

HERITAGE POSTING

MANITOBA
MENNONITE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



No. 103

October 2022



Courtesy of Jordan Ross, The Carillon

The Dirk Willems Peace Garden was dedicated on August 20, after the arrival of the Peace Trek cyclists and runners at the Mennonite Heritage Village. The "Garden" consists of three initiatives taken over the last ten years. First was the Peace Exhibit Committee, which worked over many years to see two additions to the Village grounds: the Conscientious Objectors cairn and the Dirk Willems sculpture (See article on page 4). The latter was the work of renowned sculptor Peter Sawatzky. The second project was the erection of the pergola and the mounting of information plaques on the stone wall. Finally, the Garden Club, under the leadership of Elsie Kathler, planted a garden around the pergola and the fountain and pool. Plants were carefully selected to represent local flora. Gary Dyck, Executive Director of MHV, spoke about the significance of the Garden as part of the mission of the Village; Doris Penner, Chair of the MHV Board, expressed appreciation for those who have worked over many years to bring complete the project; Elbert Toews, Chair of the Committee for many years, spoke about its history, and Elsie Kathler told the story of the planning of the plantings at the Garden.



Courtesy of Erin Unger

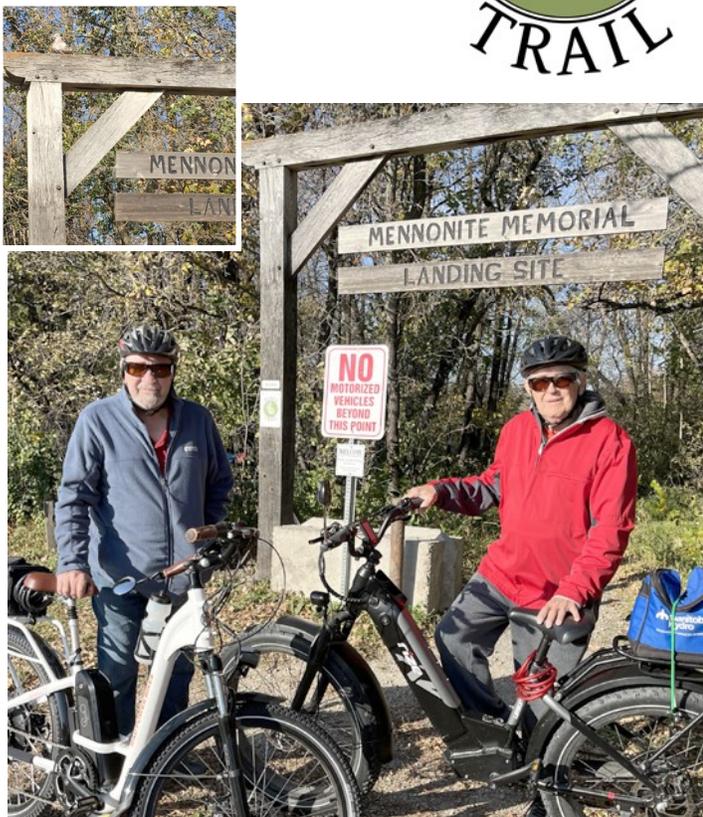


DARP DAYS 2022

October 22 World Food Supply:
Impact of War in Ukraine;
Hunger and Relief programs

Peace Trail Pre-inaugural Ride Gets Surprise Visitor

On October 11, two e-bike riders, Gordon Schellenberg and Glen Klassen set off from the Mennonite Landing Site to ride the proposed Peace Trail, shepherded by Bob Schmor in his small truck. Just as they got on their bikes, a dove landed on the Landing Site gate. Bob was lucky enough to get a photo. Glen thinks it might have been a rebuke for not including the dove in the Peace Trail logo!



HP has a New Assistant Editor

Andrew Klassen Brown is the new assistant editor for Heritage Posting. He has been quite involved with MMHS for the past five years, serving on the executive committee, maintaining the society's website, and chairing the WestMenn Historical Committee. Andrew works for Mennonite Central Committee Canada as the Records Manager and Archivist, and in his free time is also a doctoral student at the International Baptist Theological Study Centre at the *Vrije Universiteit* Amsterdam studying sixteenth century Anabaptist history and theology.



Andrew Klassen Brown

Welcome aboard, Andrew!

Thoughts from the Editor

"And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" Gen 1:31.

The fundamental goodness of the world is a concept that underlies everything that is worthwhile in our lives. What would be the point of truth, beauty, love, compassion and non-violence if the world were basically bad? Trust in goodness is a precious legacy from the first chapter of the Hebrew library, a gift of optimism and meaning for our culture.

Why then all the badness we hear about and experience? What about "the problem of evil"? I don't think we will ever understand this but we must see, by faith, that evil is not at the core. From the anchor of goodness, the goodness we see in Jesus, we can make real changes in the world around us. We can make peace.

Note: This issue of HP coincides with the CTMS Conference at the University of Winnipeg, "Departing Canada, Encountering Latin America." We hope you are attending. The conference will be covered in the February issue of HP.

At a recent meeting the MMHS Executive did their annual reorganization but did not make any changes.

