due to a drought and a great famine was felt all over the country. Local farmers still had some grain in their storage sheds but daily gangs of looters devoured much food. Later the Red and White Armies alternated in occupying our village and we had to billet them. They drafted our horses.

The soldiers brought many diseases, especially typhoid fever. Many people died. The dead were fully clothed and laid to rest on a flat board. A box-type lid fitted over the body before it was buried.

Mother had taken a cobbler's course before she was married. Leather was not available for shoes but shoes for the dead could be made from leftover silk and satin. Mother put her knowledge to good use and with father's help not only helped to feed her immediate family but also the other members of our household.

My brother, Jake, was born in February 1922. There was little food for mother and child. But when the need was at its greatest the "American Kitchen" came to our village. This "kitchen" was the start of what we now know as the Mennonite Central Committee and thus we stayed alive.

Father and a few uncles went back to see their birthplace once, in 1921. All the buildings had been demolished. The weeds in the orchard were man-high at

places and leaning, asleep, against an apple tree was a Russian watchman. They quietly retreated and knew they would never be able to take possession of their own land again.

Grandfather died in January 1922. He found an eternal home with God, but what would happen to us?

The doors opened for immigration into Canada. We would come to Canada and pay our way later. We had no friends or relatives who would take us in but we were told the Pennsylvania "Deutsch" (I always thought it was Dutch) people in the Kitchener area were opening their homes to such people.

We landed in Quebec on July 16, 1924 and travelled by train to Kitchener, arriving at the Erb Street Mennonite Church on a Saturday late in the afternoon. Most of the immigrants had already been given the name of their host on the train from Quebec. But since there were more immigrants than expected, not all families knew where they would find shelter. We were one such family.

I remember we sat in one of the horse-and-buggy stalls and watched one family after another follow their hosts to their buggy or car. I sensed the uneasiness in my parents as the evening came upon us and we were still sitting there. I snuggled close to my father and wondered, "Will there be no place for us?"

We had seen an elderly man walking by a number of times and eyeing us. We wondered, "Will he take us along?" But no, he disappeared. Later he came back. He walked by once more, then he turned around and came towards us and asked, "You are still waiting? Have you no place to go?" Father said, "No." Then he said, "Cell koomt mit mia" ("You come with me").

This kind elderly man was Aaron C. Bowman of Mannheim. We came to the car and found another couple sitting in the car already. On the way to his farm Bowman was very concerned about what his wife would say that he was bringing six people instead of the two they had made preparations for. He mentioned that his wife had been especially busy that week also preparing for a big family reunion that was to take place on their farm the next day. He must have been very concerned and voiced it aloud a number of times. I was not quite five years old at the time but remember it vividly. I held on tight to my father's arm.

When we got to the Bowman farm we waited in the car while Bowman told his wife that he had brought an extra family along. Then he invited us inside and his wife greeted us with open arms. We were given food to eat—one strange food I remember was what we later learned to love as corn flakes—and a room to call our own.

We stayed with the Bowman's for six months until we moved on to Manitoba and never once did we feel that we had overstayed our welcome. We were loved, sheltered, fed and clothed.

Aaron Bowman loved to tell the story, and I loved to hear it, of the poor, forlorn family sitting in a huddle with no place to go. He had already been ready to go home but he had come again to see if they were still sitting there and then could not leave us and took us home. My, what a heart full of love he had. Our prayers were answered. We had found a home.

Many memories of our stay at the Bowman's have faded away but a few linger on. One of the most embarrassing moments in my life I experienced the next day at the family reunion. For entry into Canada the children's hair was shorn to the scalp so it would be easier to check for lice which were sometimes left behind when troops of soldiers slept in our beds while occupying our village. I had never had a louse on my head but I also entered Canada looking like Yul Brynner. I was the main attraction at the reunion. No matter where I hid, someone would always find me. Everyone wanted to see the "Mädel [girl] that looks like a Boob [boy]." But this memory fades fast when I think of the pleasant times. I followed Mrs. Bowman around the house, into the cheese-house, helping her make cheese and then being able to eat as much as I wanted or my tummy would hold.

