MENNONITE LIFE

DECEMBER 1980

In this Issue

That Mennonites have, through the centuries, been basically an apolitical people, is an oft-repeated statement of their historiography, and for many people an unchallenged facet of their self-image. This issue will not really dissolve that notion since there is much evidence to support that truth.

More recently all that has changed somewhat, as increasingly active Canadian Mennonite community leaders at least, have found themselves quite caught up in the political stream not only at local but also provincial and the national level. The latter story is yet to be fully told, but the career of Cornelius Hiebert, as an Alberta MLA, originally from the Gretna, Manitoba area, helps to put some pieces together. The "political" art of Jacob Bock points to another even less familiar dimension, while the *Waisenamt* account, as an institutional experience comes more directly from the socio-economic strands of Mennonite life in Canada.

A review of the new volume, *Mennonite Images*, and the fine work of a rookie professional photographer, Jean Funk, recall the broad kaleidoscopic reality which constitutes community existence in any setting or with any group. The articles on "Didsbury Beginnings" and "The Peter Epp Story" are published in awareness that 1980 is the 75th anniversary year of the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. An ongoing stream of other Mennonite publications is dipped into by our reviewers as well. The Didsbury article first appeared in *Echoes of an Era History of Didsbury and District*, 1969, and the Epp article, Mennonite Historian, June and September, 1980.

The editor wishes here also to thank all the contributors who have helped to put together the annual Canadian December issue of *Mennonite Life* during the past six years.

—Lawrence Klippenstein

Notes on the authors

D. Jean Funk is a professional photographer in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Jacob Peters is a graduate student in history at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

Lorne R. Buhr is a Documents Reference Librarian at the Alberta Legislature Library in Edmonton, Alberta.

Reginold Good is a law student at the University of Toronto. He edited the book on fraktur, *Anna Weber's Art*.

Gilbert Epp, Calgary, Alberta, is finance chairman of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

Burton Shantz, Berlin, Ontario, is a son of Jacob Y. Schantz the pioneer immigrant leader who helped to establish the Mennonite community at Didsbury, Alberta.

MENNONITE LIFE

December 1980 Vol. 35 No. 4

Editor
Robert Kreider

Canadian Editor
Lawrence Klippenstein

Front Cover

From the D. Jean Funk Belize Mennonite Collection.

Back Cover

Bronze statue by the Soviet sculptor, Evgeniy Vuchetich, "Let us Beat Our Swords into Plowshares," a gift of the Soviet Union which was installed in the north garden of UN Headquarters in 1959.

Photo Credits

Pp. 4-7: Jean Funk; pp.8-14, 24-27: Mennonite Heritage Centre; pp. 15-19: Provincial Archives of Alberta; pp. 20-23: Reginold Good.

MENNONITE LIFE is an illustrated quarterly magazine published in March, June, September and December by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Second Class postage paid at Newton, Kansas 67114.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, $6.00; Two years, $10.00 (U.S. funds)

ISSN 0025-9365

An introduction to

'Mennonites in Belize'

a D. Jean Funk photograph exhibit in the Mennonite Heritage Centre 600 Shaftesbury Blvd. Winnipeg, Manitoba

family life . . .

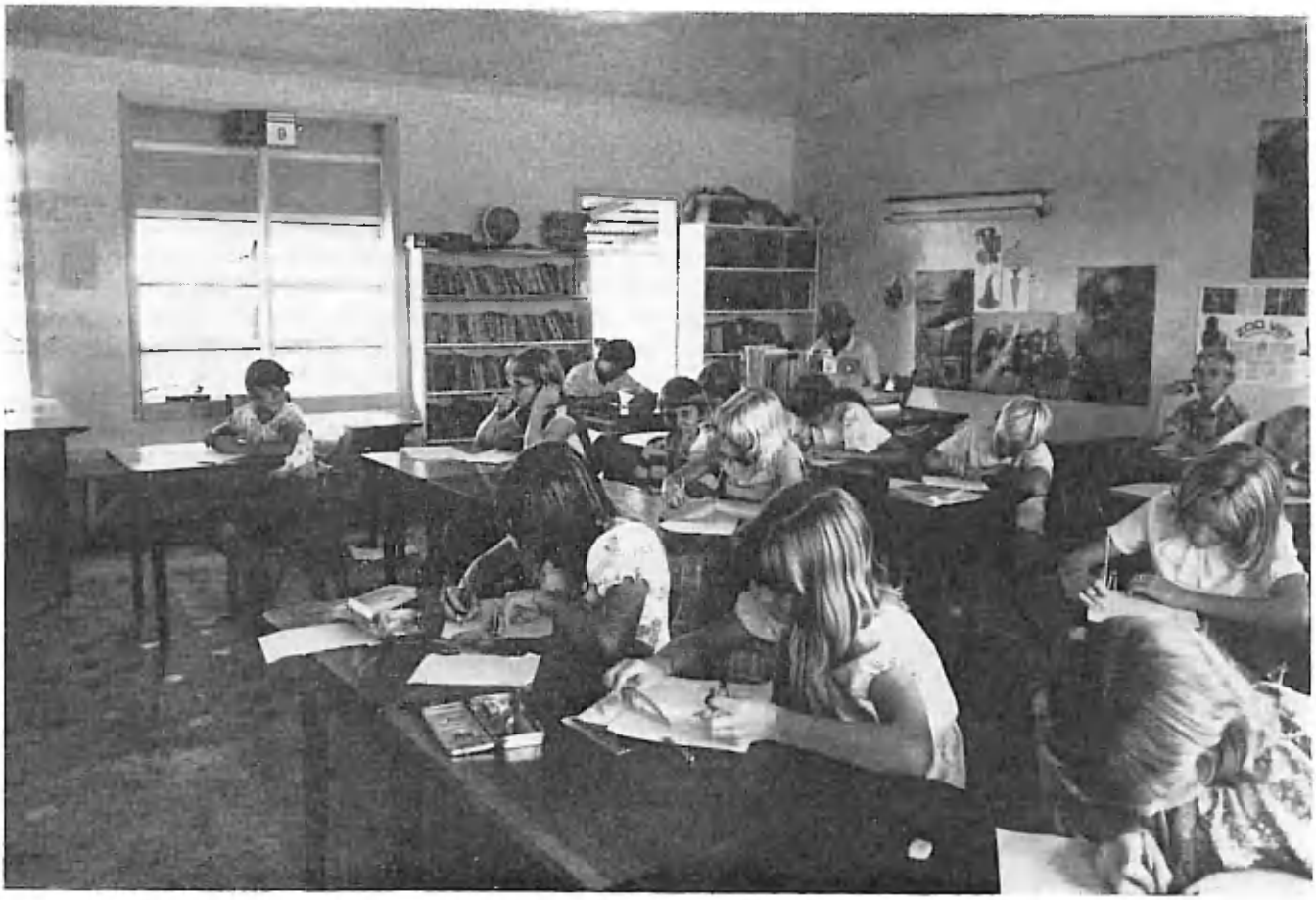
. . . the peanut harvest is a family affair

above . . . at play

right . . . at the fountain

below . . . the school bus

school life . . .



The Sommerfelder Waisenamt: Origins, Development and Dissolution

by Jacob Peters

The Russian Mennonites who settled in Manitoba in the 1870s brought with them the social institutions they had adopted during their eighty-five year sojourn in Russia. All of these institutions, whether their system of local government, education, fire insurance, or inheritance laws, existed to strengthen their community structure. The Manitoba Mennonite concept of community was egalitarian and oriented towards ensuring that there was social justice for everyone.

The *Waisenamt* (orphan's bureau) was established to administer the estates of widows and orphans. All the rules regarding inheritance were set forth in its *Waisenverordnung*[1] (orphans' decrees or regulations). The central principle set forth in the *Verordnung* was that of equal division of estates. In the event of the death of a parent, one-half of the estate was to be left to the surviving parent and the other half was to be equally divided among the children.

When one or both parents in a family died two guardians were to be nominated. These guardians were to ensure that the inheritance rules were observed and that everyone's interests were protected. This included the task of assuring that the minor children who had lost a parent would receive a Christian upbringing and the normal village school education. Only if it appeared that there was no possibility for a proper upbringing with the surviving parent was the child placed in another home. This happened only rarely.

The *Verordnung* not only stipulated clearly that the children should be properly taken care of but also stated that the inheritances of minor children should be administered by the *Waisenamt*. Their money was to be invested with a guaranteed return of five percent per year. This money then was usually available for six percent loans to people in the community.

The *Verordnung* also set forth qualifications for the people who served as guardians and for its employees, the *Waisenvorsteher* (*Waisenamt* managers). They were to be conscientious men of good character. They would have to bear responsibility for others. This task was not to be entrusted to people of doubtful character. The *Waisenvorsteher* were to be ordained by the church leadership.

The *Waisenamt* in time adopted an additional role in the community. Not only did it take the money of orphans and widows on deposit, but, it also began to accept deposits from other church members at the same rate of interest. This was, however, never understood to be the major function of the *Waisenamt*. In actual fact, the *Waisenverordnung* did not even mention the practice. This function, however, made the *Waisenamt* the financial backbone of the Manitoba Mennonite communities.

Historical Origins of the Waiseamt

The *Waisenamt*, seems to have Prussian origins although evidence is lacking for its organizational establishment in that region. The principle of equal division of estates which existed in Prussian law was later incorporated into the *Waisenamt*.[2]

The first *Waisenamt* was organized on August 31, 1792, at Chortitza, several years after the first Mennonites arrived in Russia. Its stated function was "to do justice to the orphans and widows and to give testimony to God and society that all was done with honesty and integrity."[3] The *Waisenamt* came to be regarded as a sacred institution that was based on the doctrine of brotherly love. The Molotschna Mennonites in a petition to the Russian government stated:

> We are unable to depart in the least detail from our rules regarding inheritance . . . these regulations are closely connected with our religious beliefs and principles and are even based on them. . . .[4]

In Russia, whenever the original Mennonite colonies established daughter colonies, the *Waisenamt* assets would be divided. This happened when Chortitza established Bergthal as a daughter colony in 1836. A separate Bergthal *Waisenamt* was established in 1842.[5]

When the people of the Bergthal colony emigrated to Manitoba in the years 1874-78, the resources of their *Waisenamt* were used to help finance the trip. To begin with the church leadership requested that those people who had substantial deposits in the *Waisenamt* donate one-quarter of those assets to help finance the emigration. This was done only with the depositors' permission, however. The Bergthal *Waisenamt* also had in a deposit fund five thousand rubles previously collected to buy land for landless families. This money was also applied to the emigration budget. Then the members were requested not to withdraw more money from the *Waisenamt* than absolutely essential, and that these monies be redeposited in Manitoba at the earliest possible date. Finally it was announced that all interest payments would be suspended for a period of four or five years.[6]

These measures had put the *Waisenamt* to use for community benefit. All the widows, orphans and poor had been able to emigrate along with the more prosperous. Upon arrival in Manitoba the *Waisenamt* continued to function just as it had in Bergthal. Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe later asserted in his memoirs that no one lost any money other than in the cases mentioned above.

Beginnings in Manitoba

The Bergthal people settled in two separate reserves in Manitoba about fifty miles from each other on opposite sides of the Red River. During the years 1874-89 they had only one *Waisenamt* serving both reserves. Distance factors and the steadily increasing number of people moving west across the Red River made it necessary to establish a second *Waisenamt*. All the accounts of persons living in the West Reserve were now transferred to the newly established *Waisenamt* there.

