

Village Review



VOL. 6 NO. 1

April 2010

From the President

My retirement life started with a bit of golf, travel, reading and a lot of uncertainty as to what I would commit to long term. However, that all changed when I attended the dedication ceremony of the MHV windmill in October 2001. I was impressed with the significance of the occasion and the iconic symbol that the windmill was of my heritage, as well as that of many others like me in our community. At the end of the ceremony I asked the executive director (Gary Snider at the time), "So, who is going to operate this beautiful new windmill?" Knowing I had retired recently he immediately responded, "Why don't you?"

Gary's response caught me by surprise, so I did not commit myself on the spot. However, the thought stayed with me and the more I thought about it, the more I felt myself drawn to the idea. I could see several reasons for me to consider this seriously. After all, my grandfather had been a

millwright by trade. I already knew the current millwright (a relative of mine), who encouraged me when I approached him. The windmill was a real working mill that produced an actual product that was being sold at the museum. Being the millwright would mean interacting with visitors and tourists. And, furthermore, my general interest in heritage and MHV seemed like a good fit with my genealogical hobby of the last 40 years.

After volunteering at the windmill for some time, the nominating committee approached me to let my name stand for a position on the board. I agreed to it, not really expecting that I would be elected. However, in March 2004 I found myself elected to the Board, and six months later, I was asked to take the role of president.

As volunteers, we all come to MHV in different ways and each one with their own story. My experience has been that volunteers at MHV enjoy the at-

mosphere of friendliness and happiness. They enjoy the opportunity of visiting with friends and making new ones. They also see this as an opportunity to tell others of the history and heritage of Mennonites, as well as hearing stories from people that come from many different parts of the world. The wonderful management and staff work very hard to create an environment that makes time spent at MHV an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. The purpose of the museum is to preserve and exhibit the story of our people to our children and for generations to come.

It is my intention to continue to volunteer at MHV, and more specifically at the windmill. However, this concludes my involvement on the board after serving two three-year terms. I wish to express my heart-felt thanks and appreciation for the opportunity to have served in this capacity and have felt honoured to do so. Also, sincere thanks for the opportunity to have worked closely with the many volunteers, staff and board members. I have felt your support in the last six years and I have greatly appreciated it.

Al Hamm

Mood buoyant at annual meeting

Last year was an amazing year at Mennonite Heritage Village, the president of the museum's board of directors told members at the annual general meeting on March 23.

"Even as an economic downturn was felt in many parts of the world, MHV has attained success, not only financially, but in many areas of its operation," said Al Hamm, who is stepping down from the board after six years as president.

Executive director Barry Dyck reiterated Hamm's sentiments, carrying on the buoyant mood as he noted his first year as CEO of the museum as been one of satisfaction and enjoyment. Dyck suggested the highlights of 2009 were the successes: donations were up by 45 percent over 2008, attendance at special events was up by nine percent which brought with it increased sales in the gift and book store as well as in the Livery Barn restaurant and rental income (from groups and organizations who book the facility for weddings, corporate events and meetings) has doubled.

"All these success factors have combined to improve the bottom line of our operating fund," said Dyck, noting the fund went from a loss of almost \$50,000 in 2008 to a profit of over \$63,000 in 2009.

Dyck went on to outline the reasons for the "good fortune" the museum experienced.

"The good Lord gave us very favourable weather on most of our event days, including *Touch of Christmas*," he pointed out, indicating that attendance is very dependent on weather conducive to outdoor activity.

Dyck said while it appears creating the position

of fundraising manager was a positive move considering the increase in donations, the inflow of donations also indicates the community is strongly supportive of the work of MHV.

The executive director pointed out administration has focused on making special events more family friendly by providing children's entertainment such as a petting zoo, barrel train rides, horse-drawn wagon rides and inflatable play structures which seems to have paid off with higher attendance.

Facility rentals

Dyck pointed out facility rentals under the direction of office manager Marigold Peters are a growing part of the business at the museum, which has plenty of further potential.

In response to the improved financial situation, MHV members approved a budget of just over \$1 million.

Senior curator Roland Sawatzky's report indicated the digitization of the artifact collection was completed this winter and the total is 13,251. In 2009, the museum accepted 154 artifacts from 43 different donors. Sawatzky noted MHV hosted six exhibits, among them *Through the Flowers* (art by Edith Krause exploring the experience of Mennonites in Stalin's Soviet Union) and *The Archaeology of Blumenhoff* (which displayed objects found while excavating the site of the Cornelius S. Plett farm in the former

village of Blumenhoff). In addition, work was completed on repairing and refurbishing nine heritage buildings in the village.

