

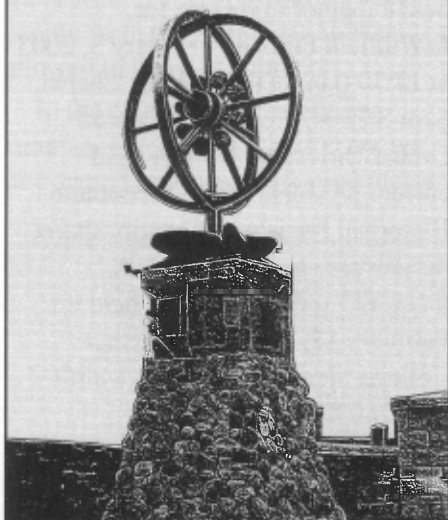
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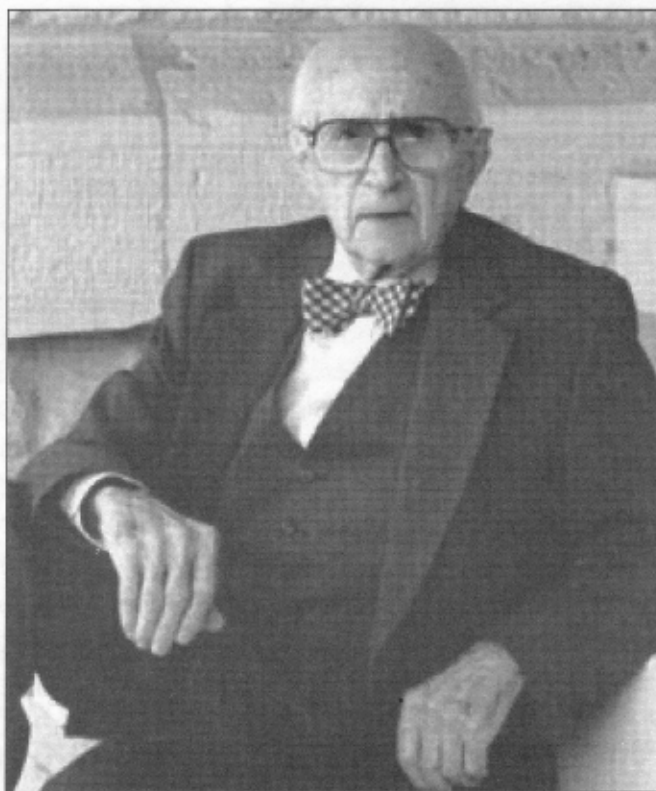
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Remembering J. Winfield Fretz

by Sam Steiner



J. Winfield Fretz 1910-2005. Photo courtesy of Conrad Grebel University College.

Joseph Winfield Fretz was born September 29, 1910 in Bedminster, Pennsylvania – basically a crossroads southeast of Quakertown, Pennsylvania and northeast of Souderton, Pennsylvania – within the oldest Mennonite community in North America.

He was ninth in a large family of eleven children. From the beginning Winfield grew up in an “inter-Mennonite” context – his mother, Ella, was (Old) Mennonite and his father, Clarence, was (New) Mennonite or General Conference. The family participated in the Deep Run West General Conference church. The family suffered financial hardship, and was forced to move to the town of Lansdale after losing the family farm through bankruptcy in 1922.

Winfield, I believe, was the first of his siblings to attend high school in Lansdale where his leadership skills

became evident very early. He served as president of his class in his junior and senior years. He chose to attend college at Bluffton, Ohio where he majored in history. There he was enormously influenced by Mennonite historian C. Henry Smith, who provided for Winfield a model for bringing together the academic and the business communities. Winfield’s life-long interests in mutual aid and economic co-operative movements also began during those years.

He graduated from Bluffton in 1934. On September 9, 1936 he married Marguerite Steiner Geiger. (Parenthetically this makes me a relative of Winfield and Marguerite, as Marguerite’s mother and my grandfather were siblings.) Together they had three sons and one daughter. One son, Burton, preceded him in death in 2001, as did Marguerite in 2002.