In Winter, before we went to church, Mrs. Bowman would throw herself on the white snow, make a snow angel, then roll over so her black coat was covered with snow. Mother and I then brushed her coat and with the help of the snow all lint or fuzz was gone. She must have done this to brighten a little girl's heart and help her learn to giggle and laugh again.

Annie Konrad lives in Leamington, Ontario. Her daughter, Esther, married a great grandson of Aaron Bowman's sister.

People and Projects

Two additional volumes of the **Mennonitische Rundschau Index** have recently been completed by **Bert Friesen**. One is the subject index for the years 1900 to 1909 and the other is the author index for the years 1880-1909. This brings the total number of volumes to four. Orders for the volumes (\$50.00 plus \$5.00 postage) should be sent to the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg.

"**Mennonites and the temptations of Nationalism**" is the working title for a proposed history conference to be held in Winnipeg in May of 1993. Peter Rempel, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society; Ken Reddig, Mennonite Historical Society of Canada; Lawrence Klippenstein, Mennonite Heritage Centre; Abe Dueck, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies; Henry Fast, Evangelical Mennonite Conference; Harry Loewen, University of Winnipeg; and a representative from Mennonite Central Committee Canada are planning the conference.

Pamela E. Klassen successfully defended her M.A. thesis in Religion and Culture at Wilfrid Laurier University in May. It was entitled "**Going by the Moon and the Stars: Stories of Two Russian Mennonite Women.**" Klassen also received a 1992 award from the Canadian Society for Studies in Religion for a term paper "**Submerged in Love: An Interpretation of the Diary of Lydia Reimer.**" Klassen is now enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Religion and Society at Drew University in New Jersey, where she intends to write a dissertation on a Mennonite topic with Karen McCarthy Brown.

The Mennonite Archives of Ontario has received a \$14,400. grant from the Canadian Archives Association and a grant of \$2,500. from the Loewen-Quiring Trust to arrange and describe *The Canadian Mennonite* photo series, which consists of approximately 6000 photographs and 1000 negatives. **Linda Huebert Hecht** began to process the series in June. Huebert Hecht has an M.A. in history from the University of Waterloo and chairs *Mennogespräch's* editorial committee.

Prof. Richard MacMaster, Associate Professor of History at Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio, addressed the annual meeting of the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society in June. He shared his

research on "**The Migration of Mennonites, Tunkers and Quakers to the Niagara Peninsula during the Pioneer Period.**" MacMaster hopes eventually to publish a book on this migration.

Paul Tiessen and Hildi Froese Tiessen delivered a paper on **Ephraim Weber** at the Learned Societies at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island last Summer. It was entitled "**Lucy Maud Montgomery, Wilfrid Eggleston and The Missing Pennsylvania Dutchman.**"

The **Mennonite Bicentennial Commission**, organized in 1983 to coordinate celebrations in 1986 commemorating 200 years of Mennonite Settlement in Canada, formally dissolved this year. The Commission transferred ownership of the **Bicentennial Monument** on the grounds of First Mennonite Church in Vineland to the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada.

Dennis Stoesz, archivist of the Archives of the Mennonite Church, will address the annual workshop for congregational historians in the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. He will describe "**Ontario Historical Resources at the Archives of the Mennonite Church**". The meeting is open to the public. It will be held on the morning of 7 November at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo.

Reg Good, associate archivist of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, will address the Fall meeting of the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society. His topic is "**Joseph Brant and the Mennonite Purchase of Block Number Two in the Grand River Tract.**" The meeting is open to the public. It will be held on the afternoon of 7 November at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo.

The 1992-93 Executive of the **Ontario Mennonite Historical Society** consists of the following: **Past President:** Alice Koch, **President:** Reg Good, **Vice President:** Sam Steiner, **Secretary:** Lorna Bergey, **Treasurer:** Pauline Bauman, **Fifth Member:** Catherine Schlegel.

The Board of the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society has adopted a new name for this newsletter. Effective in 1993 it will be known as **Ontario Mennonite History**. The new name describes the focus of the society and the contents of the newsletter.

The Ontario Mennonite Historical Society established **The J. Winfield Fretz Award for Studies in Ontario Mennonite History** at its annual meeting this year. The award will be offered annually at three levels: high school students, undergraduate students/lay historians, graduate students. First prize is \$100. Second prize is a book for the first category and \$50 for the second and third categories. Persons whose submissions receive honorable mention will be given a year's membership in the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society. Deadline is May 31. Address submissions to the editor of **Ontario Mennonite History**, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ont., Canada, N2L 3G6.