Reports were also heard from outgoing president of MHV Auxiliary, Evelyn Friesen who noted funds raised in 2009 paid for a walk-in freezer for the Livery Barn, new computers for the office and stage lights for the auditorium, and program director Anne Toews who told members while bus tours were down last year, other areas such as the education program are going strong.

To close the meeting, winners of the Henry E. Plett Memorial Award presented their essays to the audience. Meaghan Giesbrecht and Holly Goossen are both grade 11 students at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg.

Doris Penner
Village Review Editor



PHOTO BY BARRY DYCK

MHV vice-president Anne Friesen hands certificates of appreciation to retiring board members, Evelyn Friesen, Al Hamm and Gary Snider (missing is Don Janzen who is also retiring).

From the Executive Director

On Feb. 9, 2010, I celebrated my one-year anniversary of employment at the Mennonite Heritage Village. While the celebration aspect was somewhat dispassionate, my sense of satisfaction with a good first year was real and enjoyable. I am deeply grateful to God for His generous provisions for MHV this last year; to the staff for leaning into the harness together as an effective team; to the Board for considerable guidance, support and encouragement; to the volunteers for substantial contributions of time and talent; and to the MHV community for coming on board with donations and goodwill to help us tell our story.

The year 2009 has been a very good year at MHV. The collection of artifacts has grown, a number of new exhibits have been displayed in the galleries, the education program has been very well received by students and teachers, attendance numbers at special events were up from last year, sales in the restaurant and in the gift store were up and rental revenues have increased. All these success factors have combined to improve the bottom line of our operating fund from a loss of \$49,195 in 2008 to a profit of \$63,470 in 2009. We are grateful for all these positive indicators.

There are a number of reasons for the good fortunes we experienced. The good Lord gave very favourable weather on most event days, including the *Touch of Christmas* event. Donations were up by 45 percent over 2008, indicating that the investment in creating the position of fundraising manager was positive and

that the community is supporting MHV. Increases in the number of people attending various functions and events translated into more sales in both the restaurant and the gift store. We have focused on making special events family friendly by providing a lot of children's entertainment such as a petting zoo, barrel-train rides, horse-drawn wagon rides, face painting and inflatable play structures. Lastly, our rental revenues for meetings, banquets, wedding receptions and other functions increased substantially. The fact that growth is coming from a number of areas leads us to believe it's sustainable growth and not just a "flash in the pan."

Having looked back at the successes of the past year, we should now also look forward to the plans for the coming season. Again, a number of new and exciting exhibits are being planned for the galleries. Visitors will have new things to see and experience throughout the season. Bookings for the education program look strong at this time. Exploration will be done on ways to expand and enhance the program. The focus will continue to be on creating new ways to tell our story and on providing a first-class, family-friendly environment at MHV. These initiatives will support a number of strategic priorities, which are: tourism, education, conference center development, financial health and engaging future generations.

Facility rentals are a growing part of our business which we plan to continue to encourage and devel-

op. The auditorium in the Village Centre is already booked for wedding receptions for every weekend in August. June, July and September are beginning to fill up. This increase in rental activity will necessitate the hiring of additional help.

The vision for special events again includes entertainment on the stage under the tent. Because the tent needs replacing, we are looking at some more permanent options. A structurally sound and functional facility of this nature, whether a tent or a building, will also provide additional opportunities for rental income. Sadly the cost of a permanent structure is very high, so it may take some time to raise the necessary funds to begin construction.

The museum's new vision statement is "MHV will be the premier international interpretive centre for the Russian Mennonite story." This means we will continue to improve collections of artifacts, exhibits and displays. We will continue to improve our ability to tell the story through education programs and through various events. We will continue to develop and improve facilities and customer service so that both the story and the experience will be second to none. No doubt we've all heard the African proverb that says, "It takes a village to raise a child." There is no doubt in my mind that it will take not only a village, but a community, the MHV community, to achieve our vision. We invite you to join us.

Barry Dyck

Book Review

Adolf Ens, Ernest N. Braun and Henry N. Fast, eds., with John Dyck, comp., *Settlers of the East Reserve: Moving In-Moving Out-Staying* (Winnipeg and Steinbach: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2009), pb., 328 pp., \$30 CND.