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As was typical for budding General Conference Mennonite scholars of his era, Winfield and Marguerite went to the University of Chicago for graduate studies in 1936. He received three degrees there - an M.A. in 1938, a Bachelor of Divinity in 1940 and a Ph.D. in 1941. His dissertation, "Mennonite Mutual Aid, a contribution to the development of Christian community" reflected fully his growing passion to sustain the strength of Mennonite community through mutual aid and cooperative enterprises.

During these years his inter-Mennonite connections grew in strength - he was one General Conference Mennonite who was fully embraced by the (Old) Mennonite Goshen College academic world dominated by Harold S. Bender, and Winfield served on the editorial board of Mennonite Quarterly Review for many years.

From 1942-1963 Winfield taught at Bethel College, the General Conference Mennonite school in North Newton, Kansas. His research and writing - much of it commissioned by Mennonite Central Committee - continued to be on the themes of Mennonite community, as well as new studies on Mennonite migration to areas like Mexico and later Paraguay. He published popular articles as well, in periodicals like Mennonite Community, Christian Living and Mennonite Weekly Review.

Winfield was invited to become the first President of Conrad Grebel College after an initial approach to Winfield was made at an MCC meeting in Manitoba by Harvey Taves, who worked for Mennonite Central Committee, and was among the group of Ontario leaders dreaming about the possibility of a Mennonite college affiliated with the new

University of Waterloo. Winfield accepted this invitation and became Grebel's first president on July 1, 1963.

Winfield's passion for mutual aid and community building did not stop when he and Marguerite came to Canada. Although his first priority was nurturing the growth of this fledgling college and indeed its physical construction in his first year, Winfield's influence spread widely in the Mennonite community. Winfield and Marguerite joined the Stirling Ave. congregation within a year of their arrival, and soon Winfield was actively involved in lay leadership positions, first on the Board of Deacons and later on the Missions Committee.

He was on the founding board of directors of the Mennonite Savings & Credit Union in 1964, and provided much of the theological rationale for this "mutual aid" initiative. He was the founding president of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario in 1965 and of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada in 1968. He was critical to the preservation of the Brubacher House on the campus here at the University. He was an early advocate for ventures like the Mennonite Relief Sale at New Hamburg.

Winfield was a "big picture" person who knew how to utilize many hands around him to increase the level of work accomplished. One can almost not talk about Winfield without mentioning persons like Pauline Bauman who served as an administrative assistant in many projects, or Lorna Bergey, who put feet under the many historical projects that Winfield advocated.

Winfield had many gifts - I would like to close by mentioning just four:

1) First was his boundless energy and enthusiasm, even later in life. He

was well-known for sleeping only four or five hours a night while still maintaining a high level of energy.

2) Second was his ability to remember the names and the details of person's lives. Even after not seeing Winfield for some years, he could almost pick up a conversation where it had left off. He knew the names of your spouse, and could ask questions about your life and work.

3) Winfield knew how to be a past president. When he ended his term as Conrad Grebel's president in 1973 he continued teaching and working graciously within the Grebel community for another six years until his retirement in 1979 and their return to North Newton, Kansas.

4) and finally was his ability to relate to Mennonites of every stripe and theology. He garnered the trust of Old Order Mennonites, was close friends of Mennonite academics and many folks in the business community. One Mennonite denomination would have been too small for Winfield. He loved the Mennonite world, and sought to nurture its strengths whether in Old Order mutual aid or post-secondary educational institutions. J. Winfield Fretz died in North Newton, Kansas on January 24, 2005. He has left us a rich heritage.

Conrad Grebel University College held a memorial service for J. Winfield Fretz on February 3, 2005 at 12:30 p.m. in the College Chapel. Sam Steiner, archivist at Conrad Grebel University College, and current president of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, shared these words at that service. A memorial service was also held on February 12, 2005 at the Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kansas.

