MENNONITE LIFE

SEPTEMBER 1986

In this Issue

While the migration of the Mennonites to the Ukraine (following the late eighteenth century invitation of Catherine the Great to German colonists) has received considerable attention from historians, the demise of the Molotschna Colony during World War II is seldom discussed. The episode had many unpleasant aspects, not least of which was the Mennonite association with the Nazi occupation forces. Horst Gerlach, Mennonite scholar from Weierhof, West Germany, provides new insights into this association through the reminiscences of Hermann Rossner, administrator of the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* [VoMi] in Halbstadt. The VoMi bureau of the SS was charged with resettling, protecting, and administering the German colonies in the Russian Ukraine. John D. Thiesen translated and edited the interesting account for *Mennonite Life*.

Robert S. Kreider, the previous editor of *Mennonite Life* and former director of the Mennonite Library and Archives, conducted numerous interviews with Alvin J. Beachy in late 1984 and has edited excerpts for *Mennonite Life*. Beachy, a scholar, pastor, and teacher in the General Conference Mennonite Church, described his background as an Old Order Amish youth growing up in western Pennsylvania. Beachy died in Newton, Kansas, on May 27, 1986.

After over a half century of providing organized support for church missions, the Women in Mission (Women's Missionary Association) presented their first report at a business session of the General Conference Mennonite Church a few weeks ago. The story of expanding women's roles in the church begins much earlier. James C. Juhnke, Professor of History at Bethel College, examines the changing roles of Mennonite women during the first quarter of the twentieth century, when Mennonite women received their first and radically new, but strictly limited, opportunities for church leadership.

We welcome another contribution of poetry from Elmer Suderman, recently retired Professor of English at Gustavus Adolphus College.

One of the congregations pastored by Alvin Beachy was the First Mennonite Church, Normal, Illinois. Rachel Waltner Goossen, Mennonite writer/historian from Goessel, Kansas, has recently completed a history of this congregation, which is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary, and her article is adapted from the first two chapters. The book will be available in January 1987, and may be obtained from the Anniversary Committee, The Mennonite Church of Normal, 805 S. Cottage, Normal, IL, 61761. The book includes the history of the Bloomington Mennonite Church as well. This MC group merged with the GC church in 1976 to form the Mennonite Church of Normal.

Calvin Redekop's discussion of the architecture of Mennonites focuses on the issue of building and beauty. Redekop spent three years with MCC in Europe and has numerous slides of church architecture in Europe. He has never taken a course in architecture but shares his "convictions, insights, and/or biases. The Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church building process, discussed in the March issue of *Mennonite Life*, illustrates the dynamics of the individualizing versus communal aspects of design, as well as other ideas in this article." Redekop is Professor of Sociology, Conrad Grebel College.

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Heinrich Himmler in Halbstadt, Molotschna, during World War II.

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Mennonites, the Molotschna, and the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* in the Second World War 4
Dr. Horst Gerlach
Translated by John D. Thiesen

Memories of an Amish Childhood —Interviews with Alvin J. Beachy 10
Robert S. Kreider

The Role of Women in the Mennonite Transition from Traditionalism to Denominationalism 17
James C. Juhnke

Poems 20
Elmer Suderman

An Urban Mennonite Church— The First Two Decades 22
Rachel Waltner Goossen

Mennonites, Aesthetics and Buildings 27
Calvin Redekop

Book Reviews 30

Mennonites, the Molotschna, and the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* in the Second World War

by Dr. Horst Gerlach
Translated by John D. Thiesen

Before me lies the too-little-known book by Jacob A. Neufeld, *Tiefenwege: Erfahrungen und Erlebnisse von Russland-Mennoniten in zwei Jahrzehnten bis 1949* [Deep Ways: Experiences and Adventures of the Russian Mennonites through Two Decades to 1949]. I read it a second time during a recent vacation. One is shocked again and again by the events that occurred in these decades before, during, and after the Second World War in the area of the Molotschna colony, on the trek to Poland, and in the flight to the West. At the same time, every informed historian is impressed by the attractive objectivity of the author, who portrays great world events from the viewpoint of the common man.

Writings on this theme have appeared from other Mennonite pens, such as that of Frank H. Epp in *Mennonite Exodus*[1] and the very critical comments on his work by G. and M. Cornies in *Der Bote*,[2] and a number of other publications. It was certainly too early at that time, for a number of reasons, to see these affairs from a different viewpoint, specifically the viewpoint of those who took up the administration of this area with the occupation troops in the course of the conquest and liberation of the ethnic German colonies by the German army.

For this reason, I recently conversed with Hermann Rossner of Düsseldorf, an eager reader of *Der Bote* and friend of the Mennonites of Russian German background. Rossner came to Halbstadt [today Molochansk, USSR] during the war in the service of the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* [VoMi, Ethnic German Liason Office, a bureau of the SS]. Many of these people have and always did have a certain weakness for these German minorities living outside of Germany. Rossner comes originally from Berlin and, after an apprenticeship in his uncle's wholesale curtain business, attended evening courses in Berlin at the *Hochschule für Politik* [Academy of Politics]. There he studied Ukrainian history and learned of the Black Sea Germans living there.

In 1939 he joined the VoMi, which had been headed since 1937 by *SS Obergruppenführer* [SS General] Werner Lorenz, an estate owner from Danzig and the father-in-law of the German publisher Axel Springer.[3] Within the VoMi there was the *Russland-Kommando* [Russia Detachment], headed by *Oberführer* [SS brigadier] Horst Hoffmeyer. Hoffmeyer ended up in a Romanian prison in 1944. As extradition to the Soviets threatened, he committed suicide together with *Obersturmführer* [SS lieutenant] Müller of Varel in Oldenburg. He left behind his wife and a son, who today works for ZDF [German television] in Mainz.

Hoffmeyer was born in 1903 in Posen [today Poznan, Poland] and beginning 1 October 1935 was business manager of the *Bund deutscher Osten* [League of the German East] and the *Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland* [VDA, League for Germandom Abroad] in Königsberg, East Prussia [today Kaliningrad, USSR]. The leader of the two associations was the later minister for refugees Prof. Dr. Theodor Oberländer, who from 1920-1930 was employed by the Soviet authorities as an agricultural seedling specialist [*Saatzuchtspezialist*] in southern Russia and took this opportunity to become acquainted with the problem of ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union. Already at that time Oberländer came to the conclusion that the Soviet Union could not feed itself without private enterprise. He also visited the Volga Germans at the time and on account of this was deported from the Soviet Union in 1930.

During the period of the treaty between Hitler and Stalin, Hoffmeyer was sent to the Soviets with a rapidly expanded staff to arrange with them methods for the resettlement of ethnic Germans from the Soviet-annexed areas and to lead the resettlement. Among the groups resettled, only in the group from Galicia is there likely to have been a significant number of Mennonites. Professor Oberländer, today of Bonn, was involved in the Galician resettlement. The area around Lemberg [today Lvov, USSR] was occupied by Soviet troops in 1939, and the ethnic Germans would have been threatened in the course of time with expropriation, or partial or complete deportation. The Galician Mennonites, who immigrated in 1784-1785 under Emperor Joseph II and numbered 550 in 1939, were concentrated at Kiernica-Lemberg and resettled in the Warthegau [a region of Poland along the Warta river conquered by Germany in 1939], unfortunately scattered in many places.[4]

In connection with this resettlement activity, Hoffmeyer was in Moscow. The Russians wanted to have Ukrainians and White Russians from Poland in exchange for the emigrated Volhynian and Galician Germans. But, obviously, hardly anyone applied for this. Documents and invitations preserved from that time show very close cooperation between the German and Soviet authorities. At the border, Soviet commissars gave speeches to the ethnic German transports about friendship between peoples.

At that time, however, statements were made by leading Soviet functionaries at a drinking party in the presence of their German guests that those resettled populations would one day be recovered. They expected that

Himmler reviews youth group of ethnic Germans in Halbstadt, 31 Oct. 1942. In front of Himmler, General Wolff, Himmler's chief of staff (died 1985).

Hitler would land in England in 1940, and then Europe could be rolled up from the East. According to this thesis, discussed in a book by Erich Helmdach,[5] Hitler launched a preventive war on 22 July 1941 because Stalin, after the weakening of the eastern front, would have invaded about two months later.

However that may be, after the occupation of the Ukraine, the general staff of the VoMi came to Landau-Odessa. At Christmas 1941 a detachment of about 20 men was sent out by private car. Subordinated to the main staff of the VoMi headed by Hoffmeyer were three task forces [*Einsatzgruppen*, not to be confused with the *Einsatzgruppen* trained for the persecution of the Jews]. First there was the Transnistrian ["trans Dniepr"] task force which managed an autonomous government of the ethnic Germans in the area of Romanian sovereignty. The staff of this group employed a prominent Mennonite, Johannes Harder, as an editor.

The second task force was in Nikopol, under the authority of the civil administration and the senior SS and police commander [*höhere SS- und Polizeiführer*]. Rossner headed the VoMi task force in Halbstadt, which was in the military-administered area of Army Group South, then under the commanding officer of the rear army group, field and local commandant's offices, and temporarily for a few months under the civil administration. He was given the title "regional official" [*Gebietshauptmann*], not "commissar," in order to avoid the bad Russian experiences with persons carrying the title "commissar." Under the task force in Halbstadt were the administrative detachments [*Betreuungskommandos*] of Melitopol, Prischib, Halbstadt, Waldheim, Gnadenfeld, Rostov (temporarily), and Grunau (temporarily). The Halbstadt (Molotschna) area included about 60 villages with a predominantly German population.

Rossner recalls that he was trained for the administrative work essentially orally. He remembers further that the armed forces, in this case the First Mountain Rifle Division and the Romanians, penetrated the villages as the Soviets were attempting to evacuate the population. The towns were completely or partially emptied. Almost all men were gone. Only in Heidelberg, where the Russians had assembled many men to dig entrenchments, were there almost all men. In other places women and children were evacuated.

Questioned about the duties of the VoMi, Rossner recalled the following areas. First of all, the schools had to be brought into operation again. For this, several teachers from Germany were drafted. They often performed the function of school superintendent [*Schulrat*]. He remembered, for example, a teacher named Hildebrandt. In Prischib, west of Molotschna, the VoMi set up a teacher training institute, headed by the Swabian national poet and Stuttgart town councilor [*Ratsherr*] Karl Götz. Rossner thought—memory is clouded after so many years and, above all, by Soviet imprisonment—that there were about 50 Protestant [*evangelische*], Catholic, and Mennonite students there.

The hospitals in Halbstadt and Orloff also had to be made usable again. Eighty-four German Red Cross nurses came from Germany and dealt with the nutritional as well as medical care of the ethnic Germans. Rossner wondered why these "girls" (who in the meantime have become older women) are not invited to the reunions of former German residents in Russia [*Treffen der Landsmannschaft*] and of Mennonite *Umsiedler* [resettlers from Russia to Germany since World War II].

In Halbstadt a pharmacy was set up, and the German hospital acquired operating room equipment from Germany. Neufeld notes, in addition to this, the establishment of a hospital in Waldheim.[6] In Halbstadt Dr. Johann Klassen practiced as leader with the

trusty old Dr. Kotat. In Waldheim were a German doctor and the daughter of the tried and tested surgeon Dr. Tivonius.

Under pressure from the military, a self-defense force [*Selbstschutz*] was created, analagous to the development at the end of the German occupation in the First World War. In addition, there was a mounted unit with barracks, the cavalry squadron made up of 4 platoons. It was based in Waldheim. According to Rossner, there were hardly any partisans in the Halbstadt area. Epp gives the strength of the squadron as 500 men.[7] In the Cornies letter to *Der Bote*,[8] it was emphasized that it was not only a question of Mennonites, but that the members of the squadron included Protestant [*Evangelische*] as well as Catholics and Mennonites. Rossner recalls that there were great difficulties in equipping the squadron with all levels of officers. According to his recollection it had three drafted pastors as platoon leaders.

One of the members of the squadron had also told him of a poisoning attempt on one unit of the squadron. There the coffee was brewed with rain water collected from the roof. Someone (partisans?) had scattered poison on the roof of the barracks. In Halbstadt there was a similar incident in which eight or more men, among them Rossner himself, became ill. Dr. Johann Klassen of the Halbstadt hospital at first diagnosed the illness as lead poisoning. Rossner ended up in a military hospital in Berlin.

From the point of view of the VoMi, there were many grounds for the establishment of the cavalry squadron: 1) In 1941 the area was almost emptied of men by the retreating Soviets. By drafting the young men into the cavalry, a few men remained in the local territory and could no longer be sent off to all points of the compass by the German military, the intelligence service [*Abwehr*, for civil administration], or as translators. With Prof. Benjamin Unruh it was agreed that if possible, the squadron should not go into combat. In other respects, the squadron was put under the authority of the individual VoMi detachment leaders. (In general, a VoMi man and his driver made up a detachment.) Rossner attended to the clothing, arming, and feeding of the squadron by the army, mostly through Taganrog. Rossner accompanied Unruh on a visit to Reich Chief of the SS Himmler in Litzmannstadt [today Lodz, Poland] in 1943 or 1944. Himmler allowed the cavalry squadron to be taken over by the SS after his visit to Halbstadt on 31 October and 1 November 1942. It became part of the SS division "Florian Geyer."

About his visit to Himmler, Rossner wrote to a friend in Canada on 8 March 1972,

> Prof. Unruh and I agreed perfectly in our direction of march. In question was the Mennonite oath for the squadron, the continuation of stationing in the local colony area, and the avoidance of a combat assignment for the squadron. All was promised according to the wishes of Benjamin Unruh by the *Reichsführer* [Himmler]. Later or earlier, and at least once, I was with him in Karlsruhe and once in Berlin at the house of [Dr. Horst] Quiring. I knew already at that time who Benjamin Unruh was and sought his advice. I stood up for him as much as I could, and did my part as well as I could.[9]

The ethnic Germans naturally also had their religious needs. After the flight of the Russians, they cleaned out their churches, and church services and baptisms were held. Among the VoMi staff were a few religious men who also attended the church services. The church in Waldheim had been used for another purpose by the Soviets. A local VoMi detachment leader wanted to establish a Hitler Youth clubhouse there. Some Mennonites carried this affront to Rossner, and he decided in favor of the reestablishment of a church. The real preachers, though, were largely deported [by the Soviets], according to his recollection.

The Molotschna at that time received prominent visits from Germany, which Neufeld describes.[10] Among them were the Baltic German Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, Alfred Rosenberg, and the Regional Party Chief [*Gauleiter*] of East Prussia and Reich Commissioner for the Ukraine, Erich Koch. Rosenberg was put to death in Nuremberg on 16 October 1946, and Koch was sentenced to death by Poland. However, Koch wrote his memoirs while in the prison [*Prominentengefängnis*] at Wartenberg in southeast Prussia [today Barczewo, Poland]. The Himmler visit on 31 October 1942 is documented by the accompanying photos. He reviewed the cavalry squadron and the teacher training institute in Prischib. After a parade, he spoke before the ethnic Germans in Halbstadt in his office of Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood [*Reichkommissar für die Festigung des deutschen Volkstums*]. To my question of what Himmler said, Rossner answered, "Himmler promised extra help in the form of clothing and food." Soon after the visit, material and clothing arrived from the supplies of the combat SS [*Waffen SS*]. This was distributed to the population by the VoMi detachments.

Himmler said further in his speech: "I am happy that I can give attention to this positive duty, in addition to many other duties in the middle of a terrible war." Now, one knows about Himmler that he is one of those who ordered the worst crimes in the history of humanity, the persecution of the Jews. On the other hand, it is also known that in his youth, he was considered an "ardent Catholic," for whom Sunday mass was "no outer ritual but an inner necessity."[11] The ray of hope in this general picture is surely that, though he later left the Church, his conscience may well have remained and possibly motivated this statement.

In any case, Himmler's impression of the colony was positive, and he wanted to establish a center for German colonization efforts in Halbstadt. Himmler also agreed that the cavalry squadron should stay in the Molotschna area and not be sent to the front. He was also against the idea that the women capable of doing translation should be sent to other areas.