The Executive consists of:

- Conrad Stoesz, Chair
- Andrea Klassen, Vice-Chair
- Hans Werner, Secretary
- Sean Goerzen, Treasurer
- Ed Krahn
- Graham Schellenberg
- Andrew Klassen Brown

Thanks for your faithful service!

Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

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The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society newsletter, *Heritage Posting*, welcomes letters, reports and historical notes from society members and other readers.

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Website: www.mmhs.org

ISSN 1491-2325

In Memory

On Sunday October 9, 2022, retired Professor Dr. Jack Thiessen passed away in hospital in Steinbach after some years of declining health and several recent health crises which resulted in hospitalization and death. Few people in Mennonite circles have name recognition on par with Jack Thiessen, and for good reason. Professionally he was an educator with advanced credentials in the humanities, lexicographer, philologist, writer, translator/consultant, and researcher. Beyond that he was an intellectual, a raconteur, a gourmet, and a celebrity in his own right, as well as a wide



Jack (John) Thiessen
1931 - 2022

reader on all fronts.

Most Mennonites know that Jack is the lexicographer who compiled the first Low German dictionary in 1977, which later in 2003 became the much expanded work most often associated with him. To say that Jack Thiessen has done more to promote Mennonite Low German than any other person in the last century is hardly debatable. Although he began his adult life as a Dairy Herd Improvement Supervisor, he returned to school and college, after which he accepted a position in Germany as a teacher of English. During his time there he developed his passion for his native tongue, and worked in linguistic research for what became the *Preussisches Wörterbuch*, the OED of German, eventually completing his PhD on Canadian Mennonite Low German in 1963. For years during his work on Low German he carried a notebook with him noting any new or unfamiliar LG word or expression to add to his repertoire. He combed through Arnold Dyck's works word for word and listed all words in alphabetical order. Upon his return to Manitoba in 1961 he took a professorship in German at United College, later becoming Department head. From his time at the university and his publications, his academic contacts here and abroad make a Who's Who list of linguistics scholars, many of them in contact with him to the present.

But Jack was much more than a lexicographer. His contacts in the wider world are so diverse as to strain credulity: he knew everybody, partly from his extensive travels and teaching career, and partly from several summers spent working as Program Director aboard transatlantic vessel where he encountered another social stratum of society. And he was more than that. While working as full professor at the University of Winnipeg, he was the President of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, ran German Saturday schools, translated copious legal documents in print and for the courts on sensitive matters involving German citizens, and wrote reviews of gourmet restaurants in the *Free Press*. In between he did a study of Yiddish, resulting in *Yiddish in Canada: Death of a Language* in 1973. He collaborated with Dr. Victor Peters in a study of the origin of Mennonite surnames in 1987 as well as in publishing LG interviews with Mennonites born in Russia who immigrated to Canada in the 1920s, and transliterating archival material from Gothic to Latin script (early RM of Hanover minutes).

After his retirement, Jack worked as a free-lance writer in both English and Low German, and as a translator and researcher. His publications are too many to list, but notably he translated various masterpieces into Low German, like *Alice in Wonderland*, and *The Little Prince*, as well as *Max und Moritz*, a German children's classic. In the last 20 years he wrote several volumes of short stories in Plautdietsch including *Dittsied* (2011) and the two-volume *Neighbours* in 2014-15, and translated works from German to English (e.g. a novel *Elisabeth* by Peter Klassen), edited biographies and poetic works for others. His dictionary was republished in Germany in 2019 for German speakers.

Jack had a prodigious memory, and an unlimited repertoire of anecdotes about his experiences along the way, all delivered in an unparalleled gift for story telling in his own inimitable style and sometimes with sharp social

(Continued on page 4)

by Graham Schellenberg

Local historian Albert Schmidt passed away on September 28, 2022, after a brief period of illness.

Albert was born on August 14, 1937, in Altona, Manitoba. He graduated from the University of Manitoba with a degrees in Education (B.A. and M. Ed.) From 1962 until 1992, Albert taught Social Studies, Canadian history and Accounting in the Rhineland School Division. After his retirement, he continued to substitute teach in Altona until 2011.

Albert was keenly interested in his community. He served as the Mayor of the Town of Altona in the late nineties and was a member of the town council for 22 years. He also volunteered on numerous community boards.

One of Albert's passions was Mennonite history - particularly Altona and the surrounding communities. He helped spearhead the development of the Altona and District Heritage Research Centre, and his knowledge was invaluable to historians and researchers.

Albert was known to pursue everything with commitment and enthusiasm. His immense contributions to community and historical affairs will be treasured for years to come.



Albert Schmidt
1937 - 2022

Before and Beyond Artifacts — The Peace Garden Project

by **Elbert Toews**

It was 2014 when the Mennonite Heritage Village board, authorized the *ad hoc* Peace Exhibit Committee to move foreword with its vision for a special Peace Project for MHV. With the vision, particularly envisaged by Abe Warkentin, the then 'CO Committee', with added members, morphed into the "Peace Exhibit Committee," the implementing of the CO monument project then being almost complete.

The MHV was already a world-class museum. The vision of the committee was to enhance its worth by more comprehensively conveying its story from before the artifacts came to be and the story that continues beyond the artifacts – the full Annabaptist/ Mennonite story conveyed through site, setting, visuals and enhanced media.