In 1892 a church split occurred within the West Reserve Bergthal group. The two resulting groups, the Sommerfelder and the Bergthaler, decided not to divide their *Waisenamt*, but to retain only the organization for both churches. This arrangement did not last much beyond the turn of the century. Both of the *Waisenvorsteher* were Sommerfelder members. On a number of occasions the Bergthaler church *Lehrdienst* (ministers and deacons) felt that better leadership was needed. They decided to appoint their own "advisor" to the *Waisenamt*. A short while later a committee was created to examine whether the *Waisenamt's* system of operation was in conflict with the law. Unfortunately, its report is not available.[7]

In 1905 the Bergthaler church brotherhood decided to seek incorporation for the *Waisenamt*, but the Sommerfelder church opposed the move. The *Waisenvorsteher*, Heinrich D. Dueck, although a Sommerfelder member, favoured incorporation. In October 1906, *Der Mitarbeiter*[8] noted that both churches had been preoccupied with the incorporation question for some time. Obviously agreement had not been reached. The article presented the case for incorporation. Arguments favoring incorporation were: it would expedite the transfer of lands purchased from the *Waisenamt;* it would establish better safeguards against the possibility of administrators using the treasury for personal gain; and it would eliminate the possibility that the heirs of a *Waisenvorsteher* could, in the event of his death, administer certain *Waisenamt* funds.[9]

In December an election was held for the position of *Waisenvorsteher*. H. D. Dueck received 229 out of

The opening statements of a 1913 edition of the Waisenamt Ordnung *of the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church of Manitoba*

Waiſenverordnung

der

Sommerfelder Mennoniten Gemeinde

in der Provinz

Manitoba, Canada.

Einleitung.

Da unſere Vorfahren, die ungefähr im Jahre 1785 aus Deutſchland nach Rußland zogen, ihre Waiſenverordnung von dort mitbrachten und dieſe im Kaiſerreiche Rußland volle Anerkennung von ſeiten der Regierung fand, welche dieſelbe beſtätigte zur beſtimmten Richtſchnur in allen mennonitiſchen Erbſchafts- und Teilungsangelegenheiten der Waiſen und Witwen; daher brachten unſere Väter, als ſie im Jahre 1874 aus Rußland nach Canada einwanderten, dieſe Waiſenverordnung mit hierher und machten ſie, anfänglich wie ſie war, ſpäter aber etwas verändert zur beſtimmten Richtſchnur in allen Erbſchafts- und Teilungsangelegenheiten der Waiſen und Witwen unter ihnen mit folgendem bibliſchen Spruch zum Grundſatz. Jeſaia 1, 17: Lernet Gutes tun, trachtet nach Recht, helfet den Unterdrückten, ſchaffet den Waiſen Recht und helfet der Witwe Sachen.

The meeting house of the Sommerfelder congregation at Grossweide (ca. 1903).

485 votes cast whereas his nearest opponent got a mere forty votes. Dueck made incorporation of the *Waisenamt* a condition of his continued service. He informed the *Lehrdienst* of both churches that if they did not agree with his policy they could order new elections on the basis of the powers given them by the *Waisenverordnung*.[10]

The churches decided to have a vote on the incorporation question. A clear majority of the *Waisenamt* members opposed incorporation. The decision was then made, apparently on the initiative of the Bergthaler, to divide the *Waisenamt*. On February 1, 1907 the announcement was made, at the direction of the leadership of both churches, that henceforth there would be an incorporated Bergthaler *Waisenamt* and an unincorporated Sommerfelder *Waisenamt*.[11] The rapidity with which the incorporation of the Bergthaler *Waisenamt* proceeded suggests that the process had been in motion for some time. By February 13, 1907 the "Act to Incorporate the Bergthaler Waisenamt" had been passed in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly (i.e. twelve days after the official announcement was made). Dueck took over as *Vorsteher* of the Bergthaler *Waisenamt*, and shortly thereafter transferred his membership to the Bergthaler church.

The division of funds was decided by the preference of the individual depositors. Dueck suggested to the people that the Bergthaler *Waisenamt* was the safer investment. In spite of this, roughly two-thirds of the money ended up in the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt*.[12]

The Sommerfelder Waisenamt

The Sommerfelder church had chosen to retain the traditional *Waisenverordnung* as its constitutional document, rather than a piece of provincial government legislation. The difference between the 1907 Act of Incorporation and the *Waisenverordnung* is significant. The former is based on capitalist business principles, the latter on a vision of Christian community. In the Act the chief concerns are legal, in the *Verordnung* they are moral and spiritual.

The *Verordnung* retained by the Sommerfelder church begins a perspective of Christian faith and claims scriptural principle as its basis. "Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow". Isaiah 1:17[13] This was to provide the rationale for action.

In times past the *Waisenamt* had served for the benefit of the whole community. The 1870 emigration was a case in point. The *Waisenamt* had a close relationship with other institutions. It shared in the task of financing the private schools (1916), and played a role in the gathering of money for the 1917 *Dankopferkollekte*[14] (thank offering collection). It served all the other Mennonite church institutions in financial matters.

This, however, became progressively less true as the amount of capital in the *Waisenamt* grew. It tended increasingly to become the servant of the entrepreneurs and the wealthy rather than the widows

and orphans or the community as a whole. The rapid accumulation of wealth raised the spectre of a *Waisenamt* which had lost its central function.

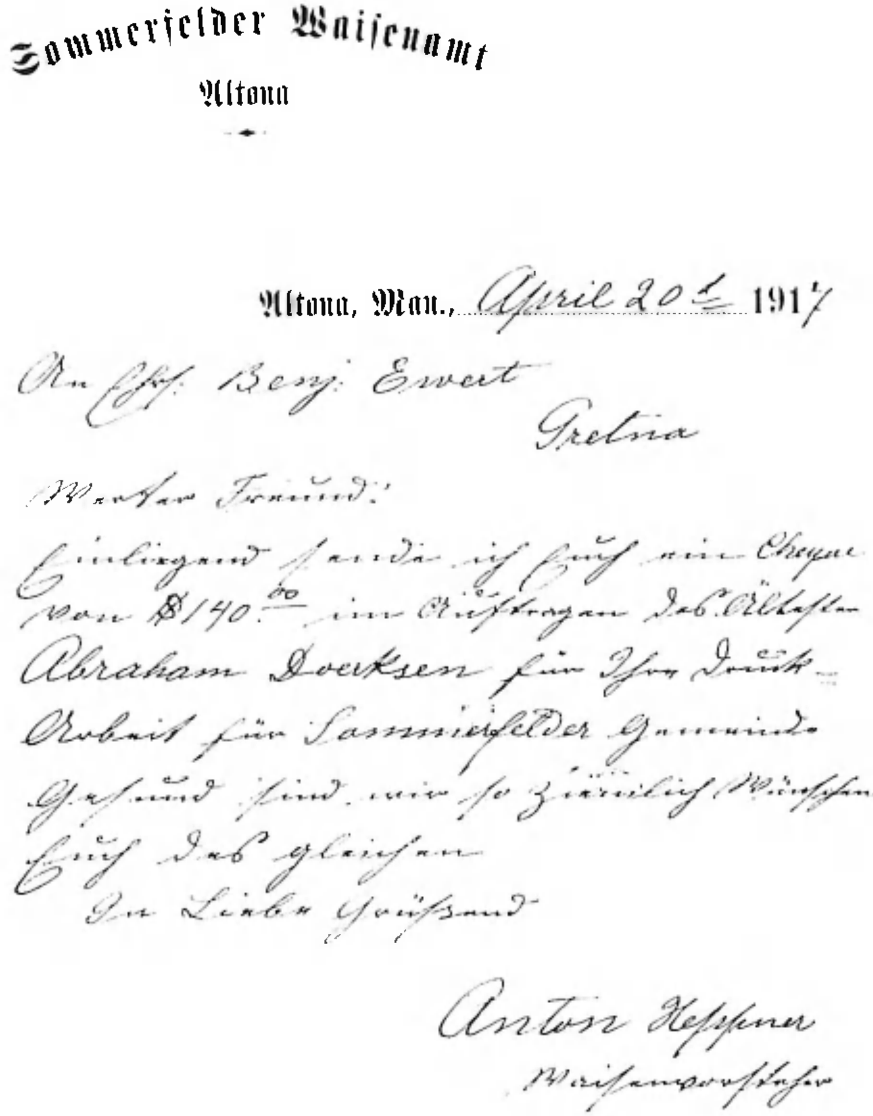
In 1913 the Sommerfelder church printed its own *Waisenverordnung*. The text of it duplicated the earlier *Mennonitische Waisenverordnung*. There were, however, two important notes added at the end. These notes read as follows:

> Because our Mennonite *Waisenverordnung* is not in agreement with the law of the land, and since this could cause complications should a (parental) death occur in a family where no will exists that each father examine our *Waisenregel*, and that whoever is satisfied with it, return the booklet with his signature and the signatures of two non-partisan witnesses to the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt*. It will be assumed that those fathers who do not sign our *Waisenverordnung*, desire that in the event of their death, their estate be settled according to the law of the land.[15]

These notes reveal that the *Waisenamt* had recognized an important point, namely that the church could not legally require members to settle their estates through the *Waisenamt*. If they applied the *Waisenverordnung* in the division of an estate without a clearly stated will they violated the law.

The organization as a whole experienced remarkable growth during the pre-war years. By 1914 it had secured its own office building in Altona. In 1917 a sister body, the Reinländer Mennonite Church, passed a regulation forbidding anyone, except orphans and widows, to have money in the *Waisenamt*.[16] This apparently resulted in many Reinländer members putting large deposits in the Bergthaler *Waisenamt* and to a lesser extent in the Sommerfelder one as well. Members of other Mennonite churches, as well as a few non-Mennonites, also deposited money in the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt*.

This phenomenal growth, added to the legal ambiguity that continued to surround the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt*, persuaded the church leaders in 1921 that they needed to be incorporated after all. The Act to Incorporate the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt* (1921) was identical to the earlier Act of 1907. In 1928 the Act was amended giving the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt* broader powers, allowing it to


Sommerfelder Waisenamt
Altona

Altona, Man., April 20th 1917

An Aelt. Benj. Ewert
Gretna

Werter Freund!
Einliegend sende ich Euch ein Cheque von $140.00 im Auftragen Jac. Aeltesten Abraham Doerksen für Ihre Druck-Arbeit für Sommerfelder Gemeinde. Gesund sind wir so ziemlich Wünschen Euch das gleichen
In Liebe Grüßend

Anton Heppner
Waisenvorsteher

A letter of April 20, 1917 from Waisenamt director Anton Hoeppner to Aeltester Benjamin Ewert. It notes that $140.00 is being enclosed for the publication of material for the Sommerfelder Church (i.e., at Ewert's printing press in Gretna, presumably).

> ... receive money on deposit; to loan money on real, personal and mixed securities; ... to borrow or raise money and to give as security therefore any mortgage or mortgages, promisory note or notes or obligations whether now held by the company or which may be hereafter held by the company, and to ... sell or dispose of any of the securities herein before enumerated.[17]

The ever increasing prosperity and high land values assured that the importance of the *Waisenamt* as a *lending* institution would only increase. By the mid-1920s staggering sums of money were out on loan against mortgages and promisory notes. The *Waisenamt* had some $490,000 out on loan in 1913. By 1924 this figure had risen to $1,072,000.

Roughly the same levels of investment in the *Waisenamt* were maintained until 1929. Then the depression brought disaster to the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt*, as it did to so many other institutions the world over. Land values dropped radically. Prices of the farmers'

Heinrich Dueck (d.1929) and his wife Helena (d.1940). Heinrich was Waisenamt Vorsteher *for a number of years.*

produce fell to almost nothing. In a short time a host of farmers faced financial ruin. Understandably the values of many of the mortgages held by the *Waisenamt* dropped greatly. Most of the debts owed to it were simply not collectable. Then, to make matters worse there was a rush on deposits in the *Waisenamt*. All available funds quickly disappeared.

Part of the problem lay in the fact that there were no frozen reserve funds. The cash reserves were small and were allowed to fluctuate. In 1928 only three percent of the money administered was in readily available funds. This small amount of money could not last long in the circumstances described above.