As a further assignment of the VoMi, Rossner named the establishment of so-called "German shops," whereby the most basic things, such as sewing needles, etc., had to be "organized" from Germany in slow and wearisome shipments. The VoMi was supposed to provide shoes and clothing. Everything was lacking. It moves Rossner even today that there were no shoes in the winter of 1942. "We wanted to at least make wooden shoes. No wood to be had. Our German Red Cross nurses then wove some shoes out of corn straw."[12]

"Another argument with all possible German authorities overshadowed this whole situation. To many German citizens [*Reichsdeutschen*] it had first to be made clear that it was *Germans* for whom we were working, what fate lay behind them and what fate they still endured, what had to be done for them and why they had to be preserved and protected.[13]

Now, some who know this material will object, certainly with justice, that the German administration set different

Top. *Participants in parade, 31 Oct. 1942, Halbstadt, Molotschna. In center cavalry band, Himmler with retinue.*
Center. *Cavalry composed of ethnic Germans in Halbstadt, 31 Oct. 1942. In front of them, civilians of surrounding German villages. After the Himmler visit, the cavalry troop was incorporated into the 8th SS Cavalry Division. When the Molotschna was evacuated in 1943/44, they protected the trek and helped refugees repair broken-down wagons, etc.*
Bottom. *SS Major [*Sturmbannführer*] Rossner greets Himmler in Halbstadt, 31 Oct. 1942. From left: VoMi-Berlin Chief of Staff Behrens, ?, ?, Himmler, General Wolff. Behind Wolff in camp is Dniepropetrovsk Senior SS and Police Chief Harm.*

levels of rations for the individual ethnic groups. Rossner knew of this grievance, and in the latter part of his time there (while he was "regional official" [*Gebietshauptmann*]), he gave the Ukrainians higher rations, approximately what the Germans got. To his knowledge there were hardly any Jews in the area. They had, almost without exception, cleared out before the arrival of the Germans, an opinion that concurs with that of many others.

To destroy ethnic German peoplehood, a new redistricting plan had been undertaken in the Soviet period that divided the relatively closed Mennonite settlement into many different districts. In the midst of them Soviet settlement strategists placed Ukrainian villages. In the last three to four months of the Soviet period, the Molotschna was under the office of the Dniepropetrovsk General Commissioner. At the beginning of the German occupation, it was under the Armored Group [*Panzergruppe*] Kleist and then became a rear area. In the Prischib area (just west of Molotschna) the *kolkhozy* [collective farms] were dissolved. But the *kolkhozy*, as far as agriculture was concerned, were under special agricultural chiefs [*Landwirtschaftsführern, Sonderführern*]. Rossner said he got along relatively well with the Russian Orthodox Poles. In this his education in Berlin was to his advantage.

II. The End of the Molotschna

In the second half of 1943 the news from the front was increasingly threatening. The VoMi was in continuing contact with the Army Group Don, later South. And what was the situation at that time? According to a report by the well-known military specialist Werner Haupt,[14] brought to my attention by Rossner, things were thus:

> The crucial point of the powerful Soviet summer offensive, which had been underway for weeks between Vitebsk and the Black Sea, directed itself more and more against the German Army Group South. The Soviet armies on the south and southwest fronts compressed the positions of the First Armor Army [*1. Panzerarmee*] and the Sixth Army between Isjum and the Sez of Azov from 16 August . . . . The situation, stretched to the breaking point—reserves were as good as gone—demanded an energetic intervention by the highest German leadership. The army group commanders, Field Marshals von Kluge (Center) and von Manstein (South), petitioned Hitler to give the order for a retreat behind the Dniepr, at a conversation on 3 September 1943 in the *Führer's* headquarters at Rastenburg, East Prussia [today Ketrzyn, Poland]. Hitler resisted this request and only acceded to withdrawal of the front behind the Desna and Kalmius rivers. On the other hand he ordered—much too late—the evacuation of the Kuban bridgehead by the 17th Army (Colonel General [*Generaloberst*] Jänicke).

It is naturally possible that the knowledge of the existing ethnic German settlements on the Molotschna and by Chortitza had something to do with Hitler's hesitation. Hitler himself had obtained a very favorable picture of the Mennonites in a conversation with the Mennonite district magistrate [*Landrat*] Walter Neufeld on 19 September 1939 in Danzig concerning the cultural achievements of the Mennonites in the Vistula delta and in the Ukraine.[15] Further, in a report by the head of the teacher training institute in Prischib and later of Luthbrandau/Warthegau, Karl Götz, the following is expressed:

> The Reich Chief of the SS [Heinrich Himmler], on 31 December 1942 in the presence of SS General Lorenz and SS Brigadier Hoffmeyer, the head of the Russian Detachment of the Ethnic German Liason Office, had a thorough discussion at the *Fuhrer's* headquarters with Prof. Lic. Unruh, in which the Reich Chief of the SS approved of the behavior and attitude of the Mennonites.[16]

One might expect that this information —although only orally reported— influenced the decisions, although it is known of Hitler that he gave orders to retreat only very reluctantly.

However that may be, the end of the Molotschna came on 12 September 1943, when the Soviet advance could no longer be stopped, even by the best military commanders such as Manstein.

> Many of us may well have had an unfamiliar feeling in this great change in our life and history as we took our places on our horse-drawn wagons on 12 September and turned our backs forever on our home along the Molotschna. It was a solemn and eventful moment.[17]

The entire flight was organized by SS Brigadier Horst Hoffmeyer. Himmler is supposed to have observed the flight of the ethnic Germans by plane, as a woman from Canada who participated in the flight reported to me at a reunion in 1978 in Espelkamp. If only he had concerned himself with it! But SS General Lorenz, the head of the entire VoMi, was also charged at the Nuremberg trials, and Prof. Unruh, according to his daughter, exonerated him.[18] The Mennonites of Holland took this as dishonesty. But who could do right by Himmler and Heaven [*Himmler und den Himmel*] at the same time?

Rossner further recalls that in 1943, no one in the Molotschna was required to leave. Those who wanted to stay could stay. He believed that Dr. Klassen of Halbstadt had stayed, but he did not know for certain anymore. In all cases the VoMi prepared railroad trains for the town dwellers who had no vehicles. The route of the trek was also determined. Each group was accompanied by VoMi troops, as one can see in photographs published in *Mennonite Life* in 1947.[19] The nurses accompanied the trek to provide medical and nutritional service, and the cavalry squadron was to protect the wagon trains from partisans. Proskorovo, west of Viniza, was planned as a large rest camp. Rossner remained in the Prischib area until combat began there, and only later joined the trek in Nikopol. From Nikopol he had to travel with the train to Jägerndorf, Sudetenland [today Krnov, Czechoslovakia] and received the assignment, after his appointment to Posen [today Poznan, Poland], to advise the authorities in the evacuation of the ethnic Germans out of the Ukraine. The Black Sea Germans were settled on a confessional [religious] basis at the initiative of Prof. Unruh. In the reports of Karl Götz it is stated:

> On 16 March 1944 a discussion took place between regional party chief [*Gauleiter*] Arthur Greiser [*Gauleiter* of the *Wartheland*] and Prof. Unruh, in which freedom of religious practice was assured, within the scope of fundamental laws, for the Russian Mennonites now coming into the Warthegau.[20]

Many things, though, did not go so smoothly. Rossner, with his secretary, found himself "alone against the entire German bureaucracy" and attempted again to be the mediator and spokesman for the people. His assignment came to an end in July 1944 when regional party chief [*Gauleiter*] Greiser gave him a "region reprimand" [*Gauverweis*]. Within 24 hours he had to leave the Warthegau. In a report to the Reich Chief of the SS Himmler he wrote, among other things, that the responsible German offices and the district farm leaders [*Kreisbauernführern*] would have refused the Russian Germans permission to farm on account of this because, of the twelve district farm leaders in the Warthegau, eleven had been placed in charge of huge estates and certainly must have been more in-

terested in willing and cheap farm workers than in independent farmers and agriculturalists. There is something to this view. On the other hand, one would have to write one's own book on the resettlement activity of the VoMi during the war.[21] There are plenty of documents on this in the Federal Archives in Koblenz. The problem was the following: in order to settle a Black Sea German, one first had to expel a Polish family from a plot of land and transport it either to central Poland [*Innerpolen*] or to Germany for forced labor [*Arbeitseinsatz*]. These expulsions by another SS organization, the Transferee Central Office [UWZ, *Umwanderer Zentralstelle*], had led to a great disturbance of the Polish population in the newly annexed provinces and in the Warthegau and in western West Prussia, and to partisan activity and bombing attacks, so that the leadership shrank back from too harsh oppression.[22]

Hoffmeyer in the meantime (1944) had been able to visit the teacher training institute, which had been put back into operation in Luthbrandau, Warthegau. Then he received a new assignment: The British Royal Air Force was flying large bombing raids on the Romanian oil refinery at Ploesti, north of Bucharest. The raiders sustained great casualties but made some lucky hits. Hoffmeyer, in the meantime promoted from SS Brigadier [*Oberführer*] to SS Major General [*Brigadeführer*] and Major General of Police [*Generalmajor der Polizei*] on account of his services in resettling 340,000 Germans out of Russia (among them about 35,000 Mennonites), was supposed to put the refinery back in operation. Thus he was transferred in July 1944 to Ploesti with about 20 VoMi men. He was also for a short time Senior SS and Police Commander [*höhere SS- und Polizeiführer*], but could no longer accomplish much because of the threatening Soviet advance and the defection of Romania from the Axis Powers (22 August 1944). The VoMi became entangled in struggles with the Romanians. The army dropped two platoons of paratroopers, but the Russians cut off the retreat to the north by quick advances. So the VoMi men next fell into Romanian internment. They were held in the engineer's barracks in Craiova about two to three weeks. Hoffmeyer, who knew the Romanians from his resettlement work, negotiated with the Romanian front commanders to pass through the lines in Romanian uniforms to German positions. A Romanian general was to be bribed. The VoMi men came to a large prisoner-of-war camp. The Red Guards had already previously come through the area. As surrender to the Soviets threatened, Hoffmeyer and SS Lieutenant [*Obersturmführer*] Muller committed suicide with their service pistols. Muller at one time had headed the main detachment [*Hauptkommando*] at Nikopol. At the time of the suicide, Hoffmeyer and Muller were together in one room. Rossner ended up in a Soviet prison. The Soviets showed themselves to be not at all enchanted by the work of the VoMi, which they themselves had strongly supported until 1941. Before being handed over to an official prison camp, the VoMi men were dragged along with the Soviet troops and decimated by shootings. Only after the transfer to the prison camps did the shootings, but not the deaths, stop. Of the twenty VoMi men who came to Romania in 1944, most of whom previously took care of the Black Sea Germans in Russia, only four survived the Russian prisoner-of-war camp, among them Ritter (since then deceased) and Dr. Otto Franke (Transnistria Main Staff [*Hauptstab*]).[23]

There remains no doubt that the VoMi work was done under the symbols established in 1933 in Germany, but also with a great portion of feeling for their ethnic German fellow men. But because these symbols of 1933 became associated with many unfortunate things, few found words of thanks to give after the war, where one could also thank someone who is not part of one's own church and confession. Among these few, however, was the unforgettable Canadian elder J. J. Thiessen, who had a warm heart for his Russian brethren in need. In a letter of 19 September 1957 he wrote to Hermann Rossner:

> She [a Canadian Mennonite who knew Rossner in Russia] honors you and with her hundreds of our people thank you for your generous help during the departure of the colonists, who had to leave home and farm in order to not fall into the hands of the Communists. I had firmly intended to visit you and warmly clasp your hand for what you lovingly did for suffering humanity. It was not possible and so I do it in writing. May God richly repay you for your rescue work and the aid that came to the colonists through you.[24]

Please note, I have endeavored to write down what Hermann Rossner still remembers. He feels still today (1986) very connected to his Mennonite friends and reads every issue of *Der Bote*. I have supplemented the interview with well-known and little-known books, sources, and parts of interviews. To some readers much here may appear new. But history, and also the history of a small group, is not as it is supposed to have been, but as it actually ran its course with all the good and bad impulses of the human heart.

ENDNOTES

[1]Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites since the Communist Revolution* (Altona, Manitoba: Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council, 1962).

[2]*Der Bote*, 1963, nos. 13-25.

[3]Heinz Höhne, *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf* [The Order of the Death's Head] (München: C. Bertelsmann, 1966?), p. 255f. This book is available in English as *The Order of the Death's Head* (New York: Coward—McCann, 1970).

[4]*Christlicher Gemeindekalender* 1939, p. 152.

[5]Erich Helmdach, *Überfall* [Surprise Attack] (Neckargemünd: Vowinkel-Verlag, 1975); book review, "War es ein Überfall?" [Was it a surprise attack?], *Die Zeit*, 7 November 1975, p. 43.

[6]Neufeld, p. 95.

[7]Epp, p. 395.

[8]*Der Bote*, 21 May 1963.

[9]Rossner to "a Canadian friend," 8 March 1972, p. 5.

[10]Neufeld, p. 95.

[11]Höhne, p. 38.

[12]Rossner to "a Canadian friend," 8 March 1972, p. 5.

[13]Rossner to "a Canadian friend," 8 March 1972, p. 5.

[14]*DNZ* (Munich) 46, 15 November 1963.

[15]Diether Götz Lichdi, *Mennoniten im Dritten Reich: Dokumentation und Deutung* (Weierhof: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1977), p. 60.

[16]Karl Götz, *Die Mennoniten*, 1944, Bundesarchiv Koblenz [Federal Archives in Koblenz], R. 69/215, p. 11.

[17]Neufeld, p. 192.

[18]Translator's note: A transcript of Unruh's testimony at the Nuremberg trials was deposited in English translation in the National Archives in Washington, DC. Thanks to Allan Teichroew of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, a photocopy of this transcript is available in the Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.

[19]Gerhard Fast, "Mennonites of the Ukraine under Stalin and Hitler," *Mennonite Life* 2 (April 1947): 20.

[20]Götz, *Die Mennoniten*.

[21]Translator's note: A detailed and thorough discussion of this resettlement activity in English is Robert L. Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy 1939-1945: A History of the Reich Commission for the Strengthening of Germandom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).

[22]Such as the Warsaw Uprising, 1 August 1944 to 2 October 1944. See Hanns von Krannhals, *Der Warschauer Aufstand* [The Warsaw Uprising] (Frankfurt/M: Gröfe-Verlag, 1962).

[23]Dr. Otto Franke was responsible for building hospitals (Landau, Odessa, Hoffnungsthal) and operated several times with the Mennonite doctor Klassen in Halbstadt. He is now blind and lives near Freiburg i. Br.

[24]J. J. Thiessen to Hermann Rossner, 19 September 1957 (on Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization letterhead).

Memories of an Amish Childhood —Interviews with Alvin J. Beachy

by Robert S. Kreider

In the wooded mountains of western Pennsylvania along the Pennsylvania-Maryland border lies a fertile farming valley where Amish families first settled in the decade before the American Revolution. This is the valley of the Casselman River, which flows westward into the Monangahela. Here the Amish ancestors of Alvin J. Beachy lived for generations. Alvin was born on July 9, 1913, the eleventh child in the Old Order Amish home of Moses and Lucy Miller Beachy, who would end up having five daughters and nine sons altogether. Alvin J. Beachy retired from the Bethel College faculty in 1978 and died in Newton, Kansas, on May 27, 1986, at the age of seventy-two.

Moses Beachy was bishop of the congregation which experienced the painful division in 1927 which led to the formation of the Beachy Amish Church, a group which today numbers one hundred congregations and 6,500 baptized members. This 1927 division, centered on the issue of the ban, was similar to a controversy in the same community in 1895 out of which emerged the Conservative Mennonite Church.

Alvin J. Beachy lived in the Amish community until 1934, when at the age of twenty-one he left to find work in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He resumed his schooling at the age of twenty-four. Study followed at Messiah College, Bluffton College (A.B.), and Hartford Theological Seminary (B.D. and S.T.M.), culminating in 1960 in a doctorate at Harvard University Divinity School. He taught Bible and religion at Bluffton College, Eastern Mennonite College, and from 1969 to 1978 at Bethel College. His Mennonite pastorates included: First Mennonite Church, Normal, Illinois; First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, Ohio; and Zion Mennonite Church, Souderton, Pennsylvania. On September 4, 1942, he married Vera Clouse at Nappanee, Indiana. Beachy's widely-commended theological treatise is *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation*.

On seven occasions during November and December of 1984, I interviewed Alvin Beachy about his memories of growing up in an Amish home. After each interview, a transcript was typed and given to him for correction. From twenty-one pages of single-spaced transcriptions, a copy deposited with the Mennonite Library and Archives, excerpts have been selected which would give insight into the life of an Old Order-Beachy Amish home in the early years of this century.

Meetinghouse

We worshipped in two meetinghouses, one at Flag Run and the other at Summit Mills, ten miles apart. These probably dated back to the 1880's. For the Old Order Amish to have meetinghouses is unusual, unique to Somerset County. Men entered by one door, women by another. Women sat on the left, men on the right. In the center was a coal stove. In the front was the preachers' table and behind it the preachers' bench. The front bench was reserved for the *Vorsänger* (song leaders). It was interesting when we worked on the architectural plans for the Souderton church how much came from the concept of an Amish meetinghouse. Twice a year members came and scrubbed the meetinghouse, took the benches outside, and washed them, and sanded the floor. After the division in 1927, the two groups continued to use the two meetinghouses on alternate Sundays until the Mountainview congregation built their present church in 1953.

Being Amish

The overriding mission of the church was to be faithful and not to be successful. The Amish approached their faith from a New Testament perspective, the whole Bible interpreted in the context of Christ, God's supreme revelation. I had no feeling of shame in being Amish.