What with all the financial challenges being encountered by the MHV board at the time, our Peace project stalled. In 2017 an agreement was reached that if the Peace Exhibit Committee would pay



Elbert Toews

for the erection of the Dirk Willems sculpture and the CO monument, the MHV board would then fund-raise for the interpretive facility to follow. (Some \$140K was raised by committee members and their friends for the CO monument and the Dirk Willems' sculpture, the latter being created by world-renowned sculptor, Peter Sawatzky.) Both were in place and celebrated on Remembrance Day, 2018!

In light of changing technologies and smart phones becoming commonplace, the need for an enclosed, glass-fronted building with multi-media options, as earlier proposed for this project, became redundant. An open beam pergola was then erected at much lower cost. It provides for a sheltered seating area, interpretive panels and soon-to-be-posted smart phone QR codes. The endless aspects of our Mennonite story, "before, during and after the artifacts", could now be accessed by one's smart phone on this site in this beautiful setting.

The Dirk Willems Peace Garden, what a wonderful place with its pergola, walkway, ponds, stream, floral features and iconic bronze sculpture, to engage and contemplate more comprehensively the Mennonite story and the Peace option!"



The Peace Exhibit Committee: (L to R) Evelyn Friesen, Elbert Toews, Doris Penner, Al Hamm, Harvey Plett, Abe Warkentin. Absent: Jack Heppner, Lawrence Klippenstein, Rudy Warkentin. Courtesy of Gary Dyck



The planted garden, a project of the Gardening Club, led by Elsie Kathler.

Courtesy of Kaelyn Nickel

(Continued from page 3)

commentary. Moreover, he was fluent in English, LG, and HG, conversant in Yiddish and Dutch, and acquainted with French and Russian. As his obituary says, he constituted a force of nature all by himself.

In his death the entire community has lost a memorable, learned man of great personal presence and stellar achievement, and a Mennonite Knowledge-keeper - he will be missed.

Leaving Canada: The Mennonite Migration to Mexico

by **Andrea Klassen,**
Senior Curator at Mennonite Heritage Village

What is the price you would pay for your freedom of conscience? Throughout Mennonite history, this question was answered hundreds of thousands of times. In the 1920s, nearly 8,000 traditionalist Mennonites faced this question in Canada, a place they felt no longer offered them freedom to practice their religion and retain their way of life. "Leaving Canada: The Mennonite Migration to Mexico," an exhibit produced by Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV) in partnership with the Plett Foundation and the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC), commemorates the one hundredth anniversary of the migration of these Mennonites to Latin America. It explores the questions of why Mennonites left Canada in the 1920s, what they experienced upon arrival in Mexico, and the legacy of this history. It tells the story about competing conceptions of religious freedom and of tensions between religious, linguistic, and educational rights on the one hand, and the obligations of citizenship on the other.

In the early twentieth century, Canada was engaged in a struggle to create a unifying national identity. Since the 1870s, immigrants from Europe had flooded the prairies, leaving the British majority concerned that these newcomers were not joining mainstream society. A quote from an article in *Busy Man's Magazine* (later *Maclean's*), outlines this dilemma: "One of the greatest problems confronting Canada is assimilation: how to take the crude material constantly flowing into the country and make loyal, self-helping, self-respecting citizens out of them." (Alfred Fitzpatrick, "Where Progress and Education Join Hands," *Busy Man's Magazine*, October 1, 1908.)

The answer to this question of a national identity was answered by way of the public schools. In Manitoba (1916) and Saskatchewan (1917) legislation was passed to make attendance in public school compulsory for all children. Commenting on the legislation in Manitoba, C.B. Sissons, professor at Victoria College in Toronto, wrote: "The [Manitoba] government has definitely set itself the task of making English a language common to all the varied elements of the population. The school is to be the instrument in achieving this end." (Sissons, *Bi-lingual Schools in Canada* [Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1917], 154.) The goal of public schools was to assimilate non-British children, including those from French Catholic and immigrant backgrounds, and to shape them into loyal, patriotic, English-speaking, British citizens.

Traditionalist Mennonites in Manitoba and Saskatchewan fiercely resisted the public schools, which resulted in heavy government fines. In Saskatchewan, for example, \$26,000 was collected from Mennonites in 1921 alone, at a time when building a new school cost less than \$5,000. Failure to pay these fines resulted in property confiscation and even jail time. According to *Maclean's*

journalist Charles Christopher Jenkins, "the government broke up Mennonite schools and fined [Mennonites] severely – sometimes they took the last horse and the last meat out of the house to pay the fines." (Jenkins, "The Mennonites' Trek," in *Maclean's*, Feb. 15, 1922.) By 1922,



after all their efforts to appeal the new school laws failed, traditionalist Mennonites decided to leave Canada for Latin America.

"Leaving Canada" explores the history of the traditionalist Mennonite community's determination to preserve its autonomy. Pushed into the unknown by the assimilation and betrayal they felt threatened them in Canada, this is the story of the lengths to which one community went to preserve its faith, freedom of conscience, and culture.

