MENNONITE LIFE

DECEMBER 1975

IN THIS ISSUE

We welcome the participation of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada in the publication of this issue. The Society has contributed substantially to the funding of this issue. Editor of the December issue is Ted D. Regehr, member of the History Department of the University of Saskatchewan and Secretary of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. Several articles contributed particularly for this issue could not be included because of limitations of space. These will appear in one of the 1976 issues of *Mennonite Life*. Ted D. Regehr contributes the lead article, "Mennonite Life—from a Canadian Perspective," and submits the information on the authors which follows. THE EDITORS.

The authors of the articles and book reviews in this issue represent a wide range of interests and areas of specialization. Several are university professors, others are archivists, librarians and broadcasters.

The university professors are J. Winfield Fretz who teaches sociology at Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario, and is also the President of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada; Nancy-Lou Patterson who is a member of the Fine Arts Department at the University of Waterloo; Mary Dueck who is a member of the German Department at Wilfred Laurier University; and Henry Klassen of the University of Calgary who, in the course of his work as a history professor, has become particularly well informed about Alberta's rural towns and villages.

Ernie Dick is an archivist at the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa and former historical research assistant who gathers together some of the materials used by Frank Epp, in his book, *Mennonites in Canada*.

Lorne Buhr is a librarian at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and Eric Friesen, who lives in Winnipeg, is a broadcaster with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. TED D. REGEHR

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MENNONITE LIFE

An Illustrated Quarterly Published by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas

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Editor of CANADIAN ISSUE

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COVER

Scene of Namaka Farm One which is described in the article by Henry C. Klassen on "The Mennonites of the Namaka Farm."

BACK COVER

Fraktur by Anna Weber, "Birds, Flowers and Squirrel," 1879, described in the article by Nancy-Lou Patterson, "Anna Weber Hat Das Gemacht."

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Mennonite Life–From a Canadian Perspective

by Ted D. Regehr

Thirty years ago, in January of 1946, a new popular Mennonite magazine began publication. Its objective, as announced by the first editor, was to make a contribution to a greater and more abundant realization of Mennonite Life as it should be. The new magazine was *Mennonite Life;* its editor, Cornelius Krahn. An inscribed notation in the early issues announced to the readers that this magazine was published in the interest of the best in the religious, social, and economic phases of Mennonite culture.

Since the appearance of that first issue of *Mennonite Life,* much has happened to the Mennonite people of North America. Editor Krahn in 1946, spoke of the Mennonites as a predominantly rural people living in comparative isolation, but lamented that many a dove was leaving the Mennonite ark of rural isolation without ever returning. The editor hoped this trend could be reversed by presenting, in *Mennonite Life,* "the problems of our churches and communities of the past and present—both here and abroad."

Mennonite Life and editor Krahn served the Mennonite community well. Much cultural and historical material was gathered, preserved, and the best of it was published. The magazine has been read over the years by both those still in the Mennonite ark of rural isolation, and by the doves, and perhaps even the occasional hawk, who flew to the cities and the institutions of higher learning. Many have gained a fuller understanding and appreciation of a spiritual, cultural, economic and social heritage which in fact originated among urban and highly educated people. The special role of *Mennonite Life* was to help make available to the popular reading audience the experiences and insights of the past and the fruits of new academic research and creative thought and interpretation. It became a part of a larger renaissance of Anabaptist life and thought in the post World War II era.

Over the years *Mennonite Life* encountered frequent financial and administrative problems and crisis—fortunately none which faith, generosity, hard work, and the exceptional talents of the editors could not overcome. The recent retirement of Cornelius Krahn was one such crisis. A fruitful but also at times trying period of search and experimentation ensued, and this issue marks a new and perhaps also experimental approach.

The renaissance of Anabaptist thought and theology, of which *Mennonite Life* was an important part, has received a very powerful and popular stimulus in the 1970's, when North American Mennonites celebrated a series of anniversaries. The sesquicentennial of the coming of the Amish Mennonites, the bicentennial of the arrival of Mennonite pioneers in Ontario, the centennial of the first major migrations from Russia, the 25th and 50th anniversaries of the other two major migrations of Mennonites from Europe to North America and, in 1975, the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the founding of the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement, have greatly increased both popular and academic interest in Mennonite culture and history. One of the results of this increased interest was the writing of a major new history of the Mennonites in Canada, and the founding of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

The aims and objectives of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada are in many respects very similar to those enunciated over the years in *Mennonite Life.* When the Society began considerations of a publications policy, it learned that an association with *Mennonite Life,* under which the Canadian society would assume responsibility for one issue per year, might be of mutual interest and benefit. *Mennonite Life* had always been published in the United States, with a few exceptions under the auspices of Bethel College, but its scope and focus always transcended national boundaries. Cornelius Krahn was very interested in and frequently featured articles on Canadian Mennonite history and culture. A review showed that more than one-quarter of the articles published in the magazine over the entire history of the magazine related to Canadian topics. An association between *Mennonite Life* and the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada therefore requires no significant change of focus or emphasis. One change that has taken place is the appointment of a Canadian editor to prepare the materials for the Canadian issue. The final assembling and printing of the magazine will still be done in Newton, Kansas.

The first "Canadian" issue of *Mennonite Life* attempts to show the richness and diversity of the Canadian Mennonite experience, both past and present. The contributors represent a wide range of

interests and learning, but all obviously understand and appreciate the Mennonite people and their life in its various manifestations.

It is of particular interest that one of the contributors in this issue also contributed an article to the very first issue of *Mennonite Life*. In 1946 J. Winfield Fretz wrote about the Renaissance of a Rural Community. At the time he was a citizen of the United States and a member of the faculty at Bethel College, but he wrote about a Canadian rural community. In the ensuing years J. Winfield Fretz has contributed much and his name has become familiar and loved in Canada as well as in the United States. It is indicative of the condition of North American Mennonites, then and now, that Winfield Fretz is contributing an article today which discusses voluntary Mennonite communities in predominantly urban settings. Many of the ideals enunciated in 1946 remain the same, despite enormous changes in the details of the Mennonite experience. Change and continuity have been recurring themes in that experience, which has been illuminated and sometimes facilitated by magazines like *Mennonite Life* and by dedicated scholars like J. Winfield Fretz.

This issue and succeeding "Canadian" issues will seek to continue, in a changed context, the specific work undertaken by the founders of *Mennonite Life* thirty years ago, and the larger tasks in which this magazine has had a part over the years.

Mennonite Community: Traditional or Intentional

by J. Winfield Fretz

The word "community" is an abstract concept. It is a word which once stood for a collection of people living in close physical proximity to and mutually dependent upon each other. Community meant sharing of the same community services, such as schools, churches, stores, shops, and other facilities in a given geographical area.

Although the word "community" is still widely used, it no longer has a commonly understood meaning. It may connote anything from a small isolated rural neighborhood to a world community. It may mean a crossroads hamlet, a village or a town, or a massive metropolitan city spreading over many miles and containing millions of people.

Jessie Bernard, a veteran sociologist, suggests that we should divide the word into two separate uses; one as "a community" referring to a specific group of people in a geographical area, and the other "community".[1] The latter refers to people who are held together around a common bond of interest or a common value, such as a community of scholars, a community of scientists, or a religious community. In this use of the term it is a common idea that holds people together even when they are not in close physical proximity to each other.

This brings me to the topic of "Mennonite community" of which we talk and hear much. In my lifetime I have studied and visited well over a hundred different Mennonite congregational communities. I am convinced that most Mennonite communities in North America are traditional, but not intentional communities. By "intentional" I mean groups of like-minded people who consciously and deliberately share values, objectives, life-styles and generally share the joys and sorrows of daily life. Most Mennonite communities are centered around the church and therefore can be called congregational communities. Such communities are collections of individuals who have voluntarily joined a religious organization for the purpose of providing themselves regular corporate worship experience at a given time and place. The members assume that there is an ongoing group of people with more or less common religious views and values with whom periodic fellowship is possible and desirable.

Mennonite churches today have increasingly less characteristics of community. They perform certain

1 Jessie Bernard, *The Sociology of Community*, Scott Foresman and Co., Glenview, Illinois, 1973, p. 1.

desired functions: 1) they provide a place for regular corporate public worship; 2) they perform the function of religious education, especially for children; 3) they provide an occasional opportunity for fellowship; and 4) they are the agency that performs the conventional religious ceremonies of baptism, consecration, marriage, and burial. Other than these functions the typical Mennonite church today does not perform many of the functions of a genuine community.

Intentional Communities

I have been tremendously fascinated by what I think is a significant social and religious phenomenon arising in areas of heavy Mennonite settlement. The phenomenon is the emergence of small intentional communities, sometimes called house churches, and at other times called fellowships. I have a list of more than twenty such groups, most of them emerging within the last five years. Following is a list of the names and locations, approximate membership, and founding dates of seventeen intentional groups.

Name	*Location*	*Membership*	*Founding Date*
1. Reba Place Fellowship (divided into 10 "households")	Evanston, Ill.	110	1957
2. Plow Creek Fellowship	Tiskilwa, Ill.	20	1971
3. 5 Kitchener-Waterloo House Churches			
No. 1	Waterloo, Ont.	12	1970
No. 2	Kitchener, Ont	8	1973
No. 3	Kitchener, Ont.	10	1971
No. 4 (David Street House)	Kitchener, Ont.	10	1972
No. 5	Kitchener, Ont.	10	1975
4. The Assembly at Goshen, Ind. composed of 17 sub-groups	Goshen, Ind.	190	1974
5. Fellowship of Hope	Elkhart, Ind.	30	1971
6. Fairview House	Wichita, Kansas	17	1971
7. New Creation Fellowship	Newton, Kansas	7	1973
8. The Gemeinschaft Group	Harrisonburg, Va.	14	1973
9. Atlanta Avenue	Atlanta, Ga.	17	1971
10. Bread of Life Community	Abbotsford, B. C.	20	1973
11. Agape Fellowship	Chicago, Ill.		
12. Chapel Hill Fellowship	Chapel Hill, N. C.		
13. Heerbrook Farm Community	Lancaster, Pa.		
14. Hyde Park Friendship House	Boise, Id.		
15. Morning Star Community	New York City, N. Y.		
16. Northridge Christian Fellowship	Springfield, Ohio		
17. Tucson Mennonite Fellowship	Tucson, Arizona		

The membership in each of the units is composed mostly of people under thirty. The Reba Place Fellowship with 110 members is divided into eleven households of approximately ten to twelve members each. The "Assembly" at Goshen is composed of seventeen smaller sub-groups. Smallness in size and intimacy in social relations is an earmark of all the intentional groups under consideration. It is the absence of these more intense personal relationships in the larger conventional congregations that led to the formation of the intentional communities. By far the largest number of the emerging intentional communities or fellowships have their origin in voluntary service groups or among college students who wanted to have a more intensive interpersonal relationship than the residence in college dormitories afforded. It will be noted in this table that the intentional communities are rather widely scattered geographically. These communities are not maintaining themselves through agricultural or industrial pursuits. They are made up of people who are either studying or working in established businesses and industries where they are located.

These communities by and large are by-products of the Mennonite church and college influences. They are located in communities where Mennonite colleges are located and oftentimes close to where other Mennonite congregations are found. This is the case in Goshen, Indiana; Newton, Kansas; Harrisonburg, Virginia; Elkhart, Indiana; and Kitchener, Ontario. All of the intentional communities under consideration are religiously inspired and church oriented. Most of the community members still hold membership in the larger conventional churches and many regularly attend and participate in some phase of the established church programs. In many ways one can look upon these intentional communities as judgments on the existing Mennonite congregations from which members come. The judgment is directed more against the form in which the Christian faith of the older congregations is expressed than against the faith itself. Intentional communities are repudiating the patterns of public or corporate worship in which the parishioner is a passive participant and the minister and possibly the choir provide the main input.

Criticisms of Congregational Communities

Members of the intentional community tend to criticize the superficiality with which the established congregations profess to deal with their members' personal problems. If the problems are dealt with at all, it is again by the minister or a designated church officer rather than by the "believers as a whole." The churches likewise are criticized for their individualism and lack of sensitivity to the deeper needs of members of the brotherhood. Grumblings are also heard about class lines or stratification in not a few Mennonite congregations. A more serious and general criticism advanced by the intentional communities lies beyond the formal or organized church life and program of activities. It is really an attack on the secularized value system and materialistic life-styles of the main body of members in the North American churches.