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Communion at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church

by Sheri and Vaughn Bender

We had the pleasure of meeting with Peter and Margaret Metzger at church one evening for a very informative and enlightening conversation about some of the behind the scenes mechanics of communion and foot washing at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church - past and present.

Our conversation started with a brief overview of how St. Jacobs structure worked in the earliest days, which Marg can remember. The bishop at this time was Oliver Snider. He was responsible for the Northern District of Waterloo County - comprising of the congregations of Elmira, St. Jacobs and Floradale. The deacon was Margaret's father, Abner Good. Marg recalled that in those times, the minister and the bishop were the only people who could serve communion.

The deacon's wife, in preparation for communion, baked large loaves of bread, the crusts then carefully cut off and the bread sliced into uniform cubes. At one point unleavened bread was used, sliced into cracker size with the delicate, time consuming use of a razor blade! Margaret's mother, Mary Ann Good would also be the one to set up the communion table with the communion cloth. Walter Brubacher was the next deacon and his wife Beatrice took over the duties from Mary Ann. It was at this time other people from the congregation were allowed to serve communion.

In the course of our interview, conducted in our church kitchen, we discovered two silver-coloured plates



St. Jacobs Mennonite Church. Photo courtesy of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

dated 1915 (we think there's brass hiding underneath) once used for communion. Marg remembers a tin cup as well; everyone used this, it was known as the Common Cup, which prior to temperance times actually contained real wine. Margaret recalled a trip to Goudies Department Store in downtown Kitchener with her mother where they purchased four glass plates, sectioned into four, along with four tall glasses to be used as the Common Cup. The present whereabouts of these glass plates and glasses elude us.

Today, we use a unique handcrafted pottery serving tray and pitcher fashioned by former church member Phil Yordy (son of former pastor Richard and Ruth Yordy) at his St. Jacobs pottery studio. The trays of juice (Welch's) are poured and set by the Pastoral Care Ministry. A white pump, sort of like a turkey baster, affixed to a glass container is used to squeeze out the right measurement per serving. There are five trays of tiny glass cups, one for each aisle in the sanctuary, with forty-one servings per

stainless steel serving tray.

About this time Peter and Vaughn headed off to the storage space underneath the foyer steps to have a look at the foot washing pails. St. Jacobs has fourteen galvanized pails, or tubs, ten with round handles and four older models with square handles. Apparently some little people also know where the pails are stored judging by the stash of crayons found inside the tubs. Markings on the tubs seem to indicate the cost for each was just slightly more than one dollar - which gives you a sense of how old these are. Marg and Peter talked about past times when wooden tubs were carefully stored in the basement of her parent's home. Several days in advance of an upcoming communion service, these tubs would be filled with water to allow the dried wood to swell and ensure the tubs had stopped leaking prior to the service! For the foot washing service men and boys had their feet washed in the sanctuary, women and girls in the basement (on the cold cement floor), and

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grandmothers in the lobby. At some point the men of the church decided some gray felt paper would help keep the basement floor a little warmer for the women's feet so each communion service the material would be unrolled to provide a walkway from the Sunday school rooms to the foot washing area. At present, Marg and Peter fill the galvanized pails with warm water from the boiler room. White towels have been used for foot washing. The care taking of the towels in the past again fell to the deacon's wife who washed, folded and stored again for the next time. Today Margaret still looks after this task with two Rubbermaid containers used to store the communion towels in the church basement. It became very apparent during this interview that the custodial services of Margaret and Peter Metzger goes far beyond the building windows, and walls of the church, for there is a great sense of history and true "care taking" which is forthcoming from these two individuals.