Mother

My mother Lucy was the youngest daughter of Samuel J. and Magdalena Swartzentruber Miller. Grandfather, who had been a schoolteacher, taught his daughter at home. "Posy Sam," they called him, because he had so many flowers. Grandfather Samuel Miller was a nature lover. He planted apple trees along the roads. His spacious lawn with evergreens was a shelter for birds, squirrels, swans, peacocks, and deer. He was fond of horses, particularly his brown mare, Daisy. He was gifted in penmanship and drew pictures of birds in flight in colored ink. Grandmother Miller's people came from the Conservative Amish-Mennonite side of the 1895 split. Father thought a lot of those Conservative Amish.

Grandfather Miller's sons inherited his love for nature. Uncle Jake planted and grafted apple trees along roads. Uncle Elias raised vegetables in his greenhouse. Uncle Simon, who made money on his royalties from the mines, had time for hunting, which he loved. He had a rare gift for taking care of the ill. He might have been a medical doctor had he not been Amish.

I remember Mother's kindnesses. She lanced my boils. I ran a rusty nail through my hand. She tied a rind of bacon over the wound to draw out the poison. She gave me an English-German testament. Mother was tall. Mary Elizabeth's description of Mother was correct: "kind, loving, gentle, sympathetic and very patient." Father

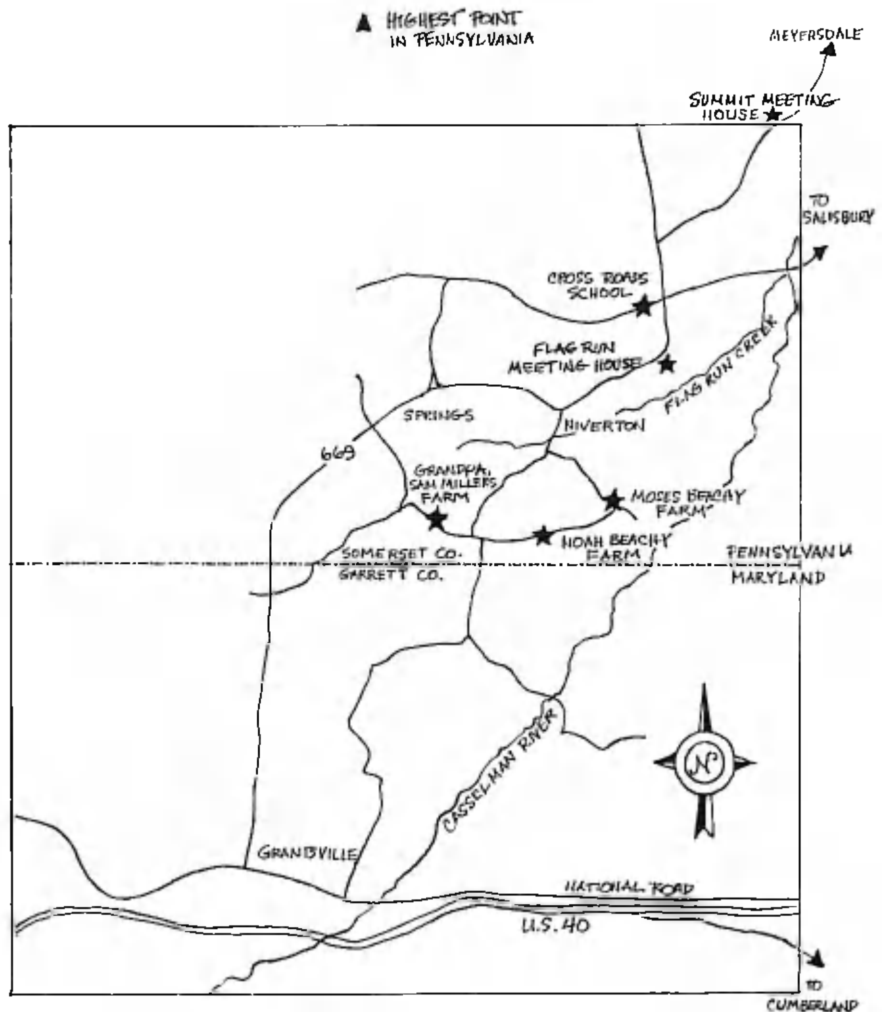
used to say that she never became angry when things didn't go right. She only cried. Undoubtedly she did much to help him control his quicker temper when his patience ran thin. Mother taught us to pray and to memorize Bible verses. I especially remember the coffee cake she made with yeast dough. I never remember being spanked by Mother. She did put me in the *Brumschtall*, a broom closet by the chimney, to be isolated and to think things over when I had been unruly. The place was dark, hot and smelly. . . . Dr. Lichty, who lived in Salisbury, delivered most of Mother's babies: nine boys and five girls. He always came by horse and buggy.

Mother was selective about the world. A door-to-door salesman came with a "talking machine," but Mother told him, "We can't have that." He responded, "I know, I'll just leave it with you for a month." With the record player were a number of records and one which Mother liked very much and played often: "Abide With Me." A preacher came to the community who would not preach in the meetinghouse, so they had preaching services in our home. Mother put the talking machine in a guest room and closed the door before the service. When the wife of the retired bishop came, she poked into closets and found the talking machine. She commented, "Something like that I wouldn't want to have in my house." Mother was fearful that this would become something for church discipline, but nothing further was heard about it. The story was told by our family with amusement and anxiety.

I don't remember Mother singing, but she was pleased to hear me singing German hymns on returning from German school.

When mother was ill she wanted a little income of her own. She got some Leghorns and paid Milton and me one dollar a week to tend them. In explaining her offer to pay us she said, "Now you must do it cheerfully." When brother Jonas died, Mother used his savings to buy religious books for each of the children. This included the series, "First Steps for Little Feet."

Mother and I once were going to visit Uncle Alvin Beachy's wife. On the road we met two ministers coming to see Father. They said, "We just want to have a nice cool talk." Mother commented to them: "I don't think there is any use. I think his mind is made up."



Map of valley of Casselman River by Gail Lutsch and Moses Beachy farmstead in about 1914.

Alvin at his school desk, ca. 1926.

Mother was of the same mind as Father on church issues.

Mother died in 1927 on Thanksgiving Day of Bright's Disease (malfunctioning of the kidney). I remember my sister coming to my bed and asking, "Are you asleep? Momma died." I didn't view Mother in the casket. I was told that her features were so bloated that she was not very recognizable. This was a month before the split. We sat up front for the funeral service and so I didn't see whether both sides in the controversy were present.

Father

Father was five feet seven inches tall, heavy, three hundred pounds, down to two hundred and fifty at his death. At haymaking time he went up into the haymow and trampled the hay down. I don't remember that Father helped with the farm work after I was fifteen. That was handled by the nine brothers and five sisters.

I remember Father going into his study (the carpeted *Stupp* or parlor and only used for special occasions), where he would close the door, and read aloud in German passages from the Bible. His sermons were a retelling of Biblical material. He was free to use illustrations in English in his German sermons. No one used notes in the pulpit. Father memorized almost word-for-word the scriptures used at communion. He practiced preaching by reciting to the blue walls in the living room the scriptures he had memorized. He read the sermons of D. L. Moody. We had a *Martyr's Mirror* which Father read by the hour. He used illustrations from it in his sermons. In one of his sermons he told of a young girl who was asked by a stranger for a drink. She gave him two glasses of milk. Later she became ill and needed surgery. The family was poor and could not afford surgery. A doctor, who had been the befriended stranger, came forward and said, "Here is $200 for two glasses of milk." He was illustrating how one might find oneself entertaining angels unawares.

Father attended the same school I did, Crossroads, but probably never had more than six grades of schooling. He chewed tobacco before his marriage, but Mother's influence led him to stop it. Uncle Alvin came back from Oregon chewing Mail Pouch. Under the preachers' table was a box of sawdust for the preachers who chewed tobacco. Two of Father's brothers were also ministers.

Father did not tell stories of his growing up years, but he did tell of his physical strength as a youth: lifting a barrel of apples alone or with one hand and arm heaving a one hundred pound bag of feed over his shoulder . . . I remember attending a political meeting in Salisbury with Father which focused on the issue of school consolidation, which the Amish opposed. Father did not vote, as far as I remember. In the 1928 Hoover-Smith election Uncle Alvin preached that we shouldn't go to the polls, but we should pray . . . Father would sit in a rocking chair by the register by the hour singing hymns in German. One of his favorites was "Make room for the little child, make room for the little child . . . for I am coming soon". . . . Father liked to tease. He was a great match-maker. He loved hearing people laugh . . . . The children knew that Father meant what he said. When he said, "Now iss es zeit," (Now it's time) we knew it was time for us to heed, or punishment would follow . . . . Father was widely known. If someone addressed him as "Mr. Beachy," his answer was, "Mr. Beachy is not here, but Moses is." He did not care for titles . . . . Father never had any difficulty getting acquainted with people and making them feel at home. One of his favorite greetings was, "Come in, come in. You're as welcome as the flowers of May". . . . Father was easily hurt when people wronged him. Father said his grandmother Elizabeth Beachy tried to help him overcome his "Beachy temper." Yes, there is such a thing; Father had a violent temper if something was broken . . . .

I never heard Father preach sermons on the Great Commission. The mission concern came with Sunday school when they began reading the whole New Testament.

I remember our first car: a 1924 Dodge sedan, four-door, black, twelve-volt battery. The second "machine," as we called it, was a 1928 Chrysler. Father said he would never own a car. They were always registered in his wife's name. I remember him learning to drive, once trying to shift into second but putting it instead into reverse. I also remember Father trying to drive our Huber tractor. He couldn't find a way of stopping it. He yelled "Whoa" and ran through a fence. We enjoyed recounting this story.

Two of Father's sisters, Phoebe and Mary, died in childbirth as young women. Father's brother Rufus, a veterinarian and a tailor, had two offices. He had an office at our place, and in Meyersdale, where he lived, he had a barn for sick animals. Uncle Lewis, a bishop—widely known and respected—lived in Oakland, Maryland, and remained Old Order Amish. Uncle Alvin, who had moved back and forth between Oregon and Indiana, was an effective preacher with a strong voice. When Uncle Alvin was in Oregon, he wrote that he was in dire straits. Father sent him $500 to move back to Pennsylvania, where they lived in the tenant house on the second farm. Uncle Alvin stood with Father in the split of 1927, but later moved to Indiana and back into the Old Order Amish.

Father made trips to Indiana, Ontario, and eastern Pennsylvania before the split. At one time Father wanted to move to Indiana, to sell out, pay off his debts, and get a fresh start, but the family opposed it, and we stayed. We were saved from being sold at sheriff's sale by Ernest, who ran the farm from 1927 on. He gave up everything to save the farm. Father made a mistake in buying the second farm in 1919 at inflated wartime prices.

Father was a firm believer in prayer. One of Ezra Yoder's twins was ill. Father conceived that he should go.

They lived over by Grantsville, and I took him in my Chevy. He came out of the house and reported that the child was much better. One sensed that prayer was important . . . . Father had a booming bass voice. My sister said, "One could hear him a half mile away when he sat on the porch and sang. My sister says his favorite at family singings was "Break Thou the Bread of Life." I remember Mother's favorite was "Shall We Gather at the River?" . . . . He was a good preacher. I would hear him say, "Put the food low enough for the lambs." He meant to preach so that children could understand . . . . I remember Mother admonishing Father not to get into a sing-song style of preaching, which was fairly universal among Amish preachers.

Father remarried in 1928—Mary E. Hershberger who was single, about Mother's age, and resembled Mother. They were married in the Big Valley. It was the bishop's job to announce forthcoming weddings. Saturday night Father disappeared and sent a note to Noah to have the wedding announced.

The Farm

On the home farm, we had eighty acres of tillable land and eighty acres of untillable land, much of it marred with soft coal talings, sunken pit heads and cave-ins. There was a big limestone quarry on our farm, the Keystone Lime and Coal Co., which has since been covered up . . . . On the new place we had a sugar camp—collected the sap in buckets in the early spring . . . . We had a Frick thresher. Father did threshing for others and ended up doing ours last, even with the new thresher. We also had a Papec ensilage cutter, one of the best, eighteen or twenty-four inch cut. We tried to throw in enough to choke it but you couldn't choke a Papec . . . . In threshing we used tractor power, except when I was very young we used a steam engine. If Father had any job, it was keeping the machine well oiled. He shone in riding the binder. He knew all the parts and how to repair and adjust. He knew how to dump the bundles in nice regular rows so that shocking was easier . . . . Father always wanted us when going into a new field with a binder to open up the field by cutting the grain with a cradle. It saved trampling down and losing the grain in the corner and along the four sides . . . .

We raised a half dozen hogs for our

Top. *Eight of Moses Beachy children in 1930, left to right: Ernest, Ruth, Milton, Alvin, Mary Elizabeth, Irvin, Lewis, and Annie.*

Center. *Moses Beachy house with the 1926 addition and to the left the veterinary office of Uncle Rufus Beachy.*

Left. *Alvin in his late teens with a favorite horse.*

Limestone quarry shortly before it was torn down, ca. 1965. Formerly on the Moses Beachy farm.

own needs. Milton Hershberger and Simon Miller came with their families and helped with the butchering. By noon all the hogs were killed. The rest of the day was spent cutting and stuffing sausage. Ham and shoulders were smoked in the smokehouse. Tenderloin was cooked and canned for quick meals. Lard was rendered in a big iron kettle. We made liverwurst (puddings) . . . . Father was a great horse trader. He would raise them until about the time they were to be broken and would then sell them. We had four horses, sometimes six. We kept one for the buggy. We never used mules. They were forbidden to Somerset County Amish . . . . For a while we had twenty or more cows and a de Laval milking machine operated with a gasoline engine . . . . We had a flock of two hundred sheep after we gave up cows . . . . We had a lot of rail fences . . . . We had lots of stones in the fields, which we hauled out to the roads, where roadmen broke them up with their sledgehammers to fill in low spots . . . . We had an old orchard and a young orchard: apples—Baldwin and Smokehouse; no peaches; cherries along the fences. We had a strawberry patch and a grape arbor.

I wanted a pony. However, the Discipline of 1837 didn't approve of mules and ponies. Father gave me an old mare, Nettie, as my own. I led her up to the pasture with the cows. She fell one night into a mining hole and kicked herself to death. I conducted a funeral and placed a cross at the hole . . . . I approached Uncle Simon to ask whether I could buy one of his pony mares. He explained that if he let me do that, "We would have war in our family." If I couldn't buy, I asked whether I could borrow one of his mares for the feed. He let me take Winnie. I fed her oats. She had a way of finding her way back to our place because she knew that at our place was oats.

The Bull

I was working at Noah's place. Milton came over just before dinner with a roadster made into a truck: "Come help Duke back into the barn." Duke (full name: "La Prime's War Duke") was a Jersey bull. We drove with the Ford into the field to get him. He put his head down and charged the Ford and would have gored the engine if Milt had not eluded him. We cut one cow out of the herd and put her in the barn. She began to bawl. Duke came to investigate. We tried to entice him to come close so that we could slip a wooden bar with a hook in the ring in his nose. He was too foxy. He wouldn't come close enough. We tried to throw a horseblanket over his head to blind him. He threw off the blanket as we were trying to hook the ring. He pitched at Milton. He was thrown ten to fifteen feet backwards, struck his head and was out cold. I jumped down and dragged Milton to safety, while Irwin threw a stable broom at Duke and diverted his attention . . . . Later when I asked Father if I could make a trip with six young people to Lancaster County, Father agreed and said, "We won't forget how faithfully you worked to get Milton out of there."

The Mines

There were mines all over the area. In the mines there was always the problem of poison fumes. "Black damp," they called it. Some of the mines smoldered for miles underground. Like the Divine Comedy. I remember smelling the escaping sulphur fumes, seeing the smoke rising from the ground. There were sink holes where the ground collapsed over mine shafts. Father was a partner in the Niverton coal business, which had a mine on our farm. I remember people referring to the Italians who had worked in the mines as "bohunks." One stable in our barn was called the "mining stable" for the miners. Our horse, Old Tom, pulled coal cars from the mines to the tipple. Sometimes we went back into the mines to watch. The shafts went back thirty to fifty feet. There were three veins of coal in our area: a four-foot vein, good; below that a five-foot vein, not so good; below that an eight-foot vein, best of all, almost like hard coal. I don't know if any Amish worked as miners. One Old Mennonite who worked in the mines was called "Coalie." Our house had to be moved earlier because of an underground coalmine fire. The farm below, Christian Zook's place, had the same problem. Christian called his place the "burning hill farm" . . . . Father was a shareholder in the Keystone Lime and Coal Co. Father and my older brother Noah worked in the quarry.