In answer to the question as to what needs the intentional communities met, I received the following replies:

> Provide a context where people can learn about themselves and others . . . we have single parent

families for whom the community is a refuge and a place to grow.

A place to discern the shape of discipleship in our world.

A primary relationship group in which we can help each other make decisions about vocation, about how to spend our money, discern gifts, and in short, explore the meaning of confessing that Jesus is Lord of every aspect of our lives.

Our Sunday service grows directly out of the lives of persons in the congregation and speaks to needs they have.

Provides a measure of security not experienced by living by ones and twos.

When intentional community members were asked what needs the conventional Mennonite congregational communities failed to meet, I was given the following replies:

Very limited in the amount of discerning help its members are able to give to one another because there is so little deep sharing of deep struggles about Christian faithfulness.

Conventional congregational membership does not involve commitment to care for the other.

Sunday morning attendance at an input lecture is about all the "church" means . . . there has to be more to "church" than this Sunday morning ritual. Many were feeling a need for serious responsible help with major decision-making like jobs, life-style, mission and general ownership of property.

There is timidity, fear, and reluctance to make vital, personal discernment with clear accountability an integral part of congregational life.

We claim a unique theological position which is neither Catholic nor Protestant and yet there seems to be little connection with the visible structure and experience of congregational life.

Experiences With Sharing Property

Many of the intentional communities have experimented with sharing of property. Here are some of the comments about experiences in this realm:

Our experience with a form of the common treasury has been very good . . . . Our experience suggests that economics is not the most important issue, or part of our life together, but it is in some ways the most basic and difficult hurdle to commitment.

The freedom gained from not having to worry about private property is a fantastic blessing . . . to make decisions about jobs with economics being the least significant factor is very freeing. To be free from the burden of having so much money to spend has been a good experience.

Most, if not all, groups share very freely what they "privately" possess. Cars, washing machines, tools, money, appliances, etc. are in many instances commonly used although privately owned.

To this point we feel that there is no value in and of itself in holding possessions in common. We have always expressed a willingness to do so if we felt that taking such action would facilitate our involvement in mission.

We share all things in common. Everything has been pooled—cars, furniture, appliances, the money earned. We have even cashed in our life insurance and university education fund for children. It no longer made sense to have that security. We have nothing beyond the basic needs to live. We want totally to trust God.

What we feel is significant is our attitude of stewardship toward our possessions, whether held in common or not. Our house is in the name of a couple who is not with us presently . . . neither are most of our cars community-owned, but there is usually a willingness to have them at the service of others. Among the women especially, a considerable amount of clothes-sharing takes place.

Alternate Church Models

What the intentional communities provide is an alternate model for those dissatisfied with the services and program of the existing churches. Members of the intentional communities want a form of organized religion that goes beyond ritual, tradition, personal piety and antiquated theological doctrines from the established churches. They want a more informal type of church, a church with a communal character; one that expects personal commitment and discipline; one where members are willing both to give and to receive counsel. In essence, this kind of church congregation tends to require the individual member to subordinate his personal will to the group will. In our culture, with its strong emphasis on individual freedom, it is not easy for even a cohesive religious group to tame and direct the individual ego.

I believe the major contribution the intentional communities will make to the larger Mennonite churches will be in the nature of a gentle prod to change. The communes will not replace the existing structures, nor radically alter their activities. It seems likely that the net effect will be some form of church renewal. The intentional communities will affect the life-styles of individual members of the existing congregations, especially the young. It will cause them to re-examine their views of private property, vocational choices and the place of money in their lives. It may also encourage the increase of additional house churches in urban areas because such patterns of organized religion are admirably adapted to the urban community.

The Mennonites of the Namaka Farm

by Henry C. Klassen

The Mennonites of the Namaka Farm, a thirteen thousand acre farm located in the gently rolling grasslands forty miles east of Calgary, contributed significantly to agricultural settlement and production in southern Alberta between the mid-1920's and the outbreak of the Second World War. Coming as a part of an immigrant wave from agrarian communities in north and especially south Russia, twenty-five Mennonite families began in 1925 on the extensive ready-made Namaka Farm which consisted of an eight-mile tract of land lying between the hamlet of Namaka and the Bow River and bounded on the east by the Blackfoot Indian Reserve. During the following one and a half decades, the arrival of new families and the departure of others changed the composition of the group and increased its size to over thirty families. In these years they found themselves making the transition from large farm operators to half-section farmers, from community activity and tenancy to individual endeavour and private ownership. Many of them took up the challenge of decentralizing the huge operations and carving individual holdings out of the big farm, of learning how to make land productive in the new prairie setting, and of hanging on to their small farms through the economic depression and drought of the thirties. Their work and their achievements helped to prepare the way for the emergence of the 640 acre and larger farms in the Namaka area during and after the 1940's.

From the outset, the Namaka Farm Mennonites were highly conscious of their physical environment. They generally found the soils sufficiently fertile and the growing season long enough to support the growing of wheat and other crops. But particularly for those who had experienced the plentiful rains and moderate climate of south Russia, adjustment to the semi-arid conditions, destructive hailstorms, blinding duststorms and rigourous winters did not come easily. While the Chinook winds brought temporary relief from cold winter temperatures, the high and drying winds in the summer months sucked up the precious moisture in the soil and caused the light, sandy soils to drift across the fields and bury the young wheat plants. Finding readily available firewood was a serious problem for most of the settlers. Apart from the groves of aspen poplar in the Bow River valley on the south side of the farm, the land was practically treeless. Thus, the Namaka Mennonites, like many other prairie settlers before and after them, often grew weary and discouraged as the harshness of the land intruded upon their lives.

Just as the land left a deep impression on the Mennonites, so the ready-made Namaka Farm played a major role in shaping the character of their community. Under the ownership of George Lane, prominent rancher, horse breeder and farmer, the farm had earlier been subdivided into three smaller farms, each having about four thousand acres and its own set of buildings and implements and operated by

Thoroughbreds on Namaka Farm Three before the coming of the Mennonites. (Glenbow-Alberta Institute Archives)

hired men. Planting one thousand acres to wheat and raising registered Percheron horses, George Lane had done well enough until the First World War years, when hard times and the high cost of labour made it impossible for him to turn a profit. By 1925 the Dominion Bank had become the virtual owner of the Namaka Farm, although it continued to do business under the name of George Lane & Company. Looking to Mennonite immigrants to make the farm a profitable operation, George Lane & Company, through the Canada Colonization Association, rented it in 1925 and 1926 to a group of poor Mennonites that began with twenty-five families and grew to thirty-six families in the second year. Out of the large group three smaller groups were formed, and then placed on three separate units: Farm One, the north unit; Farm Two, the centre unit; and Farm Three, the south unit.

In renting the whole Namaka Farm as a group, the Mennonite settlers abandoned their practice of individual family enterprise and embarked upon a cooperative venture which involved the sharing of living quarters, work, and the produce of the farm. The decision to cooperate in this way, far from being inspired by tradition or any sort of communal ideology, was born out of necessity and the opportunity of group settlement on the Namaka Farm. Their customary form of cooperation, the mutual aid society, would be transplanted to Alberta, but their natural aversion to communal living would continue. Resembling other contemporary Mennonite community experiments in Alberta such as the Crowfoot Farm which was purchased by a group of fourteen families, the Namaka Farm undertaking was a pragmatic approach to the problem of attempting to start farming without capital.

Good relations between the Mennonite tenants and the owners of the Namaka Farm contributed to the success of the community enterprise. Initially, the German-speaking Mennonites tended to distrust the men representing the Dominion Bank and George Lane & Company, fearing that they would take advantage of their inability to understand and speak English and draw them into an unfavourab'e rental agreement. The representatives of the Dominion Bank and the Lane Company, however, soon won the confidence of the Mennonite settlers by working through A. W. Klassen of Acme and G. Dahl of the Namaka Farm, both of whom were members of the Canadian Mennonite Land Settlement Board, and W. R. Dick of Calgary, superintendent of the Canada Colonization Association in Alberta. David Thompson, resident company manager of the Namaka Farm and capable farmer, also established a good relationship with the new settlers and passed on to them his knowledge of prairie farming.

The terms of the rental agreement generally put the Mennonite farmers in a favourable position. The Lane Company provided them with a fully equipped farm including machinery, horses, cows, pigs, chickens, and seed grain, and they in turn supplied the labour force and paid one-third of the crops and at first one-half and later one-third of the cream and eggs to the owners. The remaining portion of the produce they divided among themselves. In addition, they received $3.75 an acre for breaking prairie with the steam-powered breaking outfit.

One of the worst features of the community was the crowded and poor housing. The tenants occupied the three clusters of farm buildings, with the largest cluster located on Farm One. Although there were a few comfortable two-story houses, as many as four families, each with two or three children, had to share such a frame structure. The majority of the families converted out-buildings such as granaries, smoke houses, ice houses and barns into

Namaka Farm Three, 1922 (Glenbow-Alberta Institute Archives)

homes, and sometimes doubled up even in these small and humble dwellings. Living at such close quarters was particularly hard on the housewives, and imposed considerable strain upon family friendships.

The internal workings of the Namaka Farm, governed by articles of association prepared and adopted by the tenants, were democratic and efficient. At a general meeting held in March of 1925, the tenants elected their first administrators. D. Peters became the general manager of the entire establishment, and J. Peters, G. Schmidt and K. Berg were chosen as the respective foremen of units one, two and three. J. Goossen was elected as bookkeeper. Additional positions which were filled later were those of treasurer and secretary. The administration was obliged to call a general meeting if ten settlers asked for one, or whenever the manager and at least one foreman thought it necessary to do so. As a rule the meetings were conducted in an orderly manner, and the decisions of the group were respected by individual settlers. Those who refused to accept the policies of the group could be expelled from the farm. The self-imposed discipline of the tenants discouraged quarreling among them and helped to build a stable community.

Harmony among the settlers was of crucial importance to the success of the farm and the general manager and foremen tried to keep peace by giving them fair and equal workloads. Each family had to contribute one male adult to the labour force. Different categories of work with various degrees of difficulty were established, and careful records were kept of each settler's time and the nature of his work. Occasionally, the men of one farm unit were required to assist those of another unit. The task of the foreman was complicated by the fact that there was considerable disparity in the farming skills possessed by different tenants. Some of the men who had been school teachers and merchants in Russia made the painful discovery that in handling their four-horse teams and implements they were no match for the experienced farmers. As a series of eight plows, seeders or binders moved along the fields, the inexperienced settler usually had more trouble than the others and came to be regarded as the weak link in the chain. Anyone who wanted to improve, however, could learn from the example of the better farmers. Since many of the tenants took seriously their pledge of keeping in mind the common good and showing concern for the problems of their fellow settlers, a spirit of goodwill often dissolved the friction and disputes that arose among them.

The women of the community worked together as well. Although each housewife had her own food suplies and reared the meals for her own family, two or three women frequently used the same kitchen. Every morning and evening at a time that was mutually agreed upon, all the women of a unit milked the cows, each housewife milking the four cows allotted to her family by the Lane Company. They took turns running the milk through the cream separator and gave each family enough skim milk and cream for its own use. They also shared responsibility for the chickens, with two women looking after them on a weekly basis. The women like the men had their leaders who ironed out differences and found satisfaction in doing a good job.

The tenants' share of the farm income was controlled by their general treasury. After the crops were threshed by means of the two steam-threshing outfits on the farm, all the collective and individual debts including the operating expenses and the grocery bills at the general stores in Namaka and Carseland were paid out of funds in the general account. One-fifth of the remaining monies was set aside to help meet the costs incurred by the immigrant settlers in travelling from Russia to Canada. The balance was then divided equally among the settlers. Because the amounts owing for groceries and transportation varied from family to family, it was necessary to make adjustments in the individual accounts before the heads of households were given the cash coming to them. Most of the families had relatively little money in their hands at the end of a crop year. Many of the crops in 1925 and 1926 were destroyed by hail, and at the close of 1926 the amount of cash received by each family averaged out to about $150.

Still, under the effective management of the diligent and thrifty Mennonite tenants, the Namaka Farm was beginning to recover. In 1924, before the arrival of the Mennonites, it had operated at a loss. In 1925, during their first year on the farm, it showed a profit of $2,000. With an additional thousand acres under cultivation by 1926, the profits in that year rose to $17,800.