As for who bakes the bread - at the time of going to print we were able to confirm an anonymous lead about who that might be. It's an active church member who has been performing this special task with great care and dedication - Willie Pfohl. Willie has been baking five loaves of bread and recalled starting this enjoyable task somewhere between fifteen and twenty years ago. He also recalled years back he would partially cut through the loaf which former pastor Sue Steiner would break in half as part of the communion service. On a trip to Newfoundland he and Doris where enjoying afternoon tea and molasses bread with a local Newfoundlander and learned that the bread was put into the pan side-by-side in two separate lumps of dough, which of course baked together as one ...but provided a natural braking point in the loaf. It's a method he now employs back home in St. Jacobs and interestingly, when first used back

home caused Marg Metzger to recall that that's the way her mother baked bread!

Willie and Doris over the years have made very much appreciated efforts to incorporate various ingredients and breads into our services. More than once, on the occasion of World Day of Service/Peace, the Pfohls have sourced a variety of breads from ethnic bakeries around Waterloo region in an effort to reflect our integration in a much larger global community. Willie recalled one of the suppliers asking him to return the next day because he was so moved by the request for his bread for such an important purpose and wanted to bake the very best for our use at St. Jacobs!

So now you know a little bit about communion at St. Jacobs - past and present. We know we haven't uncovered every answer about the behind the scenes of communion service, but we hope you agree that a little mystery and imagination fit well with a story pertaining to the symbolism of partaking in the Body of Christ.

*Sheri and Vaughn Bender
live in St. Jacobs, Ontario and
attend St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.
This article appeared recently in the
church's newsletter Life Together.*

The Communion Cloth - A St. Jacobs Artifact

by Janet and Trevor Bauman

In days gone by communion was served by the minister and the bishop. At St. Jacobs Mennonite Church the table now in the foyer (a small one with a drawer) was the communion table prior to the current one purchased in 1949. For the service, two communion cloths were made: one to go on the table and the other to cover the elements. Today only one survives and is in the possession of Margaret Metzger. It is used to cover the communion table most times when we celebrate communion.

It is white linen cloth. The cloth was made by Almeta (Good) Brubacher (wife of Deacon Menno Brubacher). Its corners were hand stitched, creating a dedicate pattern around the outside.

Almeta would take care of the cloth and iron it prior to communion - part of the deacon's wife's role. Margaret Metzger's father, Abner Good, received the cloth when he took over deacon duties from Menno Brubacher. Abner's wife Mary Ann took over the cloth caring duties while Abner was deacon.

The office of deacon ceased in 1974, and the pastoral committee took over the duties of preparing communion (along with the pastors). Alice Brubacher, and others, took on the task of "keeper of the cloth." Then, as Alice notes, for a few years the cloth was not used. Perhaps it was misplaced or the tradition simply abandoned.

However, Margaret Metzger revived the tradition. She took the cloth home and carefully cleaned it. As it is linen material it is difficult to iron. Now, the night before a communion service, the cloth is carefully dampened, set in the refrigerator overnight and ironed on Sunday morning. The cloth has begun to show some wear and recently it was given into the able hands of Doris Kramer who did some careful mending of some of the hemstitch.

So why so much fuss about a white cloth from some seventy or eighty years ago? Because the cloth has been used for the same purpose for so many years, it is really an artifact from the church's past. Artifacts function as tangible items that connect us to our past history. History becomes real when you can see and touch an article from the past.

*Janet and Trevor Bauman
live in Elmira, Ontario and
attend St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.
This article appeared recently in the
church's newsletter Life Together.*

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A Thank You Poem in German

by Anna Rempel, Halbstadt, Molochna Colony,
given by her granddaughter, Elfrieda Dyck
and translated by Linda Huebert Hecht