This volume has brought to creative fruition, the joint labours of the late John Dyck as compiler and author of much of the material, the editors noted, the work of EastMenn Historical Committee and the publisher, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. It is a fitting start-up item for the celebrations of the 135th anniversary cel-

ebrations of 2009-2010. That celebration highlights the coming of the first of 7000 South Russian Mennonites to Manitoba in 1874-75.

The East Reserve (initially called by some the Rat River Settlement) northeast of Winnipeg (then known also as Fort Garry) was the destination of the 1874-1880 Bergthaler and *Kleine Gemeinde* arrivals. It was soon to be followed, in 1875-1880, by even more Chortitzer and Fürstenland emigrants from south Russia to the West Reserve (sometimes then called the Pembina Reserve) during that period.

A number of well-researched articles, charts, maps, photos and other material offer much "flesh and bones" data for rounding out a full account of this historic Mennonite emigration experience. New information appears in the 1876 listing of family provision loans (*Brottschuld*) which not only provides sums received by various recipients but gives their places of residence. Twenty five very early village names for the total region appear here. Some village listings of recipients seem to have been merged so this list does not include all established villages of that time.

An essay titled *Homestead Applications, Patents and Cancellations* provides a clearer full sketch than we have had till now of the people taking up homesteads, and early changes in landownership, including data on those who left the region altogether. Publication of the census results of 1891, which include Rosenhof and Rosenort near Morris, is very important here also (but note the spelling of Tanneau ("Tanneau" p.103).

We find new village histories, i.e. of Rosengart/Rosengard, Friedrichsthal and Schönwiese (all now extinct as villages), to be added to many already published histories, at least of early settlement periods. New studies on the emigrations from the East Reserve to Cass County, N.D., Paraguay and the West Reserve round out this anthology. A small 30-family movement to Bergthaler near Mountain Lake, Minn., still needs to be fully researched and added to this list.

This compilation of quite detailed summaries on various themes does not fully eliminate the need for serious researchers to check original hand written sources to make sure transcription errors have not crept in (as some readers are already saying is the case). Unfortunately the published materials do not always provide clear and complete references to the titles and locations of original documents.

The volume is generally well-edited and visually appealing, with a useful bibliography, although page margins are somewhat skimpy in places. A brief identification of authors and translators would have been useful.

To sum up, both East Reserve and West Reserve studies will benefit a great deal from what is now on offer in this book. Both the Mennonite Heritage Village and *Mennonitische Post*, as well as other bookstores will be pleased to sell any reader a copy.

Lawrence Klippenstein
MHV board member

Mennonite Heritage Village Review

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Notes from MHV Auxiliary



Set for dinner

The Auditorium provided a beautiful setting for the annual Grey-Cup-Sunday dinner on Nov. 29. Preparing an after-church dinner for 300 people is no small task; however, many helping hands made the event a successful one again.

Mary Friesen and Betty Engbrecht—seen in the forefront—are joined by a string of volunteers as they serve turkey and all the trimmings to hungry guests.



A Mennonite saga

Dr. Otto Klassen's films—as they relate to the continuing Mennonite saga—have drawn an increasing number of people at MHV. The premiere showing of *Pioneers in the Chaco: Mennonites looking for freedom in Paraguay*, on Feb. 23, gave opportunity for many to recall their own connections to Paraguay. The harp music and *galette* and home-baked pies made the evening even more enjoyable. Designated donations provided monies for a new “tent replacement fund” at the museum.

Soup's On

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada gathered at the Village Centre for their annual meeting in January. In the company of friends, Ernie Braun and Bert Friesen are pictured enjoying the Soup and Sandwich Lunch that was served by the Auxiliary.

Anne Thiessen recruited a group of friends who traveled from Winnipeg to join us for chicken noodle soup during the Christmas festivities at the Village Centre. Needless to say, they enjoyed a good time together and, as they said, “it was well worth the trip!”



Comforters

Especially during our cold winter nights, there are still those who find comfort in a traditional wool-filled covering. Several of our members are adept at making these comforters and have recently completed a number of custom orders.

And, for anyone waiting to buy one of the famous Village Quilters' quilts, three lovely quilts are presently for sale in the Quilting Room.