By the fall of 1932 the church realized that the *Waisenamt* was in serious trouble. At a church brotherhood meeting steps were taken to solve what Elder P. A. Toews referred to as *"die verschiedene Schwierigkeiten des Waisenamts"* (various difficulties of the *Waisenamt*). Firstly, the attempt was to be made to sell all lands taken on bad mortgages, with the provision that the purchaser would be responsible for all unpaid back taxes. Secondly, every church member was expected to contribute two dollars to help alleviate the financial problems of the *Waisenamt*. Thirdly, the decision was made to reduce the salaries of the *Waisenvorsteher*.[18]

At a subsequent brotherhood meeting several additional measures were taken. It was agreed that no interest would be paid for a period of four years. Also in an attempt to encourage repayment of debts to the *Waisenamt*, it was decided to give a credit of $1.25 for every dollar of debt repaid.[19]

In these circumstances it became virtually impossible for the *Waisenamt* to pay out funds, as William Dyck of Vernon, British Columbia found out. Complaining to the Manitoba Provincial Treasurer that he could not withdraw any of his money from the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt*, Dyck discovered that the government did not really know much about the financial status of the *Waisenamt*. Its reply stated:

> The Sommerfelder *Waisenamt* was incorporated by Private Act and, as far as we are concerned is in good standing . . .[20]

Dyck wrote another letter from from which one gets a glimpse of the problems that *Waisenamt* depositors were feeling. He wrote,

> I wrote this firm, and requested some money from them . . . I have inherited this money from my brother that died last fall. Now I have a family to keep, and have no money to live on, even living on relief of the B.C. government, and am in need of some money, and cannot get any from them.[21]

Dyck was not alone in experiencing the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." Many elderly people

found that, for the time being, their life's savings could not be retrieved. Those who were poor, the widows, and orphans, were the ones who really suffered because of the *Waisenamt's* failure.

The financial statements for 1934 and 1935 show the magnitude of the disaster. In 1934 the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt* lost land valued at $11,517 because it could not pay the back taxes on it. The 1935 financial statement showed $75,000 in loans written off as uncollectable. In their attempts to retrieve frozen assets, individual depositors developed some rather interesting practices. A person who had credit in the *Waisenamt* would make a deal with another who had a debt to it. They would then arrange to have the first person's credit applied to the other's debt. The debtor would have agreed beforehand that for every dollar his debt was reduced he wou'd pay his friend seventy-five cents.

More disturbing were cases where people decided that they did not want to repay their debt. Some simply decided that the easiest course of action was to let the *Waisenamt* take their land. Others would sometimes join other churches and feel that with their departure from the Sommerfelder church their responsibility to repay debts to its *Waisenamt* was also gone. They could rationalize their actions with the words of Sacred Writ, "The old has passed away, behold the new has come."[22] Presumably this could include financial debt! This scenario was possible because of the gradual erosion of church authority in the West Reserve. Due to the multiplicity of churches the degree of social control found in earlier decades was no longer present.

In 1935 a non-Sommerfelder, H. H. Wall from Elm Creek, decided to take the *Waisenamt* to court to obtain the $410 it owed him. The court case revealed the financial situation of the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt;* it was insolvent. On January 2, 1936 a petition was filed in the Manitoba Court of King's Bench requesting that the *Waisenamt* be wound up and that a permanent liquidator be appointed.[23]

W. S. Newton of Winnipeg was appointed as liquidator. The task of salvaging as many of the investors' dollars as possible was delegated to him. From this point on, the church's role in the Waisenamt became a passive one. At several points it did take an initiative to act, but this never had any great or lasting effect.

By 1939 depositors had received dividend payments totalling nine percent of their assets. By 1948 only ten of the initial one hundred mortgages remained to be disposed of. The liquidation process was slow, but all things considered, relatively successful.

When W. S. Newton resigned as liquidator in 1948, due to illness, Judge Dysart (King's Bench) praised Newton's achievements.

> In all my years of directing liquidations, I have never had a liquidation, which was conducted with so much advantage to the creditors as the present one has been.[24]

The Montreal Trust Company was appointed now to complete the liquidation.

On December 4, 1950 the final dividend was made to the creditors. They had received total returns of 50.5 percent of every dollar they had on deposit in the *Waisenamt*.[25] This was indeed high when one considers that for the Bergthaler *Waisenamt* the total returns had been only about ten percent.[26]

The Sommerfelder Church regretted the loss of its *Waisenamt*. In 1945 someone suggested that the church try to regain control of the *Waisenamt* and reorganize it. This never happened.

Late in 1950 the church managed to secure the return of the *Waisenamt* books. The brotherhood decided that the time had come to close a chapter of what had developed into an unhappy history. All the *Waisenamt* records were accordingly destroyed.[27]

Measured by the criterion of financial success the Sommerfelder *Waisenamt* ended in failure. Several factors help to explain what happened. In the first place the *Waisenamt* lacked any safeguards against a calamity like the depression. It needed a frozen financial reserve. Its cash reserves were not dependable because they were allowed to fluctuate. The three percent reserve available in 1929 was hopelessly inadequate.

Secondly, the *Waisenamt* needed better security on its loans, especially when it began to extend its services outside of the church community. With loans given to cover the entire value of land purchased, a large drop in prices brought about a situation where it was more advantageous for the farmer to forfeit his land than to try to repay the loan. Loans out on promisory notes were much too large. The fact that many of them could not be collected sealed the fate of the *Waisenamt*.

Thirdly, the *Waisenamt* should not have been allowed to become the financial burden which it was in the end. It should have been restricted to serve the church community only. In that context it could have served a positive function without risking the disaster that occurred. It was necessary that those participating in the *Waisenamt* should feel a measure of responsibility for it. As it was, all church control over it failed in the depression.

Finally, and most significant, was the way in which attitudes towards the *Waisenamt* changed. Its purpose was a noble one. It was responsible for caring for those who were most vulnerable in the community: the poor, the widows, and the orphans. This task was given second place as prosperity increased. The *Waisenamt* was transformed into a financial institution for the benefit of enterprising individuals. When it failed as a finance company both the noble and the profane aspects of it were destroyed. The whole edifice fell.

Regretably in this fall it was the widows, the orphans, and the poor who suffered most. The charge that the "Mennonite *Waisenamt* banks . . . confused the care of bank deposits and the care of souls,"[28] is truer than one might wish to admit. The subordination of Christian principle to the pursuit economic rewards brought about the demise of the *Waisenamt* in Canada.

In other settings the *Waisenamt* continues to function meaningfully as a Mennonite mutual aid institution. The Sommerfelder Mennonites who moved to Mexico in 1923, and to Paraguay in 1926 as well as 1948 asked for the right to maintain their *Waisenamt* as a condition of settlement, and still use it to fulfill its original purpose.[29]

FOOTNOTES

[1]*Mennonitische Waisenverordnung in der Provinz Manitoba,* Canada. (Winkler, Volkszeitung Publishing House, n.d.) All the information in this section of the article is based on the *Verordnung.*

[2]E. K. Francis, "Mennonite Institutions in Early Manitoba: a study of their origins", *Agricultural History* XXII (July 1948), 150.

[3]H. J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith,* (Altona, 1970) 279.

[4]Francis, "Mennonite Institutions", 154.

[5]William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony,* (Winnipeg, 1974) 27.

[6]Gerhard Wiebe, *Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika,* (Winnipeg, 1900), 27-28.

[7]Gerbrandt, 280ff.

[8]*Der Mitarbeiter* had been founded in 1906, and was edited by H. H. Ewert, a Bergthaler minister and teacher at Gretna, Manitoba. He continued to edit the periodical till his death in 1934, at which time it terminated publication.

[9]"Nachrichten aus den Gemeinden", *Der Mitarbeiter* I (October 1906), 2.

[10]"Nachrichten aus den Gemeinden", *Der Mitarbeiter* I December 1906), 29. cf. *Mennonitische Waisenverordnung* Chapter 1, paragraph 4.

[11]"Nachrichten aus den Gemeinden", *Der Mitarbeiter* I (February 1907), 4.

[12]"Nachrichten aus den Gemeinden", *Der Mitarbeiter* I (April 1907), 55.

[13]*Waisenverordnung der Sommerfelder Mennoniten Gemeinde* in der Provinz Manitoba, Canada. (Winnipeg, 1913), 1.

[14]The *Dankopferkollekte* was an offering of nearly $6,000 sent to the Canadian government to be used for relief purposes in World War I.

[15]*Waisenverordnung der Sommerfelder . . .*, 20.

[16]Gerbrandt, 283. The Reinlaender Mennonite Church (also called Old Colony) had settled on the West Reserve during and after 1875 and organized its own *Waisenamt* at that time.

[17]*Statutes of Manitoba,* 1923.

[18]Minutes of Sommerfelder Church Brotherhood meetings, 1932; in the possession of Agnes Toews, Altona, Manitoba.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Deputy Provincial Secretary to Wm. Dyck, 21 November 1933. File 3027, Records of Government of Manitoba, Corporations Branch, Woodsworth Building, Winnipeg.

[21]William Dyck to the Deputy Provincial Secretary, 14 December 1933. Ibid.

[22]Interview data.

[23]Sommerfelder minutes, 1932.

[24]Petition of The Sommerfelder Waisenamt, Winding Up Act materials, Box 320, Records of the Court of King's Bench, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

[25]*Western Weekly Reports,* 1948, 944.

[26]Harvey Toews, "The Bergthaler Mennonites," unpublished term paper; Goshen College, n.d.

[27]Interview data.

[28]E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia,* (Altona, 1955) 218.

[29]This is true also of the Reinlaender (Old Colony) Mennonites who moved from Canada to Mexico, and then later from there to Belize and Bolivia. Some of the problems in Mexico are discussed in Harry Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country. Mennonite Colonization in Mexico,* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1971), 145-146.

Cornelius Hiebert in the Alberta Legislature (1905-1909)

by Lorne R. Buhr

Little or no attempt has been made till now to assess either the impact of Mennonite politicians upon the general climate of government in Canada, or their influence on the church's self-understanding about "rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's" in actual experience. It is a fact, of course, that already in the period of Mennonite settlement in Canada, individuals of Mennonite background did involve themselves in the political arena, particularly on the provincial level. Examples relate to the origin of two Canadian provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta, in 1905. Members of the Mennonite community were elected in the first elections to the respective legislative assemblies of both these jurisdictions. For Saskatchewan, this individual was Gerhard Ens, a member of the Legislative Assembly for the Rosthern constituency. The first Mennonite elected to the Alberta House was Cornelius Hiebert, member of the Legislative Assembly for Rosebud from 1906 to 1909. Ens, who was not to be the last Mennonite elected in that riding, had gained some fame, particularly amongst his kinsmen because of his vigorous activities in the immigration waves at the turn of the century, and he is perhaps better known in Mennonite circles. Hiebert received less attention, so this essay will attempt to give a fuller picture of his activites especially in the political realm.