An unsere helfer in Amerika – 1922

Viel dank fur all die Liebesgaben
Die die fernen Bruder gespendet haben!
Ihr wisst nicht, wie weh der Hunger tut.
Da stirbt jede Hoffnung, da sinkt jeden Mut
Wenn gross und grosser wird die Not,
Im ganzen Haus kein Stuckchen Brot;
Wenn die Kinder bitten: "Uns hungert Mama,"
"Musst warten Liebling, es ist nichts mehr da."
"Der sterkste Glaube will uns verlassen,
Mann kannes nicht begreifen, mann kann es nicht fassen,
Wenn der Nachbar stirbt, und auch jener ist tot,
Sie sind verhungert, sie hatten kein Brot.
Vor Fenster und Turen das Betteln und Weinen
Die frierenden, hungernden Grossen und Kleinen:
"Habt Erbarmen, Tante, stillt unsere Not,
O gebt uns nur einen Mundvoll Brot!"
O geht von dannen, hirt auf, seid stille!
Ich kann euch nichts geben, es sind euer zu viele,"
So spricht wohl der Vater, doch Mutter schnell eilt,
Und oft mit den Armen den Bissen noch teilt.
"Denn, a spricht sie fur sich," die Hilfe ist nah,
Mann denkt ja an uns in Amerika.
Und langsam schleichen Stunden, Tage,
Und bang und lauter wird die Frage:
"Ist denn die Hilfe nicht bald hier?"
"Mussen wirklich all sterben wir?"
Doch endlich geht von Mund zu Munde
Die gluckliche, die frohe Kunde:
"Wisst ihr es schon? Jetzt ist sie da
Die Hilfe aus Amerika!"
Es giebt noch wirklich Lieb auf Erden.
Schon heiterer die Mienen werden,
Und frischer Mut und heiterer Sinn
Auf's Neu im Herz und Haus einziehn.
Zwar war's im Merz und im April
Zum Leben zu wenig, zum Sterben zu viel,
Und doch war dankbar man gesinnt,
Denn eine Ration bekam jedes Kind.
Als dann noch die vielen Pakete gekommen,
Du warst dem Hunger der Stachel genommen.
Drumm vielen, vielen Dank dort druben
Den Brudern und Schwestern, den viellieben,
Wir rufen euch zu: "Vergelts Euch Gott!
Ihr tatet Grosses, Ihr stilltet die Not"

To our helpers in America – 1922

Many thanks for all your gifts of love
That arrived from the brothers afar!
Do you know how much hunger hurts
It kills every hope and makes courage fade
And the need grows worse continually when
There is not the smallest piece of bread in the entire
house
When children beg: "We are hungry Mama,"
"You must wait my darling, there is nothing left"
The strongest faith begins to wane
One can't comprehend it, one can't understand it
When the neighbour dies and others are dead
They succumbed to hunger, they had no bread
The begging and crying at windows and doors
The freezing and starving, both young and old
"Have mercy, dear auntie, supply our needs,
Oh give us but a mouthful of bread to eat!"
"Oh leave this place, stop begging, be still!
We have nothing to give, there are too many of you,"
So speaks the father, while the mother hurries quickly
Oft sharing with the desperate her last bite of food
"For help is at hand," she says to herself,
They are thinking of us in America
But the hours and days pass slowly
First fearfully, then louder the question is posed
"Will then the help not soon be at hand?"
"Will it reach us before we all die?"
Finally, the words pass from mouth to mouth
Blissful, happy news:
"Have you not heard? It is here
Assistance from America!"
So love still exists upon this earth.
Faces now begin to brighten
New courage and new cheerfulness
Enter each heart and home anew.
Though in March and April there was
Too little for life, too much for death,
But still in our hearts we were thankful
For every child was given a ration
And when many families received packages as well
The pain of hunger came to an end.
Therefore, many, many thanks to those far away
To brothers and sisters who showed their love
We call out to you: "May God reward you!
Great things you have done, you have come to our aid"

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Richard Beasley

by Marion Roes

Richard Beasley... For two hundred years, oral history passed through the generations about his land sales to our Mennonite pioneers, makes us to think "sleezy" when we hear "Beasley."