So pleased was the Lane Company with the work of the settlers that it offered to sell the Namaka Farm to them and terminate the rental agreement. For the Dominion Bank, owner of the company farm, the long run advantage of a sale lay in the possibility of collecting a good deal of interest on the mortgage. The settlers, frustrated by the confining and unrewarding way of life of the tenant community and motivated by a strong desire to become independent farmers, were willing to consider the company's offer. Following lengthy negotiations, the departure of some dissatisfied settlers and the coming of new families, in the spring of 1927 the company sold Farm One, Farm Two and Farm Three separately, with from eleven to thirteen Mennonite families on each farm, for a total sum of $527,578 at five percent interest. With allowance for crop

failures, each year a half share of the settlers' crops would be required to pay the principal and interest.

On the basis of individual contracts with the Lane Company, each family on Farm One and Farm Two purchased a half section together with the necessary implements, horses and cattle. The families on Farm Three, believing that they were not quite ready for individual ownership, at first bought the whole farm as a group. Several years later they, too, acquired half sections on their farm and began to farm individually. The families on each of the three original farms were, however, collectively obligated to the Lane Company in that all the settlers of a unit had to guarantee that they would pay for their farms before anyone in that unit would receive title to his land. Hence, the ties between the farmers were not completely severed and leaders were again required for the units to look after the interests of the loosely united groups. The leaders of each farm group also acted as its attorneys, representing it in its dealings with the Lane Company.

The shift from tenant farming to individual ownership involved the movement of families, farm animals and buildings from the original three farmsteads to the half-section farms. In the process, the settlers had arguments over the division of the buildings and especially the horses which were of uneven quality. A. W. Klassen and W. R. Dick, the leading advisors of the Lane Company, and David Thompson, the company manager, were instrumental in settling these disputes, as well as those arising from the division of land. The half-sections, ranging in quality from excellent to poor, were separately evaluated and sold at different prices. The average prices of the land on Farm One, Farm Two and Farm Three were $45.50, $41.60 and $39.00 per acre respectively. On Farm Two, the best land was sold for $53 per acre, and the poorest for $21 per acre. Clearly, the relative success of the various farmers would hinge in no small measure on the quality of their individual lands.

As far as the Mennonite farmers were concerned, a fairer distribution of land could have been achieved had the Lane Company not insisted on making their farms conform to the rigid sectional survey pattern. Some of the settlers on Farm One, for instance, felt that more of them would have more good land if the farm were divided into narrow two miles long and a quarter of a mile wide. The Farm Three settlers likewise wanted to divide their unit into narrow fields, all fronting the Bow River and running several miles back from the river. Such a scheme would permit them to have their homes fairly close together along the banks of the Bow, in some ways similar to the villages in which they had lived in Russia. The company rejected these plans to subdivide the land on the grounds that any advantages they might have would be outweighed by the high cost of resurveying the land and the hardship of traveling to distant fields. A number of years later, as the Mennonites began to enlarge their holdings, the very sectional survey that made no distinction between rich and inferior land proved to be an asset in the sense that it facilitated expansion and enabled the settlers to acquire more good land.

Many of the Mennonite purchasers of the Namaka Farm in 1927 were young men, in their thirties and early forties, full of ambition and energy and in the prime of their life. They were the pioneers of the second phase of the Mennonite development of the farm, private ownership, and it is worth noting their names. On Farm One, the unit closest to Namaka, there were Dietrich Boschman, Jacob Neufeld, Abram Ens, Peter F. Penner, Peter Boschman, Dietrich Neufeld, Cornelius Boschman, Peter J. Doerksen, Nicolia J. Dueck, David Hiebert, Abram J. Dueck,

Namaka Farm One, 1922 (Glenbow-Alberta Institute Archives)

Mennonite settlers on Namaka Farm One, 1926. (Courtesy of Peter G. Thiessen)

George Dirks in harvest scene on Namaka Farm Two. (Courtesy of Mrs. George Dirks)

Mennonite women at milking time on Namaka Farm One, 1926. (Courtesy of Peter G. Thiessen)

and John Goossen.

The settlers on Farm Two, the centre unit, were Johann J. Boldt, Heinrich Dueck, Gerhard Quiring, Johann Jacob Boldt, Jacob J. Boldt, Gerhard G. Braun, Jacob P. Dick, Aron A. Toews, Abram Willms, Gerhard Quiring, and Gerhard Dirks.

On Farm Three, the unit near the Bow River, there were Heinrich Heinrich Willms, Abraham H. Willms, Heinrich H. Willms, Abram G. Martens, Peter J. Martens, Aron G. Wall, Gerhard H. Thiel-Farm Three were $45.50, $41.60 and $39.00 per acre man, Abram J. Wall, Abram A. Wall, John J. Braun, John K. Kopp, and John J. Willms.

As a number of the men on the three farms had participated in the earlier community enterprise, they provided an important element of continuity between the first and second stages of development. In addition to establishing a working relationship with the Lane Company, these men had an appreciation of the potential of the land as well as a knowledge of the worth of the horses and the implements. They realized that their adoption of a dispersed settlement pattern and their move onto individual farms would require an immense outlay of capital, far more than they possessed. They readily acknowledged their continuing dependence upon the Lane Company, for the amount of cash they had on hand at the beginning of 1927 was barely enough to cover their living costs.

In order to help the settlers get started on their own, the Lane Company made an advance of about $13,000 to them for the purchase of seed grain, feed for livestock, better horses, new machinery and building materials. This was the first of the many substantial advances that the company would be making to the Mennonite farmers over the coming years. A good crop would enable them to pay off much or all of the yearly loan, while crop failures would serve to increase their indebtedness to the company.

The crops were very good in 1927. It was the first year since the coming of the Mennonites to the Namaka Farm that their crops were not struck down by hail. That year they harvested 91,000 bushels of wheat, 38,000 bushels of oats, and 16,000 bushels of barley. The whole crop amounted to 111 carloads of grain. Besides selling their bumper crop, they shipped a number of carloads of hogs and cattle off to market. They paid a total sum of $75,623 to the Lane Company, and the farm as such showed a profit of $43,208. They also paid their fire and hail insurance and taxes. At the same time, the settlers had improved themselves by purchasing twelve new binders and replacing some old and worn-out horses with young ones. Except for some frost damage to the crops and the need to postpone part of the threshing until the following spring, the year

had gone well.

With prosperity, there came a new feeling of independence to some of the settlers, ultimately leading to friction between them and the Lane Company. By the spring of 1928, four of the farmers had purchased automobiles, and one had built himself a house for $800. The company felt that these expenditures were unnecessary, particularly because the settlers were again asking the company to assist them in financing the operations of the approaching season. Similarily, the company was dissatisfied when it discovered that some of those who were requesting aid had used income from their crops to pay their transportation from Russia. These payments to the Mennonite Land Settlement Board, argued the company, prevented the settlers from building up enough cash reserves to finance their own operations. Reluctant as the company was to make further advances, it did so upon being assured by A. W. Klassen and W. R. Dick that they would definitely discourage the farmers from buying more motor cars, and that they would ask the Mennonite Board to relax the pressure for payments for the time being.

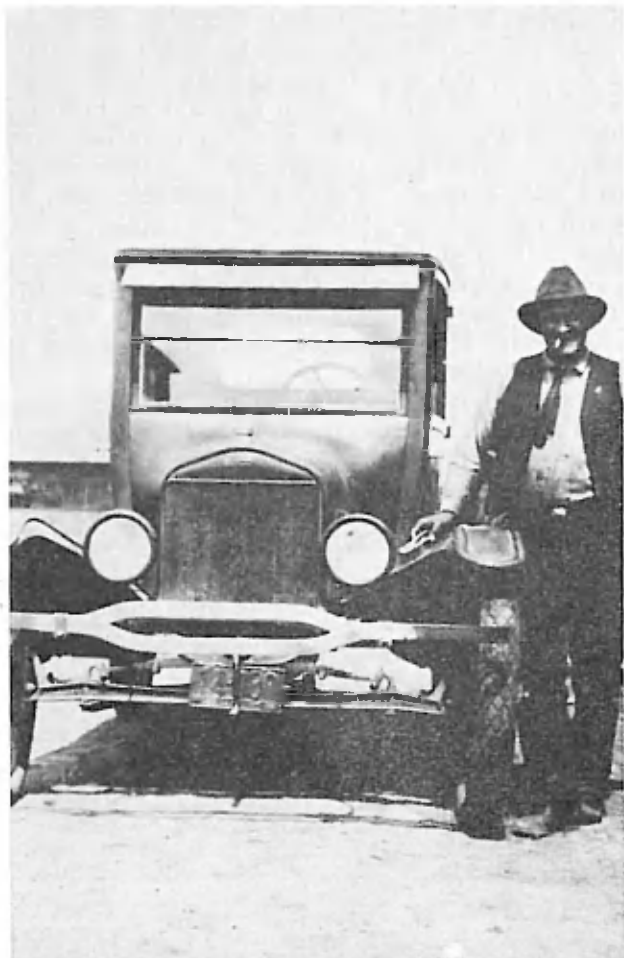
Heavy hailstorms swept down upon the promising Namaka Farm grain fields in 1928, completely destroying the crops of Farm Two and doing considerable damage to those of Farm One and Farm Three. As a result, the settlers paid only $29,967 to the Lane Company that year. To hold the settlers, the company advanced large sums to them for the next year's operations, but more than eight discouraged families left the farm and were replaced by new settlers. Replacements also had to be found for those who for various reasons were dissatisfied with the company.

The dreaded hailstorms came again in 1929, causing less damage to the crops than in the previous year but nevertheless resulting in meagre harvests for most of the farmers. The amount they now paid to the company was $31,550. Despite the endless hardships, many of the settlers refused to give up. At the end of 1929, twenty-two of the original buyers could be found on their farms. They had put a great deal of time and effort into the development of the Namaka Farm, increasing the number of acres under cultivation to about eight thousand. Constantly improving their livestock, they now sold cream from two hundred cows and two hundred and fifty horses toiled for them in the fields. Barbed wire fences surrounded their farms and kept their cattle at home, gardens provided them with vegetables, and newly planted poplars were beginning to show around some of the farmsteads. The Namaka Farm, as the settlers could see, was productive.

During the thirties, with the continuing crop losses from hail, the onset of the depression, the

Mennonite woman at kitchen stove, Namaka Farm One, 1926. (Courtesy Peter G. Thiessen)

David Thompson. Lane Company Farm Manager, 1925. (Courtesy Peter G. Thiessen)



coming of the dry years and the drastic drop in wheat prices, the Mennonite settlers' faith in the farm would often waver, so much so that many would leave for a better life in Ontario and British Columia before the decade was over. Those who stayed would have to seek much help from the Lane Company and adopt new methods of farming in order to survive.

As the decade opened the Mennonites of Namaka like other prairie farmers watched the prices of wheat and other farm produce come down, with wheat descending to a record low of thirty-two cents per bushel in 1932. Having become heavily indebted to the Lane Company in the late 1920's, they now found it impossible to meet their obligations. Most of them continued to pay as much as they could, but rarely was there enough income to make a significant impact upon their enormous debts. As crop failure followed upon crop failure, many tended to neglect their farms and allowed their fields to become infested with weeds. In a number of cases, the settlers' horses were so old and weak and their machines in such poor state of repair that little effective work could be done in the fields. Added to this were their worries about paying grocery and doctor bills, clothing the children properly and keeping their poorly insulated houses warm in winter. Small wonder that they appealed to the Lane Company for assistance.

Sometimes the desperate farmers made a group appeal to the company. In January of 1933, for example, the Namaka Farm settlers called a meeting and delegated three of their men, A. J. Thiessen, A. A. Wall and A. A. Toews, to approach the Lane Company in regard to their mounting debts. Accordingly, the delegates, drawing attention to the low prices, the hard times, and the settlers' losses resulting from the Dominion Bank's delay in selling their 1931 crop, asked the company to refrain from charging interest on the contracts of all the settlers and their advances in the years 1932 and 1933. Although the company considered the request, it was unwilling to cancel the interest for the entire group over a two-year period. Nor was the company prepared to make a downward adjustment in the purchase price of the Namaka Farm, as suggested by the Mennonite settlers.