Ways to experience the exhibit and learn more about this history:

October 14: Launch of the virtual "Leaving Canada" exhibit, available for free at www.mhv.ca

November 1: Last installment of the "Leaving Canada Speaker Series," featuring Royden Loewen speaking on the topic "Mexico Mennonites and Nostalgia for 'Old' Canada". The Speaker Series features guests sharing more about this history from a variety of perspectives. It is produced by MHV and the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies (CTMS), with support from the Plett Foundation. You can find the recordings of previous webinars in this series of the CTMS and MHV YouTube channels.

November 30: Last day to see "Leaving Canada" at MHV
Beginning in 2023: Watch for details from MHV and MHSC on how to bring the "Leaving Canada" traveling exhibit to your organization in 2023-2024.



Link to virtual exhibit.

School Rules of Yore: *Die Schulregeln*

by Ernest Braun

A framed plaque on the back wall of the Blumenhof private school building at the Mennonite Heritage Village contains the full text of what was known as the Schulregeln: a German poem in 23 rhyming couplets. This poem was used in Mennonite private schools in Russia, in Manitoba, Mexico and Paraguay, largely by Chortitzer and Old Colony Mennonites. The Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba did not use them, leading one to assume that the Molotschna never adopted the practice.

The origins of the poem have been lost to contemporary Mennonites, although living memory still recalls its use in schools in Manitoba, Paraguay and Mexico. Although a reasonable assumption would be that the poem was Mennonite in origin, in fact its origin has no connection to Mennonites, although coincidentally it does have a connection to South Russia.

The poem appeared in 1856 in an article in *Die Gartenlaube*, *Illustriertes Familienblatt*, the first large-scale German newspaper and a forerunner of modern magazines. It was founded by publisher Ernst Keil and editor Ferdinand Stolle in Leipzig, Kingdom of Saxony in 1853. According to John Eicher, Mennonites in Russia

subscribed to this magazine. Even today the MB Archive in Winnipeg actually has several issues of the *Die Gartenlaube* on hand in hard copy.

The article commemorates a model school erected and funded in 1823 in Klein Zschachwitz by a wealthy patron of education, Nikolai Abramowitsch Putjatin, philosopher, inventor and poet. Klein-Zschachwitz lies near Dresden in Germany. Putjatin (1749 - 1830) was a Ukrainian nobleman who, because of a scandal involving a powerful man's wife, was forced to leave Russia when he later married her. He started up an estate



Nikolai Abramowitsch Putjatin (1749-1830)

in the Dresden area with impressive houses, and a model school. The poem referred to as *Schulregeln* hung in a frame on the wall of the main floor school room of the A-frame building, the upper floor being the living quarters of the teacher. The school was very well equipped for its time, with desks, cabinets, chalkboards as they were at the time, and even a small organ.

For Mennonites, it might be of interest that Putjatin had earlier served as an officer and superintendent at the court of Catherine the Great, although he left Russia in 1793 for Dresden where he lived with his wife German countess



Blumenhof (WR) private school house at Mennonite Heritage Village.

All photos courtesy of Ernest Braun

Elisabeth von Sievers (1746-1818) and an ailing stepdaughter for whose sake he acquired the rural estate mentioned above in 1797 in the hope that the air in the rural setting would improve her health. Putjatin is today considered to be a man ahead of his time in that he gave the peasants on his estate title to his lands before leaving Russia. Today a small market square in the village bears his name, and a monument to him was set up in 1997, exactly 200 years after his arrival in the village.

It seems likely that some Mennonites who subscribed to the German magazine were taken with the moralistic content of the poem and incorporated it into the private schools in the Chortitza and Bergthal Colonies, and took it along with them to Manitoba, as Manitoban emigrants took it to Mexico and Paraguay. Here it was well-known by members of an earlier generation, although even members of my generation remember snatches of it.



Picture of the Dresden school in modern times:

Credit: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Attribution:Paulae>. Today it is a heritage site and museum

Internal evidence proves that the poem was composed in a dialect spoken in the Dresden area, a dialect easily recognized and even mocked in Germany today as the German of the uneducated commoner. The first couplet goes like this:

Das Erste, was du thust, wenn du erwachest früh,
Sei ein Gebet zu Gott; Kind, das versäume nie!

"The first thing you

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

do when you wake up early,
Shall be a prayer to God; child, never neglect that!"

Note that although this is a rhyming couplet, the last two words do not in fact rhyme in standard High German. The reason is that the poem was written in a Saxon dialect peculiar to the Dresden area, where pronunciation differs from standard High German, so that the "üh" sound rhymes with the "ie" sound.

A later couplet has another pronunciation anomaly:

Was dir der Lehrer sagt, das thue stets mit Freuden,
Wer ungehorsam ist, muß seine Strafe leiden.

"Whatever the teacher tells you, always do with joy.



The Schulregeln in its frame at the Blumenhof school.

Those who are disobedient must suffer their punishment."

Here the "eu" sound rhymes with the "ei" sound. This anomaly would not have presented problems for Mennonite students since our pronunciation was East Prussian and so reasonably similar to the Dresden dialect, especially in the "eu" and "ei" anomaly. Even today, should a Mennonite from eastern Manitoba venture to speak High German in Germany, the verdict will come quickly - ahh, "Sie sind wohl Ost-Preussich!"