The Showalter Foundation and the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities have provided funding to microfilm fifty-two different North American Mennonite periodicals that began publication prior to 1920. This project is now underway in association with the American Theological Association. The first microfilm copies of some titles will be available in the next year. This collection of titles will include *Christian Monitor*, *Gospel Herald*, *Gospel Witness*, *Harold der Wahrheit*, *Herald of Truth*, and *Nachrichten aus der Heidenwelt*. Following soon thereafter will be *Christian Exponent*, *Christian Evangel*, *Christlicher Bundesbote*, *Familien-Kalendar*, *Family Almanac*, *Herold der Wahrheit* (Kalona, Iowa), *The Mennonite*, *Mennonite Yearbook and Almanac*, and *Zur Heimath*. Conrad Grebel College Library is acquiring all titles in this series.

Professor Theodore D. Regehr, author of **Mennonites in Canada, Volume III**, has received an Ethnic Studies grant of \$35,000 from the Secretary of State, Government of Canada. That money will be used towards hiring a teaching replacement for Ted at the University of Saskatchewan, so that he can devote the next academic year to completing a first draft of the manuscript.

The Ontario Mennonite Historical Society has established an **L.J. Burkholder Research Project Fund** to support Leonard Friesen's collection of materials relating to the life and times of L.J. Burkholder (1875-1949) for the Mennonite Archives of Ontario. Donations are solicited

Abraham P. Nachtigal's Experiences on a Farm in Markham

edited by Herbert Enns



Farming Canadian-style.

[This article originally appeared in German in *Der Nordwesten-Kalendar*, 1929, pp.81-83, under the title "*Meine ersten Erfahrungen und Erfolge auf der Farm in Canada*." It is here reprinted in English translation for the first time. The author, Abraham P. Nachtigal (1876-1950) was born in the district of Gnadenfeld, Molotschna Colony, Ukraine and immigrated to Canada in the 1920s.]

I was not always in Canada. I was born and raised in pleasant Southern Russia. Since man is as he is, I thought to myself, "I have gained enough wisdom in my life that I can get by anywhere in the world."

With little means, but with honest intentions, my family and I set out for our new homeland in 1924. Upon arriving at Quebec, we found ourselves destined for Ontario. Good, I thought to myself; of all the Canadian provinces, Ontario will likely be the most comparable to Southern Russia, climatically as well as economically. So, it will likely require little adjustment.

Our first destination in Ontario was Markham. At one of the stops, the train conductor disconnected our car, which was full of immigrants. We stepped into the open with peculiar feelings. It was a glorious Sunday morning in September. Close by, there was a small woodland. Over our heads, uncovered in a prayer of thanksgiving, flew our familiar black pests in the form of crows. All the evil that these creatures had inflicted upon us corn farmers in Russia was forgotten. We felt only love, warm love, for our hostile acquaintances. But—what was that? A

sort of bark, like a small dog or prairie dog reached our ears from overhead. Strange sounds from familiar birds. How could it be possible? At home, these birds made a regular crowing noise, and here they bark. Suddenly, I realized, it is totally different here. I had never read of such a thing anywhere. The noise of several approaching cars interrupted our thoughts. We got aboard and were brought to very dear "German-speaking" people.

As the table was already set, we were soon invited to take our places. Somewhat furtively I appraised the bounty with which the table was loaded. Had we not come directly from Russia, the "Paradise?"

I must confess that at first glance the meal did not seem too appealing, although in Russia I had often enjoyed the privilege of eating strange foods with dignitaries. The people here even ate differently from anything I had ever known. What struck me especially was the amount of water they drank. Our doctors always told us that it was not healthy to dilute the food with water. On this side of the ocean, they say that one must drink lots of water during meals to be healthy. Furthermore, my instructors in table etiquette had taught me that I should never give my dinner companions occasion to look into my mouth, unnecessarily. Here, every diner took a fine stick [toothpick] out of a jar designed for the purpose and proceeded to pick their teeth quite casually at the end of the meal. The young ladies were even allowed to stretch their arms out over their heads, while sitting at the table. If it had not suddenly occurred to me that we

had found ourselves in the land of the free, I would have inwardly condemned such manners. Everything was indeed different. Even the "German" language of the good Pennsylvanians sounded quite strange in my ears, when they asked me anxiously whether I did not like the "Krummbeeren" (potatoes), since according to their views I took too little.