Family Life

Christmas was not lavish, but it was meaningful. On Christmas morning pie pans were set out for each child with the person's name on it. We would find on our plates peanuts, hard candy, popcorn balls. One year I received a windup train which could run on tracks. Milton and I once received an Erector set. It had been hidden in a closet. We were not supposed to see it beforehand. We found it. As punishment for peek-

ing, it was put away and could not be played with until New Year's Day . . . . At home we all had nicknames: Lewis—Grumpy, Milton—Grit, Ruth—"Povey Lovey", Ernest—Karnest, Alvin—Fish (toy from weekly bath) or Rooster (which went back to a story about a broken glass pane attributed to a rooster) . . . . Noah tells of receiving a severe whipping from Father for going fishing on Sunday. Later the rules were relaxed. I don't remember any Sunday prohibitions.... I remember cousin Alvin J. Miller coming to our home and telling fascinating stories of his relief work in Russia under MCC.... I don't remember Thanksgiving in our home, but I remember that the Hershbergers had a turkey at Thanksgiving. At Easter we colored eggs. We also made spruce beer . . . . When we had guests Mother said, in Pennsylvania German, "Reach and help yourself" and "Make yourself at home." We had silent prayer at the beginning and at the end of the meal, the first a blessing and the second thanksgiving. For devotions we knelt with elbows on the chair and faced the back of the chair . . . . We had tramps occasionally. Once a big black man came. We gave him a wash tub and water for a bath by one of the outbuildings. He slept in the barn . . . . I remember a barn raising at Noah's. Two builders were in charge. They put all the trusses together on the ground for this hip-roof barn and then thirty to forty people helped raise it. There was a good meal served by women from the church in Springs . . . . Until 1927 the quarry had the only phone in the neighborhood . . . . Every other Sunday when we did not have church services, we went visiting or had guests.... We made dandelion wine for medicinal use. For communion we used grape juice. At Weaverland in Lancaster County they used real wine in the common cup.

Two of my brothers, Allen and John, died in infancy. I assume the cause was dysentery. My parents called in an Amish woman to powwow. She would take a hard boiled egg and rub it over the body of the baby, then wrap the egg in twine and put it in the grate of the oven and as the hot ashes fell the string burned off and with that the disease would leave the body of the infant. This benign kind of witchcraft was called "brauchen." Sometimes they called the one who powwows the "hexer." However, the Amish never used hex signs. No one in our family had the gift of powwowing. None followed the signs in planting garden and the like. We were hucksters of eggs, butter, and at times, fresh pork in Cumberland. We drove a Chevy coupe made into a truck. Noah, Ernest and I went from door to door. When I first went out I was drilled on how to make change.

We subscribed to two weeklies, the *Meyersdale Republican* and the *Pennsylvania Stockman*, which had continued stories by Lewis B. Miller about Indians in the West. We boys made a dive for it to see who could read the stories first. We had *Herold der Wahrheit*. A favorite author of mine was Horatio Alger.

We had Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs and a third one, but we never ordered clothing from a mail order house. We looked through them and saw what we would like to have. We had a copy of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and books of Louisa May Alcott. A well-beaten path led across the fields to the Milton Hershbergers, where we borrowed copies of C. A. Stevens' novels about a family growing up on a farm in Maine after the Civil War.

Neighbors

Charles Deist lived in the quarry house. His son Albert had polio and was handicapped in walking. When going to school together, we adjusted our pace to Albert's speed. Charles brought in a steam shovel in the last years of operation. The steam shovel led to strip mining . . . . One of our neighbors had a large family of boys. They often tapped maple trees on our side of the line. They put skunks in our sap buckets. They fussed so much about the line that Father got a surveyor. I think Father paid for him . . . . Farther down the hill was the Livengood family; Elijah, the patriarch, lived to ninety-five . . . . We cut ice at the Lewis Yoder place on Flag Run Creek and put it in the ice house at Noah's.

School

We had a mile and a half to school and a mile and a half back. After they stopped working the mines, the cars and track remained. We used to push one of the cars up the hill on the tracks on our way to school and on our way home would ride the car down again. Once it jumped the track when we forgot to brake it. I took the eighth grade exam when I was twelve years old. I remember my father saying, "Now you need to get down to brass tacks and start growing hair on your chest and start doing the work of a man on the farm." The next fall instead of school I was out in the field with a three-horse sulky and plow. I weighed all of eighty-five pounds. Later, when the new barn was built, we separated the two farms. Either Milton or I was to go to Noah's. Milton was the better mechanic so he stayed on the home place. I could have walked back and forth because Noah's place was only a quarter of a mile away. I chose to stay at Noah's. That was the first breaking of the ties. I was sixteen.

Leaving Home

When I went to work for my older brother Noah as a hired man, I received no wages, only my keep. Once I made a trip to Lancaster County. My clothing was nondescript. Noah offered to let me wear his wedding suit for the trip. After joining the church at seventeen, I received a new suit made by Uncle Rufus. I also received a *Mütze*, a long black coat down to the knees with a split tail. When you wore that, you knew you were baptized . . . . The land on Noah's place was in Maryland and the farmstead in Pennsylvania. I loaded manure in Pennsylvania and unloaded it in Maryland. The first summer I was the hired man and there was a hired girl, two years younger. My parents approved of her, but she broke off the friendship. I was devastated. I went to see my father who was in the chicken house and told him and said I wanted to go off to Norfolk, Virginia. He asked me whether she cried when she told me. I answered, "Yes." He said, "Good, tears are salve for the soul." Later when I worked in Lancaster County I was engaged to be married. I had an attack of appendicitus and was taken to the hospital. My fiancee came to visit me and was so possessive. I thought I couldn't live with that for the rest of my life, so I broke off the engagement. I was still Amish and dressed Amish, hooks and eyes and all. In Lancaster County I worked for a man who had a tobacco field. My job was to pick off the big green worms from the tobacco leaves. I called this a "field of corruption." This man I worked for had left the Old Order Amish, for which he was supposed to be shunned by his brothers and sisters. They, however, helped him when he moved to a new farm he bought on the other side of the hill. But when they sat down to a meal, there

were two sets of serving dishes—for the shunned on one side of the table and for the Old Order Amish on the other side. I went to Lancaster County when I was twenty-one and could keep my earnings.

In October 1936, Amos Geigley, a Mennonite minister at Fairfield, Pennsylvania, married to my older sister Effie, invited me to help him operate his fruit farm so that he would have more time for his ministry. Effie was Geigley's second wife. Amos is the one who encouraged me to go on to high school at the age of twenty-four. I turned toward the ministry under Amos' preaching and influence. In his extensive library I read Robert Russel Wicks, Kirby Page, and Georgia Harkness.

Amish Church Life

I remember listening in on the brethren discussing church problems. I remember a meeting when a group came to discuss a church crisis with Father. My brother and I went upstairs and crawled under a bed and watched and listened to the proceedings through the stovepipe hole in the floor . . . . My brother Lewis joined the Mennonite Church in Springs, and my father explained: "We didn't have progress for so long on church problems so Lewis went over to the Mennonites." My father on one occasion reminded the congregation that once there had been disputes about manure spreaders, cream separators and hay loaders and how they had fussed about these issues and eventually allowed them to be used. He didn't see any reason for not trying to make adjustments to maintain the fellowship . . . . There were many comings and goings of Amish ministers in my childhood. We picked up many Old Order Amish visitors at the B & O station in Meyersdale and brought them home in a three-seater springwagon with top . . . . I remember one year when instruction for membership, which usually extended from early spring to early fall, was postponed, since the church was not sufficiently harmonious for it appropriately to take in members . . . . I remember the first indication of a split when we heard the announcement: "Next Sunday there will be a meeting at the Flag Run Meetinghouse to organize a Sunday school." We didn't have a telephone, so I was sent from house to house in the community to alert people to the fact that next Sunday there would be Sunday school. I came to one man in his carpentry shop, where he was filing a saw. He responded to my announcement: "You can just have your Sunday school. We won't come."

Singings were held on the Sunday evenings of church services. They were moved from home to home. Singings were never announced from the pulpit. Information got out among the young people by word of mouth. We used the *Liedersammlungen*, not the *Ausbund*, for the German singing and the Mennonite hymnal with shaped notes for the English singing.

For weddings we had a full length church service and then went to the home of the bride for a full dinner. Each bridal couple had two attending couples, *Neva hucks*, who were side sitters. After dinner the couple would go upstairs to receive guests. In the evening they would come down for another meal and after supper everyone would disperse. We had no folk games at weddings in the Springs area, but up in the Big Valley I remember a wedding where the young people went to the barn to *"Spiel."*

Our Sunday school teacher was Eli Tice. I was present the day he was ordained. It was a warm day. The windows were open. A swallow flew in. People saw that as the symbol of the presence of the Holy Spirit . . . .

Father had a great belief in fasting. We ate no breakfast on the day of communion. At communion the bread was cut in the presence of the congregation. They always served the men first. I thought it would have been more courteous to serve women first. Communion was a serious day. I remember the wooden buckets with water for the footwashing. The men gave each other the holy kiss after they had hung up their hats and before the singing started . . . . I remember quite well joining church: going to the *Kammer* (council room), where the ministers talked to us and asked questions.

Father's term for his ministry was "keeping house" (*Haushalten*) . . . . When Father's son-in-law Eli Yoder was ordained to the ministry in the Old Order Amish congregation at Norfolk, Virginia, Father spoke to Eli about his duties and encouraged him in the work. Eli appreciated the way Father encouraged my sister Amelia to stand by her husband Eli, Old Order Amish, when there was a division in the church at Norfolk. Eli and Amelia remained Old Order Amish and moved to Stanton. The Beachy Amish group remained . . . . There was a fuss in the church about three-pointed and four-pointed shawls. I remember women demonstrating to Father in our home how one way was much warmer . . . . At Father's funeral they followed his desire to have all those present whom he had ordained. Many of the twenty-three were there. All spoke, some briefly, some more extended.

Leaving the Amish

I broke the ties in stages. First, going to Noah's to work as a hired hand, then in 1934 moving to Lancaster County, and then going to Fairfield in 1936 where there were no Amish. A final break was to join the Mennonite Church at Fairfield, then an independent congregation. In 1937 I wrote for my church letter. I received a number of letters from members of our Beachy Amish congregation protesting my wish for transfer. Brother Noah was especially concerned: "Our children grew up with you. You can't leave them." Ernest wrote that I had a gift for taking care of animals and that "the dream of college will be a disappointment." Despite this barrage of letters, I received a letter of good standing without limitations.

The first time I came home after the transfer, I came back wearing a double-breasted blue pin stripe Sears Roebuck suit with tie. I had discarded my Amish clothing.

After my years of study at Messiah and Bluffton and before going to my first pastorate at Normal, Illinois, I met Father. He pressed my hand and said, "Be a man for Christ." I felt his encouragement. I wrote regularly to him from Normal. Father gave me his twenty volume collection of Spurgeon's sermons. Later Vera and I came home for a visit. We attended a service at Flag Run meetinghouse where Noah Yoder was leading the service. As we were seated, he leaned over to Father and said something. My father nodded. After the sermon when the ministers were called on for testimonies, I heard a voice: "Alvin Beachy you are in the same calling. You may take your opportunity to respond as you see fit." I spoke in Pennsylvania German, which was rusty. Afterward my father said, "You should have spoken in English; everyone could have understood English". . . . The hardest part of leaving the Amish was hurting Father.

The Role of Women in the Mennonite Transition from Traditionalism to Denominationalism

by Jim Juhnke

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, organized Mennonite bodies in North America established new denominational institutions which offered new roles of leadership and public activity for women. Women in earlier decades had to be silent in the church. Now they could serve as Sunday school teachers, missionaries, college teachers, deaconesses, writers for religious periodicals, and activists in women's missionary societies. These roles were carefully limited and circumscribed, however. Women could not become major denominational leaders. In the 1920s the pace of change slowed in the opening of women's opportunities. In some cases men took control of church-related activities away from women leaders.

It became clear that denominational institutions and attitudes could be used not only to expand women's roles, but also to redefine and limit them. The mosaic of Mennonite groups produced no clear, single pattern for changing women's roles. Those groups which actively developed denominational institutions (especially "old" Mennonites, Amish Mennonites, General Conference Mennonites, and Mennonite Brethren) showed a general threefold development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: traditional patriarchy first gave way to limited progressive challenges and changes and then to a conservative counter-development, holding back on the pace of change. In these processes, Mennonites reflected broader currents in American society.[1]

Traditional rural Mennonite and Amish society was built on a unique blend of both "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics. On one hand, Mennonites constituted a patriarchy in which men held all public positions and oversaw relations with the outside world. Mennonites read male priority in the Old Testament story of creation and in New Testament injunctions for women to be subordinate and silent in the church. On the other hand, Mennonites were a nonresistant community in which men as well as women were taught to be humble, submissive and obedient. There were traditional, informal sanctions against evidences of pride, exercise of power or open pursuit of high position. It cannot be known for certain whether this ethos of humility, which was most pronounced in the Swiss-American groups, produced exceptional gentleness in male-female family relationships. Male power and priority surely had its dark side. In 1917 one young Kansas Mennonite charged that "too often marriage is regarded as a license for sexual liberty, and the woman the slave of the man's desires."[2] Yet Mennonite males, socialized to nonaggressive behavior and denied the catharsis of military service, grew up in a subculture which moderated the "machismo" influences of American male violence and militarism.[3]

For both men and women, the rhetoric and style of progressive missionary and educational work was more or less at tension with the traditional Mennonite values of humility and submission. Those once labeled the "Quiet in the Land" now found a louder voice and became more aggressive. As they did, they shifted the meaning of obedience to Christ from a living of ordered relationships in community to a working of a heroic cause.[4] "Every normally endowed person has something of heroic valor in his being," wrote progressive John W. Kliewer in a missions article of 1901. "He wants to be able to fight to win." Kliewer called upon "missions heroes" to win "missions battles."[5] Women shared the same rhetoric. In 1894 Barbara Sherk of Ontario called for "soldiers of Christ" who would be just as eager as volunteers for a "dangerous military expedition."[6] To Mennonite traditionalists, such rhetoric and spirit could be doubly threatening. It placed women in new roles, and it expressed an aggressive style that was new to Mennonites—men and women.

Perhaps the most aggressive and talented of Mennonite women before the war was Ann Jemima Allebach. Originally from the Eden (GC) congregation at Schwenksville, Pennsylvania, she went to New York and became a scholar, schoolteacher, and church worker. In 1911 Allebach requested ordination as a minister at the First Mennonite Church of Philadelphia. The church said yes. Her home pastor, John Wenger Schantz, preaching the ordination sermon, explained that social customs of Bible times should not be used to confine women in the twentieth century.[7] The 1911 triennial General Conference meeting in Bluffton took up the question of women's ordination, a matter "that seems to be approaching our people." J. W. Kliewer, newly appointed president of Bethel College, summarized the Biblical arguments both for and against women's ordination to the ministry. He noted Old Testament judges and prophetesses (Deborah, Huldah, Miriam), as well as the role of women in the ministry of Jesus and in the early church. The conference should not judge severely against women ministers "in churches where the membership is largely composed of women and the work largely done by them," he argued. But Kliewer was also convinced that the Bible, in both the Old and the

New Testaments, did not allow woman "a position of commanding over man"; so he concluded that women's ordination was "not Biblical."[8] There were no further ordinations, and Allebach became pastor of a Mennonite congregation, although her occasional sermons were well attended. The First Mennonite Church of Philadelphia continued its openness to women's leadership. In 1929-30 Mary E. Bakewell served the congregation for half a year in pastoral ministry.[9] But for Mennonite congregations in the country and small towns, the "approaching" matter would have to wait at least three generations.

For what, then, did women prepare when they flocked to Mennonite colleges? The numbers of them in college were impressive. In typical years at Elkhart Institute and Goshen College from 1893 to 1930, women were forty to fifty percent of the student body.[10] Progressive Mennonites tended to borrow images and language from American liberalism to project their vision for such women's lives. This vision was not rooted in traditional understandings of community, nor did it give primary place to women's careers as teachers, nurses or missionaries. The central concepts were rather "motherhood" and "home," values surely implicit in traditional Mennonite culture but now expressed differently. Women needed education, the young progressives said, to provide high quality nurture for the young children (boys) who would one day be responsible to build a better nation and world. In 1901 Olivia W. Good of Elkhart Institute made a fervent appeal for meeting the hitherto crushed "natural and rightful longings" of women for education. As she did, she said that woman's "highest duty and her holiest position is in her home, through which she is really the ruler of the world."[11] J. E. Hartzler agreed. Casting an old adage into expansive rhetoric, he said that "The power that moves the world is not in standing armies and navies; not in political bosses; not in millionaires but in the maternal hand that rocks the cradle at midnight."[12]

This image of an educated motherhood ruling the world not only justified women's attendance at college, it also reasserted that women's place was in the home, subordinate to men. "She has a mind of her own, as well as man," wrote progressive Menno S. Steiner in 1899, "and minds are not to be crushed, but trained and educated." But in the same book Steiner also wrote: "America needs better homes and more of them, and any trade, or position, or calling that disqualifies a woman for domestic happiness and usefulness is a curse to the woman that enters it."[13] Single women who exercised genuine institutional initiative, such as Alma Doering of the Congo Inland Mission or Katherina Schellenberg of the Mennonite Brethren Mission in India, had to be seen either as potential mothers or as exceptions to the ideal. Only in the deaconess movement was there a religiously approved role for single women. It was not solely traditional Mennonites who put restrictions on women. Progressives did also, as they tried to adapt Mennonite principles to the modern world.[14] In the process they projected a new enthusiasm for a reformed America or improved world.