This moralistic German poem about how a young student should conduct oneself is a roster of values that characterize Mennonite culture: gratefulness, punctuality, cleanliness, hard-work, obedience to elders, accountability, reverence, humility and honesty among others. It might be hard to find a similar piece that so accurately describes the Mennonite value system; yet this poem was written by a Ukrainian noble in exile from his homeland.



Page 1 from Die Gartenlaube, 1868
All graphics courtesy of Ernest Braun

"Faspa: What Is Its Origin?"

by Eleanor Hildebrand Chornoboy

Introduced by Robert Martens
Reprinted from *Roots & Branches*
(September 2022 • Vol. 28 No. 3)

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On October 2 at 2:30 pm, MHSBC presents its annual fundraiser. The occasion should be a good one. Still, some of us will be anticipating what happens afterwards, at 4 pm that afternoon: *Faspa!* Most Mennonites are familiar with that term, but to the "Engländer" world, it may be a mystery.

So perhaps it's time to absorb some insights from Eleanor Hildebrand Chornoboy, author of *Katarina:*

Mennonite Girl from Russia, Snow Angels, and (here we're getting to the core of the matter) *Faspa with Jast: A Snack of Mennonite Stories Told by Family and Guests*. *Faspa*, it seems, is of some interest to her. In a 2013 issue of *Preservings*, Hildebrand Chornoboy wrote an article entitled "*Faspa: What Is Its Origin?*" This charming article wanders discursively around the question, and perhaps there are no firm answers, but the author knows her topic. Some excerpts follow. (All citations are from this article.)

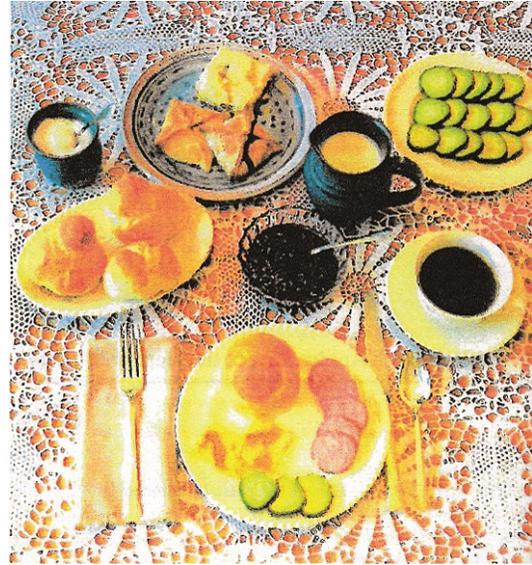
Near the article's beginning, Hildebrand Chornoboy cites Victoria Hayward, a travel writer who is credited with coining the term, "Canadian mosaic." Hayward wrote, in her travel book of 1922, *Romantic Canada*, of her visit to Morden, Manitoba, where she encountered a Mennonite custom entirely unknown to her – *Faspa* – though she didn't use that term.

"The Mennonite women in all the villages lend a hand with the horses, grooming them and getting them harnessed, ready to go in the wagon or to draw plough or harvester. We had not noted this work so much among foreign women. The women work very capably and easily with the horses and it doesn't seem hard work to them. They are at their best, however, in the little kitchen, before the door of which the wind was strewing the golden leaves when we went for afternoon – no, not tea – coffee! It is a Mennonite custom to have coffee and bread and butter and perhaps jam, every afternoon at four o'clock. The men leave off ploughing and come in from the fields for their cup of this refreshing hot drink. Mr. de Fehr said the Mennonites think coffee is very stimulating and good for a man that works. I fear that all our Canadian farmers are not so well looked after by their wives in the cold autumn afternoons at the ploughing! The coffee is ground fresh in the little mill over the stove at every making – a pointer for any who wish to adopt this custom" (92-93).

Hayward's account is a little naïve, perhaps, but that can be forgiven, coming from a rank outsider. It's gratifying to learn, though, that Mennonites were so far ahead of their time: imbibing coffee in a then British-influenced tea-drinking nation.

Hildebrand Chornoboy goes on to ask whether the word "*Faspa*" derives from "Vespers," referring to a service of either the evening or late afternoon. Any such derivation, though, seems tenuous. She then writes that *Faspa* probably finds its origins in agricultural routine.

"One theory espoused by Jack Penner, farmer in southern Manitoba, is that the times meals were taken during the busy farming season, correlated with the horses' need for water and sustenance to keep up their hard work throughout the day. It was especially during the spring,



Credit: Julia M. Toews

summer and autumn months, when farmers and their horses worked from sunrise to sunset. The working men had breakfast before the day's work began, a second breakfast around 10:30, dinner at noon, *Faspa* around 4:00, and supper at the end of the work day" (93). This farming routine eventually evolved into a light afternoon meal on Sunday afternoons.

Sunday was a day of rest, writes Hildebrand Chornoboy, as commanded in Deuteronomy 5. "In order to obey this commandment, Mennonite women did all their baking for Sunday *Faspa*, on Saturdays. Traditionally, *Faspa* was served every day of the week, and often Sunday *Faspa* was more elaborate than the regular *Faspa* of weekdays. Women baked fresh bread, cakes, cookies, and other sweet things on Saturday in preparation for their families and for company that would come to visit on Sundays. Having all the food prepared meant that on Sunday the women only needed to prepare coffee, set the table, and clean up after *Faspa*" (93).

