

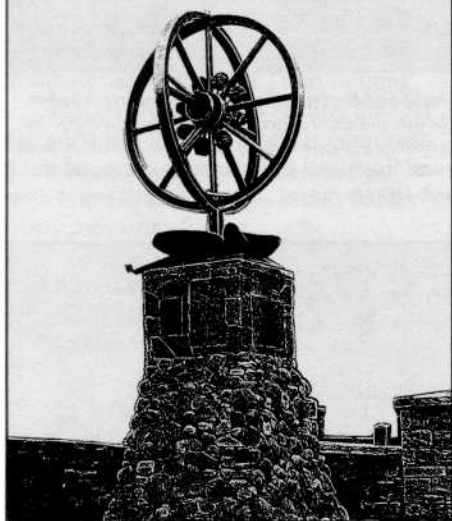
# Ontario Mennonite History

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## Changes I Have Seen In The Amish Community In My Lifetime

By Glenn Zehr

*Adapted from a presentation given at  
Steinmann Mennonite Church to the  
Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario  
on June 13, 1998.*

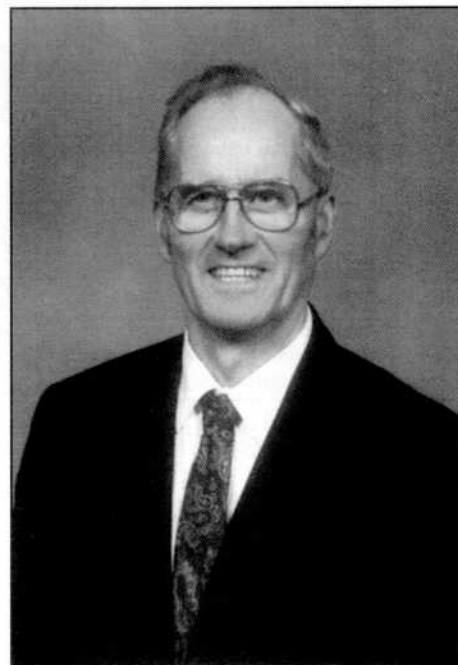
I am sure all of us know that the only certain thing in life is change. How we learn to deal with change will have a great deal of bearing on whether we enjoy life or not.

When I was invited to speak on the topic, "Changes I Have Seen In The Amish Community In My Lifetime" I asked Lorna Bergey what was meant by the term "Amish community." Her response was that I could define that. But in further dialogue we sort of agreed it should probably include both, what is generally known as the "Old Order Amish," and those of us who have the same roots but now live a different lifestyle.

I will try to address the changes I have seen and/or experienced, and some of these changes apply to all of us, and some don't. I will try to keep it clear as to whether I am talking about the Old Order group or the rest of us. I, and I'm sure most of us, have changed along with the society around us, while the Old Order Amish have resisted change, ever since their beginning in 1693. But they too are changing, whether they admit it or not.

Let me tell you where I am starting from. I was born in 1935, the seventh child in what grew to be a family of eight. My parents farmed on the 15th Line of East Zorra Township, and were very much involved in what is now called the Cassel Mennonite Church. According to the information I read on Cassel's Web page this week, the congregation began on May 5th, two and a half months before I was born. At that time it was known as Cassel Amish Mennonite Church, and was part of the Amish Mennonite Conference. For close to 30 years it was part of the East Zorra Amish Mennonite congregation, which met in two buildings, and when Tavistock was formed in 1942, in three buildings. During those years the ministers had a rotating preaching schedule. I can remember when Dan Iutzi was the bishop, and Menno Kipfer, and Jacob R. Bender were the older ministers.

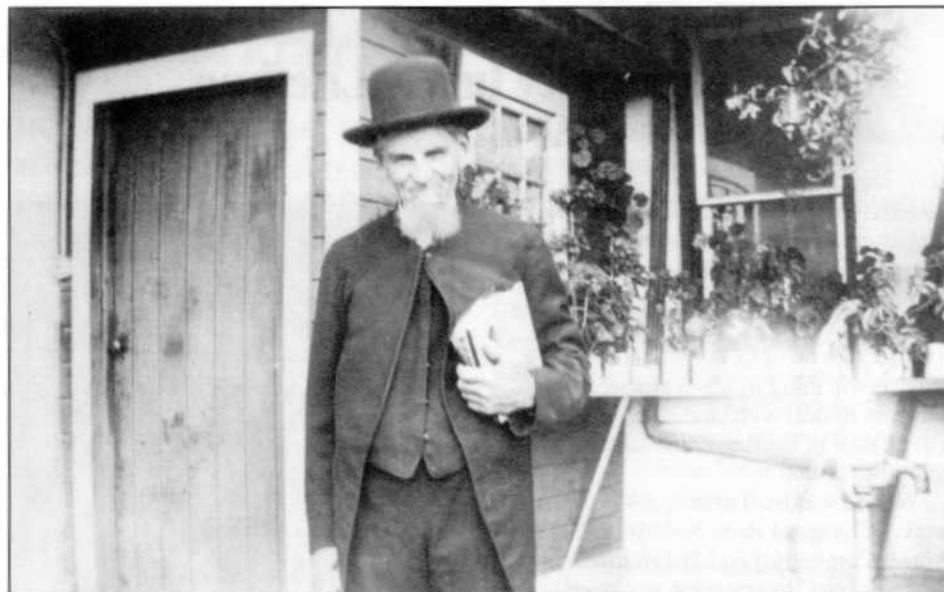
One thing that changed during my lifetime was the language used in church, and in most homes. I learned to speak Pennsylvania Dutch first. So because English is my second language I hope you



*Glenn Zehr is pastor at Riverdale Mennonite Church in Millbank, and is involved with the local information center about Mennonites and Amish for tourists who come to the area.*

can forgive me if I get a bit "ferhuddled." A little over a year ago I was interviewed by a reporter from Germany, and she wanted to do the interview in German. After a few minutes I convinced her to do it in English. She took the tape back to Germany, and recently sent me a copy of what she did with it. She played back a bit of that interview I tried to do in Pennsylvania Dutch, and I am terribly embarrassed by what it sounds like. Especially because I know Lorna Bergey and Lorraine Roth also got a copy of that tape. In between short quotes from myself, Lorna, Lorraine and Catherine Jantzi – an Amish woman from Millbank – she does an interesting commentary of what she learned about the Old Order way of life.

The transition from German to English in the East Zorra area took place in the nineteen thirties and forties. Dan Wagler and David Schwartzentruber were ordained as ministers in 1940, and I understand they did all their preaching in English. Jacob R. Bender increasingly used English in his sermons in the thirties. I remember a few German sermons preached by Dan Iutzi and Menno Kipfer, who both found it difficult to preach in English, and used the German language as long as they preached.



**Bishop Dan Iutzi 1873 - 1960.** He was ordained deacon in 1902, minister in 1914, and bishop in 1917. He helped organize the Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference, and served as Moderator of it from 1923 - 1936.

The decision to purchase the English language Church and Sunday School Hymnal in January, 1940 increased the speed of the transition to English worship in these congregations.

In 1948, Henry Yantzi was ordained as the bishop, and took over the responsibility for all the baptisms, communions, weddings and funerals, and was the leader of the pastoral team.

The year before, three deacons were ordained and placed in specific congregations: my father, Dan Zehr, at Cassel; Andrew Zehr at East Zorra; and Rudy Brennehan in Tavistock. From 1954 on, the ministers were also stationed at the different churches and were more responsible for the specific congregational pastoral care. It was in 1964, when the Hillcrest congregation was formed as the fourth meeting place, that each congregation started to hold separate business meetings, and in essence became four independent congregations. It was also at this time when the ministers were given the authority to officiate at weddings, baptisms, funerals and communion. That greatly shifted Henry Yantzi's work load, and he became the pastor at Hillcrest.