Lewis J. Heatwole, the Virginia Conference bishop and one of the founders of Eastern Mennonite School, referred to his wife, Mary A. Coffman Heatwole (sister of evangelist John S. Coffman), as "the queen of my home on earth." In an essay written about 1908, Heatwole pictured "woman" as an idealized "connecting link between men and angels." Her role was to ennoble men. "With her garments in white and her character unsullied, she stands as the balance in power that turns the very wellspring of a man's life into all ways of the true, the good, and beautiful things of this world."[15] Such idealized images of women's purity, piety and nobility, stood over against alternative images of women as fallen and corrupted victims of "lustful villains" in the cities. M. S. Steiner, acquainted with the city as founder of "old" Mennonite missions in Chicago and in Canton, Ohio, provided lurid descriptions of the fate of young girls who lost their purity and virtue.[16] J. E. Hartzler, acquainted with New York City through his year at Union Theological Seminary, graphically showed in his 1910 *Paths to Perdition* how unscrupulous men led and "spoiled" helpless women to slide from dance to drink to adultery. In a section on the "White Slave Traffic," Hartzler wrote that there are "four times as many immoral men as there are women."[17] Steiner's and Hartzler's books of modern moral exhortation borrowed the language of the Christian Endeavor, the Young Men's Christian Association, or the Evangelical alliance, and mingled it with favorite Mennonite scripture quotations and the Mennonite preoccupation with regulated dress.

In 1906, also in a book of moral advice to Mennonite young people, Cornelius H. Wedel of Bethel College developed a similarly idealized image of woman.[18] Women can benefit from education not only to become the object of the noblest interests of a man, but also to develop an elevated consciousness of their own worth.[19] Like Steiner, Wedel bemoaned modern tendencies for women to go into occupations inappropriate to their nature.[20] But Wedel's point of reference was German culture and literature rather than the American home or womanhood. In a list of good sources of information about marriage, he cited eight German writers, including two literary works by Goethe.[21] He praised the depth of feeling of "our German people" in terms that reflected romantic German nationalism as surely as Steiner and Hartzler reflected American liberal democracy. The purity of German family life, Wedel said, contributed much to the honorable achievement of "our people" ("unserm Volk") in history. Some critics complained that he slighted the Bible and quoted too much from poetry and novels. To them Wedel responded that his audience was already familiar with Biblical foundations but needed excellent Christian literature for growth and development.[22] Whether they turned to American democracy or German nationalism for extra-Biblical inspiration, progressive Mennonite leaders thus found warrant for educating women while limiting their legitimate role to a newly idealized home or family.

Mennonite women provided a good share of the material which appeared in Mennonite newspapers and religious periodicals in the form of unsigned community and church reports. This was true of articles selected from other sources, as well as signed articles. And rather often they were able to publish over their own names. In October of 1892 editor John F. Funk published a *Herald of Truth* issue full of articles by women and reproached the men for allowing the women to appear "more earnest in the good work" and "more spiritually minded." He hoped for more from the men, "now that seeding time is over."[23] The number of contributions

per year from women to *Herald of Truth* and *Gospel Herald* grew dramatically from 42 in 1884, to 173 in 1904, to 360 in 1910. Around the turn of the century these articles mixed both the traditional view of women's quiet virtue in church and family and the newer idealized view of true womanhood and its wider civilizing influence. But there was no deviation from the theme of women's submission to men—or from the importance of the prayer covering as symbol of submission.[24]

Clara Brubaker, schoolteacher and rural missionary in Missouri, was the most prolific of "old" Mennonite women writers. Between 1886 and 1927 she wrote some seventy-eight articles. Brubaker was a disciple and correspondent of evangelist John S. Coffman until he died in 1899. After attending Elkhart Institute in 1895-96, she boldly (but also asking pardon if she was wrong) suggested that more be done to keep the Institute Literary Society within the bounds of gospel simplicity. In her writings she was closer to the Mennonite mainstream than was an aggressive pusher such as Annie Allebach. In 1893 she was one of five women speakers at the first "old" and Amish Mennonite Sunday school conference held in the Missouri-Iowa district. She supported the evangelical plan of salvation, but also emphasized simplicity, service, and nonresistance. She wanted both men and women to abide by high and uniform standards of Mennonite nonconformity to the world. As the oldest daughter in her family, she accepted an obligation to care for her aging parents and did not marry until this task was completed. In 1925 at age 55 she married John Shank, seven years her junior. The two carried on outstanding rural missionary work in the Ozarks.[25] After marriage, however, her visible role, at least as a writer, declined, while her husband increased his writing and his public church leadership. Clara Brubaker stands for the legion of Mennonite women who willingly accepted subordination, yet found ways to put their talents to use in family, church, and community.[26]

Although women did not hold church positions over men, they could use moral power to challenge the bishops on specific issues. Barbara Freed of the Line Lexington congregation in the Franconia "old" Mennonite Conference was an outspoken opponent of tobacco and alcohol. Offended that her bishop, Jonas Mininger, smoked cigars, Freed informed him that she would not take communion from his hand until he gave up his filthy habit. Mininger gave it up.[27] In some cases women bent or bypassed church rules restricting their behavior. Some Mennonite women in Lancaster County in the 1920s, for example, ignored conference rulings and took part in meetings of the "Society Farm Women." In 1926 one Lancaster man, not quite sure whether to be alarmed, sent to Jacob C. Clemens, an influential Franconia Conference leader, a newspaper clipping with the names marked of fifteen Mennonite women who had attended a December Society Farm Women meeting in Paradise.[28] Conservatives held that both men and women should avoid the unequal yoke and stay away from farm organizations, labor unions, and other worldly associations. There also were families in which the wife had a stronger personality than the husband. In 1919 Noah Byers of Bluffton visited a family in behalf of a proposed Union Mennonite Seminary. Reflecting on the visit, he observed that even though the husband would not commit himself to attend an upcoming meeting, his wife was obviously interested and would see that her husband attended.[29]

As for women's suffrage, Mennonites had double reason for not supporting it: their religious views of women's subordination and their traditional noninvolvement in politics. In 1917 two "old" Mennonite conferences—Alberta-Saskatchewan and Missouri-Iowa—adopted resolutions against women voting.[30] In the *Gospel Herald*, Daniel Kauffman agreed.[31] The *Christian Exponent* at its outset in 1924 listed four women on an editorial staff of sixteen, a female contingent unprecedented for Mennonite periodicals. Yet despite its liberal or insurgent flavor, the *Exponent* had surprisingly few articles on women's rights.[32] In the more liberal General Conference, women's suffrage got more attention. In 1911, Clara Rupp Welty, former piano and organ teacher at Bethel College, argued that women voters could help protect family life and the home. In any case, she wrote, "A woman's place is at the side of a man, not beneath him."[33] In 1912, a time when female suffrage was coming up for vote in Kansas, Christian E. Krehbiel, editor of *Der Herold* in Kansas, endorsed female suffrage when the issue came to a vote in that state.[34] *Der Herold* correspondents wrote on both sides of the issue.[35] Krehbiel drew attention to the achievements of women such as Marie Curie, Florence Nightingale, and Anna Howard Shaw.[36]

A few Mennonite women who inherited or accumulated property and money made significant individual financial contributions to the church and to developing church institutions. In 1907 the Bluffton (Ohio) *News* reported that the late Louisa Kunkleman Wohlford Snavely had contributed more than $50,000 to the church.[37] Mary J. Regier in Hillsboro contributed her savings of $20,000 to build a dormitory for women at Tabor College, where she became the first matron in 1920.[38] Wilhelmina Eisenmayer Warkentin, widow of the wealthy Mennonite-turned-Presbyterian entrepreneur Bernhard Warkentin, gave more money than did anyone else to the Bethel Deaconess Society in Newton, Kansas. In 1910 she funded the building of a new home for the deaconesses; in 1916 she paid to have it enlarged.[39]

In the postwar years, the "old" Mennonites' board of missions and charities moved to establish organizational control over the "Mennonite Woman's Missionary Society." The MWMS had been founded by Clara Eby Steiner in 1911-12 as an independent women's organization for financial and material support of missions and women's education of women.[40] At first the women, distressed by the mission board's threat to their agency, managed to stall a proposed new constitution. That was in 1920. But by 1926 they acquiesced in the Board's takeover of the Sewing Societies which were the local groups of the MWMS organization. Finally in 1929 the Board created a separate committee under its own jurisdiction. With that, the independent MWMS went out of existence. A separate organization in which women exercised executive authority and handled large amounts of funds did not fit in a church group ideologically committed to women's subordination. However, the mission board took action more for organizational than for antifeminist reasons. The men who engineered the takeover, particularly Sanford C. Yoder, executive secretary of the mission board, intended to centralize their organization and make it more efficient. There were bureaucratic

reasons for change (much like a case in the Presbyterian Church in 1922, in which in the course of restructuring its boards and agencies the church absorbed an independent Woman's Board of Home Missions).[41]

Clara Eby Steiner and her friends were victims of "old" Mennonite reorganization in the 1920s. Carried out by the Daniel Kauffman generation, the reorganization not only co-opted the independent women's organization, but also reconstructed Goshen College, phased out the relief commission, disciplined and excluded change-minded congregations, and successfully opposed the Youth Conference and the *Christian Exponent*. In other Mennonite branches as well, the 1920s were a time of conservative consolidation rather than of progressive change. A side effect was that the times were not friendly to radical changes in women's roles.

ENDNOTES

[1]For general studies of the roles of women in American society see Carl N. Degler, *At Odds, Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Page Smith, *Daughters of the Promised Land* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970); Peter Gabriel Filene, *Him/Her/Self. Sex Roles in Modern America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1974). For an excellent feminist historical summary and conceptual framework see the essays by Rosemary R. Ruether in Ruether and Bianchi, *From Machismo to Mutuality: Essays on Sexism and Woman-Man Liberation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976).

[2]Edmund George Kaufman, "Social Problems and Opportunities of the Western District Conference Communities of the General Conference of Mennonites of North America," (M.A. thesis, Bluffton College and Mennonite Seminary, 1917), p. 99.

[3]The impact of the Mennonite nonresistant ethos upon male-female roles has not been systematically studied. Gayle Gerber Koontz alluded to the issue in her 1985 Bethel College Bible Lectures, "Two Bodies, One Bible: Women, Men, and the Word of God," Schowalter Oral History Collection, MLA. David Augsburger's Ph.D. dissertation produced evidence against the notion that the repressed anger of the pacifist results in dysfunctional or aggressive behavior of other kinds, and for the notion that "cognitive redefinition" of enemies as potential friends itself drains anger and allows for productive and gentle responses.

[4]Theron Schlabach, "The Humble Become 'Aggressive Workers': Mennonites Organize for Mission, 1880-1910," *MQR*, 52 (April 1978), 113-26.

[5]Kliewer, "Rueckblick ueber die Missionsthaetigkeit des letzten Jahrhunderts und Ausblick in das 20. Jahrhundert," *Christlicher Bundesbote*, 20 (July 18, 1901), 1. The article was continued in the July 25 and August issues. The quotations are taken from the August 1 issue, p. 1.

[6]Sherk, "If God is for Us, Who Can Be Against Us," *Herald of Truth*, 31 (April 1, 1894), 98. Quoted by Theron Schlabach in "The Humble Become 'Aggressive Workers,' " p. 114.

[7]Ruth, *Maintaining the Right Fellowship*, 411-13, 445.

[8]J. W. Kliewer, "Is the Ordination of Women to the Gospel Ministry Biblical." (sic) Paper read to the 19th Session of the General Conference, Bluffton, Ohio, August 31-September 6, 1911. Printed in the *Supplement to The Mennonite*, 27 (April 11, 1912), 41-51.

[9]Christine Kaufmann and Priscilla Stuckey Kauffman, "Mennonite Women's Calendar," (Notre Dame: Womensage, 1983), date April 20. *Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the First Mennonite Church of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: First Mennonite Church, 1940). 24.

[10]Sharon Klingelsmith, "Women in the Mennonite Church, 1900-1930," *MQR*, 54 (July 1980), 172-73.

[11]Good, "Girls in Education," *Institute Monthly*, 3 (June 15, 1901), 150-51.

[12]Hartzler, *Paths to Perdition* (Scottdale: Mennonite Publishing House, 1910), 199.

[13]Steiner, *Pitfalls and Safeguards* (Elkhart: Mennonite Publishing Company, 1899), 176-77, 147.

[14]For another statement of these same values by a progressive Mennonite educator, see N. E. Byers, "Normal Life of Woman," *GH*, 2 (April 4, 1908), 14-15.

[15]Heatwole, "Why I Wanted My Wife to be My Wife," *Youth's Christian Companion*, 23 (November 29, 1942), 380-82.

[16]Steiner, *Pitfalls*, 72-73.

[17]Hartzler, *Paths*, 191, 235, 246.

[18]C. H. Wedel, *Briefliche Blaetter an einen Lernenden ueber Bildung, Gesellschafts- und Heiratsfragen* (Newton: Bethel College, 1906).

[19]Wedel, *Briefliche Blaetter*, 21.

[20]Wedel, *Briefliche Blaetter*, 102.

[21]Wedel, *Briefliche Blaetter*, 25.

[22]Wedel, *Briefliche Blaetter*, 103-4.

[23]John F. Funk, *Herald of Truth*, 29 (October 15, 1892), 312.

[24]Klingelsmith, "Women," 176-77.

[25]Theron Schlabach, *Gospel Versus Gospel* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1980), 159.

[26]Priscilla Stuckey Kauffman, "Clara (Brubaker) Shank 1869-1958, Daughter of the Quickening: Rural Missionary in Missouri," Research paper at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, 1981.

[27]Ruth, *Maintaining the Right Fellowship*, 435.

[28]"Women of Farm Hold Meeting," unidentified newspaper clipping (dated December 15, 1926) attached to letter from John B. Senger to J. C. Clemens, December 20, 1926, Clemens Collection, Franconia Conference Archives.

[29]Letter from Noah E. Byers to J. E. Hartzler, November 24, 1919, Hartzler Collection, Box 4, folder, AMC.

[30]Klingelsmith, "Women in the Mennonite Church," 175.

[31]Klingelsmith, 180.

[32]Based upon a topical index of *Christian Exponent* articles prepared for the Mennonite Experience in America project, in possession of the author.

[33]Clara Rupp Welty, "Frauenstimmrecht," *Der Herold*, 25 (March 2, 1911), 3.

[34]Krehbiel editorial, *Der Herold*, 26 (October 24, 1912), 4.

[35]J. E. Wiebe, "Das Stimmrecht fuer Frauen," *Der Herold*, 26 (October 31, 1912); A woman correspondent "Korr," *Der Herold* (October 31, 1912).

[36]Krehbiel, "Frauenrecht anerkannt," *Der Herold*, 25 (November 9, 1911), 4; Krehbiel, "Florence Nightingale," *Der Herold*, 26 (December 19, 1912), 4; Krehbiel, "Women Demand Wars Shall End," *Der Herold*, 33 (August 28, 1919), 3.

[37]Noted in Christine Kaufmann and Priscilla Stuckey Kauffman, "Mennonite Women's Calendar," date September 26.

[38]Kaufmann and Kauffman, date March 4.

[39]Katie Funk Wiebe, *Our Lamps Were Lit* (Newton, KS: Bethel Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing Alumnae Association, 1978), 112.

[40]Melvin Gingerich, "The Mennonite Woman's Missionary Society," *MQR*, 37 (April and July, 1963), 113-125 and 214-233; Klingelsmith, "Women in the Mennonite Church," 195-201; Elaine Sommers Rich, *Mennonite Women* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1983), 201-06.

[41]Elizabeth Howell Verdesi, *In But Still Out* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973, 1976).

Poems

by Elmer Suderman

GRANDFATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

Kansas lies flat under Spring moonlight
for hours in every green direction.
I walk on that green
and enter a magic land.

The young wheat is busy growing
deep in a trance it's been
holding every Spring since Grandfather
planted his first plump seeds

carefully picked in Russia's Steppes
and brought in the old chest
across the Atlantic on the *Nederland*
and then on the Santa Fe

to Peabody. I stop
to hear wheat growing.
Listen! Grandfather's footsteps
can be heard in the moonlight.

FATHER TALKS TO HIS HORSE

You love this land like I do,
don't you Florie,
red and stubborn as it is,
and full of alkali spots
where nothing grows,
a land full of cocklebur's your coat
and my pants legs catch.
We've plowed under it old solitude
many times, you pulling,
I guiding the old walking plow,
the free-blowing wind
sluicing sheets of rain on us,
on clearer days nothing breaking
sun's light.
We were strangers once, but no more.
Hostile those first few years,
the soil is good now, trained to gulp
down clouds, sun, rain and snow.
I can talk to grass and you.
Together our sweat
and the weather
have given us laughing, dancing
Red Turkey Wheat rows,
and a place, a place,
we own, a home,
a land to be buried in.