2009 in review

The auxiliary's 2009 report reflects a long list of accomplishments that attest to the success of the past year. In addition to many smaller projects which we funded—computer updates, new light fixtures in the auditorium, kitchen equipment, support for the Education Program and more—a record amount of funds raised afforded us the means to provide the \$15,000 for the installation of a walk-in freezer in the Livery Barn Restaurant. Thanks is due to the dedicated members and volunteers whose efforts make our success possible. As well, thanks is due to all who support us at the film nights we sponsor, or the *Greewe Breakfast* or the Quilt Raffle or the hayrack sale or the *Wauffle Wenckel* or at any number of our soup luncheons.

Under New Management

We are more than pleased to welcome Linda Schroeder to her new role as president of the MHV Auxiliary. At a special planning session on March 4th, Linda invited us to review the existing mandate of the auxiliary and to set priorities as we considered ways of fulfilling our goals. “Keep on doing what you've been doing!” were the words of Executive Director Barry Dyck, as he addressed the members at the meeting.

Poised in her new position, Linda is pictured with treasurer, Martha Friesen, as they ponder our present financial balances.



Upcoming

- *Faspa* – along with *zwiebach* and *qwitche* jam and home-baked cakes, a pantomime will feature a lesson from yesteryear—a time when *shpoarre* (thriftiness) was a moral obligation. Join us on May 2nd at 2:30 p.m..
- Come for a *Greewe Breakfast* at the Livery Barn Restaurant on May 29th.

Evelyn Friesen
Past President of MHV Auxiliary

From the Curator

Exhibits

The Archaeology of Blumenhoff (Nov. 30, 2009 to Aug. 2010 in the auditorium). The opening of this exhibit during *Touch of Christmas* event was well-attended, with presentations by historian Dr. Royden Loewen, University of Winnipeg Department of anthropology curator Valerie McKinley, and the Mennonite Heritage Village curator Roland Sawatzky. The exhibit continues through Pioneer Days.

How Did This Get Here? Curiosities from the Collection (July 3, 2009 to April 20, 2010).

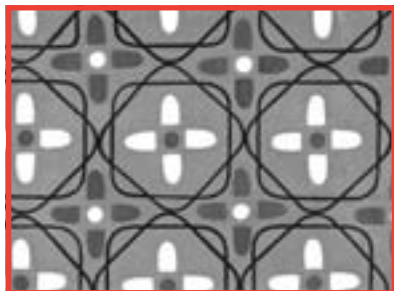
H.W. Reimer Store History

In the auditorium, the history and artifacts of the old H.W. Reimer general store of Steinbach are now featured in one of the exhibit cases.

Upcoming Exhibits

Mennonite Floor Paintings, by Margruite Krahn, April 12 to June 14 in The Art Hall.

The Mennonite tradition of painting floors with bright colours and patterns is revealed with this display of paintings on canvas (some replicas, some new). This folk art form was usually coordinated by the women of the household, and was common between 1900 and 1950. Up to five different colours could be found on one floor, usually applied with sponge and stencil, with different patterns in each room of the house. Artist Margruite Krahn brings this tradition to life: some of the pieces are replicas of floor patterns found in old house-barns in southern Manitoba, while some exhibit her own artistic expressions.



Replica of the hand-painted kitchen floor pattern of the Herdsman House, Neuberghthal. By Margruite Krahn.

Just Food: The Right to Food from a Faith Perspective, May 1 to July 4 in the Temporary Gallery. **Opening night is Sunday May 2, 7 p.m.** All are welcome (free admission).

This exhibit explores the connections between food, justice, human rights and faith through art from around the world. In total 36 pieces of art were commissioned for the exhibit, which also includes artifacts and hands-on activities.

Is food ever *just* food? Food is not only something to be routinely prepared and consumed. Food is essential for human life. Without food there is hunger, conflict and death. With food there is vitality, community, and celebration.

The right to food has been declared to be a human right. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) affirms "the right of every man, woman and child, alone and in community with others, to have physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement in ways consistent with human dignity."



Untitled by Gen Tsuboi, Kirie (cut paper).

Is food always *just* food? Food is not always justly accessible. Access to food depends on fair and efficient systems for production and distribution. The food insecurity for many people around the world indicates that our food systems are

unjust. Is the abundant food available to some of us *just* food, when it is not equally accessible to others?

The responses of people of faith to the abundance of food or its lack, for themselves or their neighbours, have been shaped by the unique beliefs of their religion. With the articulation of human rights and the call for their promotion in the 20th century, people of faith have been challenged to consider and apply their religious convictions and actions related to food in light of the premises and promotion of human rights within a secularized and global society.