I see some similarity between this "one congregation meeting in three places" style

of church, with what is still the case in the Millbank area. The Old Order Amish have six "districts" in the Millbank area. I would call them congregations. They meet in two different homes one Sunday, and in four the next Sunday. Presently they have only three active bishops and many ministers and deacons, but they would say they are one group or one church. The bishops work together as a team for all the districts, even though they are ordained for a specific district - the east, the west or the central district and so on. Twice a year, just before communion all the bishops, ministers and deacons meet. This is a group of about 25 men.

Now coming back to the Amish of which I am a part. The name change of the "Amish Mennonite Conference of Ontario" to "Western Ontario Mennonite Conference" in 1963 symbolized a period of increased and rapid changes. One of the reasons for the name change was to separate ourselves from those who rely on horse-drawn vehicles as their primary means of transportation.

I found it rather interesting that some of the same people who wanted to drop the name "Amish" from our conference and congregations in the early sixties were the same ones who worked very hard ten years later to celebrate the

Sesquicentennial, or the 150th anniversary, of the first Amish settlers coming to Canada from Alsace and Lorraine in Europe. Several books were written and a dramatic play was put on, in a *theatre* of all places, let the whole world know who these people are.

A quote from the book written by my brother, Vernon Zehr, and Leona Bender for Cassel's 50th anniversary, reports that an early job description of the janitor included, "Lighting fires, sweeping and dusting, shoveling snow, piling wood in the shed, emptying toilet pails, cleaning toilets, moving stoves in and out in the Spring and Fall, cleaning and polishing the stoves and stove pipes, lighting and cleaning the lamps." This may help us understand what life was like in the 1930's.

I clearly remember when my uncle, Dan Wagler, installed electricity in our farm



**David and Barbara (Streicher) Schwartzentruber.** He was ordained deacon at East Zorra in 1935. He served as minister at East Zorra and Tavistock from 1940 - 1967. Also after World War II they served with MCC in Poland.

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buildings. I think I had just finished grade one, and I was proud of the fact I could spell my name, and I remember writing it with my finger in the dust on his truck.

I remember when we got indoor plumbing and a bathroom, and built-in kitchen cupboards. My parents bought their first car after I was born, but I was too young to remember that. The only time I remember going to church with horses was in the wintertime. In those days, the roads were not plowed and salted every time a few centimeters of snow fell. In fact it wasn't even measured in centimeters. I think the term that was used was "feet, inches and yards."

I also remember when we built our first dairy house, and a few years later a silo. It was probably in 1946 or 47 when we got our first tractor. But we continued to use horses to do some of the farm work until after I was married. It was 1957 when the cement horse stalls were knocked out and replaced with more sow pens.

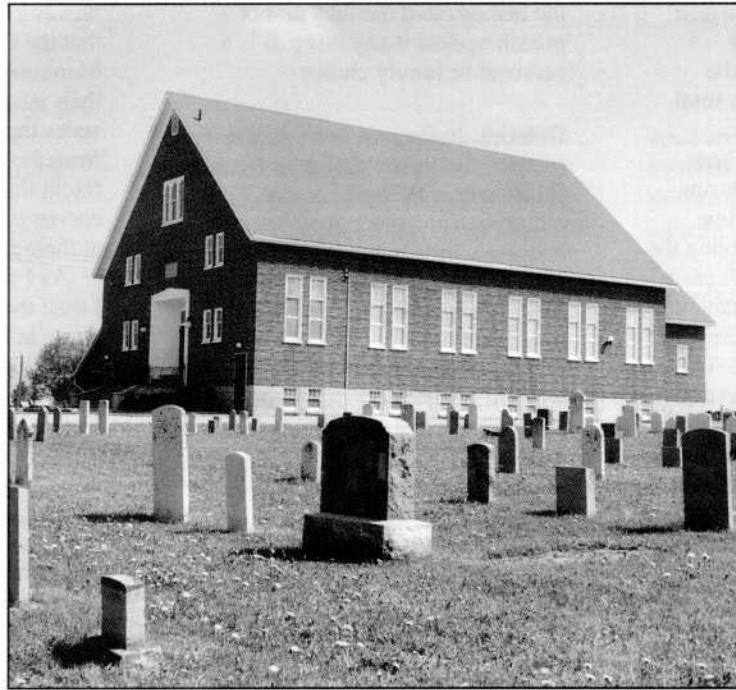
As a child and youth I helped to cut the grain with a binder and stooked it. In 1946 we got a new threshing machine and it was used on four or five family related farms for many years. That meant the grain was no longer hauled into the barn, to wait for the custom thresher to come around with his big Rumley tractor, and thresh it out of the mow in the barn in the fall or early winter.

For a number of years we swathed the grain and baled it and put the bales through the same threshing machine. It was during that time when many of our neighbours got forage harvesters and used them to pick up their grain, cut their corn into the silo and blow the hay into the hay mow. This equipment was replaced with combines about the time I quit farming.

So you can see why watching the Old Order Amish farmers cut their grain with a binder and stooking it and hauling it in with horse drawn wagons brings back many memories for me.

**I have also seen other changes within our circle of family and friends such as:**

**The level of education.** When I completed grade 8 only some of my friends went on to high school. None of my older siblings had gone,



*East Zorra Amish Mennonite Church as it looked in 1962.*

so I didn't either. That was a decision I later regretted. Now I pastor people who are in the same shoes. They have grown up in churches that still discourage education past grade 8, and many of them are now taking adult education classes. In most of our churches we now also have persons with all kinds of college, university and seminary degrees, while the Old Order attend their parochial schools and quit, either at the end of grade 8 or on their fourteenth birthday, which ever comes first.

**Eating out.** People eat out more than they used to, even on Sundays. That means a lot less socializing around dining room tables with other families from the church. At Riverdale, we have increased the number of potlucks per year to try to make up for the loss of what I still see as an important aspect of congregational life.

**Travel.** People travel far more than they used to, especially young people. And most of them now go by airplane.

**Church attendance.** More of our active church members miss more Sundays during a year than they did sixteen years ago. They go to the beach, their cottage, a Blue Jays game, or sports tournaments that their children - or the parents them-

selves - participate in. There is probably nothing wrong with these activities, but what does it say about our priorities?

**Medical.** Another thing that has sort of come full circle is where to give birth. I was born at home, like most people were in the thirties. Our children were all born in a hospital. Now, some again are having their babies at home, or in a midwifery clinic.

Now let me say a bit more about those we generally refer to as the Old Order Amish. In the eighteen hundreds (nineteenth century) I am sure there was very little difference between the Amish and their neighbours. They likely wore similar style

clothes, used the same methods of travel, and similar equipment and tools for farming. Within the Amish community the differences started to become evident when the first meeting houses were built.

I understand that several families moved from East Zorra Township to what was then known as Mornington Township. (On January the first of this year there was a realignment of municipalities in Perth County, and we now live in what is known as the Mornington ward of the Township of Perth East.) This move by these families avoided a church split in the East Zorra congregation. That's also one of the reasons I have many second and third cousins who are still in the Old Order group in the Millbank area.

According to the book written to commemorate Poole Mennonite Church's one hundredth anniversary of the building of their first meeting house, the decision to build in 1886 did not have the approval of all the members including several ordained leaders. As a result Christian L. Kuepfer, Andrew Kuepfer, and Solomon Kuepfer, along with a number of other families, withdrew from the congregation and continued to hold services in their homes. Now I know why there are so many Kuepfers in the Old Order group. This was the beginning of the group that have become known as the Old Order Amish. Lorraine Roth has made the distinction by using the terms of those who worship in meeting houses, and those who still worship in their homes or barns. There are presently 484 Old Order Amish



baptized adults living in the Mornington ward of Perth East, and in the edge of Wellesley Township. Including the children and unbaptized youth they total about 1000 people.