The custom evolved further, writes Hildebrand Chornoboy. "In *Faspa with Jast*, I note that 'traditionally Mennonites had *Faspa* every day, but over time, with people working at sedentary jobs and often employed off the farm, *Faspa* has come to be reserved for Sundays and holidays when *Jast* [guest] comes to visit. *Faspa* feeds the body and nourishes the soul. It is a time of telling stories and sharing experiences'" (93).

Sadly, she writes, *Faspa* today is more of a fond memory than a daily or weekly routine. "The tradition of bringing *Faspa* to the fields gradually diminished with the advent of high-powered machinery, farmers stopping by local restaurants for 'take-out,' and farm women working at regular jobs or being actively involved in the farming operation as opposed to cooking and taking care of the children" (94).

So – another Mennonite tradition that lives on mostly in nostalgia. At 4 pm on October 2, though,

Faspa – good food and lots of conversation – will take shape once again.

Source Hildebrand Chornoboy, Eleanor. "*Faspa: What Is Its Origin?*"

Preservings, No. 33, 2013, pp. 92-94.

The Peace Trek attracts Young and Old

by the Editor

Eden Healthcare Services has for many years conducted a highly successfully bicycle fund-raising event called "Head for the Hills." It has been especially effective in involving young participants. Meanwhile, Eden has collaborated happily with Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV) in sponsoring the Tractor Trek for tractor enthusiasts.

So why not put on a collaborative bicycling/running event in the Hanover-Steinbach area? At the same time EastMenn Historical Committee was starting to develop the Peace Trail, a 55-Km route from the Mennonite Landing Site to the Dirk Willems Peace Garden at MHV. The trail consists of black-earth roads, canal berms, grassy trails beside two creeks and a lot of gravel roads.

So a date was set (Aug. 20) and Eden and MHV began to plan the event. Event organization came from Eden and trail alternatives came from the Peace Trail Committee. Unfortunately very rainy weather preceded the ride date, so that only the eastern half of the trail could be used.

About 35 participants showed up on the morning of August 20. Most of them cyclists. There was a tremendous range of ages. Frank Derksen, 90, easily completed the route and little, 2-year old Nehemiah rode on the back of Daddy's bike.

The ride/run started from the Tourond Creek Discovery Center, an ecological site, proceeded to the historic Chortitz Church and Cemetery, and toured the Rosenthal Park. Rosenthal was a large Mennonite village that disappeared about at the turn of the century, but in its place the RM of Hanover has created a park with a small lake. A few kilometers east brought the riders to the Blind Creek trailhead. The last 2 km were on a grassy creek bank, sometimes difficult because of the wet weather.

The two cooperating institutions are determined to repeat the event in coming years. They hope for better



Frank Derksen rides the Peace Trek.

weather in 2023. In 2024, the 150th anniversary of the coming of the Mennonites, MHV is planning a walking pilgrimage along the Peace Trail, accompanied by oxen and Red River carts.

Point of Interest

David Friesen, born Apr. 12, 1856 in Friedrichsthal, South Russia, died on June 8, 1893 and was buried in the Schoensee cemetery in the RM of Hanover. He was married to Anna Wiens on Mar 14, 1878. He was the father of David W. Friesen and grandfather of David K. Friesen. They ran D. W. Friesen & Sons in Altona, now Friesens Corporation.



Shoensee cemetery showing David Friesen's stone (Source: Al Hamm)

Note: "Point of Interest" will be a recurring feature of HP. If you have an idea for one, please send it to the editor: grklassen@gmail.com.)



Credit: Gary Dyck

Book Reviews

Menno Friesen, *Heard you had some fun at Goose Brook, Uncle*, Friesen Press, Inc., 2022, (A memoir in stories and poems, compiled by Liz Plett)

Reviewed by Erin Unger

With a name like “Menno Friesen”, I feel like I should have an idea who he is. Was. But, I do not. So I was able to read this free from assumptions.

It's an unusual book. Stories and poems together. And why were they compiled in such a manner, I wondered. The back cover tells the story. Menno had written a lot, privately, over the years. And then passed away too soon, leaving his wife Liz behind. In her grief, I imagine, she put together this collection.

I was relieved to not have known Menno nor Liz (a danger in the small Mennonite writing community) because when I'm acquainted with people, I bring a pre-existing idea of them into my reading. And that is not entirely fair. I wanted to read this from a fresh point of view. But even now it's difficult because upon knowing the crux of their story from the back cover, I read with empathy. I tried to let that go and read honestly.

The book begins with easy-reading poems about Menno's youth, exploring friendships in the 70s, which left me with the impression that this book would make a good companion to others that explore southern Manitoba life and youth in the 60s and 70s.

Subjects and contemplations include friendship tensions, hierarchies, and regrets. Losing friends to marriage and the inevitable relational changes and/or fallout.

I feel like some of the prose may have been a start of a fuller story. Not that it has to be. Each entry stands alone well. But had the author lived longer...

Anyhow, Liz, in her widowhood, arranged it all thoughtfully and carefully.