Richard Beasley sold land to which he didn't have clear title, land on which there was an unpaid mortgage. That was Block 2, later named Waterloo Township. What was the rest of the story? It was told by Dr. David Beasley, historian and author, and guest speaker at the March 8, 2005 meeting of the Waterloo Historical Society. In the introduction, WHS president, Rych Mills, included helpful background, explaining that, until the mid 1980s, many documents relating to the land sales to the Mennonites had not yet been discovered. Research by local historians and authors, Ken McLaughlin and John English, for their 1983 Illustrated History of Kitchener, by Elizabeth Bloomfield for her 1995 Waterloo Township through Two Centuries and by Geoff Hayes for his 1997 Waterloo County: An Illustrated History resulted in a more accurate accounting of the land purchases of Block 2.

[Another opportunity to learn about Richard Beasley was at the May 6, 2004 meeting of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, Waterloo Chapter, where guest speaker, Len Friesen, told how Beasley has been largely misrepresented and misunderstood.]

However . . . 200 year old perceptions aren't easily altered (not everyone has read the recent history books [or heard Len Friesen]). The Waterloo Historical Society meeting was held at Erb Street Mennonite

Church, and Dr. Beasley opened by saying that he had some apprehension that the audience might be aiming peashooters at him! He added that at another talk, one man addressed him with: "Richard Beasley was a crook, wasn't he?"

Dr. Beasley learned about his ancestor while researching for a lecture he gave in 2002. From that, he wrote the 24-page booklet: Richard Beasley: the Character of the Man and His Times. He talked about the complications of early land development in Upper Canada: surveying, selling and speculation, along with the "political machinations" of that era and how they affected Beasley's transactions.

What I heard March 8 and have read since, confirmed that Richard Beasley was not a one-dimensional, "sleezy" land speculator. Indeed, so much has been written about this man, who was a prominent and colourful figure in the settlement of Upper Canada, that a synopsis would take several pages. A few examples: Beasley was acting commissary at Fort Niagara in 1777 at age 16 and a fur trader, established before 1785 at Burlington Heights; he spoke Mohawk, Dutch and English. In 1795, as a supplier of goods, he outfitted Von Moll Berczy and his German immigrants in Markham (some of whom moved later to Waterloo County). Beasley held prominent positions in the government of Upper Canada. In 1796 he was appointed magistrate and was elected to the House of Assembly. From 1803 - 1804, Beasley was the Speaker of the House, another important position. He "rescued Henrietta Springer from the Indians," married her, lived in

Hamilton, and had a family of eight children. (Henrietta was a relative of Waterloo Mayor Moses Springer.) Dundurn Castle is built on the foundation of their home. That's another story! Beasley's tomb inscription states that he was the first settler at the Head-of-the-Lake, as an honor not only to him but to the citizens who were proud of their village becoming a metropolis from the wilderness in which Richard had found it.

More may be written: Dr. Beasley said that he continues to learn so much about his ancestor that he plans another booklet. At the end of his talk on March 8, Susan Hoffman presented Dr. Beasley with a laminated copy of a 1796 deed between Captain Joseph Brant and Richard Beasley. Susan is a Waterloo Historical Society board member and archivist, and as such was given the original deed, donated by Eldon Weber.

Marion Roes lives in Waterloo, Ontario. She is a board member of the Waterloo Historical Society, and Woolwich Historical Foundation; as well as a member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario [and PGFS and the Waterloo Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society.] Information for this article was taken from Dr. Beasley's talk, his booklet, and the Dundurn Castle web site. Dr. Beasley's booklet - and his books - may be ordered from 519 426-2077 or the web page: www.kwic.com/~davus.