Now when I want to talk about how much these people have changed during my lifetime, I have to shorten the time frame because I have only lived among the Old Orders the past sixteen years. A casual observer would say they are not changing, and are almost the same as they were 100 years ago. But that is not quite true. The Old Order Amish are still not allowed to own cars, tractors, telephones, hydro, bicycles, rubber tired carriages or wagons, radios, television sets, or other modern conveniences that most of us think we must have. Although, it is interesting to observe how many of the young people are now using roller blades to quickly get to where they want to go.

#### Other changes I have seen include:

**Modernizing.** Quite a number of the farmers have installed bulk milk coolers, operating the cooling compressor with gasoline engines, generators and batteries.

**Custom Work.** More farmers are hiring non-Amish neighbours with tractors to do more of their farm work. I would say very few Amish farmers do all their farm work with horses.

**Travel.** The Old Orders are getting far more rides in cars, vans or trucks today than they did 16 years ago. In the early eighties they only asked for car rides to go to specialists, hospitals or other emergencies, generally in Stratford, Kitchener, London or Toronto. Now it is not uncommon for them to ask for rides to go shopping in Milverton or Listowel. The number of people who work in non-farm jobs has increased and some of them now get rides in motorized vehicles to and from work daily. Some even get car rides to their Sunday services, or to weddings. But on those occasions they have to walk in the lane. The car driver may not take them up to the buildings in which they gather to worship.

**OHIP.** There are still some families who have not signed up for Ontario Health coverage, even though one of

the bishops told me they do not preach against it any more. It is a personal or family choice.

**Debates.** In the past few years it seems, with the help of their friend, Ed Bennet, a Wilfred Laurier University professor, they have become a little more aggressive in their debates with the local municipalities, especially in regard to the new Perth County Official Plan and its bylaws about land use and how it will affect their way of farming.

**Individualism.** It appears to me as if individualism is also affecting them. I think they are doing less communal sharing, less helping each other with the regular seasonal farm work.

**Shunning.** Shunning, or the ban, was one of the tension points when Jacob Amman split from the Mennonite family in 1693. That continues to create a great deal of pain for some of those who leave and other family members who stay. The extent to which it is enforced varies somewhat from family to family.

I am aware, there are many people who look at the Old Order people and in a sense envy them because of what they see as their simple, peaceful, carefree lifestyle. For some that is a nostalgic, selective reflection, remembering only some of the positive experiences of their own childhood. I have lived close enough, and interacted enough with both those who have left the group, and some of those who have stayed in the group, to know that their lives are not as peaceful and carefree as a casual observer may think. I know that they face the same temptations to sin we do.

The Apostle Paul spelled out some of these sins in Galatians 5:19-21, (CEV) "People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, they are envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well." I am not saying that all Old Order Amish commit these sins.

But these sins are just as wrong when they do them as when you or I do them. Paul ends verse 21 with these words. "No one who does these things will share in the

blessings of God's kingdom." I tell tourists that the Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites live this lifestyle because of their interpretation of the Bible where it states that the Christian is to be separate from the world. The believer is to be different than the unbeliever. I sometimes encourage them to read I John 2:15-17 at their convenience.

As I was preparing this presentation I read the editorial that James E. Horsch wrote in the June 7 edition of the *Purpose* magazine. He shared an illustration that he remembered from his days as a youth "when Evelyn Rouner, his youth Sunday School teacher showed the class a full-color country scene. Then as she talked about it, she added various colors of construction paper behind it. With each new color, the impact of the image changed. Each brought a new dimension to the picture. The learning was that the background we bring to the present time helps to explain some differences. We should expect some differences, (and I would add some changes); we should welcome differences (and changes) and appreciate them rather than be troubled by them."

Horsch reports, "that this lesson was shared during the era of congregational life when nonconformity to the ways of the world had led to strong conformity in the life of the church. During that time, differences were viewed as a threat rather than a help in our church life." That's the end of the quote. How do we see differences and changes today?

I don't know whether the changes I have seen during my lifetime, have created more anxiety and tension for the Old Orders or for the rest of us. I believe that change in itself is neutral - not necessarily good or evil. But my prayer is that we will all invite the Holy Spirit to lead us in every decision we make, as individuals, and as congregations, so we may all know which way to go. May we have the wisdom to learn from our history and tradition, and continue to depend upon the Bible as our road map. When we look back, may we know God has led us in the past, may we be assured God is leading us in the present, and as we look ahead may we move forward in confidence, knowing God is leading us each step of the way, preparing each one of us for an eternity with Him. Amen!

*Glenn Zehr is pastor at Riverdale Mennonite Church in Millbank, and is involved with an information center about Mennonites and Amish for tourists who come to the area.*

## Book Review

*The Amish and Their Neighbours - The German Block, Wilmot Township 1822 - 1860* by Lorraine Roth. (Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario: Waterloo, Ont., 1998.) 118 pages, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Susan Hoffman

History enthusiasts in Waterloo Region have been fortunate recently with the publication of several new histories about the area. *The Amish and their Neighbours - the German Block, Wilmot Township 1822 - 1860*, by Lorraine Roth is a new title that is a worthy addition to anyone's local history collection.

The book is divided into two sections, with the first section dealing with the development of the German Block. The German Block in Wilmot Township had a very distinct settlement history and the author has chosen to examine that theme in detail. Thanks to the survival of important archival documents at the University of Toronto Archives, as well as the National Archives of Canada and the Archives of Ontario, Miss Roth has been able to reconstruct the fascinating story about the German Block. As Chapter One reveals, the major players were the Government of Upper Canada, the Mennonites in Waterloo, Christian Nafziger, Amish-Mennonite immigrants and King's College/University of Toronto.

Present-day Wilmot Township was originally a Crown Reserve for the County of Lincoln. Settlement of these reserves was restricted and usually they were left in a wild state which hindered expansion of other settlements. In 1821 the government decided to open up this Crown Reserve for settlement.

Christian Nafziger played an important role in the settlement of the German Block. Nafziger left his home in Bavaria in 1821 to look for opportunities in the New World. Landing in New Orleans he made his way to Lancaster, Pennsylvania in May 1822. From there he was advised to travel to the Mennonite settlement in the Grand River in Upper Canada. Wilmot Township no doubt appealed to him

because of its wild state which should have meant a smaller purchase rate. The story takes many twists and turns, but by 1824, John Goessman was commissioned to survey the German Block. Several immigrants began to arrive from Europe in 1824. However, in 1828, another change took place that had a profound impact on the fledgling settlement.

King's College was granted a charter in 1827. To provide a source of revenue for the college, the government appropriated Crown Lands for educational purposes. Among these lands was the section of Wilmot Township on which Amish Mennonites were beginning to settle. This "change of landlord" meant changes in the original land agreements. Luckily these immigrants had the help of Christian Nafziger and John Goessman. Goessman translated the first petition which protested the policies of the College, and continued to help the German settlers until his death in 1841.

Resolution of these problems is a dramatic story which comes alive in the first section of the book. Despite language difficulties and the settlers' lack of funds, most of the immigrants obtained the title for their properties by 1860. Exhibit A lists the settlers and the dates when the Patents and Deeds were received - a very useful list for genealogists. Several petitions, letters and reports have been translated and reproduced for the reader which greatly enhance the text.