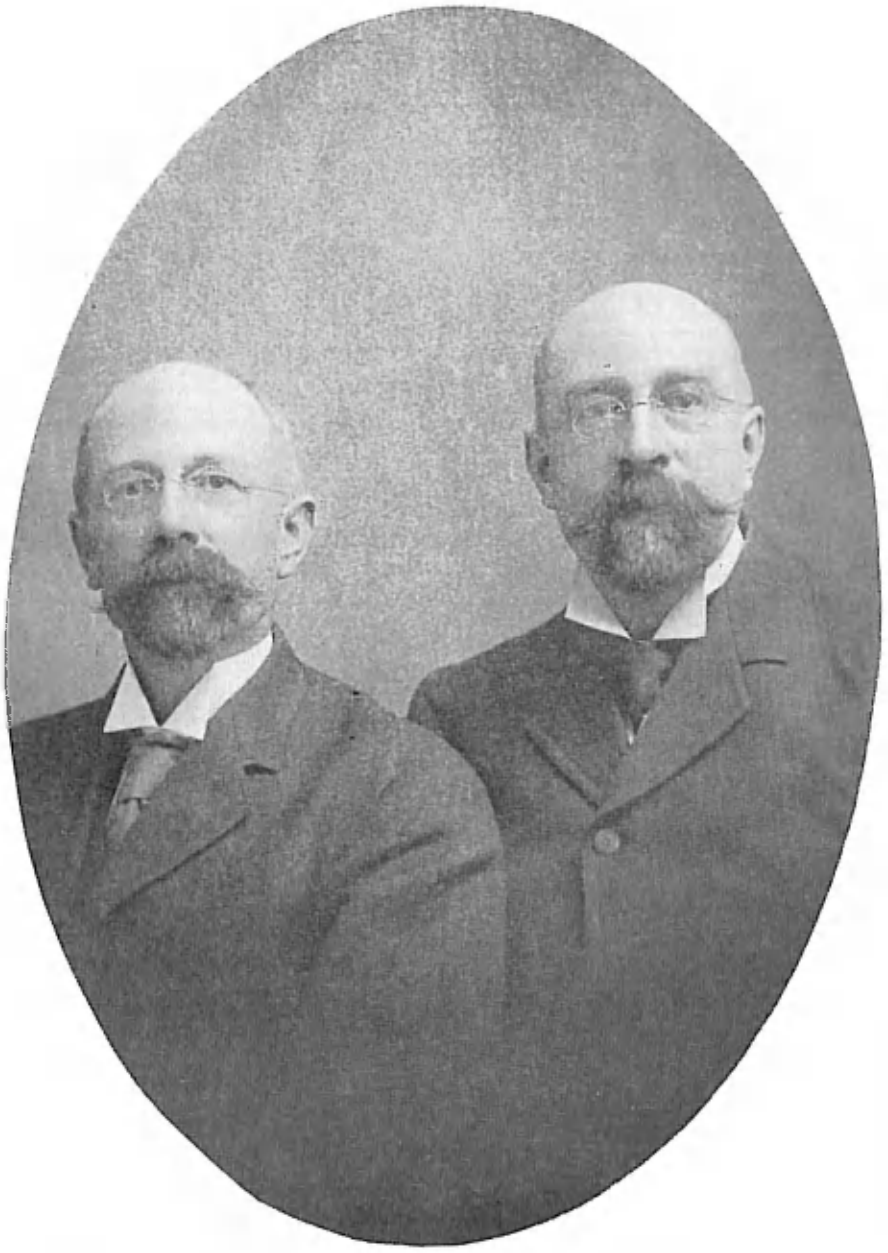
Hiebert came from the Bergthal colony of South Russia, arriving in Canada as an immigrant in 1876 at the age of thirteen. He farmed with his parents on a homestead about five miles west of Altona, Manitoba, until he was twenty-one years old; at that time he entered into a general merchandising business operated by Eerdman Penner and Co. of Gretna. After a two year apprenticeship he was assigned to manage their branch store at Reinland, Manitoba. From there he moved to Pilot Mound where he again engaged in merchandising, this time with his brother, and then on to Gretna for a four year stint in his own business. Following this he became secretary treasurer for the Rural Municipality of Rhineland, his first taste in government administration. Hiebert's stay as secretary-treasurer lasted two years. He moved on to Altona where he entered the partnership of Hoeppner, Loeppky and Hiebert. This stay lasted one and a half years after which time he moved to Holland, his final place of residence in Manitoba, where he operated a grist mill until 1900. In 1888 he had married Aganetha Dick, and they were to have three children, Anna Helen, John Cornelius and Martha.

The year 1900 also brought Cornelius Hiebert to Alberta, likely to take advantage of better business opportunities. In his enterprises at Didsbury he added farm implements and lumber to his former lines of general merchandising. Apparently he built a livery barn, a grain elevator and a lumber yard, and operated all of them at one time or another.

At Didsbury Hiebert also took on political responsibilities as village overseer from 1901 to mid-1904. Then in the first elections for the provincial legislature in 1905, he dinted the prospects for a total Liberal victory as he narrowly won one of the two Conservative ridings. A little over 1100 votes were recorded in Rosebud, and in the end Hiebert had fifty-two more than Dr. Clark, running for the Liberals. The other elected Conservative, A. J. Robertson, later the leader of his party in the House, won High River by only thirty-two votes. R. B. Bennett, who during 1930-1935 was to have one ill-fated term as Canada's Prime Minister, was the party leader, but lost his attempt to gain a seat in Calgary.

The Alberta of 1905-1906 had a population of 166,000, less than a tenth of the numbers counted seventy-five years later, and largely concentrated in the southern half of the province. This was the area serviced by railways, one of the chief factors in Canada's and Alberta's early development. Mennonites, then as now, were a small concentration among the larger influx of settlers. Many had homesteaded in the Didsbury-Carstairs area. The 1901 census of Canada numbered 546 Mennonites in what is now Alberta; 1555 was the count in 1911, after provincial status had been gained. No tally by religious affiliation was taken in the mid-term census of 1906.

Rosebud, the name of Hiebert's riding, originated with the Rosebud River which drained the area around Didsbury eastward into the Red Deer River, which eventually joined the South Saskatchewan River. The name Rosebud was taken from the numerous five-petalled roses, later to become the provincial flower, which were to be found along the river. A settlement called Rosebud was also situated further downstream. The ridings, twenty-five in total, were, except for Calgary and Edmonton, much larger than today. Rosebud, in a fairly



Cornelius Hiebert (left), and his brother John (ca. 1910).

narrow strip stretched nearly the entire width of the province from the British Columbia border to the western border of the Medicine Hat riding, which occupied the south-eastern corner of the province.

Alberta became a separate province on September 1, 1905. The following day, Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea, himself a Liberal, appointed A. C. Rutherford to form the first ministry. From that time until the first election held on November 9 the administration operated without an elected assembly. Since Rutherford was also identified with federal Liberal policies he had the inside track on that first election and captured all but two of the twenty-five ridings. Outside a few pockets of Conservatives, the Liberal stronghold was intact, much more so than in the sister province of Saskatchewan, where a Liberal majority was also returned, but with a much smaller majority.

Although Edmonton had been designated provincial capital of the new province, one of the first duties of the newly elected House was to decide on a permanent residence for the seat of government. Calgary and Edmonton, as the two major centres, were the main contenders in the race, but other towns such as Strathcona, just south of Edmonton, Red Deer and even Banff, suggested by Hiebert, and now a major mountain resort, were also on the list. On April 12, 1906, a motion to name Calgary as capital was defeated 16-8, and by default Edmonton became the seat of government.

There is no verbatim record of early debates. Instead one must consult a "scrapbook" Hansard, which consists of newspaper accounts of the proceedings of the legislative debates. A similar pattern was followed for the first sessions of the Canadian parliament. It was Hiebert himself who was the first known proponent in Alberta of a verbatim record of proceedings. This idea was shot down by a massive majority as yielding to vanity. Members merely wanted to be able to read in print what they had said. Hiebert contended that all citizens of the province had a right to read the proceedings of their assembly. Poetic justice was perhaps done when sixty-five years later it was a Conservative administration which first introduced *Alberta Hansard*. When Hiebert first raised the matter he was chastened by a Liberal member who reminded him that in his homeland (a reference to Russia, no doubt) he could not even have made such a speech. Thus, in going to the newspaper accounts we find in Hiebert, generally a "spotty" performer in the House debates. Sometimes he was acclaimed as brilliant but often his words won little favour with the press of the day. Interestingly enough some of his lengthier presentations were recorded verbatim by the Edmonton paper.

There were a number of recurring themes in Hiebert's speeches on behalf of the Opposition Conservatives. One was his repeated suggestion that a bounty be paid to those who shot coyotes. "Hiebert rambles from monopolies to coyotes in search of a point of attack," reads a headline of 29 January 1907. Monopolies, especially of the railways were the major theme in Hiebert's legislative career. The

issue eventually caused Rutherford to resign as premier, shortly after the second provincial election, one which Hiebert unsuccessfully contested as an Independent.

Railways, namely the need for more, and the behaviour of those which did exist, the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) and the Grand Trunk Pacific, stuck in Hiebert's craw. He attacked the Liberals for not successfully collecting a tax from the CPR and also particularly for granting numerous charters to railway companies, but not seeing to it that lines were built into remote and isolated settlement areas. Apparently the CPR was willing to pay a school tax, but insisted that the province could not impose a mileage tax. In the 1908 session Hiebert aimed his attack at the city of Edmonton which itself reported that it was willing to give the Grand Trunk Pacific $100,000 in order to win the divisional point of that railway's operations for itself. The press described this speech as "powerful." Hiebert also contended that too much emphasis was put on extending telephone lines, part of the first state-owned telephone system in Canada, which "would not carry one bushel of grain to market." In 1907 he also suggested a Hudson Bay Route railway transversing Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and using the northerly port for export grain. This line became a reality much later, albeit by a somewhat different route. In 1908 he made an alternative suggestion, namely, that efforts be made to reach the international boundary by rail.

The evils of liquor and its "traffic" also received a number of pointed attacks from Hiebert. In a February 1908 speech in the House he claimed that one-half million dollars was spent yearly on liquor in Edmonton alone. He suggested that to invite someone to have a drink was like innoculating him with a virus of smallpox. Rather than pushing for complete abolition, however, he outlined a plan whereby the sale of liquor would revert to government hands completely. This would take away the profit incentive which motivated commercial

The home of Cornelius Hiebert in Calgary, Alberta.

sellers. He had earlier come out for prohibition along lines tried in Manitoba and Prince Edward Island, but Attorney General Cross took some of the punch out of the example by clarifying that the Manitoba statute had never been declared in force. Still earlier, in 1907, he had favoured doubling the fee for liquor licenses of hotels from $200 to $400. Of this 24 February 1908 speech the *Edmonton Journal*, which was not inclined to support the Liberal majority, said:

> The address of Mr. Hiebert, the member for the Rosebud district in the local assembly yesterday afternoon [who spoke] in support of his resolution asking that the government take measures to provide a government owned liquor system, was one of the best and most thoughtful of the session. Mr. Hiebert was here breaking new ground and placing before the people of Alberta new ideas and advanced thoughts in respect to the sale and control of intoxicating liquors.
>
> In effect, Mr. Hiebert declared that prohibition would not produce the desired results, that under it, liquor would still be bought and sold.

Other than in the area of liquor legislation, Hiebert was not known for concerns about the direct human plight of individuals. On the handing out of additional benefits to the Metis Indians, he appeared in one sense to be a hard-liner. In effect, however, he favoured the position that if there was a justifiable need, this should be forwarded to the Federal Liberals. This would be sufficient action. The issue was after all a federal matter. He suspected Metis needs were raised repeatedly only because the Riel uprisings were still being laid at the feet of the previous Conservative administration in Ottawa.

Hiebert did come out strongly on the side of greater support for the sugar beet farmers of southern Alberta, and received a direct mention in legislation of the mine safety aspect of coal mining. He showed compassion in the areas of need about which he knew. By Hiebert's reasoning much weakness in the vital transportation links could be traced to the inability of the provincial Liberals to move ahead with their own railway plans. He saw two things missing: (1) Enough cash intake at the provincial treasury to allow for innovations in this pressing area. The fact that revenues from lands within Alberta went to Ottawa or the CPR was seen as a crucial oversight in the original autonomy bills. (2) Direct government ownership of railroads. Not

Lieutenant Governor Bulyea and members of the first Alberta Legislature Assembly (Prorogued May 9, 1906). Hiebert (bearded) is standing second from right three steps up.

much capitalism in such talk! Hiebert could see no other way, given some creative funding schemes, but for the province to direct policy in the railway field. With railways, as well as government control of the liquor industry, Hiebert was no doubt out of step with his time. Eventually both ideas saw fruition with the Alberta Resources Railway in 1965 and the Alberta Liquor Control Board in 1924.

Much has been made of the close ties the two Conservatives had with the twenty-three Liberals. Lewis Thomas, for example, suggests that Hiebert was nearly a Liberal by the time the first Legislature prorogued. (Lewis Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta; A History of the Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905-1921*. Toronto: University of of Toronto Press, 1959.) This appears to be an overstatement and rests on evidence of a February 10, 1909, speech Hiebert made in the Assembly. In summary, he indicated that he did not see his role as an Opposition member to simply oppose everything put forward by the Rutherford government because the policies and legislation had not originated in his or colleague Robertson's head.

> Now while I may have my own views regarding various acts of legislation, and while I have reserved the right, and always will reserve the right to criticize, I must in fairness submit that the present work of the Government as a general whole is for the country's good... I am not in politics to make money, neither is any man. Business opportunities in Alberta are so good and will be improved by this railway legislation... that a man who is out for the money will resign from politics and go after the investments that will be afforded.

This speech came on the eve of the provincial Conservative convention. While Hiebert on many occasions may have expressed naive views he certainly did his share of "opposing." The Thomas theory may be somewhat tenuous.