Singing in Time: Music and Mennonites, July 8 – October 30, 2010 in Temporary Gallery and other concert venues. **Opening night concert July 8, 7:30 p.m.**

This exhibit explores the social importance of music in Mennonite society. While many realize the centrality of the religious choral tradition, there exist also folk and secular themes throughout Mennonite history. There are two parts to this exhibit: the gallery experience and an historical concert series. Musical instruments, rare hymnals and an audio console will be found in the gallery, where you can listen to samples of Mennonite music, new and old. The concert series will take place at different locations and feature live performances by Mennonite musicians and singers that will help express the main themes of the exhibit: The musical context of Anabaptist origins, plain singing, global influences, harmony and secular music. Join us in celebrating this tradition, which runs so deep but varies so widely.

Concert Dates

Thursday July 8, 7:30 p.m. at Mennonite Heritage Village (opening night)

Saturday, Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m. at the Krahn Barn, Neuberghthal

Saturday, Oct. 2, 7:30 p.m. at Laudamus, CMU, Winnipeg

Recent Donations

The core of the museum is its collections, and the MHV is the public steward of over 13,000 artifacts. In 2009 the museum accepted 154 artifacts from 43 separate donors (not including items that were accepted for drama props, school programs, or the library).

J.D. Reimer Tombstone

In December, a granite tombstone monument was brought to the museum from the former village of Wiesenfeld, Ukraine. It was originally erected in 1892 in honour of Jacob David Reimer (1817-1891) and

Wilhelmina Strauss (1818-1889) and will be placed near the Jacob Hoepfner monument on the MHV grounds. Jacob D. Reimer was one of the founders of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860. The discovery and procurement of this tombstone



The Jacob D. and Wilhelmina Strauss Reimer tombstone (circa 1892) in transit state before placement on the MHV site.

was accomplished by the descendants of the Reimers. We would like to thank Gert and Katherine Martens and Agnes Pauls for coordinating the transport and fundraising for this very important Mennonite artifact. There will be a ceremony for its placement on July 25 at the museum.

Otto Klassen Film Equipment

Otto Klassen is a well-known documentary filmmaker, who has focused his energies over the last 40 years on exploring the Men-

nonite past around the world. His films have been seen by many thousands of people, helping to bring the Mennonite story to life. In January Dr. Klassen donated some of the equipment he used to film these documentaries. We thank him for this important contribution.



Otto Klassen used this Bolex 16 mm film camera for much of the footage of the documentaries he made between 1967 and 1997.

Restoration

Since Oct. 1 the following restoration projects have been undertaken:

- Demolition of old summer kitchen and construction of new summer kitchen
- Repair of floor and façade of the printery (by Tristan Hiebert, descendant of Jacob S. Friesen, the founder of the Steinbach Post)
- Repair of the timber structure of the barn of the Chortitz housebarn
- Cedar shingling of the steamer shelter (thanks to the Martin Bergen family for funding this project)

• New lighting system in Reimer Store
Heartfelt thanks goes to the dozens of volunteers who put in many hours of difficult labour to help with these projects. Thanks also to Commu-

nity Places Program (Govt. of Manitoba) for providing significant funding for some of this restoration work.

Costumes completed

The MHV Costume Project has been completed. New costumes have been researched and created by professional period costume designers for our volunteers. These costumes (featuring over 40 pieces of clothing) are meant to replace some of the inaccurate clothing currently in our costume collection. This project was funded by the Mennonite Heritage Village Auxiliary, the D.F. Plett Historical Foundation and the Winnipeg Foundation.



Office manager Marigold Peters models a new costume for use by volunteers.

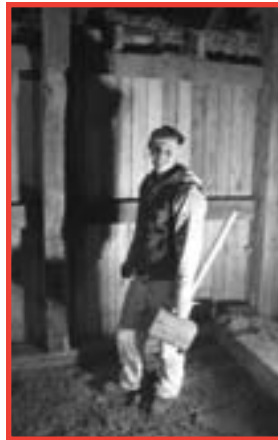
Edu-Kit completed

With assistance from the Historic Places Initiatives Fund, the Museum has developed a new large-scale puzzle (10 ft. by 4 ft.) of a housebarn for school programs based on the Chortitz housebarn at the museum and the archaeological excavation at Blumenhoff.