The Lane Company, itself feeling the hard times, was not in a generous mood. Its basic policy was to assist deserving settlers on an individual basis, and to replace those who neglected their farms with more energetic settlers. A company agent visited the farms of the settlers who applied for advances, carefully investigating each situation before making a recommendation. At the beginning of 1934, the company again approved advances to a number of Namaka farmers: one received $15 to buy lumber for his barn; another obtained $15 to put cribbing in his well; and another received $100 to buy one bull and two horses.

In collecting its share of the crops, the company took into consideration the individual settler's personal living expenses and his feed and seed requirements. Consequently, the number of bushels of wheat, oats and barley that were collected after the harvest were contingent upon individual circumstances as well as the total yields. In 1935, when hail damage reduced the wheat yields on many farms to about five bushels per acre, the Lane Company took much less than its share and made no collections on eight of the farms. Some farmers, of course, felt that the company had not been lenient enough.

The adoption of better farming methods by the Namaka Farm Mennonites in the mid-1930's was a significant factor in the survival of the settlement. Strongly supported by W. R. Dick and Isaac Zacharias of the Canada Colonization Association, a few of the more progressive settlers led the way in applying effective techniques to their farming operations. In working their summer fallow, they discarded the outmoded Bugger plow, a machine that had served them well in Russia, in favour of a single disk which helped to preserve the moisture in the land. Soil drifting, one of the most serious problems in the light soils of the Namaka area, was checked by the introduction of strip farming. Strips of brome grass, rye and sweet clover were planted on the west side of summer fallow strips to prevent the soil from drifting. To hold the soil on his newly seeded wheat field, one farmer covered the whole field with straw. Others began to experiment with trash-cover farming.

As the decade of the thirties drew to a close, the Mennonite settlement at Namaka found itself benefiting from the upswing in the economy. The coming of prosperity inevitably prompted many of the Mennonite farmers to compare the sunny days with the hardships of the past. Some of them, those who had helped to found the community, could look back upon a decade and a half of sweating in the fields. The best years of their lives had been consumed in a struggle to make a start in a new country. Now, at the end of the depression and already well into middle age, they still seemed to be at the beginning in many respects. They were just beginning to pay off their big farm debts, find pleasure in operating modern farm equipment, and experience real success in agriculture.

Anna Weber Hat Das Gemacht

Anna Weber (1814-1888)—A *Fraktur* Painter of Waterloo County, Ontario

by Nancy-Lou Patterson

Anna Weber was called "Nance" by her family, and is actually recorded as "Nancy Weber" in Ezra E. Eby's *A Biographical History of Waterloo County* (1895), but she signed her name in red and blue letters, vividly recording that a number of splendid *Fraktur* paintings are the work of her hand: "Anna Weber hat das gemacht"—Anna Weber has made this," and carefully dated each page.

Anna Weber was born June 3, 1814, to John Weber (1786-1854) and Catherine (Gehman) Weber (1782-1864), in Earl Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Her family, which included many other children, left Pennsylvania April 7, 1825, to travel to Ontario, when she was eleven years old. These facts are recorded by Ezra Eby[1]. A more vivid account is contained in the family story of the crossing of the Niagara River in a wagon box, told by Anna Weber's great-niece, Miss Angie Martin, in 1975. One of the brothers kept chanting "Now we're going to drown!" One of the sisters replied, "No, we're not!" though secretly she, too, thought they would drown. But the crossing was a success: the cow and horse swam across behind the wagon box.

Her father arrived with his family in Waterloo County on April 26, 1825, at the farm of Joseph M. Brubacher, two miles northwest of Waterloo. Soon after, he settled his family on the farm near Conestoga where he lived until his death.[2] He had become a Mennonite deacon in Pennsylvania, and in July, 1833, he was ordained minister at Martin Mennonite Meeting-House by the renowned Bishop Benjamin Eby. It is recorded: "He was considered a good speaker and ranked among the foremost of the ministers of his day."[3]

Light on Anna Weber's earlier life can be thrown by recording her father's affairs, for she lived at home much of that time. The family farm is in the Township of Woolwich, on the site that became the "Aaron Sheifley" farm, about, one mile south of Conestoga. It overlooks the Conestoga River, which forms a majestic bend there, just before its confluence with the Grand River. The farmhouse has long since burned and been replaced, but the setting is still a beautiful one. On the fourth of July, 1870, she painted her masterpiece, a superb depiction of three flowering trees, two blossoming plants, and nine pairs of birds. She was 56 years old and an

accomplished artist. Had she found time before this date to paint? One must assume that she had taken a pen and brush in hand at some time earlier in her life, but after her father's death in 1854, she stayed with her aging mother, who died at 82, in 1864. As the unmarried daughter (an "old girl"), she must have been responsible for many family chores.

In 1866 she decorated her own *Gesang-Buch* (Lancaster, Pa.: 1829) with a rather tentative bird and her name and date: "ANNA WEBER 1866," in the same complex hand. On one side is a penman's practise-stroke, the curlicue. The composition is feeble or incomplete, and the colouring is laboured, but the hint of power is there, perhaps actually in its formative stage. Her mother had been dead two years, and the last phase of her life was about to begin.

Among the many siblings who came to Waterloo County with Anna Weber was her sister Lydia Weber (b. 1816), who married David Gingerich (b. 1812)[4]. The couple lived on what was to become the "Solomon Sheifley" farm south of Conestoga close by Lydia's home, and become the parents of twelve children. When Lydia died in 1857 at the age of 41, their children were dispersed "all over the place;" Anna Weber may have helped to raise some of them. One of these was Lydia Gingerich (1849-1938) who was eight years old when her mother died. In 1871, at the age of 22, she married John Sitler (1847-1899?).[5] They made their home in Wellesley Township, between Wallenstein and Hawksville, in a rather small house now much changed and still in its original setting. It was to this household that Anna Weber turned for a home some time after her own parents died. This last period of her life is most important for our story because most of her paintings date from this time.

The house where Anna Weber lived with her niece is tiny; it, too, is near the Conestoga River, but many miles upriver from her own and her niece's family farms. A little inner room, now opened to include a larger one next to it, was her final home. One of the children of the John Sitler family was Noah Sitler: he told his second wife of standing at the foot of Anna Weber's bed, where she lay ill, when he was nine years old. On March 10, 1888, his ailing great-aunt painted him a splendid heavy-limbed horse in coloured harness, and put his name on it: "FUHR NOA SITLER," He kept this painting in a frame for most of his life, along with the 1870 trees and birds. In the family Bible still preserved by his second wife, Mrs. Esther Martin Sittler, is another horse (dated 1881), with a brilliant diapered pattern of red-violet, violet, and blue. She remarked, "A horse doesn't look like that; she just had fun making those things."

Lydia Weber Gingerich's niece, Angeline Martin (b. 1892), remembers "Aunt Lyddie" saying, "Nance Weber died, yet; she got the wrong medicine." Anna Weber's grave is found today next to that of her mother. They lie among the many modest white marble slabs beside the Martin Mennonite Meeting-House just north of Waterloo, Ontario.

Between c. 1870 and 1888, Anna Weber painted a number of beautiful pictures; many are no doubt still in the personal collections of those who originally acquired them, or of their descendants. Some have come into the hands of private collectors.[6] Her method was simple, and traditional: with a pen using a dark ink, she drew the entire design with deft, sure lines. Then she took a fine brush and painted in the colours: a deep indigo, a dark blue-green, a brilliant red-violet, a softer violet, a pure blue, and a warm yellow. These colours are still strong in the works preserved in Bibles or scrapbooks, and much faded in works which have been exposed to light. First drawn was the border, which was elaborately decorated with brushwork.

Mennonite techniques in Pennsylvania had included both water-colours and tempera,[7] the latter adding a solution of gum arabic and crushed sugar candy to the pigments which included indigo, verdigris, gamboge, as well as inks sometimes made from local materials such as gall nuts.[8] Frequently the exotic pigments were replaced by berries and other vegetable materials grown locally,[9] and the gum arabic by the gums of fruit or cedar trees. Anna Weber's paintings use a very dark ink and transparent water-colours lacking the glossy surface characteristic of gum arabic tempera.

Each picture has a characteristic flower type and border, differing from the others. Most are based on axial symmetry, with a dominant central tree. In the 1888 painting, the large horse dominates the picture and the tree is relegated to the background. Its legs take up so much room that only one plant grows on the ground, but identical sets of paired birds perch above to redress the balance. The central tree is usually flanked by two others or by two figures—roosters or horses, for instance. In the 1878 painting, a squirrel is on one side and a nesting bird on the other. Paired birds and flowers abound in every work.

J. Russell Harper says of this symbolism in Anna Weber's paintings that "they show the joy in nature . . . a joy allied to her people's strong humanitarian concern for peace,"[10] reflecting "their deep religious feeling . . . graphically . . . in appreciation of the changes in nature, particularly those of spring when flowers appear and singing birds return."[11] The term *Fraktur* is used for the Pennsylvania German style of illumination[12] to mean both lettering and designs executed by hand. This term was first applied by Dr. Henry C. Mercer in

geboren
1868

Anna Weber, "Trees of Birds," 1870.

Anna Weber, "Horse," 1888.

1897, about a decade after Anna Weber died, and has become standard.[13] The style combines *Fraktura*, an angular sixteenth century Gothic letter style used to print German in documents,[14] forming a style of penmanship in which the letters were formed with breaks between the strokes,[15] which had developed from *Textura*, a post-Reformation style commonly used for religious works,[16] with motifs derived from eighteenth century European hand-blocked textiles[17] and other elements of Rhenish Palatinate *peasant style*.

The motifs are centered around a set of very ancient symbols which derive both from Near Eastern paradisaical imagery, and from Old European prehistoric motifs which became part of European folk art. They can be summed up in the single image of the *Lebensbaum*, the Tree of Life with its paired birds or animal attendants and its blossoms, suggesting the fertile response of the feminine Earth (often symbolized by a heart) to the fructifying influence of the masculine sky.[18] This imagery affirms the pattern of birth, life, rebirth, and new life, which is the central image of Christian symbolic systems.[19] The symbols resound in those parts of the Bible especially dear to pietistic religion: the *Song of Solomon*, which is a hymn to life, love, and fecundity, both physical and spiritual.

After the first Mennonites settled at Germantown in 1683, their groups spread through southeastern Pennsylvania, settling among other places in Lancaster County, where Anna Weber was born. Wherever a Mennonite community settled, the founding of a church and a school system was a foremost concern.[20] Mennonite school masters fostered the use of *Fraktur* in teaching, among them the famous Christopher Dock, who gave drawings from his own hand as rewards for industrious behaviour.[21] The *Vorschrift* was a specimen of handwriting (or a decorative page [22]) and arose in a school system which was established without the support of adequate printed materials.[23] The development of Mennonite Pennsylvania German *Fraktur* style is essentially post-Revolutionary,[24] and was at its height (1800-1835) during the period of Anna Weber's childhood in Pennsylvania. Her lettering itself was rather debased (she never did master the correct direction of the diagonal stroke in the English letter "N"). Perhaps she had not attended school since leaving Pennsylvania.

The decline of *Fraktur* in Pennsylvania has been attributed to the introduction of the public school system there c. 1835.[25] The man who ordained Anna Weber's father, Benjamin Eby (who was the founder of what became Berlin and ultimately Kitchener, Ontario), became the first Mennonite Bishop of Waterloo district in 1812.[26] He wrote a number of books, including hymnals, catechisms,[27] and German

spelling-reading books for a Mennonite school which he opened in 1818. He became an active publisher in 1835 when the first press appeared in Ebytown (Berlin/Kitchener).[28] The development of readily available printed materials, so important for Mennonite life, may signal the beginning of the decline of *Fraktur* in Ontario. During the early years of the nineteenth century, *Fraktur* of many varieties was made in Ontario;[29] most later nineteenth century *Fraktur* in Waterloo County is in hand-lettered Bible inscriptions,[30] and in pages of decorative painting like those of Anna Weber, which are rare.

Some of her pictures are of the type called the *Taufschein*, which is, properly, a certificate of birth and baptism. Among Mennonites it was for birth only. A painting, inscribed "JUDITH HOFMAN IST GEBOREN DEN 20 AUGUST 1868", was made in 1873 when the child was five years old. Judith Hoffman died in 1879 at age 11, and Susanna Eby went to take her place at the Hoffman home. She later married Menno Hoffman and became the mother of Mrs. Lavina Hoffman Bauman, the present owner of the painting, and of one other, made for Susanna Eby and dated April 23, 1879, the year of Judith's death.