Hiebert tried to explain his unorthodox approach to his constituency in an address at the Didsbury Opera House on March 1, 1909. To his earlier comments he added the observation that elected representatives often held a position in good conscience and then allowed party solidarity to subdue their principles. He expressed regret that the upcoming Conservative convention was appointing a committee of three to investigate his position. In an open letter "To the Electors of Didsbury" appearing in the local newspaper March 10, 1909, he stated his position:

> Our province ought to be govern-

ed by business principles and not by politics. This is the idea for which I am fighting. I want, as far as possible, to eliminate politics from our system, so that when we come to an election it will merely be a question of passing upon the business done. It it is good, very well; if it is bad, put in new men. Under the old system of politics, regardless of whether the work of the administration has been woefully bad or remarkably good, the Opposition made it out universally bad, rotten in fact, and denounces the men in power as incompetent and dishonest . . . I am not a Liberal, understand. I have not gone into any "Liberal camp." I do not believe in the election of a Legislature every man of which has pledged himself to support the Government. If I am returned to Edmonton, I will maintain my right to criticize where I find occasion, but I will support the Government wherever I approve their policies, just as I have done. With me it is Alberta first, my own interests and the interests of my constituents second, and to the devil and gone with politics. Politics has done injury to the advancement of many a good priniciple.

The people of Didsbury did not understand that position, and ironically, the man who was to defeat Hiebert in the March 22, 1909, election, J. E. Stauffer, also a Mennonite, announced his candidature on the same page of the paper in which Hiebert's open letter appeared. Running as an Independent, Hiebert polled third in the vote, getting only 156 votes, with Stauffer as a Liberal getting 993 and Scarlett of the Conservatives obtaining 208.

A careful scrutiny of the *Journals of the Legislative Assembly* of 1906-1909, the only official record we have, indicates that in 1906 and 1908 sessions House Leader Robertson and MLA Hiebert combined to move an amendment to the Speech from the Throne. In effect the Conservatives proposed their own "Speech from the Throne." Among the topics covered in the 1906 amendment (not already discussed in this paper) were: deep concern about the extreme restrictiveness in Alberta's autonomy; the lack of royalties from minerals accruing to the provincial government; Protestant-Catholic division in the area of education; the need for a provincially-owned telephone system. The 1908 amendment spoke more generally to government spending extravagance and deplored the need for direct taxation of land because an inadequate agreement had been made with Ottawa in the Autonomy Bills. In 1980 when constitutional jurisdictions are high on the agenda of national concerns, these early warnings sound very current.

Hiebert sat on four or five of the nine Select Standing Committees overseeing the business of the House in each of the four early sessions of the First Legislature. He asked the usual number of questions one would expect from Opposition members on such topics as election procedures, the amount of public monies expended in Opposition ridings, official activities in the Public Health Department, whether the North West Police were encouraged to ease off their enforcement regarding the liquor licensing regulations, how much cement the government bought and at what price, and how many weed inspectors the province employed.

One victory which Hiebert won was with regard to cabinet members sitting on the Select Standing Committees. At his prompting of a motion in 1907, four Cabinet ministers resigned from a total of twenty-one positions on Committees. Premier Rutherford was among the four. Parenthetically, it may be noted that in 1908 these gentlemen were all back on committees. Whereas it would have been easy for Hiebert and Robertson to capitulate to the overwhelming Liberal majority, the Liberals really didn't need them and there is no hard evidence that Hiebert was a turncoat. If he had been anything but an independently minded MLA why did he not seek a Liberal nomination in 1909?

Ten years later, after his electoral defeat on March 20, 1919 Cornelius Hiebert died of cancer. He had reverted to his wanderings after leaving politics, probably quite depressed that his views were so misunderstood. Business enterprises again called him. First he took over a hardware store in Didsbury. Then came a complete change as he and his son homesteaded in the Peace River country in northwestern Alberta. Next was a lumber business in Saskatchewan, from which he returned to Didsbury, where despite amputation of a leg he tried to operate a business again.

Of Hiebert's personal relationship to the Mennonite church and community little is known. Mention is made of his membership in the Masonic Lodge for a period of time, and there is even some controversy as to whether his membership affected the conduct of his funeral. While he died in Calgary his burial took place in Didsbury, "by the Mennonites" according to his obituary in the local paper. However, his body was transported by train and hearse, a somewhat unorthodox practice for Mennonites of that local area.

Hiebert has been remembered as an amiable individual who had taken part in such local festivities as pig butchering, and was quite a friend of children. On one occasion while taking a nap some of the local youngsters had placed a board with corn in the open window. The object was to attract birds and awake the gentleman with a bit of a joke.

His counterparts in the Legislature in Edmonton certainly identified him with the Mennonite minority group, although it is not known whether he ever spoke out on their behalf. His dedication to high principles was certainly in step with his forebears, but his involvement in government at his level at such an early date in the Canadian experience was unusual. The pattern of public service continued with his son, Cornelius, who studied law and also was mayor of Nanton, Alberta, for a time. His oldest daughter Anna served as a nurse in the Calgary General Hospital for thirty-seven years, twenty as assistant superintendent of nursing and the final ten years as director.

The available facts do not as yet give the full picture of Cornelius Hiebert's involvement in politics. His efforts, however, need to be recognized as an interesting, if short, chapter in the story of the Mennonites and the Canadian west.

I. Jacob Bock and his Folk Art

by Reginold Good

Folk is a relative label applied to an identifiable culture whose outlook on life appears narrow and conservative. Folk artifacts are goods considered traditional by a culture's poorer people who make and use them; they do not, however, include the products of elite society. Tradition refers to long-enduring phenomena in a limited geographical area.

Traditional characteristics in an object help to determine whether it can be termed a folk artifact, but other factors are important in discerning its viability as a work of art. "While tradition is necessary for folk art, it is not sufficient. Keeping the emphasis on art, variations on tradition are usually more valued than tradition itself because they meet more readily the requirements of novelty, uniqueness, and innovation. The kind of innovation acceptable in folk art is conciliatory invention, the combination of current and earlier ideas to create an object which reconciles the past and the present."[1]

We must remember that art is not a static truth but a variable concept, and for that reason should be studied as a historical and sociological phenomenon. Many promoters of folk art get bogged down in the usually irrelevant issue of "artistic merit" of individual pieces, and fail to explore what are condescendingly called "their historical associations." As explained in the catalogue of a recent American folk art exhibition, "Objects are not presented chronologically or grouped according to type, but installed so that each item has sufficient space to be enjoyed as a work of art in its own right."[2] This begs the question whether, by separating art from artifact, one can make art!

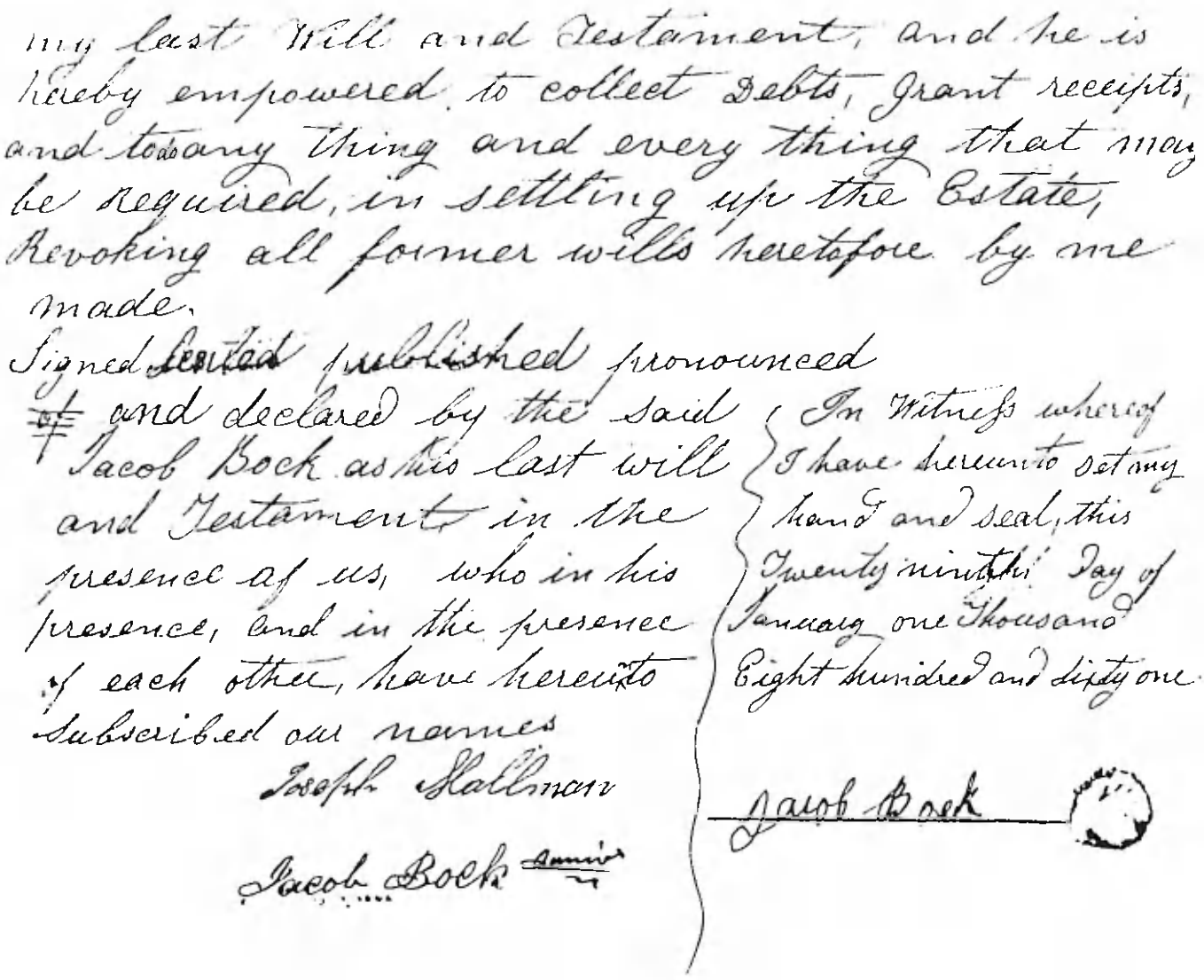
Folk art exhibitions are usually filled with unusual objects made sometime in the nineteenth century for unknown persons living in an undetermined rural community. "Labeling something art makes it safe, genteel, proper, inoffensive; it becomes domesticated and docile. Life is not like that; neither are objects. The folk art writers would have us believe that the peace and calm that can be found in these objects is an accurate reflection of what life was like in the past. On the contrary the past was as complicated, confusing, and unsettled as today. These objects provide light in darkness, serenity in chaos, and that may be why we still make and appreciate such objects."[3]

When the clay relief of S. Ambrosius is examined with the same care with which students approach the study of elite art, complexity and conflicts emerge. The earliest known marked example of Ontario pottery is a covered earthenware jar, decorated with four panels in relief depicting S. Ambrosius. It is inscribed "Waterloo, 4 January, 1825."[4] The signature of the maker, Jacob Bock, appears on a similar piece dated several months later. David Newlands, a widely-acclaimed authority on Ontario pottery, writes that "no other information is known about this Waterloo County potter, and I have not been successful in ascertaining anything about the pottery"[5] at which it was made. Nonetheless, Jacob Bock has been touted as Ontario's earliest Continental German immigrant potter, whose claim to fame lies in having created Ontario's earliest dated earthenware.[6] The artistic merit of the piece has been recognized to consist of the "unique" plaques of S. Ambrosius which decorate its surface.[7] These generalizations are largely false, and result from removing the object from its societal context; it has been deprived of any identification with humanity, and the context which has been provided for it is thus distorted.

Newlands was not able to identify Jacob Bock as a historical person, and was therefore hindered from interpreting the societal context within which all folk art should be viewed. There are no available personal census or tax records from Ontario (before 1841, called "Upper Canada") in 1825. The oral traditions of Jacob Bock would not likely have lasted 150 years, and he would not be remembered by descendents. Registry office records indicate that I Jacob Bock never owned land in Waterloo County, including the township of Waterloo and the town of Waterloo. If he lived there in 1825—instead of one of Ontario's other towns called Waterloo— he must have rented land for his pottery business.