*Roland Sawatzky
Senior Curator*



Summer kitchen rebuild; Hans Friesen in barn.



Repair of steamer shelter roof.

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From the Program Director

A Touch of Christmas and the second annual *Living Nativity* were the focus of the last event in 2009 at MHV. Attendance for the weekend was in excess of 1400 people. We were very pleased with the successful weekend.

Friday during the day approximately 300 children started off the event with concerts in the auditorium. The school choirs were from Elmdale, Blumenort, Mitchell, and Grunthal. They all had fantastic and creative performances. After the concerts they were treated to hot chocolate and sleigh rides. Thank you students, choir directors, and teachers.

On Saturday during the day there were seminars by Doris Penner, JoAnn Friesen, and Reena Nerbas. They provided valuable tips and suggestions on how to stay green and environmentally friendly not only at Christmas, but all year. Excellent job, ladies! Guitarist, Travis Bergman provided an array of lovely Christmas carols in the foyer. In the official opening of the archaeology exhibit (Cornelius Plett site of Blumenhof) was held. Display cases in the auditorium were filled with artifacts found at the dig site this summer. Approximately 75 people attended the unveiling of the display. Senior Curator Dr. Roland Sawatzky and Dr. Royden Loewen were some of the speakers at this event.

Friday and Saturday the MHV Auxiliary held a bake sale, and provided lunch with homemade soups and desserts. We are grateful for the supportive role of the MHV Auxiliary in this and other events.

Friday through Sunday evenings a short play was featured in the auditorium called *The Children's Christmas* written and directed by Sheila Reid. At the end of the performance, the angels led the visitors down Main Street to the horse shelter, (turned into a humble stable) for The Living Nativity performance. The baritone voice of renowned solo, Victor Engbrecht echoed through the village as he sang *O Holy Night*.

As the crowd neared the stable, the sounds of *Silent Night* filled the



Living Nativity scene

cold night air. Shepherds could be seen tending their sheep near a warm fire. After the crowd had settled in front of the stable, narrator executive director, Barry Dyck, began to tell the Christmas story. Both children and adults were in awe as the spotlight lit up the angel high above the stable. As the story continued, Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus were joined in the stable by more angels, shepherds, wise men and live animals. The donkey seemed to enjoy her role as she posed behind Mary and Joseph and Baby Jesus. The faces of young children lit up when they saw the llamas, the goats, the sheep, and the donkey. Every night the angel above the stable sparkled and glistened as snow fell softly during telling of the nativity story.

The scene closed with the *Hallelujah Chorus* ringing through the village. Visitors were then invited to enjoy sleigh rides, hot chocolate and home baked cookies in the Village Centre. Sunday night a number of the Vespers choir members led carol singing in the auditorium.

We were so thankful for more than 50 volunteers who participated in the *The Children's Christmas* and *The Living Nativity* in various roles. A very special thank you to Tony and Linda Sawatzky who brought the animals to MHV every night to be part of the cast. Members of the South-east Manitoba Draft Horse Association provided sleigh and wagon rides all weekend. Thank you to Golden West Radio, Signex, and Mapleside Electric for providing equipment for this event.

In a spirit of giving something back to the community which had supported us throughout the year, there was no admission charge for this event. We appreciated and were grateful for the donations received. These donations help as we strive to bring this nativity to the community each year. We also invited the public to bring non-perishable food items for South East Helping Hands. We thank the community for their participation in giving.

May the images of this nativity remain in your hearts long after the Christmas season, and may the love of Christ be with you all year long.

Plans for 2101

Plans for 2010 events are well underway. We are planning a new event! A fun filled day with "kicking the tires" and sharing tractor stories is being planned by a joint committee with members from the Eden Foundation and MHV. July 3 has been chosen for the first ever **Tractor Trek** in the Steinbach area. If you love tractors, have one that was built prior to 1960, and can travel at 8-10 km/hr, please pick up a registration form at MHV to be part of this 40-km trek through communities surrounding Steinbach. If you don't have a tractor, but this sounds interesting, you can be part of this exciting day by pledging money. All pledged money will go directly to The Eden Foundation and MHV. These funds will be split 50/50 between the two organizations. The day will end with tractor games, entertainment, and a delicious supper at MHV. For more information and/or to find out how you can be a part of this Tractor Trek, please call Anne at 326-9661 or email annet@mhv.ca. *Anne Toews*

Did you know?