Very many expressions which I heard, I had never encountered in a foreign language dictionary. Yes, even the intimate German was different in this land; so totally different.

The next day there was plowing to be done in the field. It was suggested to me that I might wish to earn a little money. Make money? Why not? And especially by plowing. In my imagination I instantly returned to my boyhood days. Horsemanship had been my boyhood dream, and at age 12 I was already in demand to take charge of a team. "The lad knows how to handle horses," they said of me. Yes, indeed; that was long ago, and not in this land.

The next morning I went to the stable early to give the horses their "wet feed," [a way of feeding horses in Russia], but found neither chaff nor crushed grain. Then the landlord came and fed the horses, but not as we used to do it. In my exuberance to be of help—in imagination I already saw the first self-earned dollars slip into my empty purse—I sought to carry the harness before the plow, but found only the horse-collar in the stable. "You can not plow with these," I thought, and stood by helpless again, until the landlord came and said something about "harnisch," or something which sounded similar. When I said something to him about "Geschirr," [German for harness] we could not convey our intentions to each other. Finally we began to harness the horses, the landlord and I. While he carefully layed it on, I just as carefully watched how it was done. Before we set out, I hurried back into the stable to fetch the whip, but could find none. I was somewhat taken aback, for in my mind I could hear the rebuking voice of my father when I would forget the whip as a youth. In Russia it was easier to imagine a one-armed plowman than one without a whip. Finally, with much paraphrasing of the good "German" I made it clear what I was seeking, and he said to my great surprise that in Canada no whip is needed for the horses. It is all done by words of

encouragement. At last we were ready to go. Sure that all the difficulties were now overcome, I walked beside the plow towards the field. The son of the landlord operated the other plow. When we arrived, the landlord helped me get started, and went home. Slowly, step by step, we went the length of the field. In time, progress seemed too slow for me, since by nature I am somewhat quick-tempered. "Ho, Olasch!" I called to the animals to encourage them. The team stopped. "Hao, how!" I cried louder. The horses stood still as if enchanted. With another attempt, and with words which in Russia always brought good results with good horses, I called, "Hao wag Olasch!" All in vain. I was at my wit's end. In all my life, horses have always responded to my "Hao wag Olasch!" Here they stood as if nailed down.

"Oh, if only I had a whip, I would soon get ahead," I sighed from the depths of my soul; but here I was as completely disarmed as the Germans were by the French. In my fear of disgrace, I began to jerk the lines back and forth, furtively stooping to the ground for a clod of earth to pelt at the lazy animals, and cried in a half strangled voice, so that the landlord's son would not notice, "Gaot enmao!" Apparently the Low German "Gaot" sounded enough like the English "Go on" to break the trance. At least they moved on; but alas, while bending to pick up the clump of earth, I lost my hat, which I just noticed after I came to myself.

"Prrr! Prrr! Prrr!"

How gladly the plow horses in Russia stood still, especially in the hungry years, upon one low-voiced "Prrr!" Here it had about the same results as of the appear-

ance of a dozen wasps among the horses. Tired and irritated, I reached the other end of the field, bareheaded. Here the horses stood quietly and I went to seek advice of the thirteen-year-old, and also lessons in the English horse language. From then on matters went better in the field, as long as I did not get the words confused. I struck the word "Prrr!" from my vocabulary. Yes, yes, life here was altogether different. With a subdued heart I related my experiences to my faithful wife Annie in the evening. After listening to me quietly, she said slowly, but with emphasis: "Yes, yes, Father. The European man in you will have to die first."

After many bitter experiences which I encountered later, I said to my wife one evening at twilight, "Mother, I believe the European has the English sickness and consumption besides."

Following six months of grim suffering the "finished" European died one night, and out of the old remains, a young Canadian was born in the early morning hours, who was willing to start at the beginning, and to learn what an ignorant child must know. My school program read thus: "How is it done in Canada?"