Section II deals with the community that emerged from the arrival of the settlers. By 1829 approximately 130 settlers had claimed lots in the German Block. About 66 were Amish Mennonites from Europe. Mennonites from Waterloo, Pennsylvania and Europe accounted for 58 more families. In the 1830s Germans and Alsations of Lutheran and Catholic faiths came into the area as well. Several family names have been profiled: Brenneman, Kropf, Schwartzentruber, Lichti, Nafziger, Gengerich, Honderich, to name a few.

The author includes valuable information about the settlers' lifestyle, for example, agriculture and other professions, the churches, schools and villages that devel-

oped and the municipal government that evolved as the population grew in the township. This section too is well illustrated with photographs, maps and "sidebars" which add interesting details. For example, read on page 88 about Absalom Shade and his part in the development of New Hamburg.

Miss Roth concludes her work with her reflections about the "settlers' loss of memory" and the resentment against the Mennonites from Waterloo for claiming lots in the German Block. Examining the documents revealed that there were conflicting agendas between the two settlement groups. The Waterloo Mennonites wanted land for their children, whereas Christian Nafziger was requesting land for European settlers. It was generally felt that free land should be granted to indigent settlers, not to those with the money to buy the land. It was also felt that the Waterloo Mennonites were claiming lots for speculation. Despite these early challenges, as well as difficulties with the government and King's College, by 1860 most of the settlers had established homes and contributed to the growth of the township as a separate municipality.

Lorraine Roth tackled an enormous task combing through the archival records and documenting the settlement history of the German Block in Wilmot Township. Her book, *The Amish and their Neighbours - the German Block, Wilmot Township 1822 - 1860*, is the fascinating result of her dedicated work. Equally fascinating is the story about the documents themselves. Miss Roth outlines the discovery of the Wilmot Township documents in the Archives of the University of Toronto in 1986, which in turn, explained the connection between Wilmot Township and King's College. She also explains where all the documents are located for future reference. All in all, this book is a valuable addition to the many histories now available about Waterloo Region.

*Susan Hoffman is Local History Librarian at the Kitchener Public Library. She is also a member of the Waterloo Historical Society.*

## Book Review

### *The Amish and Their Neighbours The German Block, Wilmot Township 1822-1860*

Reviewed by Fred Lichti

What Agatha Christie is to mysteries, and Wayne Gretzky is to hockey, Lorraine Roth is to Amish family histories. For decades she has tirelessly researched the Amish Mennonite families of Ontario. Traveling in Europe she has researched and photographed the places from where they came and why. In Washington D.C. she has poured over 19th century ship lists from American ports of entry, uncovering who, how and when they came. At archives in Ontario she has combed official records and deciphered Amish family names among the contorted Anglicized spellings, learning about their lives after they came. Using her skills as researcher, historian, detective, and linguist, Lorraine has written or contributed to some 25 genealogies, numerous articles, and several books. Building on this data base, she has now produced *THE AMISH AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS-The German Block, Wilmot Township 1822-1860*.

This 118 page book tells the story of the first settlers who pioneered the wilderness west of the present day cities of Kitchener and Waterloo. Chapter 1 introduces the major players - the Government of Upper Canada, King's College (University of Toronto), the Mennonites of Waterloo, Amish Mennonite immigrants and the heroic Christian Nafziger. Early on the theme is identified - a land deal gone sour. Haven't we heard this theme before? The Pennsylvania Mennonites who began settling in Waterloo a generation earlier faced their own controversy with land deals.

Unlike the latter controversy, the memory of this land conflict was lost to succeeding generations. Some years ago, while rummaging through boxes from the Archives of the University of Toronto, a graduate student discovered materials referring to Mennonites in Wilmot Township. Through round about contacts, itself a good story, this treasure trove of documents came to Lorraine's attention in 1986. Already familiar with the early Amish families, she investigated this newly found material and meticulously uncovered what had long been buried. What emerged is a story with modern day themes - oppression and dreams, politics and influence peddling, privilege and price gouging, discouragement and perseverance.

As one who grew up in the Amish Mennonite tradition, I was fascinated with the new insights on some well known pieces of folklore. In section one, "From Primeval Forest to Titled Ownership", the author confirms, corrects and expands upon things which have been passed down through the generations.

For example, a much loved part of this heritage is the tale of Christian Nafziger, an adventuresome "Caleb figure" who prepared the way for others. Lorraine expands our knowledge of Nafziger who in 1821, equipped with little more than a dream, left his family in Europe and sailed to America in search of land. After negotiations with the government of Upper Canada in 1822, Nafziger returned to Europe, confident of securing land in Wilmot Township under terms agreeable to poor European immigrants. But while he and other Amish Mennonites were making the long trip to Canada, the government pulled a fast one. Through the influence of Anglican Bishop Strachan the recently surveyed section of Wilmot Township called "the German Block" was transferred to King's College, forerunner of the University of Toronto. In a time of little government funding for higher education King's College looked to the settlers as a cash cow, charging twice what the land was worth. Prejudice towards pacifists, benevolent advocates, demanding landlords and deep frustration are all woven through the story. Excerpts from letters written by the pioneers who had fallen behind in their payments put a human face on those struggling families.

Another piece of tradition which the book tactfully explores is the relationship between the established Mennonite community in Waterloo and the newly arrived Amish families. It has long been said that the Pennsylvania Mennonites of Waterloo were the refugee support committees for our Amish ancestors. However, the author uncovers a shadier side to their role. The German Block was set aside for the impoverished immigrants from Europe. One well to do Amishman, Joseph Zehr, bought land in Woolwich Township because he felt the cheaper land in the German Block should be reserved for those who came with little or nothing. Yet some of the established Mennonite families from Waterloo laid claim to lots in the German Block, some for their children, but others for speculative purposes.

Section Two, "A Community Emerges", tells how the settlers carved a home and community from wooded wilderness. From

an essay which appeared in an agricultural journal in 1853 we are told how a farmer can establish himself on forested land in the shortest time possible. The section on pioneer survival tactics and development of agriculture and trades is a good read. The latter will be an excellent resource for teachers and students studying the European settlement of Upper Canada.

My enjoyment of the book was enhanced by the numerous pictures, maps, charts, letters, deeds and informative side bars. Photos of historic homes and barns illustrate the chapter on how the agricultural community developed.

More than the story of Amish families, the author includes family summaries of the first Mennonites, Lutherans and Catholics in the German Block. The origin of all the congregations, cemeteries, schools and villages in the area are also included.

*The Amish and Their Neighbours* is thoroughly documented with 373 endnotes. The final chapter is devoted to identifying the archival material, land and census records. Obviously Lorraine has learned many things through trial and error and wants to steer future researchers in the right direction.

*The Amish and Their Neighbours* will stand as a reference book for anyone interested in the history of Wilmot Township and its pioneering families. If your ancestors are of Ontario Amish Mennonite stock, this is the place to begin looking.

As a teenager I participated in the 1972 Sesquicentennial which marked the 150th anniversary of the Amish in Canada. For many of us the storytelling and celebrations of the Sesquicentennial informed a younger generation and instilled a sense of identity and pride in the Amish Mennonite heritage. The present volume deepens those senses. Does the book have power to move your emotions? Certainly the excerpts from settlers pleading with the landlord and the story of Christian Nafziger pursuing his dream touches the heart. This is stuff of life and lore which could successfully be told to a broader audience in dramatic form or some work of historical fiction. Perhaps this will be Lorraine's next project?

*Fred Lichti grew up in the East Zorra area. He is now pastor at Listowel Mennonite Church.*

*The Amish and Their Neighbours is available at various locations including Readers Ink Bookstore, University Avenue, Waterloo and from MHSO.*



## Book Review

*The Silence Echoes: Memories of Trauma and Terror*  
edited and translated by Sarah Dyck,  
(Pandora Press: Kitchener, 1997).  
237 pages, \$19.50.