**Mennonite Heritage Village
has an Endowment Fund
To provide an income stream
for MHV in perpetuity**

Donate by:

- A bequest in your will
- A commemorative Gift
- Securities – Eliminate Capital Gains
- A charitable remainder trust

For details call:

John Milinkovic – 204-326-9661
Art Kroeker – 204-489-5509
Barry Dyck – 204-326-9661

Profiles of Anabaptist women at book shop

As busy as the winter season feels for me in my position as office manager, it must seem odd there is so much work when the Village outside is closed! The hours in the winter months get gobbled up with tasks we never got around to in summer, along with making plans and changes for the next year. The phone keeps ringing with inquiries regarding rentals and other things and, indeed, we get a few visitors interested in the galleries and bookstore. I wish I could say that all the undone tasks get struck off before the new season begins, but alas, they don't. Some stay with me month after month. And so the seasons come and go! May 1st (opening day) is coming quickly and I still need to stock the souvenir and gift store as well as add a few new books to our inventory.

We had a new arrival in the book store in January of this year. The title is *Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism, Their Days, Their Stories*. We have signed copies by the author Linda A. Huebert Hecht who has done diligent research over the years on early Anabaptist women. C. Arnold Snyder, Professor of history at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, writes the following in the back cover of the book:

Anabaptist women were the mainstay of the early baptizing movement—a fact generally obscured by most historical narratives describing the movement. In this book, Linda H. Hecht opens a unique window through which we can glimpse the life, faith and practice of people to whom history has generally denied a voice. She does this by gathering and translating the records of judicial proceedings against Anabaptist women in Austria from 1527 to 1531. The translated records published here are contextualized with helpful historical introductions and commentary throughout. Contemporary illustrations and woodcuts enrich the historical texture of the collection. This book shines much-needed light on the variety and extent of women's participation in the baptizing movement.

Interestingly, she started her research in the late 1980s and co-edited a book called *Profiles of Anabaptist Women – Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers*. (Co-editor is C. Arnold Snyder) This book, which

we have in stock here at MHV as well, contains profiles of women from martyrs and leaders to ordinary rebaptized members and focuses on the turning points in these women's lives, weaving their personal stories into the greater milieu of the 16th century reformation along with the dominant male context and the socio-political background of that time. These stories will give the reader an appreciation for the central role Anabaptist women played in the emergence and persistence of this radical branch of Protestantism.

Another book we would like to feature is *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* by Marlene Epp. This book traces the complex social history and multiple identities of Canadian Mennonite women over 200 years. Marlene Epp explores women's roles, as prescribed and as lived, within the contexts of immigration and settlement, household and family, church and organizational life, work and education, and in response to social trends and events. The combined histories of Mennonite women offer a rich and fascinating study of how women actively participate in ordering their lives within ethno-religious communities. The author, Marlene Epp teaches history and peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo. She is the author of *Women without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War*, which is also available at MHV Book Shop.

These three highlighted titles cover years from the early 1500s up to the early 1900s. Betty Barkman has told the story of one woman, Annie Reimer covering the years from 1923 to 1993 and onward. This story gives an account of the life of one Mennonite woman, recalling her childhood, adolescence, marriage, motherhood to middle-age and onward, living out her faith in rural southeastern Manitoba—another piece of history in the long often under-told history of Mennonite Women. The book is titled *Annie . . . Through it all*.

MHV invites you to come and browse the bookstore, check out these titles and find others to read and enjoy.

Marigold Peters
Office manager

Where have all the Bergthalers gone?

Bergthalers were introduced to Manitoba when the colony of Bergthal in South Russia decided in the early 1870s to emigrate to Canada. That settlement was established by the Old Colony Chortitza in 1836. It soon developed a critical land shortage which needed a solution badly. Emigration helped to solve that problem. The move was also a response to changes in Russian administration policies including a new law on universal military conscription and some educational reforms. Bergthalers felt these changes would undermine some of their basic church principles.

The community had its primary leadership in the persons of *Oberschulz* (colony director) Jacob Peters, four ministers including their 1873 land scout, Heinrich Wiebe, and their bishop, Heinrich's brother, *Ältester* Gerhard Wiebe. About 80 percent of the 500 families in the colony of five villages began to move to Canada in 1874 and completed their move in 1876. The other families of the settlement either returned to the "mother colony", Chortitza, or moved to Mountain Lake in Minnesota in the United States.