RESERVE MORE EXPRESSIVE THAN WORDS

As silent as the Oklahoma prairies
on that first night you spent
under that endless sky,
you did not search for words
to express your inner life,
your reserve more expressive than words.
Father when you locked
your arms beyond words
I knew what you meant,
heard what you said.

WORDLESS SECRETS

When father homesteaded a quarter section
of rabbits, rattlesnakes and windy
buffalo grass sweeping buffalo wallows,
he brought along Low German thoughts.
Words, if he had any, were
swallowed by empty acres,
drowned out by wind's paragraphs,
or turned under broken sod.
He had wordless secrets,
or thoughts he did not need
or care to find words for.

CHEROKEE STRIP—SEPTEMBER 16, 1893

What heat!
A hundred in the shade
And no shade!
The south wind blows
Everlastingly
Howling the heat along
From Texas, burning every green thing
On its way across the sizzling prairie.

I stand
Waiting,
Waiting for the crack
Of the rifle at noon,
Waiting to stake my claim
For land where only a
Few years ago Buffalo grazed.

I taste the heat
Biting my tongue.
I smell the acrid grass.
I see only
Untouched prairie,
No trees, no building,
No trails feeling
Their way through miles of grass.
Nothing but dry grass
In a dry September
Stretching as far south and east
And west as I can see.

THE SPARROW'S STORY

At the county fair tractors
dressed in John Deere green
and Allis Chalmers orange looking
like athletes long in training
nonchalantly wait their turn in
the tractor pulling contest. A
sparrow tells me he has
just come from the horse
heaven where old horses who
used to be here watch
enviously as tractors especially souped-up
pull more than horses could.
They complain to each other
and to the god of
horses that it's a
shame for machines to take
their place. Embarrassed, one old
mare, nevertheless, places bets on
the Allis Chalmers. She loses,
just as she always did
when she entered the contests
long long horse years ago.

An Urban Mennonite Church—The First Two Decades

by Rachel Waltner Goossen

In 1912, thirty-five persons joined together as members of the First Mennonite Church of Normal, Illinois. The new town church was the sixth Mennonite congregation established in McLean County.[1] It affiliated with the Central Illinois Conference of Mennonites and served persons of Amish Mennonite heritage. Many of these had lived in outlying rural communities and had moved to Normal for retirement. First Mennonite was a comparatively late arrival on the Mennonite scene in central Illinois. In 1912, Normal and Bloomington were established regional centers for business and industry, education and government. By organizing First Mennonite, minister Peter Schantz hoped to reach the "non-churched" of Normal.[2]

The Mennonite Church of Normal, as it is now called, has roots in the historic North Danvers Mennonite Church, considered the "mother church" of at least seven congregations, and in the East White Oak Mennonite Church, organized in 1892 by minister Peter Schantz of the North Danvers community.[3] For more than a quarter of a century, Schantz served the large rural East White Oak congregation. In 1899 a younger man, Emanuel Troyer, joined him and gradually assumed congregational responsibilities.

In his later years, Schantz led a remarkable career in church planting. As a young man, he had assisted Amish Mennonite Bishop Joseph Stuckey with evangelism and church work in Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, and elsewhere. After Schantz helped to establish the Central Illinois Conference of Mennonites in 1908, he turned almost exclusively to mission work. This led him to Normal, site of the Conference's first urban congregation.

On July 24, 1910, Schantz gathered twenty-five persons for Sunday school in an upstairs room of Baumgart's store on the northwest corner of Hovey and Main in Normal. Of the cramped quarters, one person wrote: "It has indeed reminded us of the upper room in which the disciples gathered."[4] Neighborhood children had attended the Sunday school meeting, and during the next few days Schantz and several others visited their homes. Attendance at the next week's gathering doubled. Schantz built a home on Osage Street in Normal and began visiting with local Mennonites about building a church on the west side of town.

The growing Sunday school needed an adequate meeting place. It moved to Smith School, located a block south of Hovey Avenue, where Schantz began preaching. Within a year, the Normal "mission" decided to build. Schantz and two local men, Peter Augspurger and Samuel Kaufman, chose two adjacent lots at the corner of University and Plum Streets. The building of a new church at the site prompted Normal's city council to change the name of Plum Street to "Church Street."[5]

The cost of the land in the 1911 transaction was seven hundred dollars. The committee hired contractor Charles Sakemiller to complete the modest frame building by the summer of 1911. Men of the church helped with construction. Farmer Philip Bertram brought in a team of horses and a scraper to dig the basement.[6] The cost of the church, with heat, light, water, and furnishings totaled $3,654.70, a sum raised by treasurer Samuel Kaufman and other solicitors. A. H. Patton, a son-in-law of Schantz, recorded that "many from the other churches of the Conference met with us and showed the true Missionary Spirit by their liberality and cooperation in helping us to completely cancel the debt incurred."[7]

On Sunday, July 2, 1911, a crowd of six hundred was on hand to help dedicate the new building. Schantz emphasized the evangelistic mission of the new church. Joseph King, minister at Carlock, presided over the special services. Guest ministers from the Central Conference preached throughout the day, including A. B. Rutt of Chicago and Valentine Strubhar of Washington, Illinois. A reporter for the Bloomington *Pantagraph* wrote: "The church is a very pretty and well built little structure. The prospects look towards a large congregation."[8]

Throughout the building phase and into 1912, Schantz continued to serve the church. Since it had never formalized its membership, many in the Conference referred to it as the "Mennonite mission church" and associated it with the large East White Oak congregation. The new mission church brought to Normal religious speakers of such stature as Dr. Charles A. Blanchard, president of Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. Early in 1912, neighborhood residents gathered at the church to hear three presentations by Blanchard on the controversial issue of lodge membership. One person who attended the lectures commented: "His presentation of substantial and reliable facts convinced a few of the errors of the lodge. We trust they may be further led to separation of the same."[9]

By inviting outside speakers, Schantz hoped to keep alive the mission fervor which had sparked his vision for a city church. Indeed, the church drew in non-Mennonites as well as Mennonites. One example was George Washington King. In his retirement years, this Civil War veteran lived near the church, on Franklin Avenue. Interested in the activities of the Mennonite church, King "was as regular as possible in attendance and was much interested in the building up of the Kingdom of Christ."[10]

In 1912, Schantz preached his funeral service.

In February of 1912, Schantz introduced Mennonite evangelist Lee Lantz of Nampa, Idaho, to the congregation. Lantz led the Normal church in a two-week revival while other town churches hosted their own protracted meetings. Lantz's evening messages were only part of the Mennonite effort. Pearl Ramseyer and Elsie Nierstheimer played the piano, and John Rosehart of Meadows assisted with his cornet. Elizabeth Streid performed gospel solos and the congregation joined in the "old time hymns." The campaign also included a "house to house canvass of the neighborhood." By the time the revival concluded, ten persons had accepted Christ and others were "seriously considering the matter of their souls' salvation."[11]

On March 27, 1912, thirty-five persons, including six whom Schantz had baptized during revival, joined together as charter members of the First Mennonite Church of Normal. Frank Bertram—at present the sole surviving charter member of the congregation—joined the church with his parents and two older sisters.[12] The new congregation elected as its first deacons John Ropp, Albert Nafziger, and Samuel Kaufman and applied for membership in the Central Conference. No longer was the church at Normal a "Mennonite mission."

In May of 1912, Schantz led the congregation's first Communion service. The event marked the formal end to his leadership at First Mennonite, for he asked the congregation to call Lee Lantz as pastor. As Schantz turned to other agendas of home mission at Chicago, Peoria, and elsewhere, he challenged the new congregation with the words of John 4:35: "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest."[13]

By 1913, church attendance rose to one hundred, and organizations within the church—Ladies' Aid, Junior and Senior Christian Endeavor, and men's and women's Bible classes—met regularly. The Sunday school elected officers. A newly formed choir rehearsed from the songbook *Great Revival Hymns*.[14] Bina Denler, a member of the newly organized congregation, wrote of development in Normal:

Top left. *Peter Shantz.*
Top right. *William Grubb*
Center. *Sketch of the original building (1911) of the First Mennonite Church, corner of University and Church Streets.*
Bottom. *Young people of the congregation, ca. 1928.*

> We are encouraged by having others of our people moving here . . . . Just keep a coming. Normal is a very desirable place to live with the best educational advantages as well as the conveniences of two large, modern cities, taxes are not high and property is comparatively reasonable in price though it is advancing rapidly. If you chance to be in the city over Sunday, come and worship with us.[15]

The church placed high priority on children. Beginning in 1914, the congregation observed Children's Day with a special service promoting the accomplishments of Sunday school pupils. Related to the Sunday school efforts was Junior Christian Endeavor (C. E.), a society for children modeled after the adult Christian Endeavor program. On Sunday evenings, children of the neighborhood attended missionary and music programs along with the children of Mennonite church members.[16]

The Central Conference churches, as well as those of other denominations, considered Junior C. E. a major instrument for leading young persons to Christian commitment. Children aged ten to fourteen were prime candidates for baptism. Elsie Stahly, presently a member of the Mennonite Church of Normal, came from a non-Mennonite background in McLean County. Her childhood experiences with Christian Endeavor demonstrate its appeal to midwestern Protestants of that era:

> When I was fourteen years old, I went forward at an old fashioned revival meeting. That year the Mennonites had tent meetings and the whole high school went. Rev. Emanuel Troyer [of the East White Oak congregation] preached that night. A friend of mine came over to me and asked me if I was ready to go, so we walked down towards the front together. That was in the fall of 1914 and in March of 1915 I was baptized in the Danvers Presbyterian Church . . . . I became active in the Christian Endeavor of the Presbyterian Church. That was where I learned to do public speaking.[17]

Baptismal services at First Mennonite in Normal were held several times a year to bring new converts into the church. Although "pouring" was the traditional method of baptism practiced by the East White Oak Mennonites and other Central Conference congregations, Normal pastor Lee Lantz accommodated three newcomers to the Normal church who requested immersion.[18]

Lantz, ordained in 1899, was a native of Congerville, Illinois. After preaching for several years in Nampa, Idaho, Lantz moved to Osage Street in Normal. Lantz, like other Mennonite leaders of the period, conducted his ministry without pay. To support his family, Lantz did carpentry work, raised corn, and with his sons ran a dairy delivery route. Members of the congregation contributed to the family's welfare by helping with some of the farming responsibilities. During the early years, financial commitment to the church was minimal on the part of most members, who were assessed a "poll tax" of one and a half dollars at the beginning of each year.[19]

Lantz was foremost an evangelist. On Sunday mornings, he "preached till the tears rolled from his eyes."[20] His strength lay in persuading crowds as he moved from place to place; he was not, ultimately, a "church builder."[21] In 1912 Lantz invited to the community a popular revivalist, Ira E. Hicks of Topeka, Kansas, and together the two men led a five-week evangelistic campaign in Normal. Afterwards, Lantz was absent from his pastorate for extended periods. During his six years at Normal, he traveled to Nebraska, Indiana, and Pennsylvania to lead revivals. In 1914, a member of First Mennonite noted: "As winter comes, our pastor is gone a good deal, but if the Lord needs him in other places in Evangelistic work, we must not complain but wish him God's blessing in his work."[22]

In his stead, visiting ministers from the Conference filled the pulpit. Prior to 1920, the most frequent of these was Peter Schantz. But other Conference men helped out as well: Emanuel Troyer, Benjamin Esch, John Kinsinger, A. B. Rutt, Valentine Strubhar, and others. Moreover, several Mennonite ministers moved to Normal and participated in church life. Youthful Julius Oesch, for example, was a man of conviction. In speeches and in writings, he rallied against the "modern religions [of] Christian Science, Unitarianism, Russelism, Spiritualism, Mohammedanism, etc." He spoke on behalf of the temperance movement. "Are you ready to undertake the task?" Oesch asked. "If you are even a moderate drinker, 'Quit sin and serve God,' become a rescuer for God and throw your influence against the traffic that sends so many to hell."[23] In 1914, the First Mennonite Church of Normal adopted by unanimous vote a resolution endorsing the movement for a national, constitutional Prohibition.[24]

Who were the people who made up the congregation during its early years? The Mennonite congregation at Normal was a more heterogeneous group than its sister congregations in the rural communities. But there existed a core of elderly Mennonites, most of whom had moved to Normal for retirement. Many of these were farmers. The majority of workers in the church held semiskilled positions. Some were carpenters and painters; others worked for the railroad companies or at local factories. Among the few businessmen of the congregation were several automobile dealers, an inventor, a meat market operator, and an industrialist who co-owned the large Meadows Manufacturing Company in Bloomington, which produced washing machines and portable elevators.[25]

Other members of the congregation found ways to support themselves during retirement. Older men engaged in part-time work. Couples and widows kept rooming houses for university students. Occasionally students attended church with their Mennonite landlords, and a few eventually joined the Mennonite congregation. One widow, Anna (Stalter) Mohr, provided a home for her grandchildren when they reached high school age and kept Illinois State Normal University boarders as well.[26]

Not all families were "ethnic Mennonites." A study of members during First Mennonite's first decade shows that just over half of the members who belonged to the congregation prior to 1920 were fully "ethnic Mennonite."[27] Most of these were persons of Amish Mennonite heritage whose Alsatian Amish ancestors had immigrated between 1830 and 1860. A minority descended from the Pennsylvania Amish, and some of the "ethnic Mennonites" descended from a mixture of Alsatians, Pennsylvania Amish, and Hessians. Significantly, nearly a quarter of the early members had no Mennonite family connections. Some had lived in the East White Oak neighborhood and attended that church before transferring to Normal. The majority of the "non-ethnic Mennonites," however, lived in the neighborhood of the small frame church. While some dropped away within a few years, a considerable number became Mennonite and remained Mennonite. Finally, another fourth of the early members were persons who had some Mennonite and some non-Mennonite background. In

many cases, a parent had married outside the Mennonite fold.[28]

Central Conference Mennonites were progressive in their views towards intermarriage and other matters of social consequence. Stylish dress and the use of musical instruments never caused controversy in the Normal congregation. Walter Ropp, a member at East White Oak who later joined First Mennonite, teased his fellow churchgoers about coveting the lifestyle of other Protestants: "The plain clothes, caps and aprons . . . are all dead, so if we want adornments and other doodads we can have them. . . . We're just like the other folks now and that makes us feel better."[29]

The Central Conference Mennonites' accommodation to American ways carried over to their perspectives on national and world affairs. In 1914, for example, the Christian Endeavor Society at Normal sponsored a program on current events. Several persons of the church delivered speeches on topics such as "Some Commendable Characteristics of President Wilson."[30] As the World War became a dominant event, most Mennonites of the area supported American involvement. Mennonites, including those at First Mennonite in Normal, purchased liberty bonds. Apparently none of the men from the Normal congregation were of draft age during the war.

Pro-government sentiment ran strong in most Central Conference families. Many central Illinois Mennonites had close business and personal ties with their non-Mennonite neighbors.[31] The war issue was so explosive that Mennonite children in Normal avoided disclosing to their schoolmates the fact of their German ancestry.[32] Trouble over the war issue was something most families wanted to avoid. The costs of publicly challenging the prevailing view became clear when Emanuel Troyer of East White Oak Mennonite Church "draped a flag over the pulpit and preached a sermon in which he explained provisions in the Consititution that provided for conscience." Troyer believed that conscientious objection was a legitimate part of the spectrum of patriotic behavior. But an indignant group outside the congregation disagreed—and plotted to tar and feather him.[33]

Meanwhile, at First Mennonite in Normal, the congregation's focus shifted to problems at home. Towards the end of the war, personal conflicts developed between pastor Lee Lantz and some of his parishioners, and in 1918 he returned to Nampa, Idaho. In the aftermath of the controversy, other families also left the church. Lee Hartzler, a young minister from the Mennonite Gospel Mission in Chicago, was the next pastor to come to Normal. Hartzler served only a few months at Normal before poor health forced him to resign.

In the spring of 1919, a General Conference minister from eastern Pennsylvania, Andrew S. Bechtel, accepted a call to Normal. Bechtel emphasized inter-Mennonite cooperation, and he edited the Central Conference's *Christian Evangel* from his Bloomington home. The first salaried minister of the congregation, he received eighty dollars a month and lived in a house rented by the church.[34] Bechtel had served First Mennonite for just over a year when he decided to move his family to Pulaski, Iowa. Before leaving Normal, he advocated a shift towards full-time, professional leadership in the Central Conference churches. Said Bechtel: "It is not physically possible for a man to be working hard at some occupation most of the week and then come into the pulpit on a Sunday morning. . . . God has called us to do His work in the church, there are enough others to do the farm work."[35]

The congregation at Normal took Bechtel's message to heart. In 1921 the church called another easterner and General Conference man, William H. Grubb, and offered him $150 a month, a salary higher than was customary in Mennonite churches.[36] Grubb had been educated at Temple University and Eastern Pennsylvania Seminary. A former president of the Eastern District Conference (General Conference), he came from a distinguished Mennonite family. His father, Nathaniel B. Grubb, had pioneered in city ministry during a career at the First Mennonite Church of Philadelphia. William Grubb's older brother, Silas, was a minister and scholar of Mennonite history.