Reviewed by Herbert Enns

Many subjects of various kinds have been written and reviewed in the past. The subject matter can be of a positive nature, supportive of the writer's intent.

To write a book relating accounts of traumatic experiences as they affected family, friends and relatives during the Russian revolution is, to say the least, venturesome, since most readers are apt to reach for a happy title. That is, unless the reader is in pursuit of the truth – what really happened!

Sarah Dyck's book *The Silence Echoes* is a book that the reader will not put aside until it has been read, and perhaps re-read. We are inclined to tell ourselves that it couldn't have been that bad! The reviewer and Ms. Dyck have been good friends ever since our families came to Canada, although the reviewer was only a child at

that time. The author is a Canadian by birth, having been born in Wilmot Township, Ontario, in 1924. Some of the experiences of which the author refers to are those which the reviewer's uncles and aunts experienced, one uncle having been shot and killed. At times it appeared the terrors and atrocities seemed to be concentrated more in some areas than others, but usually the horrific incidents mentioned spread across the land. And sometimes, because of the delay, the vengeance was greater.

With great care Ms. Dyck has selected letters, written mostly in German by friends or members of the extended family, to illustrate the "beastliness" mankind can be subjected to. Although much of the terror seemed to be directed towards the prosperous Mennonite settlements, it seems more correct to assume that anyone of German background was subjected to horrific atrocities. Ms. Dyck compares these events by today's names of "ethnic cleansing or genocide". One cannot help but be impressed with what care the translations were achieved, thus making them believable, since what is contained in the

accounts can be duplicated over and over. The author writes: "The writers are representative of a million and more voices echoing to us out of the silence of the past, out of that glacial era of the socialist-communist Paradise known as the U.S.S.R."

The reader of this book should not be misled that he/she is reading some fictitiously fabricated anthology. Rather, this is history. Those who experienced it, and are alive to tell about it, will vouch for its authenticity.

A book of this magnitude will surely find favour among the serious readers, and become better informed on what where beastly hordes transformed a country into chaos. Ms. Dyck's deeply moving writing and translation will retain a captive audience.

*Herbert Enns lives in Waterloo. He is a long time member of MHSO, and a member of W-K United Mennonite Church.*

*Available at Readers Ink Bookstore, University Ave., Waterloo or from Pandora Press, 51 Pandora Ave. N., Kitchener, Ontario N2H 3C1.*

## COLONIZATION IN THE 1870'S

by Isaac R. Horst

*1999 will mark the 125th Anniversary of the first migration of Mennonites from Russia to Canada. Celebrations are planned in Manitoba to commemorate the event.*

In the late 1700's, Russia acquired the Ukraine as a result of a war with Turkey. This vast, sparsely populated area lay almost dormant, at a time when Russia desperately needed both food and credit. The Russian empress, Katherine II, was German by birth, and had a soft spot for the Germanic people. She knew they were industrious, and invited Dutch/ German Mennonites to populate the Ukraine. The area prospered, producing vast quantities of wheat. Under Katherine's rule, the Mennonites enjoyed many freedoms including exemption from military service. They became quite self-reliant. In fact, throughout the Ukraine, the Mennonites were the affluent, dominating body, while the native born populace a poor, subservient second.

By the 1870's, a new ruler emerged who "knew not Joseph". As a result, the Mennonites lost their military exemption and freedoms. Consequently, an exodus to the New World began, continuing throughout the next sixty years or more. The first wave to arrive in America settled mostly in western Canada and the adjoining states.

Elias Eby, son of the pioneer bishop, Benjamin Eby, was the former miller at Bridgeport, Ontario. He took an active interest in the Russian Mennonite immigration. So did Jacob Y. Shantz, the button manufacturer in Berlin (Kitchener), the latter being one of the most influential forces to help the Russian Mennonites get settled in the Canadian west.

In his diary, (1872-1878), Elias Eby makes frequent reference to the Russian Mennonite influx. On December 20, 1872, he wrote: "This afternoon we visited Jacob Y. Schantz, to inquire about his trip to Manitoba, from which he and his Russian companion just returned, to which

they took six weeks. In regard to climate, and the raising of produce, they found the area much more favorable than they had expected. It seems to be especially well adapted to raising spring grains and cattle. From 30 to 40 bushels of wheat is the usual yield per acre, and oats, barley, peas, and potatoes all in proportion. Our government offers great advantages to all immigrants who settle on the land."

Eby's Russian companion was presumably Bernhart Warkentin, who had come to spy out the land.

On June 2, 1873 (Whit Monday), Elias wrote the following:

"We were at Ebys [meeting house], where three bishops from Russia preached: Leonhart Suderman, Jacob Buller, and Tobias Unruh. They have the true German language, and are good speakers. On the 4th, Jacob Y. Schantz is going with them to Manitoba to see about homes."

This was the "advanced guard" of the group who were planning to settle in the western provinces.

"July 20. We were at Ebys in meeting, where A. C. Weber and a minister from Russia named Heinrich Weibe preached. He had his sermon written down, which is customary among their younger ministers."

Although he was not previously mentioned, Weibe was likely also with the above mentioned group.

"Aug. 3. We were at Ebys in meeting where Leonhart Suderman from Russia preached. He had just returned from Manitoba and the States. He had also preached here on Whit Monday. He is a fluent speaker, with good command of German."

On August 8, Elias Eby went with the Russian brethren, Leonhart Suderman, and Andreas Schrag, to Lancaster County, Pa.

"Aug. 23. Jacob Y. Schantz visited us today and brought Cornelius Jensen's wife and her sister, and two children, all just out of Russia, well brought up, and church members."

This Cornelius Jansen had been a wealthy grain merchant near Odessa on the Black Sea. He was exiled from Russia for his emigration activities. His family had their home with J.Y. Shantz, while he traveled through the country in search of a settlement site. An interesting sidelight surfaced here: the daughters were greatly disappointed with the Canadian Mennonites' quiet celebration of Christmas; with not even a Christmas tree!

"Dec. 6. This afternoon, J.Y. Schantz brought brother Jansen, his wife, and two sons for a visit. He is a very talented and honest family head. They live with J.Y.S. since August, but most of the time he was traveling through the States, seeking a good locality to establish a colony, from which he and his son returned only eight days ago. So far they do not know where they will settle."

"July 4, 1874. Towards evening, Elias Schneiders visited us. His letters from Russia say that the brethren will soon land at Toronto, and then travel to Manitoba on the Dawson Route."

"July 18. This afternoon I went to Toronto to meet the Russians who are on their way to Manitoba."

"July 19. At 8:30, 320 souls came to Toronto on the cars, where they unloaded at the immigration sheds and stayed until Tuesday afternoon at 2 o'clock, July 21. From here they went by [train] cars to Collingwood. Then per Allen Line by steamers to Duluth. This company is from southern Russia; consists of 69 families. Among them is one man of 76 years, down to children of 16 days old. They seem to be innocent, peaceable and modest people. In the large dining hall an afternoon worship service was held. For the opening, they sang a hymn in soft and humble tones, Schmitt [George Schmitt, Baden] made a suitable introduction. Scherg [David Scherk, Doon] then spoke further, and Heinrich Berg, a preacher of their party, concluded the service with well chosen remarks.

Monday, some men chosen among us are gathering 60 hams and other provisions. From Collingwood on they have to support themselves. They are cheerful and seem healthy; weigh from 180 to 250 pounds. They have close to \$60.00 each cash along, although some have as little as \$25, but they help each other. From 2 to 9 children per family. Another good point they have: they use no tobacco!"