All the Manitoba newcomers settled on eight townships, in villages again, of what came to be called the East Reserve. This area was bordered roughly by the present-day communities of Niverville, Tourond, Kleefeld (earlier Gruenfeld), Grunthal, Steinbach, Blumenort and Landmark. The first seven families travelled on the SS Austrian to Quebec City, took a train at Duluth and travelling north on the Red River by ship on the SS International, landed in Winnipeg on July 31, 1874. They disembarked at the junction of the Rat and Red Rivers the next day. Later arrivals followed the same route.

Within less than ten years, these families and more than half of the rest of the Bergthalers who came in the next two years would move to the West Reserve, reserved for Mennonite settlement by the federal government in 1876. They occupied the eastern part of the Reserve in 25 new villages. Within that same time 30 or so families moved from Manitoba to Mountain Lake also. About 2000 church members with Bergthal, South Russia, roots (Chortitzer and Sommerfelder – see below) moved to Paraguay and Mexico between 1925 and 1930. A number of these would return to Canada later.

Settled on East Reserve

The 2800 or so Russian "Bergthalers," as they came to be called, originally settled in 35 or more villages of the East Reserve. Among them were scattered seven or so village communities of *Kleine Gemeinde* Mennonite families (plus two northeast of Morris), about 700 persons in all, who left South Russia during these years also. Of these Steinbach, Blumenort, Kleefeld and Rosenort, west of the Red River, are still growing communities of more mixed residents today.

Only three of the Bergthaler villages still exist. Today we know these communities as Grunthal, Randolph (earlier Chortiz) and New Bothwell (close to the former Kronsthal). Cemeteries and a few other village remnants mark the location of several others. Chortiz would become an administration centre for a time when *Ältester* Wiebe made that his home community after arriving in Manitoba in 1875. The closing of its church is scheduled for this summer.

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Where have all the Bergthalers gone? (continued)

Around 1881 Bergthalers who moved to the West Reserve and some other West Reserve families from the *Reinländer Mennonitengemeinde*, together around 800 members, were reconstituted as a new congregation (*Gemeinde*) under the name *West Lynne Mennonitengemeinde* (West Lynne Mennonite Church). The group obtained its own (Bergthaler) *Ältester*, Johann Funk, who then lived in Alt Bergthal west of Altona. Bergthalers remaining in their original East Reserve village homesteads now came to call themselves the *Chortitzer Mennonitengemeinde* (Chortitzer Mennonite Church), from 1882 also with a new *Ältester*, David Stoesz, from the village of Bergthal near the village of Blumenort. This body, now with 12 Manitoba congregations and ca. 2100 members, continues to use that name to this day.

Division in congregation

Serious dissension arose in the West Lynne *Gemeinde* about 10 years later. A division in that large congregation resulted with about 60 families remaining with *Ältester* Funk still calling themselves Bergthaler. The remaining members of the West Lynne group, i.e. several hundred families, now elected a new *Ältester*, Abram Doerksen, who lived in Sommerfeld, southeast of Altona. This group of former Bergthalers then took the name *Sommerfelder Mennonitengemeinde* (Sommerfelder Mennonite Church), today with about 3800 members worshipping in 20 or more Manitoba and other congregations. A part of this body which moved from Manitoba to Saskatchewan around 1900 retains the name Bergthaler to this day. Some members relocated to other communities in Western Canada as well.

Meanwhile, former West Reserve Bergthalers have mostly merged with other Mennonite groups (e.g Mennite Church Manitoba today) or become congregationally independent. Ten local congregations (of a *Gemeinde* which once had twice that many) still keep "Bergthaler" in their official names. The name "Bergthal" survives among Mennonite

communities in other Canadian provinces, Paraguay, Mexico and elsewhere as well.

Several books give us more details on this story. They are *History of the Sommerfeld Church* (2001) by Peter Bergen, *Adventure of Faith* (1971) by Henry J Gerbrandt (the Manitoba Bergthaler story), *Chortitzer Mennonite Conference 1874-1990* (2004), by Gustav Dueck, *Building Communities-Manitoba Mennonites* (2007) by John J Friesen, and Adolf Ens, Ernest N. Braun and Henry N. Fast, eds. and *Settlers of the East Reserve* (2009). You can get these books at the Mennonite Heritage Village bookstore in Steinbach, the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg and some other locations.

Lawrence Klippenstein
MHV Board Member



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