Book Notes

WHS VOLUME #92

The 2004 Waterloo Historical Society annual volume #92 is available for purchase and reading at the Grace Schmidt Room of Local History at Kitchener Public Library. (The annual volume is included with a WHS membership.) A copy is also available at Conrad Grebel University College Library. This volume has many pictures: 1940s and 1950s aerial photographs by Garfield Schmidt: Waterloo County villages, farms, gravel pits and city edges, demolition of Elmira's oldest manufacturing business: Procast Foundry. A History of Preston Mineral Springs plus coloured postcards of early Preston hotels; pictures and story about several locations of the Letter furniture and funeral locations in Waterloo; an original 19th century hand-coloured and hand-drawn surveyors map of Woolwich near St. Jacobs that accompanied a petition by landowners to build a new road. There are also stories about how Berlin got postal delivery to homes (first, streets had to be named and buildings numbered); weekly, sometimes daily letters between a betrothed couple in 1886 - an unusually personal glimpse into wedding plans of the late 19th century. One letter pictured in the volume is written in cross-hatch, an interesting technique, supposedly used to save paper, but hard on the eyes! Also listed are historically valuable (and exciting!) acquisitions and donations acquired during the past year by local historical organizations.

Submitted by Marion Roes

A FAMILY TORN APART

Justina D. Neufeld retells her story of growing up in the Soviet Union. She tells of her joyous childhood being shattered by political events beyond her control. First losing her father and brothers during the Stalin

purges, then fleeing during the Second World War only to be separated from her mother. Neufeld eventually comes to an MCC camp in Holland where she eventually is able to immigrate to the United States in 1947.

THE QUIET IN THE LAND

Christian spiritual reflections abound in this rare journal written by a Volga - German teacher during the years of the Russian Revolution 1916-18. The religious writings of Henry P. Wieler were recorded during the troubling years of 1916-18 in Russia. His life as a father and teacher was difficult and he turned to his journals as a way of asserting his spiritual beliefs. His thoughts and religious experiences relating sermons, biblical passages and church events are revealing as are his descriptions of the times and struggles of his people, the Volga - Germans, who are known as *The Quiet in the Land*.

Translated from the original German scripted writings, the original journals have been used to share some excerpts which directly relate Henry's religious experiences during the critical periods of transition in Russia. The events of World War I put the Volga - Germans in a difficult way with their Russian neighbours. Wieler was fearful for his family and fellow Germans living in their Volga communities. Christian faith helped him to deal with those times and he fortunately recorded his faith reflections for us to appreciate.

Henry P. Wieler was born in 1891 in a Volga - German village in Russia. He grew up to become a teacher in the German communities within Russia and wrote extensively in his journals about his life and experiences, especially his Christian religious life. Surviving the Russian Revolution period, he was able to escape with his family and friends to Germany where he assisted many in obtaining

sponsors for a new life in North America. He was able to get his family to the USA, where he eventually settled in Lancaster, PA, (his original journals with him). Henry lived successfully in the USA, raising his family and working in many jobs. He also had success in his Religious Motto business. He died in 1984 at the age of 93.

His journals live on and provide a unique view of life along the Volga as experienced by the German communities in the early 20th century. Many more pages remain to be translated from the over 1500 pages written by Henry from 1912-1924. Success from this publication would provide incentives to offer more of the journal writings of Henry Wieler in the future.

From news release

THE MEASURE OF MY DAYS

The full title of this book is *The Measure of My Days: Engaging the Life and Thought of John L. Ruth*. Edited by Reuben Z. Miller and Joseph S. Miller, they have put together essays from a variety of writers in order to pay tribute to John L. Ruth. This well known historian, storyteller and author has served the Mennonite community for fifty years.

THIS TEACHING I PRESENT

Mary Jane Lederach Hershey takes a close look at the art of fraktur. She explains the techniques and designs of this art form concentrating on the Skippack and Salford Mennonite Meetinghouse Schools from the years 1745-1836. Hershey expands her study to look at the history of these schools and the role of early Mennonite educator Christopher Dock in its development.

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The J. Winfield Fretz Award *for* *Studies in Ontario Mennonite History*

Administered by
The Ontario Mennonite Historical Society
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Address submissions to the editor of:
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The Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario reserves the right to
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