Local history, genealogical, and court records are probably the most accessible route to identify Jacob Bock. In Ezra Eby's *Biographical*

Left, tobacco jar with applied relief portrait of St. Ambrosius, made in Waterloo County.


my Last Will and Testament, and he is hereby empowered to collect Debts, Grant receipts, and to do any Thing and every thing that may be required, in settling up the Estate, Revoking all former wills heretofore by me made.
Signed Sealed published pronounced and declared by the said Jacob Bock as his Last will and Testament in the presence of us, who in his presence, and in the presence of each other, have hereunto subscribed our names
Joseph Hallman
Jacob Bock
In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this Twenty ninth Day of January one Thousand Eight hundred and fifty one.
Jacob Bock

History of Waterloo Township (Berlin: 1895 & 96, reprinted 1971 by Eldon Weber, p. 69) we find that I Jacob Bock, born in 1798, appears to have lived in Waterloo County in 1825. He was a prominent local figure remembered particularly for his role in founding the Blenheim Mennonite meeting house, Oxford County, Ontario with Jacob Hallman in 1850.[8]

Clayton Wells, in "A Historical Sketch of the Town of Waterloo" (*Waterloo Historical Society*, 1928, p. 39). provides more specific information on the whereabouts of I Jacob Bock in 1825. According to him, the town of Waterloo was the first commercial and administrative centre of Waterloo Township which was laid out in 1812. Following the publication of the Gourlay Report in 1821—which encouraged Canadian districts to lobby for such things as construction and improving of roads—township government was formed in Waterloo. "The first record of township meetings is 1822, when George Clemens was elected township clerk. In 1823 I Jacob Bock was elected township clerk, in which office he served for four years."[9]

The Probate Court records for Waterloo County contain a will written by the hand of I Jacob Bock. It does not stipulate Bock's occupation, but it does provide a representative sample of his handwriting which is identical in style to that inscribed on the earthenware jar attributed to Jacob Bock.

The location of Bock's pottery in Waterloo was probably the site where a German immigrant potter, John Jacobi, began to work at his trade between 1843 and 1847.[10] Jacobi purchased this lot—on the corner of present day King and Dupont Streets, in 1852.[11]

We do not know much about I Jacob Bock. He was born in Lancaster, County, Pennsylvania, on February 18, 1798, and came to Canada as a young boy, where he made his home with his uncle, Christian Reichart, who lived near Freeport.[12] He was too young to have mastered the pottery trade before he came to Canada, and must have learned it from a Tunker or Mennonite artisan in the area. I Jacob Bock married Catharine Shupe at an undetermined date, and their first of fifteen children, Levi, was born in 1815.[13] Likely he became a potter before that time.

The following excerpt from a letter written by I Jacob Bock in his

Left, excerpt from the Jacob Bock will.

Right, bottom view of tobacco jar.

middle age sheds some light on his personality:

> I have now another troublesome commission imposed on me. I say imposed, because it was not of my seeking or electioneering . . . that of Superintendent of Common Schools of the whole township. This is a very critical, harassing, difficult, unprofitable business . . . but I still expect to get through with credit to myself and without incurring any penalty.

I Jacob Bock was a politician all his life. He was a respected organizer of community activities and a leader in religious affairs. The earthenware jar decorated with plaques of S. Ambrosius—one of three which he is known to have made in 1825—appears to have been a politically-motivated action as well. S. Ambrosius (340?-397) was a known archetype in Mennonite theology. He was remembered as a Christian bishop who advocated separation of Church and State, and who invoked sanctions against a Roman Emperor for his massacre of a civilian population. S. Ambrosius' lifestyle paralleled the Mennonite emphasis on sectarianism and good works.

1825—the year in which all of Bock's known earthenware jars were made—was an election year in Ontario. This was the third election in which Halton County, of which Waterloo Township was then a part, could participate.[15] Mennonites could legally vote, but in the elections of 1817 and 1821 they had voted for Reform candidates to the dismay of the ruling Family Compact. Polling officials counteracted by demanding Mennonites—even the old and grey-haired—to *swear* that they were over 21 years old. This the Mennonites would not do and were denied the vote.[16]

I Jacob Bock, in promoting the archetype of S. Ambrosius in a contentious election year, was clearly calling for the separation of church and state. He seemed to be advising Mennonites to hold fast to their faith, including the refusal to take an oath, in spite of political pressures. Although the impact of the Mennonite vote was almost nil in the election of 1825, Halton County returned two Reform candidates.[17] No doubt this justified the Mennonites' actions in their own minds, and may account in part for I Jacob Bock's continued popularity in the local community.

I Jacob Bock's earthenware jar shows the marriage of tradition and innovation in strong light. Tradition lingers in the form, but innovation appears in the decoration. The shape perpetuates a form introduced to the Western world centuries ago. The plaques of S. Ambrosius which adorn its exterior are a physical image expressing the theological concept: separation of Church and State. The archetype of S. Ambrosius was known to Mennonite theologians, but had probably never been dissipated among the masses in response to a political threat against the orthodox position of refusing to take an oath. Herein lies the artifact's claim to innovation and its prominence in the field of folk art.

NOTES

[1]Kenneth L. Ames, *Beyond Necessity, Art in the Folk Tradition* (Delaware: Winterthur Museum, 1977), p. 80.

[2]Block and Lyle, *Masterpieces of American Folk Art* (New Jersey: Monmouth Museum and Monmouth County Historical Association, 1975), n.p.

[3]Ames, op. cit., pp. 51, 54.

[4]Actually there are two examples by Jacob Bock bearing this date. The covered earthware jar discussed in this article is part of a private collection in Kitchener, Ontario. A smaller jar missing the original lid is in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario.

[5]David Newlands, "Rare and Unusual Ontario Pottery," *The Canadian Collector* Nov.-Dec., 1977), p. 26.

[6]David Newlands, *Early Ontario Potters: Their Craft and Trade* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1979), pp. 23, 100.

[7]David Newlands, Public Lecture to the Waterloo Historical Society, Spring, 1977.

[8]L. J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario* (Markham: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935), p. 66.

[9]Clayton Wells, "A Historical Sketch of the Town of Waterloo," *Waterloo Historical Society* (1928), p. 39.

[10]Newlands, *Ontario Potters*, p. 101.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ezra Eby, *A Biographical History of Waterloo Township* (Berlin: 1895 and 1896, reprinted in 1971 by Eldon Weber), p. 69.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Wells, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

[15]M. H. Snyder, *History of Hannes Schneider and his Descendants, 1534-1939* (Kitchener: published by the author, n.d.), p. 176B.

[16]Gottlieb Leibbrandt, *Little Paradise: Aus Geschichte und Leben der Deutschkanadier in der County Waterloo, Ontario, 1800-1975* (Kitchener: Allprint Company Ltd., 1977), p. 32.

[17]Synder, ibid.

The Peter Epp Family

by Gilbert Epp

Epp was a Mennonite family name in the Old Flemish congregations of West Prussia mentioned in the Danzig archives in 1584. In 1586 an Epp, born at Losendorff, Dutch province of Groningen, lived at Langgarten near Danzig. Members of the family emigrated to Russia and America. They are numerous in Kansas, Nebraska and Canada.

In the Dutch *Naamlijst* the name Epp is first found among the ministers in 1766, Peter Epp and Cornelius Epp being preachers of the Flemish congregation of Danzig. Peter served from 1758 as a preacher and became elder in 1779, serving until about 1790. Cornelius was a preacher until at least 1810. Leading later members of the family include David Epp, elder of the Chortitza (Russia) Flemish congreation 1793-1802, and one of the delegates to St. Petersburg 1798-1800, who obtained the *Gnadenprivilegium* from the czar; Heinrich Epp, a teacher and elder of the Chortitza *Zentralschule;* and Deitrich H. Epp, editor of *Der Bote* 1924-55.

Peter Epp was born of Heinrich and Helena (Dyck) Epp on April 19, 1849, in the village of Schoenenberg, Chortitza, South Russia. Father Heinrich Epp was born June 21, 1826, and died August 20, 1905. Mother Helena Epp was born July 17, 1827, and died July 1, 1902. In June, 1868, Peter Epp was baptized by Elder Gerhard Dyck and on December 20, 1870, he was united in marriage with Anna Rempel who had been born in Nieder-Chortitza, South Russia, on September 29, 1850, and baptized in 1869, also by Elder Dyck.

Peter and Anna lived in Nieder-Chortitza until 1872, then in Michaelsburg until 1874, in Alexandertahl until 1890, and in Georgstahl until May 20, 1893, when they left for Canada with their ten children. They arrived in Manitoba the following July and lived with his sister, Helen, and brother-in-law, Jacob Hoeppner, at Waldheim, Manitoba. Here their second last son, Jacob, was born and daughter Helen was married to Jacob Hoeppner.

After acquiring a plow, a wagon, two yoke of oxen and one cow, in May, 1894, the family moved by train to, and settled on, a homestead described as the North East corner of Section 4 Township 43 Range 5 West of the 3rd Meridian. This was four miles north of what is today Waldheim, Saskatchewan, and is the very spot where a family reunion was held on August 15, 1965; it was then still a part of the North West Territories.

Peter and Anna Epp had been preceded in this district by his parents one year earlier. It is said that no difficulty was experienced in selling out in Russia before leaving but most of the proceeds were expended for the fares to Canada. By our standards the family arrived poor. The decision to pack up and leave was difficult as times had been fairly good and the climate pleasant. However, the prospect of obtaining free land in the new far-off country proved overwhelming and the pioneering spirit predominated. The decision to leave was further

Right, Anna and Peter Epp at Waldheim, Saskatchewan.

prompted by the loss some years earlier of the privileges such as exemption from military service granted by Catherine the Great.

A story is told of the unkind attitude of German customs officials when the caravan crossed into Germany. Reference was made to "Russian dogs" which was then promptly countered by Grandfather's retort, "What are you then, a German dog?" It seemed that Grandfather, five-foot-seven but of sturdy physique, was always a stern, hard-ruling man and not given to much humour; however, he was not ungrateful to his God, for in his diary, on arriving in the new land, he had written in German, "Thank the Lord for He is good and His mercies are everlasting." Grandmother was a slight woman but strong of will and is remembered best for her kindly disposition, a fact attested to by those of us who had the good fortune of knowing her.

Grandfather for some years owned a white mare named Queen, of which he was very proud. Before going visiting he would always say to his sons, "Yunges, wauscht noch de Queen den sawgel oot." (Boys, wash out Queen's tail.)

Upon arrival at the homestead, attention was first turned to building a log house for a roof over their heads, and to breaking the sod. During this time, the family lived with the John Andres on their farm at Eigenheim. That first summer five acres of oats and some potatoes were planted. No doubt making a living those first years was difficult for the family was large, grain had to be hauled by oxen to market at Rosthern, a distance of about 15 miles, and equipment was poor. However, apparently things went fairly well for very soon Grandfather took a pre-emption on the south-east quarter of Section 9 at $3.00 per acre, and obtained title to the land on March 6, 1899.

It is a credit to our forefathers that even in those early pioneer days the education of their children was not neglected. School was held in various homes during the first year. Son Henry, who had acquired some schooling in Russia, was the first teacher and conducted classes in his father's home. The second teacher was Peter Classen who taught in his home. For textbooks, the teachers read German-language papers such as *Herald der Wahrheit*, printed in Elkhart, Indiana, *Mennonitische Rundschau* and *Der Nordwesten*.

Above, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, about 1906.
Below, an early farm house in the Rosthern-Hague area.

Late in 1894 a petition was signed by farmers of the area requesting formation of a certain tract of land into a school district. Names on the petition no doubt included most or all of the following farmers then resident in the area: David Epp, Heinrich Epp Sr., Heinrich H. Friesen, Johann J. Neufeld, Heinrich Epp Jr., Peter Epp, Heinrich Warkentin, Gerhard Hoeppner, Abraham Dyck, Peter A. Dyck, Franz Klassen, Johann Fast, Jacob Neufeld, David Friesen, Johann P. Epp, David Berg, Peter Classen, Dietrich Neufeld and Heinrich D. Friesen. The petition received approval from the Council of Public Instruction, as the Department of Education was then known, in a letter dated February 20, 1895.