This was one of my first experiences in Canada. But I wish to write a little about my progress on the farm in Manitoba. "My" farm! How sweet it sounds! Quite different from the last while in Russia. On "my" farm, which I honestly acquired on "Mennonite Conditions," I made three attempts at potato planting. The first time, I planted the potatoes quite deep, by European methods. The results were that they practically all rotted because the bed was too cold and damp. The following year, I made an attempt with red, so-called

seven-week potatoes, which I simply laid on the ground, scraped earth over them, and later hilled them with loose earth. The result was unbelievable. From about seven pails of cut seed potatoes, we gathered in 78 bushels.

The next year I carefully prepared a quarter acre, cut the potatoes in the Spring so that each piece had several eyes, and let them dry in the sun. When a fine crust formed on the cut side one and a half to two days later, I laid them down with the yes on top, without a furrow, on the prepared ground, then covered them with a shovelful of earth. The notable advantage which the potatoes gained was that they had a warm bed, loose earth underneath, and could push through quickly. When the sprouts grew longer, we hilled them after every rain until the new potatoes were set. The pigs rooted out a part, yet we harvested 175 bushels of late white potatoes. If the uprooted stalks had remained, we could have had 188 bushels. This would be the equivalent of 752 bushels per acre.

The fortunate part was that wife and daughters seized the opportunity to gather in potatoes. We needed no shovels. We pulled the stalks out by hand, and before us lay up to 30 splendid potatoes, which were a pleasure to gather into sacks.

Now, dear reader, if you like potatoes, try it this way; and even if your women have become somewhat fashionable, you could not keep them indoors when the potato harvest begins.

Herbert Enns is a founding member of the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society and is German language editor of Mennogespräch.

Book Notes

William Janzen edited a 15th-anniversary publication of MCC Canada's Ottawa Office entitled *Mennonite Submissions to the Canadian Government: A Collection of Documents prepared by the Ottawa Office of Mennonite Central Committee Canada, 1975-1990* ([Winnipeg: Mennonite Central Committee Canada, 1990]), 70 pp. It is intended to contribute to the on-going dialogue in MCCC's supporting church groups about the question of relating to government. Readers may wish to consult Janzen's *Limits on Liberty: The Experience of Mennonite, Hutterite, and Doukhobor Communities in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 375 pp. for an historical context of church-state relations in Canada.

George Bechtel compiled information on the gardening practices of Pennsylvania-German Mennonites and other ethnic groups in *The 1914 Look: Landscapes & Gardens of Waterloo County* (Kitchener, Ontario: Heritage Resources Department, Regional Municipality of Waterloo, 1991), 221 pp. It was prepared for Doon Heritage Crossroads, an outdoor museum in Kitchener, which interprets Waterloo County history in 1914.

Peter Erb edited *On Being the Church: Essays in Honour of John W. Snyder* (Waterloo, Ontario: Conrad Press, 1992), 178 pp. Snyder was pastor of Rockway Mennonite Church from 1966-1991. A

history of Rockway Mennonite Church by Eleanor High Good and Peter C. Erb is included.

Bruce Jantzi and Lorraine Roth trace the descendents of Andrew and Anna Herrfort in *The Family History and Genealogy of Andrew and Anna (Sommer) Herrfort* (New Hamburg, Ontario: The Herrfort/Herford Family Book Committee, 1992), 335 pp.

Harry M. Hoover's *Huber-Hoover Family History* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1928), pp.335 has been reprinted. The 1992 edition includes a preface by Amos B. Hoover. Available from the Olde

Book Notes (Cont'd.)

Springfield Shoppe, 10 West Main Street, P.O. Box 171, Elverson, Pennsylvania, 19520-0171.

H.S. Hallman's *History of the Hallman Family in Canada* (Berlin, Ontario: H.S. Hallman, 1906) has been updated by Joan Hallman in *Hallman Family History in Canada* (Kitchener, Ontario: Joan Hallman, 1991), 383 pp. Available from the compiler at 30 Buttonwood Dr., Kitchener, Ontario, N2M 4R1.