William Grubb himself was an able writer and historian. In 1916 he published a history of the Mennonites of Butler County, Ohio. While at Normal, he continued to pursue his interests in writing and history. During his first year there, he founded the yearbook of the Central Conferences of Mennonites.[37] To local organizations he gave presentations such as "Mennonite Missionary Activities Beginning with the Mennonites of Holland."[38] The president of Illinois State Normal University, an agnostic, learned to know Grubb and invited the Mennonite minister to address the full student body with a series of lectures on the history of religion. This Grubb did.[39]

During the seven years that the Grubb family lived in Normal, the church acquired its first parsonage. Jacob Schad, an elderly deacon and retired farmer of the congregation, built a large brick home directly west of the church on

First Mennonite Church Choir, ca. 1932.

University Street. The Grubb family moved in, but the parsonage remained in church hands for only a brief time. In 1922 Schad was killed in an interurban and automobile collision. After his death, the house on University Street was deeded to several of his eighteen children. In 1924 the minister's family moved to Hovey Avenue.[40] Twenty years would pass before the church would have another parsonage.

The church had an entrance stoop on the University Street corner which served as a gathering place for neighborhood children. Behind the church the children played ball during the daytime and "Blackman" at night. They also played around the hitching posts located along the east side and northeast corner of the church. One of the Grubbs' sons, Norman, recalls having to mow around those posts "which had long since served their usefulness."[41]

Under William Grubb's leadership, the church grew rapidly. During his first eight months at Normal, twenty persons joined the congregation.[42] Many in the congregation liked to hear a good sermon in German, and Grubb took such occasions as "Old Folk's Day" to preach in German. Yet the congregation included neighbors of very different backgrounds. A block south lived an elderly black woman who had done field work as a slave girl generations earlier. "Mammie Lee," as she was called, told the neighborhood children what slavery had been like and attended Sunday night services. Another black family of the neighborhood, the Calamees, operated a barbershop and came to church occasionally. A white family of the neighborhood, the Norgaards, never attended, but they contributed regularly. Apparently, their view that "the church helped to keep a good neighborhood" was shared by other local families.[43] But many neighbors who participated in church life in one way or another never joined. When an outsider asked: "Why is the church not its present size?," Grubb responded, "Mennonite peculiarities."[44]

Throughout the early years, the congregation met on New Year's Day for its annual business session. In 1925 the congregation voted to allow women to become deaconesses. The first woman to hold this elected office was Minnie Anderson, an elderly woman of Swedish descent who taught Sunday school and walked to church each week with her husband, Andrew. Younger people of the church remember that the Andersons had one pair of glasses which they passed between them as they read scripture.[45] In addition to serving as deaconesses, women of the congregation gave leadership in a variety of ways. In 1920 Lillie Heck joined four men in publishing the Constitution of the Sunday school. Others contributed as teachers, as officers of the Christian Endeavor Society, and with music. Mabel Nafziger (Bertram), a musician educated at Illinois Wesleyan University, served as pianist.[46]

A major congregational event during the twenties was the remodeling of the church. The small frame building had become too crowded. After a plan to build at a Bloomington site failed, the deacons proposed modest improvements on the building at the corner of Church and University. A local construction crew removed the outside corner steps and added an entrance onto the west side. Carpenters erected a bell tower and restructured the classrooms, kitchen, storage, and fellowship areas.[47]

In the spring of 1928, at the conclusion of the remodeling project, William Grubb left for a Congregational parish in Cobden, Illinois. The next pastor to serve First Mennonite would be Emanuel Troyer, a leader in the Central Conference and a promoter of Mennonite institutions.

ENDNOTES

[1]The other five were the Hessian Meeting/South Danvers Church (1841), Rock Creek Meeting/North Danvers Church (1851), Meadows Mennonite Church (1890), East White Oak Mennonite Church (1892), and Anchor Mennonite Church (1894).

[2]"Brief History of the First Mennonite Church," *Sixtieth Anniversary: First Mennonite Church* (Normal, IL: Anniversary Committee, 1972), p. 1.

[3]Steven R. Estes, *A Goodly Heritage: A History of the North Danvers Mennonite Church* (Danvers, IL: North Danvers Mennonite Church, 1982), pp. 125-26.

[4]"Field Notes," *Christian Evangel*, October 1910, p. 3.

[5]*Pantagraph*, 12 August 1911, p. 7.

[6]Interview with Frank Bertram, Normal, IL, November 21, 1985.

[7]First Mennonite Church Minute Book, 1912, Mennonite Church of Normal Archives.

[8]*Pantagraph*, 3 July 1911, p. 9.

[9]"Field Notes," *Christian Evangel*, April 1912, p. 182.

[10]"Obituaries," *Christian Evangel*, June 1912, p. 281.

[11]"Church Correspondence," *Christian Evangel*, March 1912, p. 133; "Mennonite Church Revival," *Pantagraph*, 12 February 1912; "The Mennonite Revival," *Pantagraph*, 17 February 1912.

[12]Frank Bertram interview.

[13]Quoted in First Mennonite Church Minute Book, 1912.

[14]"Church Correspondence," *Christian Evangel*, August 1913, p. 320.

[15]Bina Denler, "Church Correspondence," *Christian Evangel*, May 1912, p. 232.

[16]"Church Correspondence," *Christian Evangel*, February 1915, p. 72.

[17]Evelyn Bertsche, "Interview with Elsie S.," transcription of interview with Elsie Stahly, January 19, 1986, p. 25. In Bertsche's possession.

[18]Information provided by Mabel Bertram, Normal, IL, April 30, 1986.

[19]Minutes, Church Board Minute Book, 1913-1920; Mary Sharp letter to the author, October 17, 1985.

[20]Frank Bertram interview.

[21]Interview with R. L. Hartzler, Bloomington, IL, October 8, 1985.

[22]"Church Correspondence," *Christian Evangel*, November 1914, p. 435.

[23]"A Consideration," *Christian Evangel*, June 1912, p. 286.

[24]"Resolution," Church Board Minute Book, January 1914.

[25]Research by Myrna Park provided to the author, February 18, 1986.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Figures on membership are derived from Park's study of the 1985 congregational "Family History Charts" and her study of church membership lists from 1912 to 1920.

[28]Research by Park provided to the author, February 18 and March 3, 1986.

[29]Walter Ropp, "East White Oak History," c. 1932, p. 5, hand copied from the original by Elsie Sloneker, I-B-51, Mennonite Church of Normal Archives.

[30]"Church Correspondence," *Christian Evangel*, February 1914, p. 72.

[31]Interview with John Miller, Meadows, IL, November 16, 1985; Greg Stucky, "Interview with Lloyd Ramseyer," in *Voices Against War: The Schowalter Oral History Collection on World War I Conscientious Objection*, tape #137, 1970, Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, KS.

[32]Information provided by Mabel Bertram, Normal, IL, April 30, 1986.

[33]Maurice Troyer letter to the author, October 30, 1985.

[34]Minutes, Church Board Minute Book, 1919.

[35]"Church Correspondence," *Christian Evangel*, September 1920, p. 250.

[36]Minutes, Church Board Minute Book, March 27, 1921; Interview with R. L. Hartzler, Bloomington, IL, October 7, 1985.

[37]William Grubb, *History of the Mennonites of Butler County, Ohio* (Trenton, OH: The author, 1916); *Year Book of the Central Conference of Mennonites* (n.p: n.p., 1922).

[38]"Church Correspondence," *Christian Evangel*, April 1923, p. 91; "Mennonite History," *Christian Evangel*, June 1921, pp. 123-26.

[39]Transcription of tape by James Grubb, Palm Harbor, FL, November 1985, p. 3.

[40]Frank Bertram interview.

[41]Norman Grubb letter to the author, November 12, 1985; James Grubb transcription, p. 1.

[42]"Church Observes Anniversary Date," *Pantagraph*, 1922 clipping in Scrapbook I, Mennonite Church of Normal Archives.

[43]Grubb transcription, pp. 3-4.

[44]Penned notations on "A Questionnaire," 1925, in Harry F. Weber Collection, Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN.

[45]Interview with Myrna Park, Normal, IL, November 16, 1985.

[46]Mabel Bertram, "Music in First Mennonite Church of Normal," undated, in possession of the author.

[47]Minutes, Church Board Minute Book, 1922-1926.

Mennonites, Aesthetics and Buildings

by Calvin Redekop

* *Adapted from a paper presented at the Sarasota Builders' Conference, Sarasota, Florida, 22-24 January 1986.*

For an introduction I will make an exegetical application of a wag who said, "In Sarasota about 90 percent of the buildings are beautiful. The rest are built by Mennonites." I think there is a very interesting and good reason why this type of joke comes about: beauty is something very, very problematic and complex. I would like to propose that Mennonites have had some special difficulties with beauty, with aesthetics.

I

Mennonites have adapted and developed some very important styles and types of architecture. One needs to mention only the Alsatian farms, the Swiss Mennonite churches—one could recognize them anywhere. The Dutch Mennonites also developed their own architectural style. It clearly was a descendant of the Dutch, but the Mennonites took that style and developed some very specific and unique adaptations to it. The Dutch hidden church is a unique architectural style; those of you who have travelled in Holland will have seen hidden churches and their very functional and simple beauty. The Russian Mennonite house-barns can still be seen in many parts of the world. Those of you who have travelled to the Chaco will recognize an architectural style that has come via Canada, Russia, and West Prussia from Holland. Mennonites have developed some very recognizable architectural forms or adaptations of some traditional forms which can be recognized at a glance.[1]

Through the years Mennonite architecture or the way Mennonites built their buildings thus developed from a functional base. Mennonites, as many others of course, built their buildings in a basically functional or utilitarian form, to serve a specific purpose. What is the reason for putting a house and a barn together under one roof? Basically function, i.e., the hard winter. My father told me many times—one could immediately tell how cold it was in Russia by how much frost the barn would develop on the walls in the cattle area which was right next to the house. And if it got really cold, they would open the doors from the stable part of the barn to the house. The smells would get rather strong, but the house kept warm.

Those of you who have seen an Old Order Mennonite church will recognize it immediately. I think there is no type of church building that is exactly like that of the Old Order or the Amish and other plain groups of Mennonites. So why were they designed this way? If you go inside, you recognize that the auditorium always has the chancel or the pulpit along the elongated side of the building. The builders had a deep functional insight: the preacher or the pulpit bench was close to everybody. They probably did not verbalize it in terms of the abstract theory, but functionally they developed it because they had many Vorsaenger, that is, the people who led the singing. There were also the deacons and the preachers. They needed a long bench, so they put the two benches along the long side. When you compare this with any other type of church structure you will recognize the difference immediately. Typically the pulpit is standing over against many rows upon rows of short pews. The last rows of people could always conveniently wander in mind or even go to sleep.

Another example is the heating oven in Russia. My father said that until he left home, he used to sleep on the oven. The winters got awfully cold in Russia, so the oven in Mennonite homes was the center of the house. They fed the straw from one room and baked in that room, and the oven extended into the other room. It was huge, with a big flat platform on top where four or five children could sleep, and my father said there was often some competition for the central places. Imagine the kind of togetherness that that kind of situation would develop. This was a very functional way of heating, and the Russian oven still has a great amount of nostalgia in the memories of people who grew up that way even in the New World.

First of all, then, the Mennonite buildings were, in terms of the architectural structure, very *functional*, which resulted in very simple and very honest architecture. There was nothing false or pretentious, i.e., *dysfunctional.* The homes we visited yesterday were beautiful, but in one of the houses, a cathedral house, the beams were nailed on, and I am sure if I had grabbed them I could have pulled them down. But traditional Mennonite architecture would never have this kind of structure. A beam would be an authentic beam that would hold up the roof. This illustrates that wood is for the purpose of covering or bearing or whatever, not for decoration.

There is thus a way in which the designs spoke for the purpose, for the practice which then reflected the ideas. I think the best illustration is the grossdoddy house. When you first see these grossdoddy houses they look like a hodge-podge kind of building and architectural design. But there is no attempt here to put on any kind of impression—if you need another two rooms, you tack them on. The addition may not be the same color, it may not be the same design, but it comes out of the needs it will serve. So the building begins to reflect what the purposes and the intentions are, and thus its integrity emerges.

And so for Mennonites, if it was functional, it was plain; it was honest and had integrity, and hence it was beautiful. That is my definition as well as an art critic's definition of beauty. In our history, beauty was something that had quality, i.e., served a purpose. It had plainness, simplicity, and meaning because of its utility.

II

Secondly, I would suggest that functional architecture normally develops into a system of symbolic meaning. In our heritage and many others, function came first. Mennonites built an oven to heat their houses and cook in winter. What happens when a group of people

with at least quasi-cultured homogeneity or similarity develops a pattern of behavior? The functional building, the grossdoddy house, develops into a style because of a traditional practice. "Grandfather built one, we need a new one and so we're going to build one too. And how do we build it? Just like he did." That's how the grossdoddy house became a tradition among the Amish, for example.

And if our traditional style is practiced long enough, it becomes symbolic. It creates an image and conveys a complex and very meaningful system of ideas, beliefs, values and feelings. What does the grossdoddy house say? It says, for example, that the grossdoddy or the grandparents are influencing the children and the grandchildren because the grossdoddy was a continuing presence in the family. It says something as well to those who drive by and see the grossdoddy house. What the superficial appearance gives off is important, but what it says about what goes on behind the walls of those facades is even more important. A facade or architectural form reflects the essence of what the persons behind it are trying to do. In Amsterdam along the canals one sees fantastic facades. One might think, what superficiality! No, they began functionally but began to outdo each other in affluence and power and so forth. And these various styles of facades are projecting the image even to us today. The grossdoddy house immediately projects an image of many, many things. Mennonites have unconsciously depended upon the symbolism of their architecture, probably more than any other form, to express and maintain their belief system. The symbolic world of the Mennonites is readily observable to outsiders and scholars, but few insiders are very much aware of it, because they are so fully conditioned by it. The symbols of separation, such as the plain dress, have become fairly self-conscious symbols of Mennonite life, but the role of architecture as a symbol system of Mennonite faith has not been seriously studied, nor are Mennonites very conscious of its influence.[2]

III

What about the contemporary role of architecture in Mennonite buildings? Let me suggest that the traditional architecture forms that Mennonites have used have slowly been changing and have in many cases been totally deleted. I doubt if you will see very many grossdoddy houses being built today except in the most conservative Amish groups. But I would suggest that among the rest of us Russian Mennonites, we are no longer building these ovens to heat our homes.

Why have we changed architectural forms, the style and the symbolic image? I would suggest first of all, that the old patterns are no longer useful. The activities housed in our churches and our homes are no longer the same, and since they are no longer the same, the old forms have no meaning. We apparently have increasingly adopted function and form from the world around us. In other words, our needs are becoming increasingly like the needs of others in religious, social and physical life.[3]

We no longer are living in closely knit Mennonite communities, so our geographic designs and buildings no longer provide for the functions that they once did. For example, the local village and especially the church in the local community is no longer the center of our activities. We go to the golf course, we go to the Y, we go to the resort for the weekend, or whatever. We no longer have the same needs in terms of our own houses or the religious building either. Our residence, for example, has become like the residence of almost anybody else. And finally, images have changed because they are no longer based on earlier functions and forms.

I would suggest that we are increasingly being dominated and motivated by the criterion of economy. We, like most other people, are increasingly beginning to build our styles, not on the basis of a traditional function, but on the basis of what is most economical. I talked to a group of people recently who were very incensed that the church's building cost had overrun original estimates by a high percentage. The major concern was financial . . . It doesn't make much difference what we expect from this building, only what the bottom line is. We build our homes on the basis of the most house for the money. We have changed our definition of function. What is our lifestyle? How do we live with these buildings?

I would suggest that the outcome of having adopted the more or less prevailing attitudes, norms and values regarding building is that we have lost touch with an intrinsic beauty and are more or less copying others. If beauty is defined as a combination of function resulting in simplicity, honesty, and integrity, I would suggest that we are copying other people's architecture. The motivation of other people as they design their houses, buildings and their churches has become ours.

I am laying a heavy load on the architectural profession. Let me get very specific but I hope not judgmental. I would say church and church institutional architecture concerns are in a hot spot. But there is some religious church architecture which is very exciting and encouraging. I can feel good about the symbolic image that these beautiful buildings are projecting. But others are disasters; in church architecture the pragmatism of most for the least is often the motivation.