On July 26, 1897, the Waldheim School District (Public) No. 454 of the North West Territories officially came into being with Peter Classen, Abraham Dyck and Johann P. Epp the first members of the school board. One or more of the Epps has been on the school board continuously since that time until a few years ago. Among the minutes of the meetings held during the first years, Grandfather's name appears frequently as a mover or seconder of resolutions in connection with the establishment of the school.

Didsbury Beginnings: The Ephraim Shantz Family

by Burton Shantz

The Bert Shantz family can trace its history back to 1737 when Jacob Shantz moved from Switzerland to Pennsylvania. In 1810, his son, Jacob moved to Ontario, buying some acres on King Street, Kitchener. In 1822, the third Jacob Y. Shantz was born.

Jacob Y. Shantz was a builder, a farmer, and a contractor. He had a sawmill and a button factory in Kitchener. In 1872 he was appointed by Sir John A. MacDonald's government to help settlers moving to Manitoba from Russia. In 1892 he made a trip to Alberta to find another site to colonize, having much more faith in the west than did his friends in the east. Then in 1894, he sponsored a trainload of settlers, 34 in all, to found the town of Didsbury. Three children of Jacob Y. Shantz were among the ten families, one being Ephraim with his wife, Hannah, and two daughters, Selina and Elsie, and one son, Burton.

They left Ontario on April 10, with the snow coming down heavily. There were seven cars and two coaches. The coaches had slat seats and there were kitchen stoves on which they made their meals. Each family had to bring enough food for the journey and bedding for the nights. Ephraim had one and a half cars, the latter being shared with his sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Detweiler. He had seven horses, two cows and some pigs and chickens. On the way the train would stop so that the animals could be fed. Once one of the horses escaped so the train waited until it was found and loaded again. Near Medicine Hat when they stopped, they saw some bears. Elsie remembers how excited they all were.

The journey was 2000 miles over rocky, tree-covered northern Ontario, and across the vast lonely prairies of the three prairie provinces. At Winnipeg they stopped and the Hunspergers from Michigan joined them. From Calgary, they travelled north to a sign on the post which said 'Didsbury.' It was April 18, 1894, when these first settlers of the town of Didsbury arrived.

In an immigrant shed built by Jacob Y. Shantz, the tired travellers made their temporary home, using blankets to divide the shed in sections for the families. They slept on the floor and sometimes in the cold spring they were not very warm.

Jacob Y. Shantz had filed a homestead for his son, but as Ephraim was not satisfied with the spot, he set out to find other land. Much of the land just north of the town site had been taken by Americans, so he, with J. B. Detweiler, his brother-in-law, took land two miles north of town. Needing a house on their farm, the Shantz's hired Manasseh Weber, a nephew of Ephraim's to build their first home in the west. It took him one month.

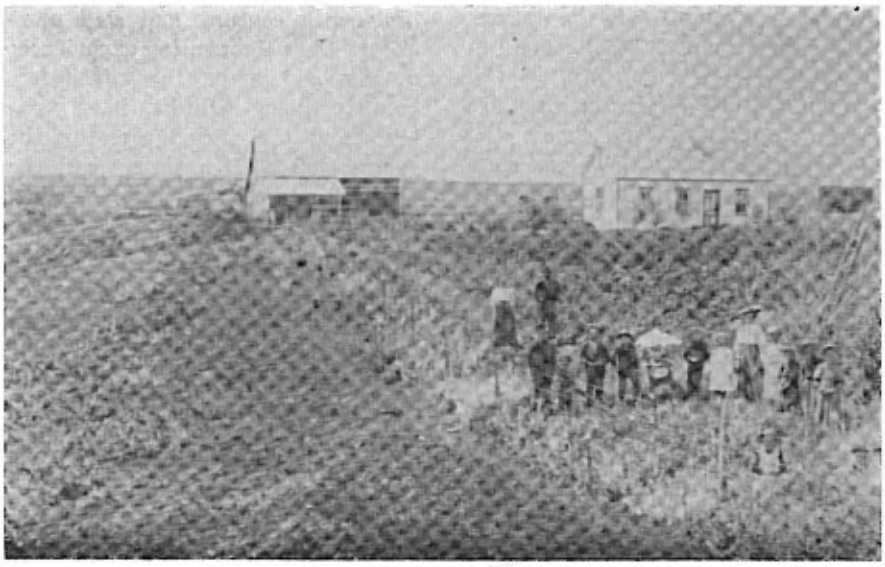
Since here were no stores in Didsbury, Bert remembers going to Olds to get their groceries. He also remembers going to Calgary in a wagon with butter and eggs to buy other needed articles, and sometimes returning with much of the butter and eggs which they could not sell. They tried to go to Calgary two or three times a year, resting at the Stopping Houses. In 1898, the first store in Didsbury was opened by Mr. Robertson.

When the families had settled on their own farms, Ephraim Weber, another nephew of Ephraim Shantz's, started a school in the immigrant shed. As teacher he was paid $.10 per day per pupil and had ten pupils. There Bert Shantz had his first school, which lasted only 30 days. Then the Rosebud School was built east of town and here he spent 2 years. Later he had a term of school in Edmonton and one at Mount Royal College in Calgary, taking a commercial sourse.

Ephraim lived and worked on his homestead until 1910. He then sold it and moved to a farm which he had bought in 1906. This farm was partly within the town limits. On it he built a fine brick house which is still being used today. He and his wife, Hannah, remained on this farm for several years. Then they built another brick house in the town on Shantz Street and lived there for the remaining part of their lives. Ephraim died in 1921 and Hannah died in 1942. Ephraim was a member of the first school board in Didsbury and was secretary-treasurer of his church. He had also been a leader of the church and the Sunday School superintendent.

In 1909 land was opened for homesteading near the Saskatchewan border. In May of that year Noah Eby and Bert Shantz left Didsbury and found land three miles from the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. They returned to Calgary to file their land and spent the winter in Didsbury. In 1910 Bert went back to homestead a shack for his young wife, Katie Moyer, and baby daughter, Dorothy, who joined them in 1911.

Bert and Katie Shantz had five children, two sons are farming at Alsask; one daughter lives in Honululu, one at Vulcan and one lives with them at Calgary.



Left, the Jacob Y. Shantz family in Berlin (Kitchener), Ontario. J. Y. Shantz seated front with beard. Right, a homestead of Gerhard Neufeld family near Didsbury c. 1912.

Book Reviews

Doris Janzen Longacre. *Living More With Less*. Scottdale, Pa. and Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1980. 295 pp., U.S. $6.95, Canada $8.05.

I had read a dozen reviews of the book and felt prepared for a good compendium of simple lifestyle ideas. I was not prepared for the abundance of practical suggestions for living more effectively and efficiently with less, in so many areas: transportation, celebrations, homes, money, recreation, clothes, and more.

Part One discusses five life standards for those who would live responsibly and faithfully. These encourage us to do justice, learn from the world community, nurture people and nonconform freely.

Part Two is a collection of contributions from 350 people, illustrating ways to incorporate more-with-less standards in a lifestyle of joyful, wholesome creativity. These add insights on a variety of lifestyle areas which have been carefully catalogued for convenient reference. Some confirmed my own convictions and practices. (Wrap gifts in maps, decorated paper bags or scraps of cloth.) Others were most unusual. (Like the couple who fashioned their own wedding bands by braiding paper clips.) Photographs and significant quotations add interest and attractiveness to the book.

Living More With Less, as also Doris Longacre's first book, the *More With Less Cookbook*, was commissioned by the Mennonite Central Committee in response to inequities in the world resource distribution and to bring a Christian perspective to material consumption. Many of the contributions in the book came from the experience of MCC workers abroad. They alert us to the continuing efforts of those in Third World countries and help us recognize how our consumption relates to their need.

"Everyone needs a hand to hold while walking upstream," Doris Longacre once observed, "a voice to challenge when one wants to turn around and drift." To us in the West, with our suffocating affluence and increasing inflation, *Living More With Less* is such a hand, such a voice. In fact, the book will do more. It will propel you to move with increasing vigor toward a non-wasteful, energy-conserving lifestyle. And in the process you will discover an exhilarating new freedom.

This truly is, in the author's words, a book "about beauty, healing and hope, a book about getting more, not less."

LaVerna Klippenstein
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Henry B. Tiessen. *The Molotschna Colony: A Heritage Remembered*. Kitchener, Ontario. Published by the author, 291 Weber Street. 1979. Paperback, 112 pp., $8.75.

During the past decade we have witnessed a renewed interest in Mennonite history, and consequently a considerable number of books have been published. This research has brought to light a substantial amount of new information that gladdens the heart of anyone interested in the story of the Mennonites. *The Molotschna Colony* by Henry Tiessen is no exception. It fills a need. Volumes have been written about the religious conflict in the colony during the middle of the nineteenth century and still more about the Mennonite experiences during and after the revolution. However, very little has been written about the period covering the years 1900-1917, a time when the religious and economic problems had been largely overcome and the Mennonite community enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity.

The writer attempts to create an image of the everyday life of this period, not with one continuous story, but with a series of one-page stories augmented by sketches on the opposite page. The sketches though simple, do in a very real way, help the reader to understand what the author tries to say.

Tiessen deals with almost every conceivable topic related to a rural Mennonite community; seeding, harvesting, threshing, transportation, herding of cows, schools, churches, weddings, agriculture, machinery, and the construction of the local railway. Several village plans are included. Readers should take note of the map of Halbstadt. It is the first of its kind that I have seen.

The book is written in the first person and in an easy yet interesting style. Mr. Tiessen has done future generations a favor by recording many of his boyhood experiences in a systematic and meaningful way. The book deserves a place on the bookshelf in Mennonite homes.

William Schroeder
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Joanne Flint, *The Mennonite Canadians*. Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd., 1980. (Multicultural Canada Series), 72 pp. $5.50 pb.

The full-colour glossy photograph on this beautiful booklet shows a group of Old Order Mennonite children against the background of an urban park in Ontario. But the fear that this will be another collection of half-true cliches to re-enforce the stereotype image of Mennonites fortunately is not fulfilled. Instead, the book is a very readable and balanced account of the two main Mennonite groups in Canada.

Written for elementary school children, the book tells the story of Jacob Martin coming to Ontario from Pennsylvania and Greta Janzen coming to Manitoba from Russia. Through the story of their two families the pioneering experiences and later developments of the Swiss and Dutch-Russian Mennonite communities is described. While useful for children, the book does not talk down to them and can be enjoyed by older readers as well.

The illustrations are beautiful as well as useful. Sixteen of them are full-colour reproductions. Maps are clear and functional. Photo captions are informative and do not say the unnecessary and obvious. The layout, providing for a three inch and a four and one-half inch column on each page allows the author to insert interesting smaller items of information or questions for reflection and further study without interrupting the main story line. In

addition, some half dozen "highlight" pages feature such diverse themes as *Fraktur* art and quilting, Mennonite Central Committee, and the grasshopper plague.

The book has a few factual errors and historically misleading implications, but is basically a faithful telling of the Mennonite story in Canada. Although only seventy-two pages in length, it is such a good buy that even families without elementary school children ought to have one. It will provide older people with many opportunities to expand on their own story for children or grandchildren whose curiousity has been aroused by Flint's book.

Adolf Ens
Canadian Mennonite Bible College
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Harry Loewen, ed. *Mennonite Images: Historical, Cultural, and Literary Essays Dealing with Mennonite Issues*. Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1980. 279 pp. $11.95.

In 1978 the University of Winnipeg established a Chair in Mennonite Studies. Its purpose was to encourage study and research in the fields of Mennonite history, culture and literature. *Mennonite Images*, a collection of essays edited by director Harry Loewen, is a publication emanating from the Chair's activity.

Most of the essays contained in this volume are first presented as public lectures, either at the University of Winnipeg or other institutions. A number were written specifically for this publication. Most of the authors are university professors; thirteen of the eighteen reside and work in Manitoba.

The twenty essays which comprise *Mennonite Images* are divided into three sections: historical tensions, cultural identity, and literary images. In the first section topics range from the role of the child among earlyAnabaptists and Menno Simon's spiritual roots to Mennonite political conformity in pre-World War II Germany and present-day North America. The essays on cultural identity run the gamut from a number of views on the direction contemporary Mennonites seem to be taking in their relations with the non-Mennonite world and a photographic essay on southern Manitoba Mennonite life to an analysis of the relations between Mennonites in Paraguay and their Indian neighbours. The final section discusses the literary works of Mennonite authors and poets as well as a few non-Mennonite portrayals of Mennonites.