"July 29. I received a dispatch that Henry Wiebe with 160 families are coming to Toronto tomorrow from Berghal, southern Russia. From there they all want to go to Manitoba."

"Aug. 31. 20 more families of Russians came through Berlin on their way to Manitoba. S.Y. Schantz accompanied them. They belong to Heinrich Wiebe's church. They laid provisions by in Berlin."

"Oct. 26. Seventeen Mennonite families from Russia came to Berlin today. Word of their arrival was sent from Quebec by telegraph, which gave us the opportunity to make preparations for fetching them in Berlin, and quarter them for the winter in this area. By April they want to continue their journey to Manitoba. They seem to be honest

and diligent people. The local inhabitants are doing their utmost to make their condition as comfortable as possible. Six families went from Toronto to Markham with Sem Risser to winter among the brethren there, and are going along to Manitoba in the spring."

"Nov. 11. A family of Russians came to Berlin today, named Klassen, consisting to ten persons, whom we quartered in Sem Brubacher's house in Lexington. They plan to go to Manitoba in the spring, to their acquaintances."

"Nov. 22. We were at Ebys in meeting where Elias Schneider and George Schmitt preached. There were a nice number gathered together, among them quite a few of the Russian brethren who now live in this district."

"Jan. 24, 1875. Because of the stormy weather we stayed at home all day. In the afternoon, Jacob Klassen of Lexington, (Russians) visited us, and went home in the evening through the storm."

"Feb. 23. Today I went to (six neighbours) to gather provisions for the Klassen family, and received a good supply."

"May 2. Since Oct. 1874, some twenty Russian families are living in this region since it was too late to go to Manitoba. They found protection and friendly acceptance among the brethren here, found various preparations through the winter, to be able to work on their land. May 4, the trek began, escorted by Simeon Risser, Markham, by cars via Detroit, Chicago, St. Paul, and Moorehead, then by steamer on the Red River to Winnipeg, where each settler received 160 acres free land from the government."

"May 28. The above named Simeon Risser came safely back from Manitoba yesterday. They arrived at their appointed destination May 12, near Winnipeg, among their friends who had migrated out there last fall, to the so-called grassland. They get along as well as can be expected under the circumstances. The main point is nourishment and health, which they have."



"July 6. Today, Aaron Schantz and others went with 600 Russian per rail to Manitoba, via Sarnia, Detroit, Chicago, St. Paul, and Moorehead. Five families stayed in this area."

"Aug. 5. We visited John Erbs. This afternoon John went along to Henry M. Brubachers where Solomon Dyrkson, (a Russian) lives, and to George Gehl, where John Krohn and family live. They are well settled and seem satisfied here in Canada, and with the people."

"May 8, 1876. The Russians who stayed here in Ontario last summer, gathered in Berlin, from whence they left for Sarnia at 8 p.m., and on Tuesday at 11 p.m. went from there per boat on the lakes to Manitoba; 442 persons. Our son-in-law, Aaron Schantz, who guided 600 Russians there July 6, was their guide again. He took along his wife, two small children, and Nancy's youngest son, Henry Clemens. [Nancy had been staying with Elias Ebys for some time, as hired help.] They are all seeking homes there. Besides these, there were over 200 other persons on the same boat. May the dear God attend them on this dangerous trip."

"May 29. Today's mail brought the first news about the above mentioned emigrants to Manitoba, from which I take a short excerpt from Aaron Schantz's letter: 'May 9, in the evening, the boat left Sarnia, Ontario, having several hours' interference from ice at Manitoulin Island, yet hoping to reach Duluth by Saturday, May 13; but in vain. Although they were now on Lake Superior, they were still far from Duluth. The lake is an average of 600 feet deep. In this region stands the 95 foot lighthouse which cost \$73,000, and can be seen for 18 miles.' Monday the 15th, they were within 20 miles of Duluth, they were daily hindered by ice, so that they only arrived at Duluth with great difficulty and the help of two other steamers, on the evening of the 24th. The provisions of food were practically exhausted. On the 26th they went by cars to Moorehead, and on the morning of May 30, they all arrived safely at Winnipeg, where Aaron entered the service of a store, with free rent, within a few days. Salary, \$900 per year."

A firsthand account of such an experience always makes it seem more real. However, two firsthand accounts, both from people who were there to experience it, is even better, especially when they describe differing views. The following letters were written by another passenger on the same boat.

Peter and Maria Penner were a young married couple among the group of Russian Mennonites who spent the summer of 1875 in Ontario. The correspondence between them and my great-grandfather, Peter G. Martin, indicates the Penners found a home with my ancestor during that time. The Penner's correspondence is all the evidence I have, yet it is self-explanatory.

*Duluth, May 25, 1876.*

*Dear parents:*

Since I promised to send you a card, I will write a few lines about our journey. On the 8th of this month at 8 o'clock we boarded the ship. This was on Tuesday. Then we headed towards the Edward Island archipelago, Thunder Bay. This was on Sunday morning, the 14th. At 10 o'clock we left. On the 24th we arrived at the city of Duluth. Dear parents, the journey was depressing, yet better than we feared it might be. No one died of starvation. We lived on 5 potatoes and a quarter pound of bread on the journey. Some people had even less. On Wednesday the 24th, the Lord opened the way. On Monday [15th or 22nd], 18 men walked to the shore over ice. The ship was still about 20 miles from the harbour. They traveled on foot for about 11 hours. Here the Lord showed us how He can reprove us, and how He can rescue us. Praise be to the Man of God. We poor mortals cannot praise and thank Him enough for His great blessings.

Regarding ourselves, we are quite well, thank God, and hope that this imperfect writing may find you the same.

Yes, you may wonder why I call you parents. It is the best I can do, since you do not accept us as brethren. Yes, you accepted us as children, for which we cannot reward you or thank you enough. I believe the heavenly Father will reward you.

Further, I must inform you that we shall leave here tomorrow, Thursday.

In closing, a hearty greeting to you and your children from us. I had promised Henry [fourth son of Peter G. Martin, he had married in 1875, and lived on Peter's farm at the time of this letter] to write, but I have no time. A hearty greeting of love to you.

*Peter and Maria Penner*

*Rosengart, June 24, 1876.*

*Dear parents, Peter G. Martins:*

Since we are here in Manitoba for 3 months already, and have so far sent you no communication except what I wrote and sent to you on our journey, I find myself indebted to you, to inform you of our new home.

My wife and children are quite well, praise God, and my condition is still much the same. I still can't work, but it has improved enough that when I sit still I have no particular pain. Our hearty wish is that this imperfect writing may find you in good health.

Now I will inform you that I have bought a cow for \$25, paying \$11 down, and borrowed the remaining \$14 until August 1. Dear parents, since my thoughts are so often with you, and am often reminded of you, I will try to keep my promise; but I can't give you much exact information about the land here, for I haven't taken up land yet. I have looked at land which suited me quite well. I don't expect to build yet this year, because I am still too weak, partly because of my back, and also because I have no team.

About our affairs I can report that most of our things stood the transportation well, except some of the carrots rotted. The trees which you sent along will likely all grow, as some are already turning green. We have planted very little so far; about 1 1/2 bushels potatoes, the flax seed, a few beans and a few turnips. These are all growing, but still small. The early seeding of grain here in Manitoba is flourishing so that it is a pleasure to see. My brother-in-law, Heinrich Dueck, with whom I live, sowed 5 acres of wheat, 1 1/2 acres barley, 1/2 acre peas, and 6 bushels of potatoes. He figures that if he is fortunate he will have enough to feed his family of 5 for a year.

Those who settled on the prairie suffered some water damage in places,

because the land is lower than the brush and woodland.