I would like to read a statement that Marvin Bartel made in a recent *Festival Quarterly* article from the Summer 1985 issue entitled "Who needs a church architect?" He says,

> "Is it really good stewardship to pay an architect money that could otherwise go into materials? While many smaller churches today bypass the architect in favor of a design-build firm, or a church builder, I see this as an extremely unfortunate trend.
>
> Good builders are pragmatists. They are skilled at building crafts. They are efficiency experts. They are skilled at managing workers. And they do perform important and essential functions for the church building committee. Your building committee may even be fortunate enough to include one or more builders and their knowledge.
>
> Yet if I had to choose between a good builder and a good architect, I would much rather choose a good architect, even if the builders had to be trained. Indeed, one fair-sized church was recently built by an industrial arts teacher on leave and a crew of college students on their summer vacation. Fortunately, good builders are usually available. The main concern is customarily to find a good architect."

There is a development among Mennonite builders that is reflecting something of our heritage by really beginning to say something about Christian function and form, and this needs to be encouraged.

IV

Most creative architecture, designing and building is coming from what I call community planning groups. The most creative church buildings that I have seen are those that are planned by a congregation or a community. I would suggest that the Bloomington, Illinois, Mennonite congregation has developed a total plan, which includes not only the architecture of the building, but the base from which the whole community

comes: What are they going to be doing here? What are the objectives? "From cradle to the grave" is in a sense what the Bloomington congregation was concerned about. Similarly, the congregation is concerned about providing tuition support for any child that goes to a Mennonite school. That is architecture. That is planning. A General Conference Mennonite church in Bogota, designed by a Mennonite architect, is one of the most beautiful communities I have seen in many a year. It is a big round church where the congregation can face each other. They have a boys club, playgrounds and so forth, right in the middle of Bogota. There are other aspects of this community which are beautiful; it is the total community.

What about some other examples? What about some of our service institutions? The Paoli, Indiana, Medical Center was designed by a Mennonite group of doctors and others with Mennonite architectural help. It is a functional part of the witness and outreach into the larger community. I have talked to a few non-Mennonite residents, and there is nothing but praise for the enterprise. It already is a symbol—the way the building is designed and the activities that take place there are already saying a lot of things to many people, and I suspect that in years to come the medical services building will become a symbol that will say, "That is where Mennonites serve the entire community on a day-to-day basis, serving people who cannot pay, giving some medical service free if necessary."

What about other institutions? Among the most impressive institutional designs that I've come across in our educational circuit is the Marbeck Center at Bluffton College. And ironically, or appropriately, the architectural design at Marbeck Center comes out of function, out of utility: A few years before it was built, Bob Kreider, the president, bubbling over with the kinds of things he wanted to do there, asked me, "What do you think we ought to think about yet before we build?" It might not hurt for some of us to visit some of these places just to see what they are trying to say and do with form, not only for function but for symbolism.

Our Mennonite enterprise comes through the best when we design and plan things together.* It is in a communal aspect that a real ethos and our real faith comes out. We are a communal people. From the Hutterites, who are totally communistic in their life and architecture, to the urban Mennonites who are probably the least communal, we still have a communal heritage: working and thinking together to discuss why we are here—what is our function and our purpose to be here. We begin to say—"Let's do it this way." I predict that our churches are going to be increasingly built in a round form of some kind. But this will happen only if these buildings are planned communally by people in the community, by people who know something about their own heritage.

I would like to suggest that the buildings like Bluffton College Marbeck Center, the Paoli, Indiana, Medical Center, and the Bloomington Church are the best evidences I have seen of function, integrity, plainness, and simplicity in architecture.

The final question now—is the collective conscience still among us? Or is each of us as a builder and as an individual homeowner simply borrowing from the world? How can we stimulate and encourage this collective conscience? What are the contemporary functions and purposes of our Mennonite community and in what way can we develop a style that will express our tradition?

Let me ask you quite bluntly: are we still identified as the communal people? There is integrity and beauty in the architecture of plain people, although there may be as much internal strife and lack of achieving the golden rule as among us. A fellow sociologist at the University of Waterloo said to me, "You know this competitive, vicious academic life gets to me after a while. When it gets so bad I tell my wife, 'Let's get in the car and go to the Old Order country.' We just drive through the area and stop and talk to Old Order persons, and we come back refreshed. There's something wholesome, something with integrity there." Integrity is the issue I think we have to face when we talk about beauty and building. Building and beauty are not separate or antagonistic—they are, as a matter of fact, brothers. In fact, they are the same. A building has beauty if it has function and simplicity and integrity.

I came into the Swiss Mennonite orbit from the Russian Mennonite tradition and now consider myself a pan-Mennonite; I don't think one conference has anything over another. But when I came to Goshen College in 1946, they were pushing nonconformity, which I thought was an old-fashioned idea. The girls were still wearing culottes to play basketball in the old gym at Goshen. "Why don't they get with it—put aside all these simple things such as black stockings?" I said to myself. But here I am in 1986 in conclusion reading to you from Romans, the 12th chapter. "I beseech you therefore brethren (it should be sistren as well) by the mercies of God that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, accepted unto God which is your real service and be not conformed to this world. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye might prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." This passage tells us something about form and function. It begins with obeying the will of God, and conforming our living sacrifice to that will, together as a community of faith, in teaching, life and in architecture.

Menno's theological slogan was, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This is an architectural metaphor, and the phrase "Let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon" gives us something to think about.

* The Alexanderwohl Church building process, discussed in the March 1986 *Mennonite Life*, illustrates the dynamics of the individualizing versus communal aspects of design, as well as other ideas in this article.

ENDNOTES

[1]Cornelius Krahn maintains that "nowhere, however, has any characteristic or distinctive architectural style developed which was created by Mennonites" (*ME*, p. 146). This can be debated, depending upon the definition one uses. Krahn himself rejects his own statement in the same article. "But Mennonite meetinghouses in Holland, at least until about 1840, are quite different from other Protestant church buildings" (p. 148). I maintain that adapting a particular style of architecture *is* original to the group. Further, there are numerous examples which can be cited such as the Alexanderwohl Church, which was discussed in *Mennonite Life* in the March 1986 issue. Even a "smorgasbord" adaptation is a form of unique architecture.

[2]There has been little done in the analysis of Mennonite symbolism, but what has been done shows clearly how architecture expresses beliefs. The Hutterite organization of geography, hofs, and buildings portrays the symbolism of life very clearly. E. K. Francis, in studying the Russian Mennonites in Manitoba, is probably most conscious of this fact (*In search of Utopia*, p. 107ff).

[3]The contemporary status of awareness of architectural issues among Mennonites appears to be relatively dormant. *Mennonite Life*, especially articles by Cornelius Krahn, has presented the most concerted discussion. Krahn's article in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* includes a bibliography of important articles until 1958. Smucker's *The Sociology of Mennonites, Hutterites and Amish: A Bibliography with Annotations* contains no references to studies of Mennonite architecture. The only conference in recent years, according to my information, was the "Consultation on Church Building services," held at Goshen, May 30-31, 1975. Undoubtedly there is activity, but it is not coordinated or available.

Book Reviews

Raymond F. Wiebe. *Hillsboro, Kansas: The City on the Prairie.* Hillsboro, Ks: Hillsboro Centennial Commission, Centennial Publication Committee, Hillsboro Historical Society, 1985. Pp. 189. ($26.00 pb).

Hillsboro's long-awaited centennial publication is not a disappointment. Written by Raymond F. Wiebe, a historical scholar recognized for his meticulous research, this volume gives the reader an excellent overview of the history of Hillsboro, former hub of much Mennonite activity, and of the surrounding area from the time when the Quivira/Wichita Indians made their home there to the present. The book, well documented with endnotes, bibliography, appendices and an index, is a treasure trove of information.

The author moves from the city's early history, when the growing cattle trade began to edge out the Indians, to the coming of the first Anglo settlers prior to 1874. With the arrival of the ethnic Germans and the Mennonites from Russia (identified by Wiebe as Dutch-Low Germans even after they arrived in Kansas), the market town took shape as businesses, schools, churches, civic government and other institutions were developed. John G. Hill, the founder, intended to call the community Hill City, then Hillsdale, but was edged out of these names by other Kansas cities who claimed them first. Hillsborough was shortened to the snappier Hillsboro. In successive chapters the reader is introduced to the various members of the healing arts professions and some of the early cultural activities, such as the Dutch Band, Choral Union, library, Marion County Fair, Adobe House Museum, and the Arts and Crafts Fair. This latter event, more than anything else, has placed Hillsboro on the map of Kansas in recent years.

Churches, those that have disappeared and those that have made a place for themselves on the horizon, are carefully noted and described. Because Hillsboro is the cradle of both the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Brethren churches in America, they and their institutions, such as Tabor College and Salem Hospital, are featured significantly.

Even as the careful attention to documentation and detail will delight the researcher, it may also discourage the casual reader. The reader should not expect to find here an examination and interpretation of trends, or of how major events, such as the Depression of the thirties or the World Wars, affected the community. If there is a disappointment, it is that the mass of detail prevents the long look, the nostalgic remembering. Readers will also not find the underside of history—many stories of the little people and ordinary families who never became heads of businesses and institutions.

As centennial books are expected to be, the material presented here is pleasant, with only a sidelong glance at the difficulties, trials and hard work in breaking land and building a community. That story still needs to be written. A nation's history is about its wars and political struggles. A city's history is about its civic, business and economic development. That is well presented here.

I was dismayed to find only three women indexed—Theresa Kuhn (handicapped), Esther Ebel (Kansas Mother of the Year), Margo Schroeder (Miss Kansas)—and little or no mention of the many women's organizations, such as the Mentor Club and women's church organizations, that played an important part in Hillsboro's development. Others will miss the mention of the influence of athletics and music on the life and spirit of the community. Yet despite these omissions, the book is a worthy contribution to the historical record of Hillsboro.

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Gerald Peters, ed. and trans., *Diary of Anna Baerg, 1916-1924.* Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1985. Pp. 158.

Almost all of the diaries and memoirs published by the Russian Mennonite emigrants of the 1920s are penned by men. As such they frequently chronicle the macrocosmic happenings related to village life, pontificate on politics, or bitterly condemn the violence of a revolution destined to change their lives forever. All this does not detract from the accuracy or usefulness of such material, though we might complain that the authors cannot free themselves from their parochial world or realize that they are victims of cataclysmic events completely beyond their control. Yet the real problem is their maleness, rather than their objectivity. Their jottings rarely reflect upon the success of vegetable and flower gardens, creative cooking in times of famine, the raising of children, or the trauma of widowhood in unsettled times.

Anna Baerg's diary will help to change that. Young and sensitive, she matures amid the vicissitudes of World War I, the Russian revolution of 1917, and the subsequent civil war. When she began her diary in 1916 she hoped it might be a "a tiny mirror . . . reflecting a little of the life that passes by." It became more than that. Endowed with a rich emotional life and a gift for exacting expression, she records the expanding violence associated with the Bolshevik Revolution. There is an added dimension: Anna suffers from a spinal condition which never allows her to fully participate in the life of the community. Again and again she struggles with feelings of inadequacy and uselessness. She finds it difficult to accept the consequences of her handicap, especially when she falls in love with the young teacher, Harder, who is boarding with the Baergs.

Anna's father was an overseer on the large Mennonite estate Apanlee. They were the servants, Dicks were the masters—and the relationship was not without its pain and humiliation. Yet there was the beauty of the physical world, and Anna faithfully recorded her perceptions of the changing seasons. At heart she was a poet and even developed a local reputation for her verse. Apanlee lingered in her consciousness long after it ceased to exist. In later times of dislocation and stress, its tranquility, its gardens, and the memories of childhood innocence became a source of solace.

Anna's portrait of the intensifying Russian holocaust is most impressive. In 1916 she could still write: "Nothing much happens here. One day passes like the next" (November 14, 1916). By mid-summer of 1917 she commented: "Conditions in our Fatherland are dark and gloomy" (July 3, 1917). The following year is filled with foreboding. "Horrible things have taken place in Halbstadt these last few days. Seven people have been shot, including our neighbor" (February 6, 1918). "They say the anarchists plan to murder everyone, burn everything and drag all the women off" (April 27, 1918). After more than a year of civil unrest in the Molotschna settlement, she despairingly notes: "The whole world appears to

have become one big field hospital" (December 22, 1919).

Anna's reflections on the effect of general violence and the lack of law and order are most revealing. Whether beset by anger, fear, or a sense of helplessness, she is always careful to examine her own priorities. "Whether or not they are as you say 'stupid Russians' Anna Baerg you have no right to hate them. They are people too and as such God has placed them on the same level as you" (December 22, 1917). Not long after, she prayed: "Lord save me from this hatred towards the Lenin family. Please help me for your sake not to wish them evil" (February 16, 1918). "It is unfortunate but true that we Germans have all too frequently treated the Russian with disregard" (February 23, 1918). Her comments on the compromise of nonresistance through the para-military *Selbstschutz* are equally astute. "All I can say is that often there is more courage in patience and endurance than in retaliation" (May 20, 1918). "Four Mennonites came by yesterday afternoon, rifles on their shoulders, grenades in their pockets. One would think God could handle the problem without this little heap of Mennonites" (December 23, 1918). The dislocation of her own family, widespread famine, and the continual seesaw of the civil war front evokes a desperate assertion of faith. "Doesn't it say in the Bible that God will take care of all the widows and orphans?" (July 23, 1919). Anna is keenly aware of the cumulative effect of such circumstances. "What would once have brought tears of compassion and pity now elicits little but the show of sympathy" (February 16, 1922). "Oh there is so much sadness in this world. Any word of comfort is meaningless" (March 18, 1922).

The diary offers a rich mosaic of similar images from the pen of a young woman gifted with a reflective mind, the requisite writing skills, and a compassion for the world which surrounds her. It is one of the most moving and reflective diaries of this era that I have read and should be required reading for all students taking a Mennonite history course.

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Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1985. Pp. 524. ($22.50)

Here is a new synthesis of western Canadian history. Friesen, a professor of history at St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba, brings together the results of Canadian prairie historiography in a critical and discriminating manner to create a new and authoritative interpretation. Friesen's presentation is distinctively up-to-date in its concerns; more pages contain economic, social, and cultural history than political events. The native people occupy an appropriately prominent place through the first third of the book. All the themes that make the Canadian prairies unique are carefully laid out: the fur trading companies, the metis communities, immigration, western antagonism towards the rest of Canada, agriculture, natural resources, class structures, the school question, the confusing political party system. To one more familiar with the American West, the anti-Turnerian features Friesen points out are quite interesting.

Friesen has little to say about Mennonites directly, but much indirectly. This is the context which has controlled much of Canadian Mennonite history. A completely inadequate index is the work's only obvious flaw (for example, no entry for "Ukrainians," the prairies' most important non-English ethnic group).

Sara E. Kreider and Rachel E. Stahl. *The Amish School*. Intercourse, PA: People's Place Booklets, 1986. Pp. 96. ($3.95 paperback)

A former teacher in the Amish schools of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and a writer have teamed up to produce an interesting and readable account of the whys and hows of Amish schools.

After World War II, the traditional country schools were closed, except for more or less isolated areas in western states. School attendance ages were also raised in many states. These two factors and a distrust of urban values as represented in the new schools played a dominant part in the decision of the Amish to organize and conduct their own schools. Those of us who grew up in the country school and/or taught in such a school will recognize the similarities between our experiences and the Amish school experience. The Searson and Martin Readers of the Kansas country school of 60 or more years ago are similar to the readers used in the Amish schools today in that they not only taught reading as a basic skill but they also emphasized values such as loyalty, integrity, responsibility, appreciation of nature, and love of the land.

The Amish schools are very successful in teaching basic skills with value orientation. Their teachers are not academically trained to meet state standards, but they are carefully selected, encouraged by parents and fellow teachers, and experience community support that would often be the envy of other teachers. Teachers meet frequently to discuss common concerns; they have access to a periodical, *The Blackboard Bulletin*, devoted to the improvement of teaching in Amish schools, and distractions are held to a very minimum.

The Amish school plays its part in reinforcing the sense of security imparted by the Amish home and community and in undergirding the work ethic as a basic value. However, let it not be said that Amish children do not have fun. They play all the traditional games country school children have always played (the authors could have told us more about games and pranks), and children learn that life is essentially a happy venture.

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Stephen M. Kohn, *Jailed for Peace: The History of American Draft Law Violators, 1658-1985*. Greenwood Press, 1985. ($29.95)

In a concise 143 pages, Kohn outlines the historic and philosophical development of draft resistance in this country. He brings to light both the failures and successes of individuals who have made the difficult decision to abide by their beliefs and convictions, and exercised the right to freedom of conscience so valued in this country. Their struggles, as presented by Kohn, have a lot to teach us of what real strength and courage are all about.

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*Hoisting the flag at the edge of the racetrack, Halbstadt, Molotschna. From left (next to the right flag hoister): SS Lieutenant [*Untersturmführer*] Dietrich, ?, ?, Heinrich Himmler, SS General [*Obergruppenführer*] Wolff, ?, Hermann Rossner.*

Himmler talks to Mennonite surgeon of the Halbstadt hospital, Dr. Johann Klassen, 10 Oct. 1942. Klassen tells him that partisan fighters tried to kill some cavalry men by putting poison onto the roof of their quarters. At right, General Wolff.