It would seem, then, that both the presentational element and the commemorative element had remained associated with *Fraktur*. Important moments in life were recorded in this ornamental manner, in coloured letters and with illuminative affirmation of life and Christian hope: a child's birth, the coming of a child to replace one who had died, and the rewarding of a little boy who stood at the foot of his great-aunt's bed in the last year of her life. Beautiful images were made as a form of celebration to enshrine events which were meaningful in the life of the maker and of those for whom she made paintings. Anna Weber's *Fraktur* is distinguished by its vitality and freshness; it shows us a view into an archetypal world of splendor, a paradisaical universe where the Tree of Life still blooms. Luckily for art historians, she dated her works and signed them, so that we can know her: "ANNA WEBER HAT DAS GEMACHT."

Note:
I wish to express grateful thanks to the many people who assisted me in this research, including Dr. J. Winfield Fretz, Mrs. Pat Weber, Mrs. Minerva Martin, Mrs. Esther Martin Sittler, Miss Angeline Martin, Mrs. Lavina Bauman, Mr. Simeon E. Martin, Mrs. Beth Culliton, Professor Micheal Bird, Professor and Mrs. Laurence Cummings, and my photographers, Ms. Phyllis Waugh and Mr. Jacques Mercier. Through the open-hearted generosity of these loving inheritors and sensitive collectors, these priceless works have been preserved for aesthetic appreciation and scholarship.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Ezra E. Eby, *A Biographical History of Waterloo Township*, Vol. II (Berlin, Ontario: E. E. Eby, 1896), pp. 621-622.

[2]Ibid., p. 570

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ezra E. Eby, *A Biographical History of Waterloo Township*, Vol. I (Berlin, Ontario: E. E. Eby, 1869), p. 690.

[5]Eby, Vol. II, p. 458. Eby gives John Sitler no death date, but the Bible preserved by his son Noah Sitler says of Lydia Gingerich Sitler that she "lived in matrimony 28 years," suggesting that her husband John, who, it also records, married her October 15, 1871, died in 1899.

[6]J. Russell Harper, *People's Art: Naive Art in Canada* (Ottawa: the National Gallery of Canada, 1973), pp. 25, 148, 149.

[7]Henry S. Bornemann, *Pennsylvania German Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York: Dover, 1973; first published as Pennsylvania German Society *Proceedings*, Vol. 46, 1937), p. 44.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 45

[9]John Joseph Stoudt, *Early Pennsylvania Arts and Crafts* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1964), p. 280.

[10]J. Russell Harper, *A People's Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 159.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 161.

[12]Donald A. Shelley, *The Fraktur-Writings or Illuminated Manuscripts of the Pennsylvania Germans* (Allentown, Pa.: Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 1961), Vol. 23, p. 176.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 22.

[14]*Ibid.*

[15]Stoudt, p. 279

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 280.

[17]Shelley, p. 22.

[18]Marija Gimbutas, *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1958), pp. 48, 66.

[19]E. O. James, *The Tree of Life* (Leiden; E. J. Brill, 1966), p. 243.

[20]Vernon S. Gunnion and Carroll J. Hopf, *Pennsylvania German Fraktur* (Lancaster, Pa.: Pennsylvania Farm Museum of Landis Valley, 1967), opp. Pl. 41.

[21]*Ibid.*

[22]Stoudt, p. 293.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 301.

[24]*Ibid.*, p. 278.

[25]Gunnion and Hopf, *loc. cit.*

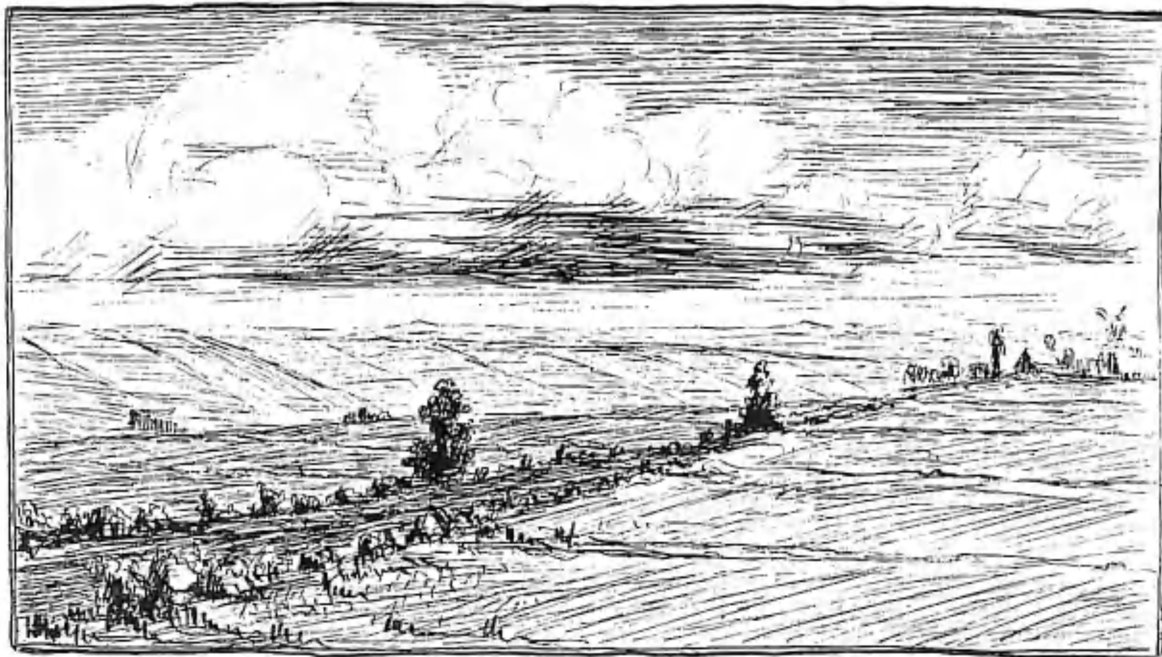
[26]Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, 1786-1920 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), p. 119.

[27]*Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 127.

[29]Nancy-Lou Patterson, "Mennonite Folk Art of Waterloo County," *Ontario History*, Vol. LX, No. 3 (September, 1968), pp. 86-90. See also Nancy Lou Patterson, *Mennonite Traditional Arts of the Waterloo Region and Southern Ontario* (Kitchener, Ontario: The Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, 1974).

[30]Nancy-Lou Patterson, "Mennonite Traditional Arts," *Canadian Antiques Collector*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (May, 1971), pp. 78-79.



Drawing by Arnold Dyck from his "Verloren in der Steppe."

Arnold Dyck: Non-Conformist

by Mary Regehr Dueck

Arnold Dyck's critics have viewed him variously as an artist, a humorist, a craftsman in the use of the Low German language, a literary priest, etc. Not many would dispute any of these designations. However, when one considers the simple village background from which he came, limited in scope and opportunity, narrow-minded and strict in its adherence to traditional forms, one realizes that he must have been, first and foremost, a non-conformist.

This kind of background could have produced a great moralist, which he is not; it was unlikely ground for the formation and development of his artistic bent. His keen awareness of his own differences, his perceptivity to the sensitive stirrings and nuances of the inner spirit, found expression in a distinctly individualistic and non-conformist outlook incompatible with village norms.

If one views Dyck's *Verloren in der Steppe*[1] as an autobiographical *Bildungsroman* and recognizes the central hero, Hans, as a projection of Dyck himself, one can easily note the persistent and conscious resistance to the prevailing outlook on life. "Non-Conformity has occurred when an individual reacts negatively, for whatsoever reason, to the standards or mores of others. . . . The mark of non-conformity is an active rebellion, an overt rejection of social goals."[2]

If we examine Hans in the light of the aforementioned characteristics of non-conformity, we see him deliberately moving away from the norms and standards held dear by the closely-knit group of people which comprised his Mennonite village in Russia.

It takes Hans only two years in public school to read all the books the school library contains. In this realm of books Hans is exposed to a whole new world, a world of fantasy and imagination, but, nevertheless, more real to him than the world of the village which he inhabits. He is convinced it is a quirk of fate which prevents him from being amongst those people to whom he rightfully belongs. His kindred spirits are knights and robbers, princes and princesses, witches and shepherds and not the plodding, hard-working, pious and thrifty peasants of his own village. Hans is angry with fate which has placed him into an environment which seems quite unsuitable to his nature. In fact, Hans finds himself questioning fate rather frequently:

> Und wie einmal schon, damals, als er Kronsweide erlebte, hadert Hans mit seinem Schicksal: Was ist schon Hochfeld, dieses nüchterne Dorf mit seinen geraden Linien und rechten Winkeln. Diese Bauernhöfe, alle nach demselben Plan angelegt. Diese Häuser, alle mit

> derselben Stubenanordnung und Einrichtung. Und die Ställe, die Scheunen, alle nach demselben Muster erbaut, die Vorgärten, die Hintergärten, überall dasselbe. An der Gartengrenze die Maulbeerhecke von einem Ende des Dorfes zum andern. Alles, alles dreissigfache Wiederholung derselben Schablone. Und tritt man durch die Hecke ins Freie, so liegen da endlos die Getreidefelder, alle gleich gross, alle mit derselben Getreideart und hinter ihnen die Steppe, die Viehweide, noch viel eintöniger als alles andere. . . . Wie arm, ach wie arm und verloren fühlt Hans sich in dieser Steppenwüste, . . (II, p. 76)

When Hans compares his village, Hochfeld, with the far more exotic places of his imagination, he concludes that Hochfeld does not amount to very much. It is such a prosaic village with its straight lines and right angles. Every yard is laid out according to the same plan. Every house is designed identically and the room arrangements with their contents are the same also. This uniformity is carried over to the layout of the barns, the sheds, the front yards and the back yards. A mulberry hedge growing along the boundaries of the front yards from one end of the village to the other emphasizes the uniformity and sameness of his surroundings. There is absolutely no visible difference in the thirty farmyards which comprise his village. And outside the yard one is confronted with uniformity once again. The grain fields are all of identical size with identical crops and the meadows where the cattle graze are even more monotonous. How forlorn and desolate he seems to be!

This regularity in pattern, this sameness in the appearance of one farmer's yard, his house and acreage to another, this conformity to one standard pattern which always has been extolled as one of the most beautiful aspects of the Mennonite Russian villages, Hans peremptorily dismisses as "alles, alles dreissigfache Wiederholung derselben Schablone." The word "Schablone" suggests stencil-like copies of one prescribed pattern, mechanically reproduced, leaving no room for the imagination or for individualism. This slavish repetitiveness he finds indescribably monotonous and stultifying, a veritable desert in which his sensitive nature, yearning for beauty and individuality, feels utterly lost.