By and large the essays in *Mennonite Images* are well-written, well-researched and highly stimulating. Many of them discuss issues that have not been dealt with in any depth before; others shed new light on older areas of debate. Those that I found particularly fascinating were John Howard Yoder's "Mennonite Political Conservatism: Paradox or Contradiction?"; Harry Loewen's "The Anabaptist View of the World: The Beginning of a Mennonite Continuum?"; Roy Vogt's "The Impact of Economic and Social Class on Mennonite Theology"; and Al Reimer's "The Creation of Arnold Dyck's 'Koop enn Bua' Characters." These essays and a number of others are well worth preserving, and Harry Loewen is to be commended for ensuring this.

Although most of the essays have important points to make, it is somewhat difficult to perceive of them as a collective unit. According to Loewen's introduction, all the essays address themselves to the question of "What does it mean to be a Mennonite in the modern world?" Yet one really needs to stretch the imagination to find answers in Abraham Friesen's "Wilhelm Zimmermann and the Interpretation of Anabaptism" or Loewen's own "Anabaptists in Gottfried Keller's Novellas." While some variety is of course a necessity for a collection such as this, the extent of it here may leave the reader somewhat bewildered as to what the common theme really is.

There is also variety among these essays in terms of quality. The majority are solid pieces of work. But there are also a few which do not measure up to the others in validity of argument and irrefutability of conclusion. The entire book would have been improved if a number of these had been eliminated.

Since most of the authors in *Mennonite Images* come out of the Dutch-German tradition, it is not surprising that references to the Swiss Mennonite tradition are limited almost exclusively to the sixteenth century. Because the book attempts to present a number of images, rather than a broad overview of Mennonite experience, this is not really a weakness. Yet there are a number of instances where an insensitivity to Swiss Mennonites is shown.

Most disturbing is George Epp's statement that Mennonite history begins with Menno Simon's departure from the priesthood (page 51). What about Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock and Felix Manz? What about the many Swiss believers who suffered persecution ten years prior to Simon's conversion because of their refusal to baptize their infants? If Epp's reason for not including Swiss origins as part of the beginning of Mennonite history is that the Swiss brethren did not call themselves Mennonites, one can only reply that the history of Canada does not begin only with the creation of a political entity called Canada.

Also problematic is the way in which a number of authors refer to all members of the Mennonite faith as the "Mennonite Church." The Mennonite Church is the official name of those more popularly known as (Old) Mennonites and therefore is virtually synonomous with Mennonite General Conference (not to be confused with General Conference Mennonite Church). While one may take issue with the (Old) Mennonites for giving an exclusive meaning to an inclusive designation, the fact remains that in *Mennonite Images* the use of this term is inaccurate.

Because the essays in *Mennonite Images* are very specialized, and because most of them were originally meant for members of the academic community, this book will not be widely read. Nevertheless, it will be appreciated by those who wish to keep abreast of Mennonite scholarship in the areas of history, culture, and literature. We look forward to

seeing more collections which serve that purpose.

Esther Epp-Tiessen
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Wiebe, Katie Funk, ed. *Women Among the Brethren.* Hillsboro, Kan.: Board of Christian Literature of the MB General Conference, 1979, 197 pp., $7.95 pb.

Women Among the Brethren is a rousing collection of excerpts from the lives of 15 different Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren women from the mid-1880's to the present day. It includes the story of the faith of a child, reminding me of the story of Naaman in 2 Kings.

Edited by author Katie Funk Wiebe (and praise God for her), it took hundreds of exhausting hours to collect material for the book from various sources. Some accounts are sketchy and many have never been recorded because, in the past, women had not been part of the formal decision-making processes of the church.

Those mentioned in this book are a cross-section of women with a clear dedication to Christ, and with a story to tell. The accounts reach beyond the usual pioneer struggle for survival and religious freedom. Each in her own right, whether it be doctor, midwife, wife and mother, foster-mother social worker or missionary to other cultures has accomplished at least as much as the many university graduates of our day.

Who needs women in the pulpit? These women have quietly moulded the face of the Church, and have mastered the mood of their day. The inscription on the tombstone of Dr. Katherina Schellenberg best describes these women:

"She lived for Christ,
She served others,
She sacrificed herself."

To read this book once through is mind boggling! It bears re-reading several times. You will be reduced to tears and carried to inspirational heights. I found it a real encouragement.

Proverbs 31:10: "who can find a virtuous woman, for her price is far above rubies"—we have women like that; let us encourage the youth. Despite our seeming conveniences today, things have not really changed.

Catherina Hurd
Kelowna, British Columbia

Hans Rempel, compiler, and George K. Epp, editor, *Waffen Der Wehrlosen: Ersatzdienst Der Mennoniten In Der USSR.* Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1980. 175 pp., $9.00.

Mennonites in Russia could not perceive authenticity and group integrity without reference to nonresistance. In 1925, B. H. Unruh, their most prominent representative in Europe, wrote: "Die mennonitische Gemeindeseele kann die Wehrlosigskeitfrage nicht los werden; sie wird von ihr bewegt Tag und Nacht." Though its origins in Anabaptism were largely forgotten and the implications of its teachings applied rather narrowly, nonresistance was so deeply imbedded in Russian Mennonite self-identity that conscientious objection to military service did persist even under the Soviet regime. The Mennonite peace witness did not end with the infamous "Selbstschutz" (self-defense) of the colonies during the civil war. Significant numbers of young Mennonite men performed alternative service under very difficult conditions for another two decades at least.

In *Waffen der Wehrlosen,* numerous personal experiences of individuals "serving for peace" in the U.S.S.R. have been gathered by Hans Rempel. Few are aware of this heroic witness, even in the Mennonite community, and therefore this new collection is a valuable publication.

The memoirs are grouped into several time period sections, each briefly introduced by the compiler. In the first period, from 1914 to 1926, Mennonite conscientious objectors are seen at work during World War I and after the Revolution assigned to non-combatant roles in the Red Army on the basis of a decree issued on January 4, 1919 which permitted alternative state service. After the introduction of new legislation in 1927 Mennonites served in distinct non-military projects for several months in successive years until they completed the required two-year term of state service.

In 1927 and 1928 several hundred men built up a railway embankment near Kiev and in 1929 and 1930 they were scattered in small units to extract resin from the forests of Siberia and the Urals. Under relatively good conditions, in 1931 they worked in the construction of the power dam at Dnjeprostroj near the Chortitza settlement. The absorption of the alternative service into the compulsory labour force in 1932 began the final and most difficult period. Together with the disenfranchised sons of kulaks and priests, Mennonites laboured in stone quarries near Korostenj for one year. Then from 1933 to 1937 in the coal mines near Vladivostock they experienced possibly the most severe conditions under which Mennonite conscientious objectors have ever served. The book also includes reports from men and women who were drafted into the *Trud Armee* (Work Army) during and after World War II, though this punishment was not directly related to their non-resistant convictions.

Generally, the conditions for Mennonite conscientious objectors worsened each year. The court hearings became more intense, the terms longer, the work norms higher, the rations less, the housing worse and the casualties more numerous. One senses from these personal accounts that the oppression actually originated in a dehumanized and dehumanizing system rather than from personal cruelties. The reports include several acts of kindness and decency by individuals who were serving the system.

In experiencing this increasingly oppressive system, nonresistance was not the only traditional Mennonite value retained by the young men. Their reports of various incidents reveal, both self-consciously and unself-consciously, traits as

their stubbornness in refusing to work on Sundays, their assertion of legal rights, their pride in good, hard work, their passion for cleanliness, and their ability to organize themselves. Despite their religious and ethnic uniqueness, the sense of self-confidence in their educational and cultural status as Mennonites continued. Furthermore, despite their lack of formal religious teaching and nurture, the brothers in service (*Dienstbrüder*) found joy and spiritual strength in singing.

The publication of this valuable collection is long overdue. The delay is reflected in the date of the compiler's preface (1976) and perhaps also in the reference to the earlier title in the foreword (*Friedenszeugnis*). Some additional re-organization of the collection would have improved the book. For instance the compiler's comments could have been consolidated more (e.g. pp. 66-69, 162-164). The changes in the alternative services system outlined above, suggest that the second period extended from 1927 to 1931 rather than only to 1928. In any case, the reports by Peter Neudorf (pp. 75-84) and the first section of the report by David Klassen (pp. 148-156) would more properly belong in the 1929-35 period. There are repetitions in the general descriptions and even in the recording of specific events, but these are unavoidable in such a collection and do allow for verification of information.

In some cases specific citation of sources would have been helpful, as for instance for the excerpt from *Unser Blatt* (p. 13). The inclusion of the article by Peter F. Froese, of Moscow, and later Germany, (pp. 14-24) provides an important reprint source on the initial arrangements with the Soviet regime. One wishes that the text of the basic exemption decree of January 4, 1919 would also have been located and added. A number of typographical errors remain; the most significant one occurs on page 158 where the eighth line from the bottom of the page should read "kam ich nicht zur Ruhe und entschloss mich, den vorgesetzten. . . ." The last report on the experience in the coal mines (pp. 137-144) was probably submitted by Gerhard Neufeld, not J. Neufeld as stated.

Perhaps the words of Franz Rempel, one of the Russian Mennonite COs, summarizes the witness best when he acknowledges that although the service was performed by many of the men as much out of tradition as personal conviction, the service was nevertheless a valuable heritage of faith of the fathers, (*Glaubenserbe der Väter*) to which they witnessed under difficult circumstances and also carried further (pp. 69, 70).

The compiler, himself a *Dienstbruder* under the Soviet government, presently lives in Virgil, Ontario and serves as a minister of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Mennonite congregation.

Peter H. Rempel
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Gerhard Lohrenz, *Stories From Mennonite Life*, Steinbach, Manitoba: Derksen Printers, 1980. 132 pp., p.b., $6.65.

It is always a delight to see another book by Gerhard Lohrenz available for those interested in their Russian-Mennonite roots. As a fine story-teller Dr. Lohrenz does not disappoint the reader in this his latest book.

Within it are seventeen stories which describe Mennonite life in Russia during the first half of this century. The stories are presented in the form of biographies of important personages, stories of the fate of several Mennonite families, and personal reminiscences.

An example of this is the story of "Two Brothers". Here the love of a young man for a beautiful woman is described against the stark background of the father's conviction that the impending marriage is not permissable. We see both the young man and young woman struggle to accept the father's wishes. Finally in stoic obedience the young man follows his father's directive and eventually marries another woman. The tragic final scene portrays the son, years later, forgiving the dying father for his stubborn discipline which has caused him years of deep emotional pain.

One would like to think that within the peaceful village life of our forefathers in Russia such cruelties did not occur. As a peace-loving community, striving to follow Jesus' example of love, such wilful, inconsiderate regard for the feelings of one's own son seems out of place. Yet within most of our families we have a story or two that closely resembles the situation Gerhard Lohrenz describes.

In this sense *Stories From Mennonite Life* is much more than a history. It provides the reader with an inside view of the socio-cultural life of Mennonites in Russia. Spanning some fifty years the stories portray the First World War, the aftermath of the war, deportations, labour camps, and the subsequent forced interaction with the larger Soviet society. This disintegration of the closed village community leaves its mark on the attitudes, values and religious life of the Mennonites.

In telling us these stories Gerhard Lohrenz has done us a fine service in capturing brief vignettes of our past history and culture. The portraits are not always rosy ones. Some scenes are vivid in their disappointing portrayal of a persecuted people who did not always give evidence of their faith in God. Yet, as in biblical stories, through the deeds of the good and the bad we sense a people of God striving to remain faithful in the face of horrors and deprivations—the personal impact of which most of us cannot imagine.

Here is set a fine example of how the older generation can convey its thoughts, dreams, and disappointments of the past in an understanding form, to the younger generation. They too were like we are—though in a different time and different context. The book forms a bridge of understanding between two generations; those who lived in a tempest of the past, and a sheltered generation for whom physical and emotional horror are in the movies, and little more.

Ken Reddig
Winnipeg, Manitoba