From these collected writings, these snippets and starts, I gather that Menno and Liz had been quite involved in welcoming newcomers.

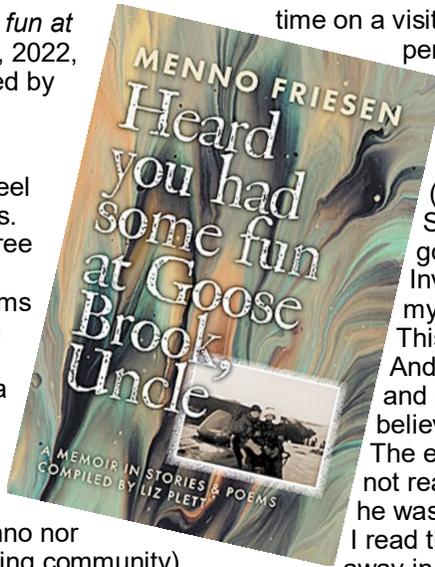
As far as the prose included in this collection, I was particularly entranced by *The Jump* — fiction (or is it? I envision the Pembina Hills...). The short story mentions Stony Brook which, to my mind, is Steinbach. The story contrasts a modern couple of Mennonite background (likely such as Menno and Liz) interacting with a more conservative young Mennonite couple. Within the space of a few pages, we peer into their lives, their rhythms, motivations, curiosities, and kindnesses. There is a contemplative pacing that draws me in, makes me hold my breath, eager to read on.

Whether fiction or non, either way, I get the impression Friesen was a quiet observer. He observed, remembered, and recorded. We can observe alongside him, by reading this book.

The photos in the middle of the book took me by surprise. I hadn't expected them to be there, adding an element of reality to the poetry and prose.

“Do you know how many things we haven't seen?”

An innocent question, referencing how to spend limited



time on a visit to Spain... haunting now, having been penned by a man whose life was cut short.

The book features many short, conversational, reflective chats.

Dealing with the decline of his father.

Accidentally seeing the Tour de France (how exactly does one manage such a feat? Suffice it to say, this is now one of my life's goals).

Invigorating travel adventures that call to mind my own early days of travel with my spouse. This couple would have been lovely to know. And I wonder... what motivated Liz to collect and publish his writing? Love and honour, I believe.

The end of the book arrives far too abruptly. I'm not ready for it. But what did I expect? Suddenly he was gone. He stopped writing.

I read the back again, and realize Menno passed away in 2019... one short year before the pandemic landed here in Manitoba. This book was released in 2021. I imagine Liz alone in lockdown, sorting through her husband's pages, revisiting their shared memories through his eyes.

To me, even though this is a book of Menno's writings, it says a lot about Liz too.

There were times I laughed, but other times that I just wanted the story to continue. Some short stories felt like introductions. Others, like pages from his journal.

An intimate, introspective read.

Recommended.

The Beaches of Steinbach (Lake Agassiz, that is)

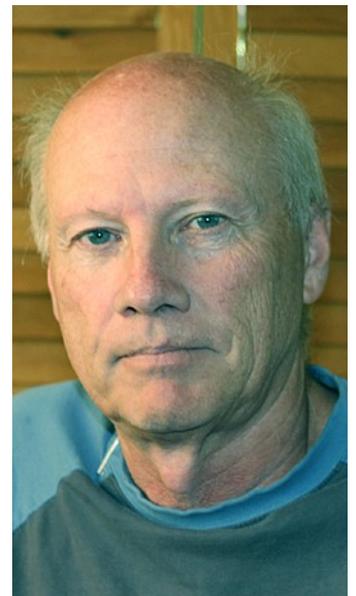
A talk by Bill Redekop

Sat. Oct 22, 7:00 pm at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach

Free Admission (donations accepted)

Sponsored by EastMenn and MHV

Bill Redekop, author of *Lake Agassiz, the Rise and Demise of the World's Greatest Lake*



Book Notes

by Erin and Andrew Unger

The White Mosque by Sofia Samatar (Catapult, 2022).

Samatar is an American Mennonite, well known as a poet and fantasy novelist. In *The White Mosque*, her first work of non-fiction, she explores her Swiss Mennonite and Somali Muslim background as she tells of a Mennonite heritage tour she took to Uzbekistan. Of particular interest to Russian Mennonites, is Samatar's exploration of the story of Claas Epp Jr., a 19th century Mennonite leader whose apocalyptic vision led a group of Mennonites from Ukraine to await the return of Christ in Central Asia.

Living in the World: How Conservative Mennonites Preserved the Anabaptism of the Sixteenth Century by Ronald C. Jantz (Wipf and Stock, 2020)

Though not of the same background himself, in this book Jantz explores the Holdeman, or Church of God in Christ, Mennonite people – an interest that may have been raised as people he knew joined and left the church. Recommended for those wanting to understand more about these mysterious Mennonites.

Guiding Diverse Flocks: Tales of a Mennonite Pastor by Ernie Hildebrand (Friesen Press, 2021)

Like most people called into the ministry, Ernie Hildebrand's life did not take a direct trajectory. In this book, he reflects on his early days on the farm, his years serving as a pastor, and his return to farming... and all the stories in between.