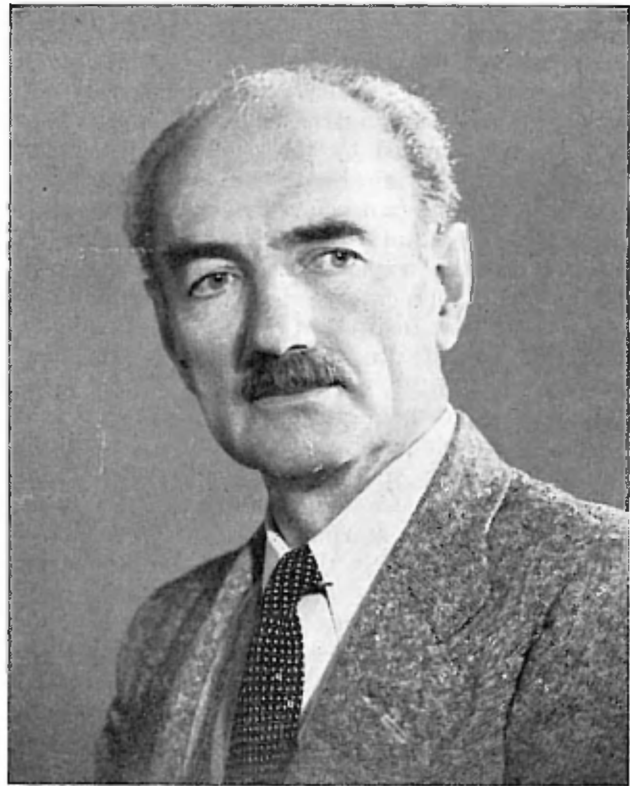
If this negative reaction had been expressed only once during his early adolescent years, a period in life which is generally fraught with emotions and full of conflicting yearnings, we could dismiss it as nothing more than a childish fancy. But this is not the case. Upon completion of grade school his desire for further education is granted and on his way to Chortitza to the **Zentralschule** the odious sameness of the Mennonite villages strikes him again. The road leading to Chortitza takes him through Hochfeld, Franzenfeld, Nikolaifeld and Wallmann's Chutor, a large prosperous estate, again a succession of monotonous repetitiveness. Hans views it this way:

> In den deutschen Dörfern, wenigstens in denen der offenen Steppe, ist alles viel zu sauber, viel zu ordentlich und viel zu rechtwinklig. Ein Hof ist wie der Andere. (V, p. 101)

In the German villages of the Steppes everything is much too neat and tidy and symmetrical. Every yard is like the next one. This same trip also offers young forest planted on Wallmann's estate. He has always been intensely intrigued by the grandeur and the mystery of the deep forests in his books and his deep disappointment is revealingly illustrated:

> Nur gefällt es ihm nicht, dass alle Bäume gleich gross sind und in Reihen stehen. Auch ist kein Unterholz da, viel mehr wird der Grund gepflügt und von jedem Unkraut frei gehalten. Einen richtigen Wald denkt er sich doch ganz anders. (V, p. 101)

He doesn't like a forest in which all the trees are of uniform height and planted in tidy rows. Neither is there any underbrush nor weeds and the ground is plowed. He had visualized a genuine



Arnold Dyck at Seventy.

forest to be quite different. Where nature and freedom should reign supreme he is confronted again with the same abrasive, meticulous order he objects to in the layout of the individual farms and villages. For this reason Hans finds the Russian villages much more interesting and amusing and the difference is picturesquely portrayed:

> Ganz anders ist es bei den Russen. Da ist die schönste Unsauberkeit und die herrlichste Unordnung überall. Man braucht sie nicht erst lange zu suchen. Und ein Winkelmass hat man wohl weder bei der Anlage der Gassen noch beim Aufpatzen der Lehmkaten gebraucht. (V, p. 102)

The Russian villages are different indeed. Beautiful untidiness and glorious disorder is evident everywhere. One certainly doesn't have to look for it. Neither is there any indication that a square was used in the layout of their streets or in the slapping together of their mud huts. To Hans this lack of planning is symbolic of a way of life that is free and unfettered by conformity and rigidity and a mentality ruled by instinct rather than reason.

Sameness and conformity were fostered and promoted by the Mennonites in areas other than in the layout of their properties. Here the attitudes and aspirations of the people were shaped and formed in a uniform mold with the intention of total identity with a specific "Weltanschauung." Hans' yearning and appreciation for beauty, individuality and uniqueness left him dissatisfied in the rigid confines of the Mennonite village mentality. We find him carefully evaluating situations and arriving at independent conclusions, untainted by the opinions of the majority. His attitude towards the Russians, with whom the villagers were in frequent contact, is especially noteworthy.

Many negative experiences had contributed to the following derogatory view of their cultural opposites: "Die Deutschen schauten mit Geringschätzung auf die Russen." The Germans viewed the Russians with condescension. Because the Mennonite estate holders were prosperous we find that their Russian servants and hired men were frequently guilty of theft. An increasing social consciousness of this deprived class was giving rise to threatening recriminations in the foreseeable future. Many felt they had been robbed by Mennonite landowners and that this land was rightfully theirs and they were determined to regain it. Although many were justly treated by their Mennonite overlords there was also deep-seated hatred and desire for revenge among those whose work experiences had been less than favourable. A friend suggests the following professional career for Hans: "Werde Jurist, Toews! Wir brauchen Juristen. Wir müssen den Russen zeigen, das wir die Herren sind. Mit dem Knüppel geht's bald nicht mehr." (V, p. 96) "Toews, you had better become a lawyer. We need lawyers. We have to show the Russians that we are the masters here. We can't do it with a club much longer."

Warwara Pawlowna, a Russian teacher, speaks of the discriminatory behaviour the Hochfelder reserved for Russians, even for those who were certainly their social equals:

> In Hochfeld aber . . . Warum hat man da so einen Unterschied gemacht zwischen Heinrich Jaklowlewitsch und mir. War das nicht einzig und allein, weil er Deutscher ist und ich Russin! Weil ich Russin bin, hat man mich abgelehnt und hat mich als etwas Geringeres behandelt. (V, pp. 40-41)

Warwara asks herself why she was treated differently than the other teacher. She knew it was because she was a Russian and he a German. Because she was Russian she was rejected and regarded as being inferior. She extracts from Hans a promise that he will educate and influence the Mennonites towards a better understanding of the Russian mentality. His behaviour had always been exemplary towards her and now she confides her hopes to him.

The distinctly derogatory designations the Mennonites used for these Russian teachers were identical to those used for all their Russian workers, "Russenmarjell" and "Chocholenbengel". But Hans' attitude had always been different from this unfortunate norm. As a young child in the primary grades he immediately recognized the "Wesensfremdheit", the essential difference of Marja Iwanowna Minajewa, his first female teacher, from her stodgy Mennonite counterparts. He appreciates her beauty of form and mind, her poise and self-confidence and is indignant at his playmate's reference to this vision of beauty as "Russenmarjell."

As a child Hans had been drawn into the realm of fantasy and imagination by the inventive story-telling abilities of a Russian house servant. Intrigued by the Russian affinity for the mysterious and the mystical, he is entranced by the beauty of their singing as it was carried through the stillness of the night and by the romantic unstructured life of the "Baschtanwächter", the watermelon watchman. He is aware of their different culture and the foreign and exotic aspect which it represents. Yet, rather than being negatively critical of this strangeness, he is objective and openly appreciative and regrets the fact that his dull, prosaic village life offers so little of this.

But not only in his attitudes did Hans differ from the village norm; his aspirations for life were

also directly opposed to village standards. The centuries-old tradition for young Mennonite lads was to take over their father's farm or establish themselves on their own. This was certainly the intention of Hans' school friend, Hermann. He is only fourteen and already he speaks matter-of-factly of settling down on a farm in the near future. In order to do that he expects to marry soon. The complete self-confidence of this young lad who knows exactly what he wants to do in life makes Hans feel utterly downcast in the face of his own conflicts and indecisions. For the first time in life he seriously contemplates his own future: "Was wird aus dir noch einmal? . . . jedenfalls nicht Bauer . . ." (IV, p. 94) What will he be some day? He is sure of one thing only, he will never be a farmer.

The thought of Hermann marrying a girl from Hochfeld is as appalling to him as the idea of farming. Whenever Hans contemplates marriage he thinks of a "Prinzessin", a "holdes Wesen", graceful, fairy-like creatures like those which inhabit his world of fantasy, not like the local village girls. Hermann's future wife is bound to be:

> . . . eine mit roten Händen und grossen Füssen, eine, die dann in wenigen Jahren dick und schwer und plump längs dem Fussteg wackelt, an jedem Schürzenzipfel ein ungewaschenes Gör mit triefender Nase. (IV, p. 95)

He visualizes Hermann's wife with red hands and huge feet. In a few short years she would be fat and waddle heavily along the village path. A dirty brat with a runny nose would be hanging on to each apron string. Not a romantic picture. But the inhabitants of Hochfeld were simple, practical people, living godly lives, intent on security and material prosperity and not much given to fanciful visions. Creative beauty was one component that played a minor part in their outlook in life; in fact, it was more dreaded than fostered. It was more important that things be functional, not beautiful. They needed thrifty, strong, hard-working wives and good farm managers, certainly not dainty princesses!

Hans' mother dreads the possibility of Hans marrying a girl ouside of Hochfeld, one with an education, and his father wishes he might be content to be a farmer like others. If young men went away to seek further education it was hoped that this education would be of practical benefit to the Mennonite colonists. Hans, at age fourteen, finally has the courage to tell him that he does not wish to farm. His father can't keep his disappointment from showing as he says:

> So, so, Hans, Bauer möchtest du nicht werden", sagt er langsam, schwer und ohne dass er's will klingt Enttäuschung aus jedem Wort. "Was möchtest du denn aber werden?" (V, p. 12)

Since Hans doesn't want to become a farmer his father asks him about his future plans. If Hans could have answered his father's question by saying that he wished to become a teacher, a preacher or a lawyer, these would have been acceptable alternatives. Instead, Hans replies: "Das weiss ich nicht, Vater, . . . denn mit dem Maler kann er doch nicht herausrücken." (V, p. 12) Hans wisely refrains from telling his father that his ambition is to become a painter of pictures. Such a response might have ruined all his chances for higher education. For of all professional opportunities possible, that of painting would have been viewed as the most useless, and decadent, too.

In those last days, at home, before leaving for school, Hans' reflections reveal that he has already achieved total separation from Hochfeld: ". . . Hochfeld soll ganz hier bleiben", and ". . . er fühlt sich innerlich von Hochfeld so ganz losgelöst." (V, p.98) He is determined that Hochfeld shall remain behind. He feels he already inwardly has broken his ties with Hochfeld completely. Hans' mother has deplored the fact that her son is so different from other boys and his father is conscious of the loosening from village ties and traditions. He is concerned with this persistent moving away from what has been the norm and he anxiously pleads with Hans. ". . . du darfst uns aber nicht vergessen, deine Eltern, auch Berend nicht und Peter. . . ." (V, p. 100) He asks Hans to remember them all and he is too moved to utter the other admonishments that weigh heavily on his mind.

The journey to Chortitza is a joyous one. He has forgotten the miseries of farm life and does not yet realize how much these childhood experiences of village life have become a part of the intricately

Hänschen dreaming in "Verloren in der Steppe"

woven fabric of his personality. Hans has moved from self-awareness to independent thinking and has arrived on the brink of freedom which makes possible his development into full personhood.

Born in 1889 in Hochfeld, South Russia, Arnold Dyck has poignantly portrayed his sense of lostness and his feelings of not belonging to the society into which he was born. The title for his novel *Verloren in der Steppe* or *Lost in the Steppes* is an extended metaphor and aptly illustrates his forlornness. As a child, his active imagination, his flights of fancy and his creative artistic talents lent colour and interest to what might have been a drab existence. They also provided him with an escape mechanism and ready access to a private, magical world of his own. In his heart he yearned to leave these wastelands and become a part of the fascinating world outside.

As a young man and later as an adult and as a writer, Arnold Dyck continued his distinctly individualistic pursuits. As a teenager going to Chrotitza to the *Zentralschule* in 1903 he didn't dare mention to his father his desire to become an artist for fear his entire higher education might be scratched. In 1909, at age twenty, he was able to go to Munich to study art and then continued his studies in Stuttgart the next fall. Later, after completing his alternative service in Russia, Dyck continued his studies in art in Moscow and St. Petersburg from 1912-1914. It was largely due to Berend, a brother frequently mentioned in his novel, and his persuasive powers, that his father finally granted him permission to study abroad. Also, Dyck had stated that he wished to teach art in the *Zentralschule!*[3]

Teaching, preaching, law and medicine were respected professions, all contributing a highly-esteemed and much needed service to the Mennonite community. But painting pictures and writing stories were questionable pursuits, associated with decadence and very likely to lead to the downfall of an individual. In terms of monetary returns, art and writing were known to be unproductive. It was no way for a Mennonite to make a living. Dyck was well aware of these prevalent attitudes. In the novel we see him silently but ecstatically viewing a real painting for the first time and relishing the beauty of ornamental knick-knacks at his teacher's house.

According to the opinion of Hans' mother, the most certain road to ruin was the reading of *unnützes Zeug* or useless material. Regretfully, she notes that her husband no longer exclusively reads the Bible, the hymn book and the catechism. He has taken to perusing Mennonite weeklies as well as reading story books. The narrator laconically observes that the earth continues to rotate in its orbit after Hans' father has read his first and even his second *Liebesgeschichte,* love story. The Bible represented truth, historical records supposedly reported truthful facts, but stories were fictions of the imagination and therefore full of inherent dangers.

As a youth he vowed he would never marry a girl from Hochfeld. He remained true to his word. Katharina Vogt, the handsome, bright-eyed youngest daughter of a minister was indeed different from many of the village girls and she came from Schoenwiese. She also had attended a *Mädchengymnasium* and had creative and artistic abilities. After their marriage in 1918, they founded a *Fortbildungschule* in Hochfeld where they both taught art. But they were both such individualists that their marriage did not work out and from 1937 on they lived separate lives.