Now I will turn to Henry; because I promised to write, I don't wish to evade you. Indeed I can't inform you of anything special, for I have already written all my news; just so you realize that I still think of you. May you and your wife be heartily greeted.

Now I must close my imperfect writing, and greet you all heartily, including the children. Also greet Ziegler [Peter Ziegler lived close to Peter Martins]. Jacob Penner [Peter Penner's parents] and Bernd Neufeld also greet you. Bernd has been quite sick for two weeks and is still not better.

*We remain your dearly beloved,  
Peter and Maria Penner*

*Rosengart, December 26, 1876.*

First I wish you the grace of God and the peace of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ. Amen. Further I will try to visit you in my imperfect writing. Good morning, all good friends and acquaintances; I come for a visit to you all on Christmas Day. Although you cannot see me, you can see my imperfect writing. Further I will let you know that the harvest was good, for which we cannot thank the dear God enough. There were up to 30 bushels potatoes per acre. From 1 bushel of wheat I got 10, but on second plowing of land they received 20 bushels. From nine flax seeds we received 1 bushel!! Further I will inform you of the prices: wheat from 80 cents to 1 dollar; barley, 50 to 60 cents; potatoes, 20 to 30 cents; peas, 60 to 75 cents; bacon per pound, 18 to 19 cents; lard, 16 to 20 cents; onions per bushel, 50 to 80 cents. Further, I will inform you about cattle. Oxen, two years, 40 to 50 dollars; three years, 60 to 75 dollars; four and five years, 180 to 190 dollars. Cows, three years 20 to 26 dollars; good, 30 to 38 dollars. Now I will inform you of my livestock. I have a two year old ox and four hens; that is my livestock. I would entreat you – I still have a few dollars; but would you loan me another 15 dollars? If you could, I would like a loan for two years with interest, for I want to pay you back. Think it over, what you wish to do. Then I could buy another ox. Oh, how glad I would be if I could only have a pair of oxen!

You ask how our home suits us. It suits us well. I now have land, mostly woodland. I almost forgot –(regarding the loan)– if you can't, don't worry; I will be satisfied. Our love remains the same. Just write back again. I imagine you have been waiting for a letter a long time. Here I don't have time every day; otherwise I would have written many more letters.

Now I must write about our circumstances. We are quite well now. I had been sick all summer with my leg and spine, but now it is quite a bit better. Second, we had acquired a young son, but he lived only four days; was born December 14, and died the 18th. Dear parents, we often think of you, because we no longer see each other; yet we can enjoy ourselves through visiting by writing, until death.

I will further let you know about the weather. On the 14th and 15th December it was cold and stormy so that one could barely see. A Kleine Gemeinde [now known as the Evangelical Mennonite Church] man froze to death about two miles from home, and several others badly frozen. At the coldest it was 28 below zero. Now it is above zero.

Now to Henry. Good morning dear brother. Since I now have the opportunity, I would like to write to you, but I don't have much to say, except that my wife went to the meeting today, and I stayed home with the children. A hearty greeting to you, my friend. We received your letter of September 21 on October 14, which greatly cheered us. Now I expect you to write soon again.

*(Greetings, etc.)*

*Peter and Maria Penner*

*December 26, 1876.*

I, Jacob Penner, also come to you as a guest, and wish you the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen, and the best of health. First I wish to inform you that we are quite well, thank God, except that our son has had leg pains for about 15 weeks. Greet all brethren and sisters, and tell Wendel Bauman [father-in-law of above mentioned Peter Ziegler] that I have taken up land. Now I will close and greet you all, and remain your friend until death.

*Jacob and Katarina Penner*

As I feel I haven't written enough, I must inform you about the land. The first villages are on prairie land. This is very flat and low. This year the grain was drowned out in several places. They say that here the springs rise early in June; then the water level is higher than in spring. Then some grain is under water; but by June 25 the water is gone. Where I intend to take up land, it is all poplar and brush. The wood here, besides poplar, is oak, pine, and ash. One hears nothing of grasshoppers this year.

*Peter Penner*

*Rosengart, Manitoba,  
March 4, 1877*

*Dear parents in the Lord,*

First we wish ourselves and you the grace of God and the power of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ. Amen. We further let you know that we are all well, thank God, and hope this writing will find you the same. Second, a hearty thank you for all the good that you have done to us, and now loaned us 15 dollars. I think the heavenly Father will reward you. He sees all the good one brother does to another in secret, and will reward him later.

Now I will inform you of my livestock. I now have two small oxen, one cow, three hens, and one rooster. That is my livestock. My land is three miles away, but we want to lay out a village of 10 or 15 families next to my land. I have already hauled 50 logs there, a half foot wide. Next week I want to start laying logs.

*(Greetings, etc.)*

*Peter and Maria Penner*

*Bourwald, Manitoba, June 20, 1878  
Dearly beloved in the Lord,*

First we wish you the grace of God and the power of the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ. Amen. Since I had some encouragement again, I cannot resist writing a few lines. I haven't much news to report, except that we are all well, and wish you the same. I must confess my guilt, that I waited so long to write, so I beg forbearance.

You asked about my brother. He is here at Bourwald and sends greetings; but Bernhard Neufeld moved to Chortitza 60 miles away, where he is now plowing. The winter was quite

severe with much snow, and this spring is quite wet. We started plowing April 15 and finished May 15. I sowed 9 bushels of wheat, and planted 3 bushels potatoes. Many are moving away from here, but I am content here. The land is better there, but no wood. It looks promising for a good harvest here.

Dear parents, the time is here when I should send back the 15 dollars, but I can't do it yet. I have no wheat to sell, and there is little to be earned here. I hope you have patience with me. You may think that is why I didn't write. Oh no, not for that reason. I have little time, and money is very

scarce. We are all barefoot and naked. We are still poor, but the Lord said, "Hope maketh not ashamed," and "Come unto me and I will give you rest." Amen.

*Address P.O. Nesbanville  
Otto Scholz, Manitoba*

From the information in the letters, it would appear as if the Penners lived between the tip of Lake Winnipeg and the mouth of the Winnipeg River. Chortitza, the village where Bernhard Neufeld lived, is in the Steinbach area. It is quite possible that Rosengart no longer exists. No one whom I have questioned ever heard of the

place, though Rosenort is quite common.

The first years in Manitoba in the 1870's were apparently difficult ones. However, once they had livestock and buildings, the tide changed. In the Steinbach area at least, the Russian Mennonites flourished, at least up to the depression of the thirties. Besides, with such a strong influx of settlers, it boosted their morale. Even the city of Winnipeg to this day is strongly influenced by the presence of the Russian Mennonites.

*Isaac R. Horst lives near Mount Forest. He is a well known author about the Old Order Mennonite community of which he is a member.*

## CRESSMAN'S WOODS - Henry Nickel's Farm (Homer Watson Park)

by Herbert Enns

Homer Watson Park - when the writer was a teenager the park was known as Cressman's Woods, although it was no longer owned by a Cressman, at one time had been part of a Cressman farm.

To get to Cressman's Woods one would take the streetcar as far as the Rockway Gardens (that's as far as the public transportation in the city of Kitchener went). Then we would walk Doon Road to Mill Street. Mill Street would take you to German Mills. At the entrance to the village a road to the left would lead directly into the Park. This no longer is the way to get to the Park today. The direction of some of the streets has changed, or closed. Years ago, from Rockway Gardens to German Mills was all farmland. Even Rockway Mennonite Collegiate was farmland with farm buildings on it. And some of its buildings (the barn) were used as classrooms in Rockway's early history.

But the park itself! Even now, anyone who walks through the park will concede there is something magical in the stillness of the park, with its towering trees and its winding paths. Only the birds and the chatter of people is heard. And there is no need to shout in order to be heard. In the quietness of the park the human voice seems to carry without exertion.