Death at the Grass Huts: A Story of God's Grace and Human Endeavor by Rudolf Duerksen (Christian Faith Publishing, 2020)

Born to Mennonite parents fleeing Russia, Rudolf Duerksen was raised in Paraguay's "Green Hell" and lived to tell the tale. He tells of his adventures and documents the tragedy and triumphs of the settlers, giving credit to God in all things. (Also in German.)

Heart's Hydrography by Sally Ito (Turnstone Press, 2022)

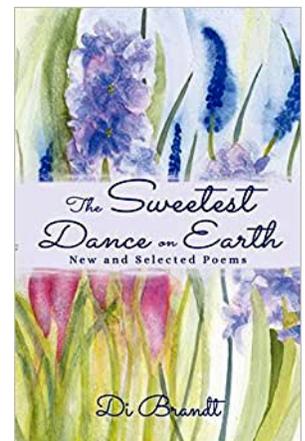
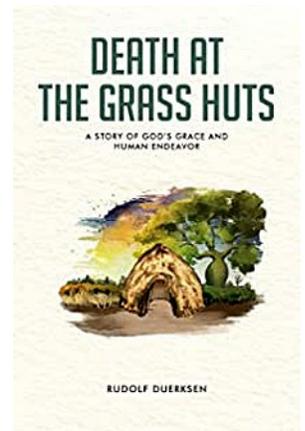
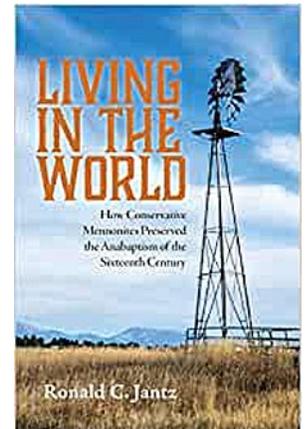
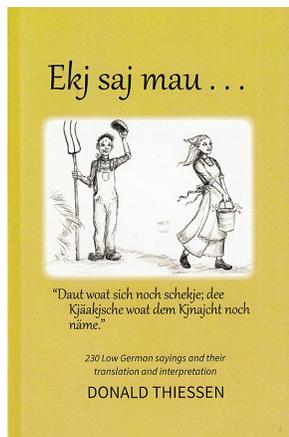
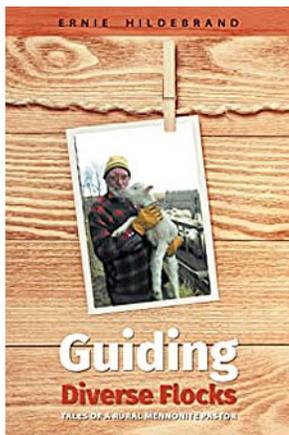
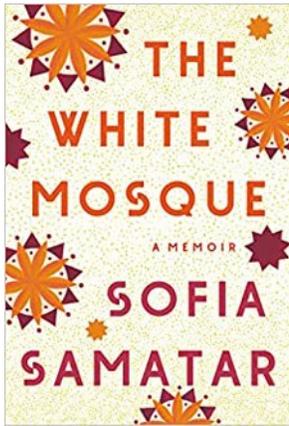
In this her fourth book of poetry, Winnipeg resident Sally Ito delves deeply into the heart; its aspirations and influences. More than an organ, more than a symbol -- in her poetry the heart expands to represent other natural and human-made wonders.

Ekj saj mau. . . By Donald Thiessen, Derksen Printers, Steinbach, 2022..

230 Low German sayings translated and interpreted, illustrated. (GK)

The Sweetest Dance on Earth: New and Selected Poems, Di Brandt, Turnstone Press, 2022.

Manitoba's groundbreaking, internationally acclaimed Poet Laureate (of 2018) returns with her ninth book of poetry. Brandt continues her exploration of the world as seen through a feminist, ecological lens. Manitoba readers will likely relate and possibly gain an ounce of provincial pride in reading Brandt's Winnipeg Winter Sonnets, contained within this volume.



Poems to Ponder

Abram P. Toews, best known for his 2012 book, *The Problem of Mennonite Ethics* was also a poet. Who knew? The following poems are from his *Lines of the Soul, Book Four*, 1974.

(Thanks to Linda Peters, Steinbach)

It Was Full

I thought the hand was empty
But when it was opened
It was full of air.
I thought the sky was empty
But when darkness came
It was full of stars.
I thought the soul was empty
But when the needy came
It was full of love.

Rewards

The band had led the parade
To the bandstand
Where the trophies were presented.
Herald, the winner
Stood gratefully
To receive his award.

Not far from Herald was grandma
Who shared the presentation
But instead of seeing the young athlete
She saw him as a little boy
Coming to her running.
Hugging and saying.
"Grandma, I love you."
For her this was the reward.

Greater rewards come
From the inside out,
Presented not for show
But for achievement,
Watered by humility,
Warmed by divine sunshine,
Giving body and soul maturity.

The hand that pins on the recognition
Does so with the same strength
That grandma had in her arms
When she embraced with love.

Trophies are not presented for the "now"
But for the "then."
Life always awards that way
Both this life and the one to follow.
Herald's awards were grandma's
For without those hugs
Neither won.