Eunice M. Brake, in *Schnitz and Plum Pudding: A Family History of the Brake-Brech, the Cosens, the Kraft, the Wismer Families* ([Ann Arbor, Michigan: Eunice M. Brake, 1992), 270 pp. narrates the history of her extended family and includes 65 pp. of genealogical charts. Available from the author at 1200 Earhart Rd. #511, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48105.

Eileen Beirnes, compiler of *Family history of John Strohm Clemens, 1833-1991* ([St. Jacob's, Ontario: The Clemens Family Book Committee, 1992]), pp.106 provides background information on the Clemens family and traces the descendants of John and Rebecca (Snyder) Clemens.

David Wiens, compiler of *The Wiens Family Chronicle* (Cloucester, Ontario: David Wiens, 1991), 296 pp. traces the history and descendants of Abraham and Margarethe (Froese) Wiens. There are three sections: history, genealogy and appendixes. A 36-page chapter, erroneously numbered "V", was inserted between the history and genealogy sections after the book was paginated. This chapter summarizes the history of relatives who remained in the Ukraine after most of the family emigrated to Canada in

the 1920s. Available from the author at 644 Glenhurst Cr., Gloucester, Ont., K1J 7B7.

George Krahn, compiler of *Memory Lehn: A History of Jacob Lehn and his Descendants, 1679-1771* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: George Krahn, 1991), traces the history of the Lehn family in Russia and Canada. Available from the compiler at R.R.#3 Saskatoon, Sask., S7K 3J6.

E. Elizabeth Koch Lang, compiler of *Koch: Some Ancestors and Descendants of David Ludwig Koch and Barbara Reist* (New Dundee, Ontario: E. Elizabeth Koch Lang, 1988), 427 pp. traces the history of the Koch family in Germany and Canada. Well illustrated. Includes an index of descendants and spouses. It is available from the compiler at 276 Bridge St., New Dundee, Ont., N0B 2E0.

D. Douglas and Anne Eby Millar, compilers of *Two Pine Trees: Pictorial Biographies of the Antecedants, Descendants and Relatives of David Douglas and Anne Eby Millar* (Kitchener, Ontario: D. Douglas and Anne Eby Millar, 1992), 245 pp. trace the genealogy of their Millar and Eby family lines. Well illustrated. Available from the compilers at 51 Duncairn Ave., Kitchener, Ont., N2M 4S5.

Russel H. Janzen, compiler of *Janzen 1780-1989: A Family history and genealogy of Jacob F. and Susanna (Baerg) Janzen their ancestors and their descendants* (Bountiful, Utah: Family History Publishers, 1989), 271 pp. traces the history of the Janzen family in Canada. Available from the compiler at #37-3351 Horn Road, Abbotsford, B.C., V2S 4N3.

H. Walter Christner, compiler of *Our Immigrants: Christian and Elizabeth Christner's Family* (Sarasota, Florida: H. Walter Christner, 1991), 254 pp. traces the descendants of Christian Christner who emigrated to Ontario in the 1820s and served as deacon in the Geiger (now Wilmot) Mennonite Church. Includes an index of descendants and spouses. Available from the compiler at 2912 E. Forest Lake Drive, Sarasota, Florida, 34232.

Wray and Cathi Bender, authors of *A History of the Tavistock Mennonite Church, 1942-1992* (Tavistock: Tavistock Mennonite Church, 1992), 68 pp. outline the 50-year history of the Tavistock congregation in this attractive anecdotal booklet.

Alexandra Janzen Schura and Philip Schura, trans. and ed., *Our Journey: From the Letters of Jacob H. Janzen, 1924-25* ([Ottawa: privately printed], 1992) 30 pp. describe the Jacob and Elsie Janzen family's journey from Russia to Canada in 1924.

Wilma McKee, author of *Heritage Celebrations: A Resource Book for Congregations* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1992) 75 pp. suggests creative ways for Mennonites to celebrate their history.

Marcus Shantz, compiler of *Looking For Peace: Three Mennonites Remember WWII* (Kitchener: Mennonite Central Committee Ontario, 1992) 23 pp. plus handouts, provides a useful resource for peace education at the Secondary School level.

I would like to become a member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. I will be informed of all Society events, will be eligible to serve on the various committees of the Society, and will receive *Mennogespräch* as part of my membership.

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