Whenever the young people would go to Cressman's Woods, it would be for the day; we would arrive around 10, or a bit later, in the forenoon, and we would break for home soon after supper. The fellows usually got off easy, they didn't have to prepare the food, or bring any, the girls looked after that. The most the boys did, was probably carry the baskets (no picnic hampers then). There are memories where

the girls shamed the boys, but the writer won't go into them now. But when it was mealtime, all the fellows were present with their healthy appetites. Bar-b-ques or other picnic stoves weren't invented at that time. Open fires were usually confined to wiener roasts. Yes, wieners had already established a certain popularity, but were looked upon as something which one ate only at wiener roasts, rarely at mealtime at home.

After arriving at the park, a general walk through the park was in order, after which it was usually close to the noon meal. A popular spot for the group of about 20 young people to have their meal was near the spring in the innermost area of the park. The water from this spring was clear and cold and refreshing. As stated above, a general exploration of the park, the escarpment to the river's edge had been made. Some young people had also gone across the road from the park, to the Nickel farm, to say "hello" to Henry and his sister Louise. If they had not heard us as we arrived, they now knew we were there.

By about mid-afternoon the young people would leave the park and congregate on the lawn in front of Nickel's house. The house was, and to the writer's knowledge, is still located as you enter the park at the bottom of the hill on the left-hand side. For us, coming from the city, we had come out on a holiday, either the 24th of May (incidentally, it was observed on that day too), or July 1st, or Civic Holiday. But for the people working on farms, there were no such days, at least not during the summer. However, most often by mid-afternoon Henry and Louise would put down their work and join the group.

Usually some pictures were taken and games were played. Our young people were quite musical, and we would sing a lot (all German songs, of course): "Schoen ist die Jugend", "Im schoensten Wiesengrunde", "Nach der Heimat mocht ich wieder", "Hab oft im Kreise der Lieben", and others, and some Russian songs were also included. An outing such as this always had a lot of laughter connected with it, and usually there was a good reason for it. Someone among the fellows would be able to perfectly imitate a well-known orator, and in Russian he would regale his audience with his rhetoric. Such incidents were most popular during the 24th of May holiday. In Russia the first of May was a declared holiday, a day of parades and oratory, hence the continuing practice here.

Supper was eaten on the front lawn at Nickels, and the food served was what was left over from lunch time. The singing had ceased. Slowly our minds returned to thoughts of the next day, when everyone would be back to work, sewing shirts, making rubber shoes or boots, or tires, setting type or writing insurance policies.

Lasting friendships were formed here. Some culminated in marriage, others in friendships which have lasted to this day. "Schoen war die Jugend, sie ist nicht mehr" (it was nice to be young, but it is no more).

*Herbert Enns lives in Waterloo. He is a long time member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, and a member of W-K United Mennonite Church. This article was first written for his church's newsletter.*



## People and Projects

### THE INFORMATION AGE

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada received a \$25,000 grant from Industry Canada earlier this year. It has been used to place the **Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia** on the World Wide Web. The project administered by Conrad Grebel College started in June and will be complete sometime in November. Sam Steiner has been supervising the work of five students - Cory Albrecht, Judith Epp Friesen, James Seyler, Clifford Snyder and Derek Suderman. They have been working hard to scan all the printed material from the encyclopedia as well as some additional photos into electronic form so students, researchers or anyone else with an interest in Mennonites can easily access the information through the school's internet web site or going directly to: <http://mhsc.uwaterloo.ca/cme/index.html>. Once it is completed it can be easily updated with new information at any time.

### RESTORATION UPDATE

The restoration of the Detweiler Meetinghouse near Roseville is continuing. The floor was removed to replace rotted beams underneath, and has now been reinstalled. The interior walls have been replastered and other interior work is being completed. A dedication service for the building's completed restoration is being planned for autumn of 1999. Reg Good has completed a manuscript on the history of the Detweiler Meetinghouse and the local families involved. Plans are to publish it in 1999 as well. Lorna Bergey, Carson Moyer and Sam Steiner are MHSO representatives on the Detweiler Meetinghouse restoration committee. The fundraising efforts reached the committee's initial goal, but donations are still welcome as unexpected costs arise.

### NEW ROTH FAMILY GENEALOGY

The Mennonite Library and Archives at Conrad Grebel College has recently received the **Johan Jost Zimmerman and Related Genealogies of Roth, Yaggy, Schlunegger, Bratton, Cochlin, Elliott, Campbell, and McCullough**, compiled

by Jay Norwalk. It was donated by Gail Zimmerman and his siblings who commissioned the work.

Of interest to Canadian Amish Mennonites are the chapters on the Roth family. Chapter six gives a brief history of the Roth family from Steffisburg, Switzerland, who because of persecution spread to various areas in France. Chapter seven gives the known genealogical information on the Hans Roth and Anna Varni/Fahrni family for several generations. For these chapters, Norwalk used the work of several European and North American researchers. It is the first time this information has been gathered together and published in printed form.

Chapter eight on the Jaggy/Yaggy family is also of some interest to Canadian Amish, because this family came from the same area in western Switzerland as did the Kipfer/Kuepfer family.

The Zimmerman family is selling this 664 page book for \$35.00 (U.S.). Books may be ordered from Axion Press, P.O. Box 539, Alna, ME 94535. Make U.S. money order payable to Gail Zimmerman.

### NEW BOOKS IN THE WORKS

Marlene Epp will have her doctoral thesis on Mennonite women's migration from Russia to Canada published by the University of Toronto Press. It is expected to be completed by next spring or summer.

Isaac R. Horst has been working on revising, refining and reconstructing his former **Mennonite Reporter** columns in order to publish them into book form. He is being assisted in the task by David Gerber.

Leonard Freeman has written a history of the Russian Mennonite migration to Canada in 1924 called **Plucked up by the Roots**. He is focusing on the story surrounding the experiences of retired Woolwich Township farmer Henry Wieler. Henry was born in Russia in 1915, orphaned at age five, and emigrated to Canada with his uncle's family in 1924. On arrival he was placed with an Old Order Mennonite family. Henry never left,

and became one of the few Russian Mennonites to join the Old Order (Markham) Mennonite Church. Leonard Freeman uses the recollections of Mr. Wieler, his uncle's diary and letters from a sister who remained in the Soviet Union to tell this unique story. He hopes to have the completed manuscript published soon.

### STEINMANN BUILDING COMMEMORATED

On October 10-11 Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, celebrated 50 years in their current building. Events included a dinner Saturday evening followed by a program.

### LONGTIME CHURCH WORKER DIES

Arnold Cressman died July 8, 1998 in Pennsylvania at the age of 69. Arnold was born in New Hamburg in 1929. He was a co-founder of **Tourmagination**, along with his wife Rhoda and Jan and Barbara Gleysteen. It is a travel company started in 1970 which specializes in group tours showing and explaining areas of significance in Mennonite history. Before this Arnold served as pastor at Blenheim Mennonite Church for 10 years. He also taught at the Ontario Mennonite Bible School and edited **The Evangel** before moving to Scottdale, Pennsylvania in 1961. In Pennsylvania he worked with the Mennonite Commission for Christian Education, Mennonite Publishing House and at the Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. In 1990 Arnold returned to Ontario to serve as interim pastor at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church until 1991. *from the Canadian Mennonite.*

### FRETZ AWARD WINNER

Barb Draper, of Elmira, is the 1998 winner of the J. Winfield Fretz Award. She won the award for studies in Ontario Mennonite History with her essay **The Effect of Revivalism on Worship in the (Old) Mennonite Church of Waterloo Region**. Submissions for next year's award should be made by May 31, 1999.