Dyck's literary works, especially his slapstick humour in his Low-German writings, were thoroughly enjoyed. But his early efforts at publishing in Canada resulted in a series of disappointments. In 1935 he began publishing the *Mennonitische Volkswarte* which later became the *Mennonitische Warte.* This endeavour collapsed after four years for lack of interested subscribers. The *Warte Year Books* which appeared in 1943-44 and his *Auslese* (Selections) of 1951 suffered a similar fate. The Echo Verlag, his own publishing house where he published books by other Mennonite writers, was also unsuccessful.[4] A number of Mennonite writers whose works might have remained obscure forever were encouraged to have their material printed here. But these were depression and post-depression years and the average Mennonite was concerned with his bread and butter existence and literary interests did not receive priority rating.

Though Arnold Dyck understood the Mennonites completely and humorously depicted their foibles and eccentricities, he remained somewhat of an enigma to them all his life. His satire was gentle and he never resorted to cruel sarcasm or outright ridicule. In spite of his love for his people and his remarkable gift for observation, he himself, however, was an outsider and remained on the periphery of the Mennonite community right up to the time of his death in 1970 at the home of his daughter in northern Germany.

1. Arnold Dyck, *Verloren in der Steppe,* Teil I, Selbstverlag, Steinbach Manitoba, 1944; Teil II, Selbstverlag, Steinbach, Manitoba, 1945; Teil III, Selbstverlag, Manitoba, 1946; Teil IV, Selbstverlag, North Kildonan, Manitoba, 1947; Teil V, Selbstverlag, North Kildonan, Manitoba, 1948. Hereafter, all references to quotations taken from these volumes will appear in parentheses following the quotation.
2. E. L. Walker, R. W. Heyms, *An Anatomy for Conformity,* Belmont, California, 1967, p. 88.
3. Elizabeth Peters, *Der Mennonitendichter Arnold Dyck in seinen Werken,* University of Manitoba, M. A. Thesis, 1963, p. 31.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 41.

Plowing the Steppes

by J. P. Klassen

There is much beauty and riches in farming, as there is in any other productive line of work, and our people have proved it, never being satisfied, unless they had achieved the highest and best, not only in numbers, but also in quality and beauty.

The material goods we must have, to live, all of us, without distinction or discrimination; but the real value of life lies in spiritual work, in religion, in our work with God.

For this no price to pay can be too high, and no suffering to endure will ever be too great, for in this is the Kingdom of God. And if we as Mennonite artists can do our share in clarifying these ideals, what more and better could we wish for?

From an address by J. P. Klassen on "Mennonite Ideals and Art," given at the Conference on Mennonite Cultural Problems at Bluffton, Ohio, August 25, 1945.

The above picture and accompanying words appeared in the first issue of *Mennonite Life* thirty years ago. On August 6, 1975 in Bluffton, Ohio, John P. Klassen died at the age of eighty-seven. His life and artistic pilgrimage were featured in the December 1973 issue of *Mennonite Life*. We remember with gratitude this gifted Mennonite artist.

The Public Archives of Canada.

Resources on Mennonite History In the Public Archives of Canada

by Ernest J. Dick

PART I

The Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa might seem a strange place to come to investigate the history of Mennonites in Canada but a wealth of material awaits the researcher who wanders its corridors. Much of this documentation is relatively easily located but much also takes the persistence of a formidable detective to locate. For while knowing there is a story to rethink and recreate, the historical detective is sometimes not certain that historical evidence was created, much less preserved, or where it might be found.

Though Mennonites have long been suspicious of politics and government, much documentation is to be found in Ottawa because they had to negotiate the specifics of their non-involvement. Particularly in times of an expanding and encroaching state, as in the past 200 years, Mennonites have constantly been rethinking and re-negotiating the nature of their involvement with government. And when they did so they rarely bothered with intermediate or local governments but went straight to the Prime Minister, as if they were a separate fiefdom establishing a contract with a monarch. Thus the Prime Ministers' papers and the government departments to which they dispatched the questions provide valuable sources for historical investigation.

Furthermore, Mennonites were for many years a sharply distinct and slowly assimilated group and above all, largely German-speaking pacifists while Canada fought two wars with Germany. Thus the federal government sometimes regarded them with considerable suspicion and occasionally monitored Mennonite leaders and activities carefully. As these records become accessible, they provide another fasci-

nating source of documentation.

Skill and persistence is required on the part of the researcher, however, to reap this harvest as the Public Archives has no shelves neatly labelled "Mennonite" where all the appropriate material may be found and sorted. First, the sheer size of the holdings of the Public Archives, over 200,000 linear feet of shelving of documents, close to a million maps, 20,000 hours of sound recordings, presents one dimension of the research task. It is necessary to know fairly precisely what one is searching for. Second, the principle of organization at the Public Archives, indeed at any archives, is to respect the integrity and state of mind of the individual or institution that created the documents. That is, material is not reorganized at the Public Archives, but rather the original organization is used to create guides to the material. This, of course, precludes the comprehensive access of a library card catalogue to all materials to be found in the Public Archives.

Therefore, a researcher must first determine the appropriate section of the Public Archives that interests him, be it public records, manuscripts, pictures, maps, prints and drawings, films or sound recordings. Then he must become familiar with likely groups of material that might contain appropriate material and study the descriptions and inventories of such groups. In some cases these descriptions will provide sufficient detail to indicate the relevance of the material, in others more detailed finding aids or indexes will be prepared for parts of the material, and yet, in other cases, it will simply be necessary to examine the material itself. The researcher needs to be familiar with the administration and cast of mind of the day to determine the appropriate documents to consult. Even then some of the valuable sources will be found in unlikely locations and the researcher must follow up every clue and more than a few hunches.

Thus this article will attempt to sketch some of the readily identified sources of Mennonite materials at the Public Archives of Canada (hereafter cited as PAC), perhaps indicating fruitful areas of historical investigation. It can never claim to be exhaustive as further research always stands the chance of making significant new finds of material.

Sources relating to the early history of Mennonites in Upper Canada, or what we now call Ontario, are not as abundant in the PAC as for the later periods. But, nonetheless, there is some fascinating documentation relating to movements of Mennonites into Waterloo County. As the lands the Mennonites occupied were for a short time being contested by the original occupants, the Indians, there are some relevant files in the Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs correspondence, designated in the Public Archives as Record Group 10, A2 (hereafter the PAC term Record Group will be cited as R.G.).

Sources concerning the earliest land settlement could be aided by the petitions submitted to the Executive Council of Upper Canada by applicants for land grants. These are held by the PAC in R.G. 1, L3 and a card index organized alphabetically by petitioner is available to provide access to these petitions.

Also interesting sources regarding some of the earliest evidences of the nature of the relationship between Mennonites and the Canadian society and state are available. One such source is the State Papers of the Executive Council of Upper Canada (R.G. 1, E3) which include petitions, correspondence, reports and other such documents for the years of 1791-1841. A similar source is the petitions, correspondence, reports, etc., received by the Civil Secretary for the years 1766-1840 and designated Upper Canada Sundries (R.G. 5, A1).

Other sources relating to this early period are undoubtedly available at the Public Archives but have not yet been identified. Serious research and a thorough familiarity with the administration of government at the time could well turn up more material in this area.

For many years the PAC has had projects of transcribing and photocopying material of the Public Records Office in London relating to Canadian affairs. Such material is to be found in Manuscript Group 11 (hereafter the PAC term Manuscript Group will be cited as M.G.) and is designated as the Colonial Office papers. Volumes 43 (1825-26) and 104 (1873) have been indicated as containing references to Mennonites and undoubtedly more references are yet to be found in this manuscript group.

As already suggested above, Mennonites were not hesitant in writing the Prime Minister when asking for special considerations or when they considered that the government was violating some part of its contract with them. Thus, the papers of our Prime Ministers, all to be found in M.G. 26, provide a fascinating source of documentation.

Our first Prime Minister, John A. MacDonald, was both the Prime Minister (1867-73, 1878-91) and Minister of the Interior (1878-91) while the Mennonites were immigrating and settling in the Canadian West. Thus his papers are invaluable as Mennonites continued to write him even during his five years out of office.

No significant collections of materials relating to Mennonites have yet been discovered in the minor Prime Ministers that followed MacDonald: Alexander Mackenzie (1873-78), John Abbott (1891-92), John Thompson (1892-94), Mackenzie Bowell (1894-96) and Charles Tupper (1896). However, their papers deserve to be examined if an issue investigated

falls within these years, as conceivably some references to Mennonites will be found there.

The Wilfrid Laurier papers (Prime Minister from 1896-1911) are not abundant on their references to Mennonites, but necessary for any reference to the education issue in Manitoba. Also, the Borden, Meighen and King papers contain references to this issue.

The Robert Borden papers (Prime Minister from 1911-1920) obviously deal with the question of Mennonites and the first World War. Indeed, there are 105 pieces of correspondence between 1916-1918 alone which come under the general subject heading of "Mennonites."

Arthur Meighen held a variety of crucial cabinet posts in Borden's government and was himself Prime Minister from 1920-21 and for a few months in 1926. There are large gaps in his papers for the period before 1920 but they nonetheless provide some valuable references to Mennonites.

The MacDonald, Laurier, Borden and Meighen papers all have subject and author indexes for the bulk of their material, with the Borden and Meighen papers also having a chronological index. This means that one can look up such logical headings as "Mennonites," "Immigration," "Pacifism," "Emigration," or obvious correspondents such as William Hespeler or Jacob Y. Shantz and find documents pertaining to Mennonites. However, the obscurity of Mennonites within the context of Canadian society means that one cannot trust such indexes to catch all appropriate material. Also these indexes cover only the majority and not all of the material of any of the collections. It is necessary to examine the general inventories published by the PAC (should be available in most university libraries) to determine whether further searching is necessary.

The Mackenzie King papers, both because he was an inveterate keeper of records and something of a favourite with Mennonites, contain many references to Mennonites. A letter from David Toews soliciting contributions for Rosthern Junior College is just one enticing example. To date, however, little has been found concerning his reputed promise to allow Mennonites into the country after the 1921 election, but further research may turn up such evidence. The King papers are in the process of being indexed and thus the present finding aids are incomplete. But already at least 100 items of correspondence between 1909-1946 have been identified in the King papers with the main correspondent being David Toews (over 35 letters by or from Toews) with B. H. Unruh and Gerhard Ens also referred to. Also, volumes 117 and 306 in the King Memoranda and Notes have material relating to Mennonites and, undoubtedly, as the indexes reach completion, more material will come to light.

Our next Prime Minister's papers (R. B. Bennett, 1930-35) are the property of the provincial archives of New Brunswick in Fredericton but are presently at the PAC for organizing and microfilming. When this process is completed in another year, a comprehensive author and subject index will be available. The original papers will return to New Brunswick but a complete microfilm copy will remain available at the PAC. The partially completed index gives a reference to Mennonites and Paraguay for 1933. Bennett was also Director General of National Service under the War Measures Act in charge of national registration during the first World War, thus his papers may well refer to Mennonites in that regard.

The Louis St. Laurent papers are held at the PAC but everything is closed until 1978, at which point general access will apply to the period before 1948. Access to the period during which he was Prime Minister will only be possible after 1987. Likewise, the Lester B. Pearson papers are held by the PAC but only the correspondence files before 1947 are open. In 1978 all material to 1965 when Pearson became Prime Minister will be available and his papers while Prime Minister will be open in 1990. These are the provisions for general and unrestricted research but the appropriate literary executors may grant access for specific research projects upon request.

Former Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker has not yet deposited his papers with an archives and it is likely that he will leave them with a Saskatchewan depository. The Public Archives will undoubtedly cooperate with such a depository to ensure that at least copies of his papers are available in Ottawa.

Also the PAC holds manuscript collections for a wide variety of Canadians, many of them being political figures or public officials, which could well provide material relating to Mennonites. As suggested previously, any attempts at cross referencing are inadequate and suspect and thus one must investigate the existence and extent of manuscript collections for those figures who were involved in the issue being examined. A valuable guide in this regard is the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories* recently published by the PAC in its second edition. One hundred and seventy-one (171) archives participated and it contains approximately 27,000 entries. At the price of $50.00 for the two volume publication it is obviously out of reach of the individual researcher but most Canadian university libraries should carry a copy for consultation. This publication will indicate the existence and extent as well as the location of manuscript collections in all of the participating archives. Obviously, the entries have to be brief but they nonetheless provide an invaluable guide to the serious researcher.

(To be continued)

Books in Review

MENNONITES IN CANADA, 1786-1920

Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920; the History of a Separate People.* Toronto, Macmillan, 1974. 480 pp. $9.95

Frank Epp's new book, *Mennonites in Canada,* is a unique achievement. It is the first synthesis of an entire span of events covering activities of Mennonites from Ontario to Alberta. (There was little or no Mennonite activity in British Columbia until after 1920 and movement east of Ontario has only begun very recently.) Epp deals with all segments of the Mennonite mosaic. He furthermore attempts to see the events of over a hundred years in the context of the larger Canadian setting. This is no small endeavor. It is made possible by the author's use of hitherto untouched sources in the Public Archives of Canada and in many other Mennonite and non-Mennonite archives. The book is firmly rooted in the context of the Canadian period it covers. Time and again Frank Epp deals with the issues besetting the Mennonite people, such as the school language question in Manitoba, the tensions of World War I, and many other intense debates our fathers had with government officials. He discusses cases where the minority voice was in danger of being drowned out, and how leaders like Ewert, Toews, Coffman, and others stood up for the principles by which they and their people sought to live.

All this is done with the scholarly thoroughness which bespeaks historical soundness and the touch of human interest which makes the book compelling reading for a wide audience in or outside the Mennonite church.

Much of Epp's success in achieving his goal of telling this multivariate story can be attributed to his excellent use of the thematic approach, which he weaves through the chronological sequence of events. He has chosen as his major theme the tension between separateness and acculturation.

The first Mennonites came to Ontario (the Upper Canada) to find "a more congenial political climate" offering "not only British privileges, freedom for Mennonite religion and an abundance of good land, but also the easier continuance of the German culture." (p. 54) This was in the period following 1783. The 1870 movement from Russia to Manitoba was largely undertaken for the same reasons. After 1900 the Northwest Territories (later known as Saskatchewan and Alberta) became another fruitful area for Mennonite settlement as the railroads branched out.

One focus of the tension Mennonites were in was the matter of election to municipal office. Historically, Mennonites viewed politics and government with suspicion. Even participation as a voter was questioned by some groups. It was at this point that acculturation became operative and the common phenomenon of Mennonites becoming Lutherans, Baptists or any other denomination without sanctions on elective office began.

Another major issue was that of maintaining German culture. The village system of Russia did much to assure a closed, secure community. The reserve system the Mennonites benefited from on the Canadian prairies kept the community intact to some degree, but the elements of change appeared soon. Municipal government broke down the autonomous village system in Manitoba. For some elements of the Mennonite church this shift was less of a problem than for others. Prosperity abetted the breakdown of the closed Mennonite community. Individualism challenged and in many cases replaced the group spirit and so there were social reverberations as well.

An attempt to deal with the onslaughts of the "outside world" can be seen in the move by some Mennonite groups to adopt "evangelical Protestant models," the Sunday School and an emphasis on missions. Epp compares this approach with that of the old order groups. Conservatism and resistance to change was the answer of these groups. A plain life style was mandatory in terms of approaches to farming, the home and clothing, for instance.

It is significant that throughout his narrative Frank Epp does not line up his facts and marshal all his evidence to come down on the side of the progressive elements in Canadian Mennonitism. On the contrary, groups such as the Old Order in Ontario, the Old Colony in Manitoba, the Sommerfelder in Manitoba, all get a fair hearing and are portrayed as maintaining particular tenets which they felt were required if integrity was to remain in the face of acculturation movements.

Another strand in the story is the Mennonite position

on education. In Russia a network of schools had been established and both the German and Russian languages were taught, with an emphasis on the former of course. This background was transposed to North America but here governments soon insisted on public school instruction in the English language. In Canada the attempts to deal with the situation were varied. Bible schools and high schools were founded with the training of church workers and teachers as their goals. One, the German-English Academy (later Rosthern Junior College) was obviously dedicated to linguistic dualism—compliance with the requirements of the state while maintaining the German Language.

A culmination of the separation-acculturation theme comes at the close of this period in Canadian Mennonite history with the Great War. Here there was relative agreement among the various Mennonite denominations that non-resistance must be adhered to. Although there was much misunderstanding as to how Canadian regulations applied to Mennonites, most groups opted for no cooperation in any aspect of the military venture. On the other hand there was also general agreement by those who received some clarification of the issues that the Mennonites had a duty to raise funds for relief of war victims. Throughout this period and even after 1918, German-speaking, non-resistant people were suspect in the Canadian milieu.

Tieing the various Mennonite strands together were the church organizations—the conferences, which gave spiritual leadership a sense of identity in spite of vast geographical distances. At this point Epp must adopt more of a continental approach for two reasons: (1) most of the Mennonite conferences active in Canada had an American origin or flavour; (2) there was a great cross fertilization of insights in this process which continues to this day.

For Mennonite readers this book is instrumental in achieving identity. It enables a Mennonite Brethren reader to see what he has in common with an Old Mennonite from Ontario, for example. For Ontario readers it tells how the "reserve system" worked in the West. Many Saskatchewan Mennonites found out for the first time that a reserve system existed in their province as well. It is the essence of well-told history to tell us from where we have come, to establish links with the past, to accurately juxtapose events and place them into a meaningful content. Frank Epp achieves these goals.

The book is sprinkled with summarizing charts and tables. Line drawings help to capture the spirit of the past. Each chapter has a list of detailed footnotes. A few of these lack careful editing. The chapter bibliographies are comprehensive. The index lacks in enough detail to make it meaningful.

One leaves this book with the immediate desire to hear the rest of the story, a wish which is to be fulfilled in Epp's concluding volume. Here we hope to read of Mennonites who have entered in other spheres of the world apart from agriculture and education and how they have or have not remained separate. For this is the essence of Mennonitism.

Lorne R. Buhr

ADVENTURE IN FAITH

H. J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure In Faith.* An account of the background in Europe and the development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba. Published for the church by D. W. Friesen and Sons Limited, Altona, Manitoba, 1970, 379 pages.

In his remarkable book of spiritual odyssey and contemporary philosophical synthesis, zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance, Robert Pirsig, his memory erased by electric shock therapy, pursues his past by visiting the scenes of his former life. Every city, every classroom, every mountain road revisited, and every person met, stimulates the deep recesses of memory too remote even for the gadgetry of modern Bedlam, and gradually Pirsig is able to reconstruct for himself a past, and an image of the man he was.

I thought of Pirsig as I was re-reading Henry Gerbrandt's *Adventure In Faith*, an account of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in Manitoba. Though the comparison may be a little extravagant, I remember very clearly reading this book for the first time when it came out five years ago and being excited about the reconstruction of *my* past. Suddenly I was acquiring a memory, the memory of my southern Manitoba community, its people, their traditions, their group characteristics and an account of their decisions and actions. Now the experiences of my youth and the particular character of my life in Altona were made understandable, as I read about the Russian Mennonites, primarily from the poor and backward colony of Bergthal, who emigrated to southern Manitoba in the 1870's and had fashioned a society of some seventy-five years' duration by the time I came along. To discover one's past like this, to be given an orderly attic to rummage through, is a very exciting and enlightening experience. I will never forget that first reading, nor will I ever forget the debt of gratitude I owe H. J. Gerbrandt for having written the book. My review, therefore, can be no more detached nor objective of Gerbrandt's efforts, than is his account of the Bergthaler Church's past.

Adventure In Faith is not history in the classic sense, for Gerbrandt is not an historian but a chronicler. It is a partisan account of the life of the Bergthaler Church written by a man who has loved and served this institution for all of his life. He has known most of the main characters and the bit-players upon the Bergthaler stage. Gerbrandt cannot be an E. K. Francis, the informed outsider, the detached academic. He cares very passionately for the church and its future, as his many little lectures to the membership throughout the book attest (he cannot resist the pastor's impulse to avail himself of every opportunity for instruction and exhortation). Assuming and understanding his position, I don't think one need take up a lot of space in documenting Gerbrandt's lack of objectivity. Fortunately for posterity, he has avoided the pitfalls of sheer propaganda, willful manipulation of facts and hagiography but there is simply no denying all the evidence that he must have felt the eyes of the entire Bergthaler membership peering over his shoulders as he was writing.

Some would criticise *Adventure In Faith* on this very

account, but I think one must acknowledge the value of such a chronicle and hope for the gaps to be filled in by some disinterested historian in the years to come. Francis, of course, has already done the spadework. But as much as Gerbrandt chooses to give us, from his position of intimacy within the church, it is more than the most perceptive and enterprising historian could give. The debt we owe Einhard for his biography of Charlemagne is a debt similar to that we owe Gerbrandt for his account of the life of the Bergthaler Church.

Gerbrandt is a superb chronicler because he understands the psychology of his people intimately, he recognizes the important themes and incidents in the history of his people, and he has probably the best access of anyone to the source material. His natural love for his church and his consideration for those still living sometimes gets in the way of his better judgment and destroys the impact of many good potential anecdotes and portraits, but yet, as Sidney Painter said of Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, "his account has the ring of truth." Anyone who has lived in southern Manitoba or has known its people can attest to that.

The author has done a good job in sorting out the often confusing denominational developments among those Mennonites who came in the 1870's. To add to the confusion, many of these congregations have taken on names which do not relate directly to their origin or development. This is where his acquaintance with those elders who still possess the original church registers is so important; others might have found it difficult to have access to that material.

He has painstakingly written the record of some difficult chapters in the Bergthaler experience, in particular the era of spiritual and social breakdown in the West Reserve in the last years of the nineteenth century, the history of private and public school education, and the collapse of the *Waisenamt* in the West Reserve.

In his foreword to *Adventure In Faith* Gerbrandt acknowledges a nostalgia for the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church of his youth. The Sommerfelder Church was born when many West Reserve Mennonites resisted the renewal movement led by men like Johann Funk and H. H. Ewert. Those who identified with the forces of renewal were the first Bergthalers, and those who resisted the movement (many simply could not tolerate its leadership) were the first Sommerfelders. It would be an easy temptation for a Bergthaler chronicler to scorn the values of the Sommerfelder people, for their conservative and reactionary ways, for their resistance to the principles of progressive education, for their resistance to the development of a musical culture in their worship ritual, and for their lack of emphasis on discipleship in the individual Christian life. But because of his association with the Sommerfelder Church in his youth, Gerbrandt retains a sympathy and respect for its membership. This is important to his account because it was precisely this kind of a people (and not those who were attracted to Ewert) who first came to Manitoba from the Bergthal Colony. Gerbrandt's sympathy for their attitudes and values, while not affirming them, is important to our understanding a particular dimension of the Mennonite experience that is often glibly derided by those who administer our conference institutions and by those who are, by temperament and tradition, more progressive and sophisticated. While there is much to reject in the tradition of the Sommerfelder Church and other even more conservative off-shoots, there are some values that are worth considering. I'm not certain which of them Gerbrandt would find attractive, perhaps their ability to isolate themselves from the glamours of mainstream culture more successfully than their progressive brethren. I have always found to be attractive their natural cynicism for the new and novel, and I also laud their congenital inability to assume the manners and habits of false piety that afflict Mennonites of a more evangelical persuasion.

There are many omissions which anyone with an historical interest might find in this book, also issues and contemporary events which the author has chosen to avoid evaluating with the vigour that is required (the movement to write a constitution and the important meeting of 17 May, 1958, related to it, is a good example). I would very much have appreciated his insight into what I think was the most important spiritual shift among those who came in the 1870's, the shift from a Christianity rooted in the values of culture and the group, to a Christianity measured by one's personal relationship with God and the standards of one's personal life. This development affected profoundly all of us who grew up in the 40's, 50's and 60's confronting us as it did, not so much with the spirit of Anabaptism as with the spirit of an evangelical Christianity that was being imported from alien sources.

A chronicle is like a family album: there are many pointed omissions, and there is a lot of irrelevant detail that is of interest only to the immediate family. And yet, for all of its inherent imperfections, *Adventure In Faith* is a most important addition to the Mennonite historical record, and an important contribution in helping us understand ourselves. And for those of us who grew up in southern Manitoba, Gerbrandt has given us a past. He neither could nor need have done any more than that.

Eric D. Friesen

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